

For the first time, EPA has addressed the issue of climate change adaptation in a letter from Administrator Lisa Jackson. The contents of the letter are not startling: mostly instructions to carry out existing policies or government recommendations on climate change. Two points are worth noting, however. First, the Administrator directs the agency to produce a formal adaptation plan within a year. That plan should help put some flesh on the fairly vague policies that the Administration has adopted to date. Second, the letter places particular emphasis on environmental justice and adaptive management in her directives to:

Focus on (1) understanding the environmental-justice implications of climate-change impacts and identifying populations and communities vulnerable to climate change and with limited capacity to adapt and (2) incorporating consideration of environmental-justice issues into the design and evaluation of adaptation strategies; [and]

Monitor and evaluate efforts to adapt to climate change to continually assess the effectiveness of actions and adjust as necessary.

This is an encouraging start. The key issue, however, will be the amount of follow through.