The More Things Change, the More They Remain the Same

LIVING AND DYING IN CANCER ALLEY (1990 TO 2023)

DEEPSOUTH CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Ver. 2.1

The Mississippi River Chemical Corridor, or Cancer Alley, produces one-fifth of the United States' petrochemicals. This area, once called a "massive human experiment", has transformed from one of the poorest, slowest-growing sections of Louisiana, into burgeoning working-class communities. As the number of petrochemical plants in the corridor have increased, a rise in toxic substances absorbed into air, water and land has followed. The toxins' link to health disparities is well documented, and Louisiana is consistently ranked among the states with the highest rates of cancer as a cause of death according to the Centers for Disease Control.

1990

More than thirty years ago, the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ) developed the first maps demonstrating what neighbors living in the corridor experienced: there were a disproportionate number of chemical plants located in these communities (as compared to wealthy white areas) and they were releasing harmful toxins. The maps displayed the facilities that reported Toxic Release Inventory (TRI). The maps of nine parishes (Ascension, East Baton Rouge, Iberville, Jefferson, Orleans, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, and West Baton Rouge) in the corridor showed that most of the chemical facility locations were in Census tracts with minority populations of 40 to 60 percent, with some clustering three or more facilities in one area.

Toxic Release Inventory (TRI)

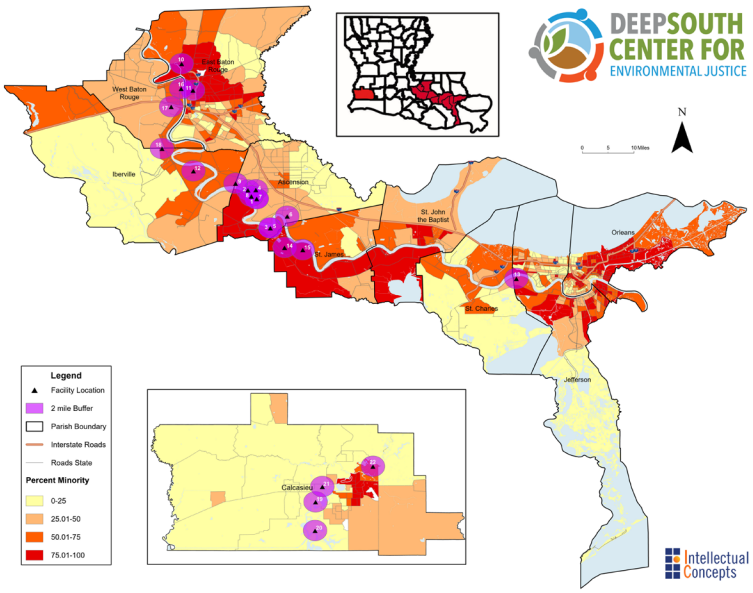
TRI is a report of facilities' toxic release inventory, data about managing chemical waste through environmental releases (into the air, water, and land), recycling, energy recovery, treatment, and disposal.

Today

The DSCEJ has updated the 1990 maps to include TRI air emissions and Greenhouse Gases (GHG) emissions in relation to poverty and minority populations who make their home in the corridor to determine the facilities' impact over time. Since 1990, both the number of petrochemical plants and the staggering incidence of health impacts for individuals living in the Corridor has been on the rise. As of 2020, the parishes have a total population of 1.7 million. There are 170 facilities (consisting of oil refineries, plastics plants, and chemical facilities) reporting TRI and 149 reporting GHG emissions.

Beyond Petrochemical Sites, Louisiana

Percent Minority and 2 mile buffer from facility location



"The outcries, pleas and demands for environmental justice for the impacted communities in the Mississippi Gulf River Chemical Corridor have been sounding for over 30 years. The maps and analysis we are releasing as part of this report unequivocally point to the compounding impact the petrochemical industry has had on the health and wellbeing of overburdened communities. These ten parishes must be a priority as Justice40 investments are made."

—Dr. Beverly Wright, DSCEJ

Impacts

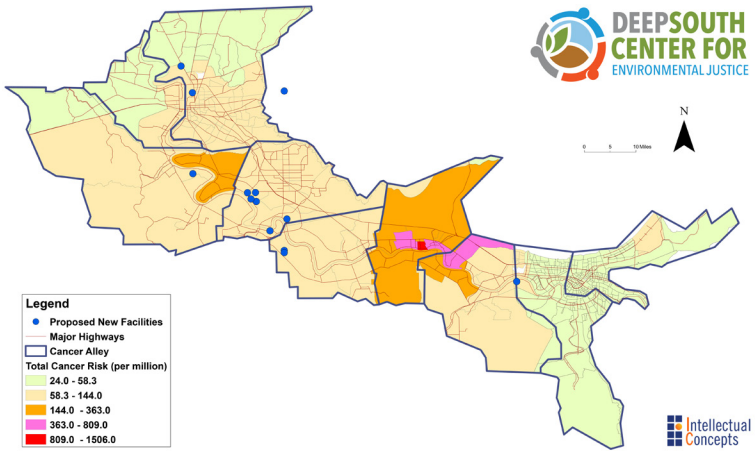
Ascension Parish has nearly double the proposed and under construction facilities (nine sites) than any other Parish, and yet it already has the highest Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) rating. Cancer risk rates are among the highest in the nation. In some parishes [Ascension, Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson and Orleans] the annual cancer rate is more than six times higher than the average rate of cancer for a community of similar size.

Parish	Year	Age-Adjusted Rate	Case Count	Population
Ascension Parish	2015-2019	492	3041	125,289
Calcasieu Parish	2015-2019	501.9	5760	212,646
East Baton Rouge Parish	2015-2019	485.7	11621	455,447
Iberville Parish	2015-2019	549.3	1101	30,651
Jefferson Parish	2015-2019	472.7	12998	439,402
Orleans Parish	2015-2019	437	9824	383,974
St. Charles Parish	2015-2019	475.9	1399	52,411
St. James Parish	2015-2019	517.6	696	20,390
St. John the Baptist Parish	2015-2019	461	1137	42,704
West Baton Rouge Parish	2015-2019	505.6	741	27,064

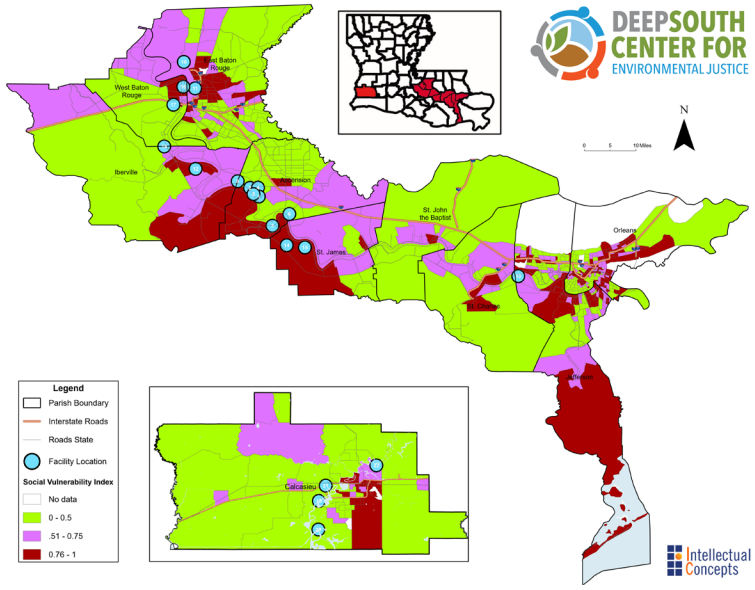
Future—Proposed Sites

There are 29 facilities proposed or under construction in Louisiana, and 24 are in the ten parishes. The majority of these facilities are plastic resin manufacturing and methanol plants.

2014 EPA National Air Toxics Assessment
Total Cancer Risk



Under Construction and Approved New Petrochemical Facilities
Social Vulnerability Index



CALL TO ACTION

To improve the health and wellbeing of people living in these parishes there must be a reduction in the exposure of toxic substances in the air, soil, and water. This can be achieved both by reducing the concentration of facilities in underserved and marginalized areas and by reducing the impact of the existing facilities.

The Deep South Center for Environmental Justice was founded in 1992 to respond to the toxic threats of industrial pollution along the Mississippi River Chemical Corridor. The Center sought to assist in the development of African American leadership and build the capacity of communities to respond to these threats- and to effectively participate in the decision-making processes affecting their health, environment, and economy.