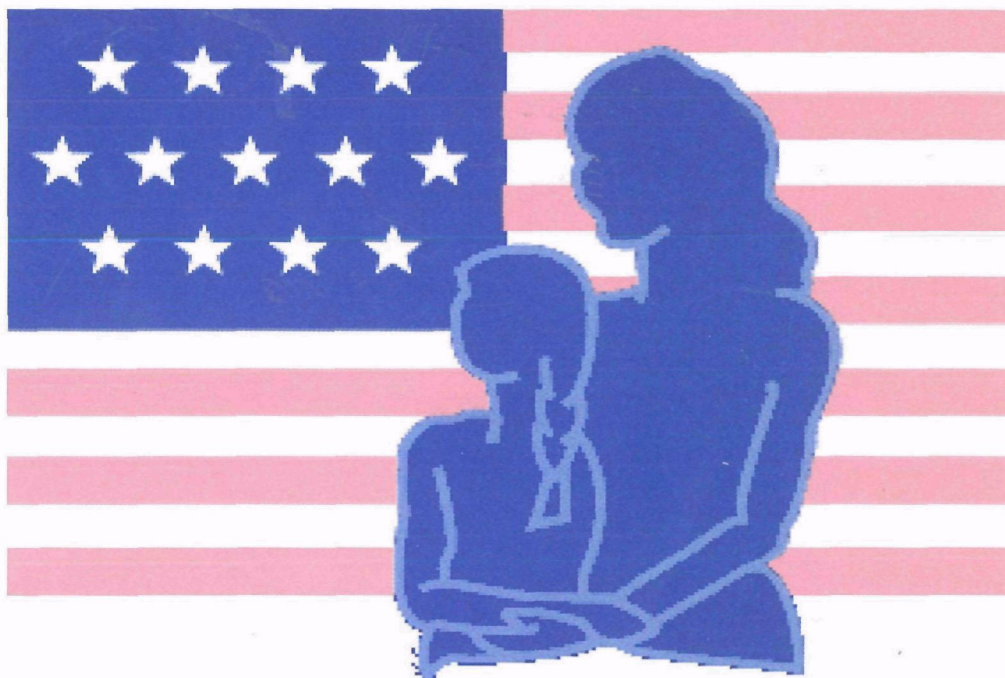




America's Commitment Women 2000



Meeting the Unique Challenges of Women
and Children's Environmental Health



EPA's Contribution to the President's Interagency Council on Women



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

AUG 14 2000

OFFICE OF
REGIONAL OPERATIONS

In 1995, the President's Interagency Council on Women was established by President Clinton to coordinate the implementation of the Platform for Action adopted at the 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. Every executive department and agency has a representative on the Council. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton serves as the Council's Honorary Chair. Secretary of State Madeline Albright is the Council's present Chair. I was honored to serve as EPA's representative to the President's Council.

Under the leadership of the Administrator, Carol Browner, EPA has participated in a wide variety of activities that has inspired many across the Agency to develop programs and engage in outreach and public education to further women's progress and support the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Our EPA workgroup developed new initiatives as well as highlighted the programs EPA already had in place that support this effort.

It is with great pleasure that I present this report emphasizing EPA's programs and new initiatives that benefit women and the girl child in the United States as well as internationally. They have all been implemented from sound policies that protect the public health and the environment.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frankee Greenberg". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Frankee Greenberg, Director
Office of Regional Operations

“As a woman, it has been my honor to serve in an administration that has done so much to help women gain some balance in their lives, allowing women to lead full, productive, healthy lives — to reach our fullest”

- Carol M. Browner



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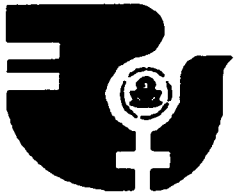
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Message from the Administrator

Dear Friends:

In September 1995, some 8,000 Americans joined more than 40,000 people from around the world in Beijing, China, to participate in the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women and the parallel gathering of individuals and members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

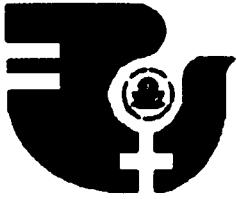
At the Conference on Women, the United States, along with 187 other countries, adopted by consensus a Platform for Action. The Platform is the strongest, most comprehensive statement on women's rights and public policy ever agreed upon by the world's governments. The President's Interagency Council on Women, established by President Clinton, seeks to translate the principles contained in the Platform into concrete policies that respond to the needs of our citizens.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as part of the Interagency Council, takes seriously its obligation to implement the standards of the Platform for Action. A number of programs and research initiatives geared towards women and children have been developed and set in motion in the five years since the Beijing Conference. We wish to highlight some of these activities and thus provide a glimpse into the future of environmental health and well-being for women and children.

We are proud to present this report emphasizing EPA programs and new initiatives measured against the standard of the Platform for Action. EPA is pleased to do its part to show that the United States is a leader in recognizing the rights and advancing the status of women. But a leader cannot stand still. This report reflects our resolve that the policies and programs of EPA fully meet the objectives of the Platform. This is a dynamic process that EPA and the American people are engaged in, a process requiring a sustained commitment from us all.

Sincerely,

Carol Browner
Administrator



Introduction

In June 2000 the United States will join one hundred eighty-nine (189) countries at a special session of the United Nations' General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century." The purpose of this meeting is to assess progress in advancing the status of women since the historic U.N. World Conference on Women in Beijing, September 1995. The U.S. has taken its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action seriously. On the eve of the Conference, President Clinton announced the formation of an Interagency Council on Women to make sure Conference recommendations would be urgently pursued.

That is precisely what has happened. Over the past five years, the Council has coordinated implementation of the Platform throughout the federal government. It has worked closely with all major agencies to:

1. assist with extensive outreach and public education on issues of critical interest to women and children,
2. ensure that the special needs of women are represented in every relevant governmental activity, and
3. upgrade programs of importance to the health, safety and social participation of women and children.

This process benefits all family members, including men and children, but women have a unique potential to accelerate social equality and environmental restoration in their communities. Critical reforms can be facilitated if women gain access to a range of educational and medical services, not to speak of job training and opportunity to work for wages. Not investing in women's special skills and talents means wasting vital resources for advancing global development. To support these talents, on the other hand, is to maximize productivity per capita in the context of responsible economic growth.

EPA has transformed its programs and research priorities over the past four and a half years to address the special vulnerability of children and women of reproductive age. A very brief overview of such initiatives is outlined in this publication. Some long precede the Beijing Conference; e.g., our research on environmentally induced breast cancer, enactment of the Safe Drinking Water Act, and participation in the Federal

Women's Program. More recently, EPA has pursued research specifically targeted on the effects of endocrine disruptors on women and their offspring; gender differences in susceptibility and exposure to ionizing radiation, lead, radon, mercury and vehicular exhaust; childhood asthma; and studies of environmental factors in ovarian cancer and reproductive/developmental disorders.

The Agency's outreach activities include the use of media to raise awareness of asthma and lead poisoning, environmental training at Superfund and Brownfield sites, and a strategic partnership with the Girl Scouts of America on ecological issues. Intramurally, EPA has opened up opportunity and thus visibility for women contractors, making sure they are not inadvertently overlooked. The Senior Executive Service Accountability Framework tries to ensure that women inhabit a workspace purged of invidious discrimination. The Agency has also appointed additional women to its critical Science Advisory Board, where they serve with distinction. EPA will not tolerate the antiquated excuse that "no qualified women are available", since it is obviously false.

In a broader arena, the Agency works as a member of the International Negotiating Committee to reduce the threat of persistent organic compounds (POPS), which may interfere not only with fertility, but with the etiology of fetuses and newborns as well. EPA has improved access to safe drinking water and sanitation services in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras, especially vital for children and women during their reproductive years. In cooperation with the Czech Republic, the Agency is calculating the effects of air pollution on women and neonates. EPA has a training course in Guatemala to help cut women's and girls' exposure to lead. It is also sponsoring a policy planning workshop on lead in Bangkok, Thailand, to design a regional approach applicable to Asia as a whole.

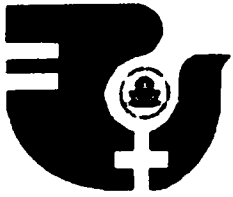
For more information on these programs, just access the EPA website, [Internet: <http://www.epa.gov>]. For information on the President's Interagency Council on Women or the Platform for Action, please visit [Internet: <http://secretary.state.gov/www/picw/index.html>].



Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing China, 4-15
September 1995

12 Critical Areas of Concern

1. **Poverty:** develop macroeconomics mechanisms to improve access to economic resources.
2. **Education and Training:** ensure equal education and promote lifelong education and training for girls and women.
3. **Health:** increase women's life-long access to affordable, appropriate, and quality health care, and to information dealing with maternal mortality, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health.
4. **Violence:** adopt and implement legislation to end violence against women, ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, encourage international cooperation to dismantle trafficking in women.
5. **Armed Conflict:** increase participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels, condemn ethnic cleansing and rape as a consequence of war and a violation of human rights.
6. **Economy:** promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment and appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources.
7. **Decision-Making:** ensure women's equal access to and full participation in public sector power structures, increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership positions.
8. **Institutional Mechanisms:** create/strengthen national bureaucracies to ensure that advancement of women is vested in the highest possible level of government.
9. **Human Rights:** promote human rights of women by fully implementing all human rights instruments, especially the convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.
10. **Media:** promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.
11. **Environment:** integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programs for sustainable development.
12. **The Girl-Child:** eliminate discrimination against the Girl-Child: enforce rights to succession, and to inherit, eliminate female genital mutilation, son preference, economic exploitation of child labor, and strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the Girl-Child.



Contributing to the fight on Breast Cancer

Breast cancer incidence rates have steadily increased over the last 20 years, and it is now the most common type of cancer among women in many Western countries. Much scientific research is underway to better understand the causes of this disease. The U.S. EPA contributes to this research through study of chemical, physical, biological, or other causative agents that might cause this disease.

“Congress passed and the President signed a new Food Quality Protection Act and a new Safe Drinking Water Act. And in both of those laws, we worked with Congress to put in a provision to require the testing of chemicals that disrupt the human endocrine system — chemicals that change how our hormones function. Without the advocacy, the activism, the pressure exerted by the breast cancer coalition — that chemical testing would not have passed the Congress and would not be in the law today.” –Carol Browner

Agricultural Health Study

The Agricultural Health Study, a collaborative effort between the EPA, the National Cancer Institute, and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), offers important opportunities to examine potential links between breast cancer and environmental risks. This research program includes a study group of 90,000 certified pesticide applicators and their families from North Carolina and Iowa, and it will provide an unprecedented amount of new information on pesticide exposures for both residential and worker settings. EPA will be able to collect considerable information on participants' work history and practices and the chemicals to which they have been exposed.

information to people in areas with high breast cancer incidence and mortality, these agencies, with assistance from advocacy groups, are conducting a project to provide information on breast cancer treatment and resources for several high priority areas - San Francisco, California, The State of Illinois, New York City, Hawaii and the region of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. This project maintains a web site that enables citizens to quickly locate breast cancer surveillance workers, as well as control and prevention programs. [Internet: <http://www.napbc.org/>]

Rapid Response Project

The Rapid Response Project of the President's National Action Plan on Breast Cancer is a collaboration between the EPA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Human Health Services (HHS), and other federal agencies. In an effort to provide health

Research : Endocrine Disrupting Compounds in Mammary Gland Development

The EPA contributes to research on the effect of endocrine disrupting compounds on mammary gland development. The Endocrine Disruptor Screening Program, created under authority from the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act, will detect the potential of chemicals to produce a number of endocrine-related effects in addition to breast cancer, including reproductive

Contributing to the fight on Breast Cancer

disorders and birth defects.

EPA is currently establishing a process for selecting chemicals to be subjected to screening and testing, developing endocrine disruptor screening and testing methods, and standardizing and validating screening and testing methods for regulatory programs.

Endocrine disruptors are chemicals that interfere with the normal function of glands (pituitary, thyroid, testes, ovaries) or the hormones (estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, thyroid hormone, etc.) produced and secreted by the glands. These chemicals may cause permanent irreversible effects that seriously impact human health. Examples include birth defects and certain endocrine sensitive tissue cancers (breast, ovarian, vaginal, testicular, thyroid, etc.) EPA is in the process of a plan by establishing a priority setting process for approximately 87,000 chemicals found through endocrine disruptor screening and testing methods.

The EPA participates in the Long Island Breast Cancer Study Project, a comprehensive, multiagency research program led by the National Cancer Institute and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). Mandated by Congress at request of Long Island communities, the study will examine the causes of breast cancer in that area. Forty-one Long Island hospitals, New York area medical research centers, and over 3,000 Long Island women are participating in epidemiological studies. Study results will be published in 2001. [Internet: <http://www.napbc.org/>]



Ensuring Healthy Future Generations: Reproductive Issues

Protecting the reproduction, development and growth of human beings is vital to the progress of society. Among 50 known vertebrate hormones, estrogen, androgen, and thyroid hormones play major roles in these processes. Because these hormones are so important, methods and procedures to assess harmful effects of chemicals on these three systems are being closely studied.

"By acting now, to protect the health of women, of children, of the elderly and to guarantee environmental justice for all, we safeguard a healthy future for generations to come far into the new century." -- Carol Browner

Results of EPA's Integrated Urban Air Toxics Strategy

The EPA released the Integrated Urban Air Toxics Strategy in 1999 as required by the Clean Air Act. The strategy developed a broad framework for addressing the risks posed by emissions of air toxics. Hazardous air pollutants, referred to as "air toxics," are pollutants known to cause or suspected of causing cancer, other serious health effects, or ecosystem damage. Available data indicate that about a third of these pollutants affect development or reproduction, which means that exposure of a fetus or young child may hinder development. Exposure of women may alter the ability to conceive or give birth to healthy children. The strategy identifies thirty-three hazardous air pollutants posing threats to public health in urban areas, a list of the various categories, or pollutants and a strategy to achieve substantial risk reductions, including a seventy-five percent (75%) cut in estimated cancer incidence from exposure to hazardous air pollutants.

Alaskan Native Cord Blood Monitoring Program

Researchers have found evidence of pollutants from distant sources in the subsistence foods of Native Alaskans, raising concern about the potential effects on maternal and child health. The U.S. EPA's Office of International Activities

has co-funded, with the HHS's Indian Health Service and the CDC, monitoring of umbilical cord blood and maternal blood of Alaska Natives in the Arctic region during the year 2000. The goal of the project is to determine links between contaminant and potential health effects to mother and child. This program has the potential to be applied internationally. There is considerable interest from other Alaskan, Russian, and Siberian Native groups for use of this program.

Early Pregnancy Loss and Effects of Chemicals

EPA scientists are studying the effects of specific chemicals on early pregnancy and embryo implantation in animals in order to identify risks, including miscarriage, to the health of pregnant women.

Pesticide Regulatory Decisions Affecting Women and Children

The Food Quality Protection Act of 1996 (FQPA) prohibited the use of multiple pesticides shown to have harmful effects on humans, including vulnerable population subgroups such as women and children. EPA's regulatory decisions have tightened protections for women and provided an extra margin of safety for children

Ensuring Healthy Future Generations: Reproductive Issues

through prohibition of pesticides linked to reproductive and developmental effects, cancer of the reproductive system, and neurotoxicity.

Modifications to Hazardous Waste Risk Assessment Models

EPA is modifying risk assessment models to give special consideration to children and women of childbearing age. These risk assessments are used to guide the toxic waste cleanup process at sites where people may have been exposed and to determine the necessity for further regulation of chemicals and waste. Specific contaminants for which the risk assessments are being modified include lead (Pb) and compounds that can accumulate in the body and be passed on to children through breast milk. Recent efforts have established more realistic scenarios for evaluating risks for women and children. The Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response continues to improve the analysis of risk to both children and pregnant women.

Efforts to Protect Women and Children from the Effects of Mercury

Exposure to high levels of mercury has been associated with serious neurological and developmental problems in humans. EPA, under authority of the Clean Air Act, is working to control mercury emissions and conduct assessments to boost understanding of how mercury affects the environment. Mercury is transported through the air and deposited in water where humans ingest it by eating contaminated fish. The developing human nervous system is particularly sensitive to mercury; thus women of child bearing age and young children are among the most affected. To

combat this problem, EPA has underway or has completed multiple actions to reduce mercury emissions significantly such as the establishment of stringent emission limits for a variety of waste incinerators and plants using mercury, and is studying emissions (to be completed in December 2000) of coal-fired electric power plants to determine if control of mercury emissions from this source is necessary.

Additionally, EPA, in conjunction with the Department of Energy (DOE), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and the Electric Power Research Institute, is in the process of developing promising mercury control technologies. EPA is also funding a review by the National Academy of Sciences of recent research on health effects of mercury in fetuses and children.

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Study of Exposure of Mohawk American Indian Women to Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)

A 1995 study was conducted to determine if breast-fed Mohawk infants were at a higher risk to PCBs since Mohawk land is in close proximity to three PCB-contaminated Superfund Sites in New York State. This study was supported under EPA's Superfund program, through a grant from the Agency for a Toxic Substance and Disease registry in the New York State Department of Health (NYDH). The study

Ensuring Healthy Future Generations: Reproductive Issues

indicated that the Mohawk women studied for the 1995 report (samples taken 1991-1992) had no significantly greater breast milk PCB average levels than a controlled population.

This compared favorably to an earlier study (samples taken 1986-1989) which indicated that Mohawk women had at that time higher average breast milk PCB concentrations than Mohawk women who did not consume local fish, and than the controlled population. This study, coupled with fish advisories issued by the NYDH, the Mohawk Tribe and Canada, have resulted in a decline of fish consumption and cut PCB levels in Mohawk women.

Health Risks of Dioxin

Studies evaluating the adverse effects of dioxin and chemicals causing endometriosis are underway, plus a follow-up study to determine why dioxin causes these effects. A special issue of Mutation Research, organized by EPA and NIEHS, focused on the biology and genetics of female risk. The research demonstrated that in spite of the greater difficulties in assessing genetic damage in female germ cells, identification and assessment of genetic hazards should not be limited to studies of males. Participating agencies include HHS (NIEHS, OWH, CDC, FDA and NIH), EPA, National Aeronautic Space Administration, and NSF.

Additionally, EPA has undertaken a number of measures to better account for gender differences in environmental health. EPA's Office of Research and Development and Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances require that industry, in tests submitted to EPA, should more carefully evaluate the risks to reproductive development and function in both males and females.

EPA partnered with the American Industrial Health Council on a project to assess varying susceptibility to chemical exposure of various sectors of the population. It focused on four types of health effects: reproductive and developmental toxicity, pulmonary toxicity, neurotoxicity and cancer. The final report "Human Variability in Response to Chemical Exposure: Measures, Modeling, and Risk Assessment" was published in 1995.

EPA established the Developmental and Reproductive Toxicology (DART) database, available online from the National Library of Medicine's TOXNET system.
[Internet:[http:// www.toxnet.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.toxnet.nlm.nih.gov)]



RIGHT-TO-KNOW: "Keeping the public informed about the Environment"

Providing the American public with access to sound environmental information and involving the public in our work are essential parts of a comprehensive approach to protecting the environment.

"We believe that local residents know what is best for their own communities and, given the facts, they will determine the best course of action to protect public health and the environment. Putting environmental and public health information into their hands is one of the most effective ways to reduce local pollution and prevent it from happening in the future." — Carol Browner

Protecting Women and Children in the Migrant Farm Worker Environment

The Federal government estimates that as many as five million migrant and seasonal farm workers labor each year to produce food in the United States. Entire families often travel and work together in the fields. Housing is often located near or even in the fields, which exposes entire families to one of the greatest hazards in agriculture-pesticides. Recent EPA activities benefitting women and children in farm worker families include a safety video geared toward migrant worker communities, student workbooks on pesticide safety, EPA involvement in related workgroups, and further research into the effects of pesticides on children. [Internet:<http://www.epa.gov/oppfeadl/safety>]

Fish Consumption Advisory Program

EPA has demonstrated special concern for the more susceptible populations including children, pregnant women, and nursing infants. States and tribes have primary responsibility for protecting their residents from the health risks of contaminated, noncommercial fish by issuing fish advisories. EPA is increasingly working with states and tribes to ensure that advisories are issued, particularly addressing the needs of sensitive groups.

In December 1998, EPA and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry provided a brochure for health care professionals about the health consequences of high consumption of contaminated noncommercial fish. [Internet: <http://www.epa.gov/OST/fish>]

Food: Right-to-Know Consumer Brochure and Website

In 1999, EPA released a right-to-know brochure informing consumers and their families of practical steps to reduce their exposure to pesticides used on food. EPA distributed over four million brochures and launched a related Website. [Internet: <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/food>]

National Pesticide Telecommunications Network

The National Pesticide Telecommunications Network (NPTN), a cooperative effort between Oregon State University and EPA, is a toll-free telephone service that provides impartial information about pesticides to anyone in the contiguous United States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Because many women use pesticides in the home and stay at home with their young children, it is not surprising that the

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majority of callers to the NPTN are women. In 1998, 66% of callers were women. Of these calls, about 45% were health-related, and about 14% had to do with pregnancy or children's health.

State Radon Grant Program

EPA's Indoor Air Grant Program funds state and local activities to increase the number of homes tested and fixed for radon problems. This particularly affects women and children because they spend a large amount of time in the home. Recent national outreach programs include "A Citizen's Guide to Radon - The Guide to Protecting Yourself and Your Family from Radon."

Children's Health Protection Website

EPA's Office of Children's Health Protection has designed a Children's Health Protection Website to provide comprehensive information about children's environmental health threats. The website offers simple information to help parents protect children from environmental risks. [Internet: <http://www.epa.gov/children>]

The Sun Wise School Program

The SunWise School Program was developed by EPA, in response to the epidemic increase in UV-related health effects, including skin cancer and cataracts. The effort focuses on elementary school students, while also conducting outreach to educators, school nurses, administrators, and parents. The program teaches children and their care givers to avoid sun overexposure. Children are particularly at risk since the average person's lifetime sun exposure occurs before the age of 18.

The SunWise School Program is an environmental and health education program in which participating schools receive educational materials and tools promoting sun-safe behavior. Pilot testing of SunWise began in May, 1999, with 25 schools participating in 14 states, and the program will be launched nationwide in the fall of 2000. More than 50 national and local organizations, as well as citizens across the country, are participating in the development of SunWise. [Internet: <http://www.epa.gov/sunwise>]

"My Kids" Cable Television Show and Video

EPA in partnership with the National Safety Council developed a short video to provide parents and others with easy things they can do to protect children from environmental hazards. The program aired in June and July 1999. The video, produced in English and Spanish, is being distributed across the country. The National Safety Council received \$250,000 through a grant to produce and distribute the "My Kids" cable television show (and video) on children's environmental health protection.

The National Environmental Education Act of 1990

The National Environmental Education Act of 1990 requires EPA to provide national leadership to raise environmental literacy. The Act encourages partnerships and builds upon long-standing environmental education efforts conducted by federal and state agencies, colleges and schools, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. Estimates show that 60 percent of those in or directly affected by the programs are women and children.

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The Act establishes, in part, the following two programs available to women:

1. Environmental Education Grants. Each year EPA awards more than 200 grants providing between \$2 and \$3 million to support quality environmental education projects. The grants provide grass-roots funding for projects at schools and environmental education for teachers.

2. Training for Education Professionals: EPA awards a multi-year cooperative agreement to a consortium of universities and nonprofit organizations to deliver training and related support to educators. The ultimate goal of the program is to augment the public's ability to make responsible environmental decisions.
[Internet:<http://www.epa.gov/enviroed>]

League of Women Voters

The League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWEF), working with local and state Leagues throughout the country, has been educating citizens about water issues for decades. Since 1973, the League has worked collaboratively with EPA on a variety of water-related projects. In 1996, through a \$90,000 cooperative agreement with EPA, 30 local league members representing 23 states were trained to become resource and discussion facilitators on wetlands. Participants were challenged to build awareness and appreciation of wetlands when they returned to their hometowns. During 1997 and 1998, several local Leagues of Women Voters used small grants to carry out creative citizen education programs focused on wetlands. The projects varied from student boat tours to bus trips for elected officials, and from workshops on wetland models to creating a Wetlands Week.

[Internet: <http://www.org/webwalk/index.html>]

Public Service Campaign

A series of videos, posters, and pamphlets have been created to target Washington, DC Metro riders, supermarket shoppers, moviegoers, and other segments of the general public. Topics such as environmental risks from lead were focused upon. EPA developed this campaign in partnership with private organizations such as the National Safety Council and DC Metro.

"It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air " Initiative

The "It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air" program, an interagency collaboration between EPA and the Department of Transportation, was initiated in 1994 to support and facilitate state and local government efforts to meet goals set for traffic congestion and air quality under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21 Century and the Clean Air Act. The program's goal is to inform the public about the link among transportation choices, traffic congestion, air pollution, and public health. It stresses an individual's ability to make a difference, once informed about the environmental consequences of daily travel. "It All Adds Up" is targeted to specific segments of the general driving public. Research conducted during program development indicates that the audience most receptive to the messages is women who are concerned for their children's health.
[Internet: <http://www.epa.gov/omL/traq/>]

Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools

Throughout 1998 and 1999, EPA's Region 2 (New York) provided technical assistance and grant funds to a mentoring

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program for pilot schools implementing the Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools kit (a kit for developing and maintaining a program for good indoor air quality). Three high-school girls participated in the mentoring program. Also, over the last five years EPA provided over \$300,000 in grants to Rutgers University for training of school personnel, such as school nurses, business administrators and facilities staff, on indoor air quality and the Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools kit. [Internet:<http://www.epa.gov/reg5oair/radon/toolskit.htm>]

"Expanding Your Horizons in Science and Mathematics"

Texas in EPA's Region 6 participated in a one-day conference held February 20, 1999, for sixty-one 7th and 8th grade girls. The conference was sponsored by the American Association of University Women and held at Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas. It was designed to emphasize the importance of math and science classes through hands-on experience and expand the participants' knowledge of careers in math and science. Approximately 400 young women, parents and teachers attended the conference. Region 6 EPA participants conducted several sessions, presenting an overview of EPA's goals and a brief description of the work they do. Session topics included safe drinking water and potential harmful effects of improperly disposed waste.

"Let Kids Lead. Involving Youth in Transportation Choices"

This pilot program, a partnership between EPA and the Academy for Educational Development, was created to empower youth to participate in transportation choices that improve

air quality and quality of life in their communities. The "Let Kids Lead" pilot phase was a three-year program ending in March, 2000. Emphasis will then shift to applying lessons learned in communities throughout the country.

"Let Kids Lead" is being undertaken in three diverse pilot communities, and resource materials are being developed for use by communities that want to encourage youth to participate in transportation and air quality decision-making and problem-solving across the country. Youth may evaluate current transportation options, propose bus route upgrades, suggest alternatively fueled bus fleets or pursue community-wide pedestrian and bike paths.

For example, youth in Massachusetts successfully rallied to enforce a state idling law for buses by issuing their own "tickets" to diesel buses idling more than five minutes. [Internet: <http://www.letkidslead.org>]

Volunteer Monitoring Program

EPA has provided strong support for various groups across the country to organize and train teams of volunteers to protect streams, estuaries, wetlands and lakes by monitoring water quality conditions and becoming active stewards of their environs. Data collected by these volunteers is used to build awareness of pollution problems, encourage a water cleanup, and help water quality managers make pollution control decisions. Approximately one-half of all volunteer monitoring program coordinators are women, and half of all programs work with school-aged children and their teachers. [Internet:<http://www.epa.gov/ow/monitoring/vol.ht> MI]

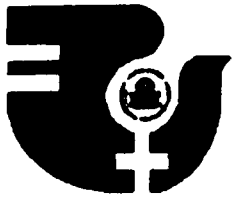
RIGHT-TO-KNOW: “Keeping the public informed about the Environment”

The Girl Scouts of America

The Girl Scouts of America and EPA have formed an innovative partnership to promote environmental stewardship amongst girls. Girl Scout troops in Washington, D.C., can earn a badge for community-based watershed activities. EPA's Region 8 (Colorado) has participated in a Girl Scout Health Fair and is working with the Agency's Substances and Disease Registry to find a Girl Scout Council interested in developing a badge for asthma awareness and prevention. These initiatives could potentially lead to the development of more badges relating to health and the environment. The Girl Scout badges provide an excellent opportunity for girls, including those in low-income and/or minority communities, to learn about the importance of protecting the environment, both for public health and long-term environmental stewardship. Also, through these badges girls can get into scientific issues and projects which may interest them in environmental protection careers.

BEACH Watch

In 1997, EPA announced the BEACH Program to strengthen beach water protection, better inform the public of risks, and promote research. Children, a target population of the program, are more likely than adults to develop infections after swimming in polluted water. This program seeks to help states and communities improve beach testing methods and provide better information to the public about water quality conditions and the risks of exposure to contaminants. BEACH Watch is the first federal Internet-based information system to inform the public about beach closings and advisories. [Internet: <http://www.epa.gov/OST/beaches>.]



Safe Drinking Water for America

Approximately 157,000 public water systems in the U.S. draw all or part of their drinking water from groundwater sources. At present, the use of disinfectants to prevent waterborne disease is required only in public water systems supplied by surface waters, such as rivers, lakes and streams. New research indicates that ground water supplies can also be susceptible to contamination from a range of sources.

“This Administration has made delivering safe, healthy drinking water to communities throughout the country a major priority. The proposal to extend drinking water protections to ground water sources builds on our commitment to making our communities healthier”

— Carol Browner

Delivering Safe and Clean Water

In addition to the obvious health benefits of preventing disease, particularly in women of child bearing age, sound wastewater treatment and drinking water infrastructures contribute to our economic, environmental, and social well-being. Since the 1972 enactment of the Clean Water Act, EPA has provided \$70 billion dollars in federal grants to states, communities, and tribes for the construction of publicly-owned wastewater treatment plants. As a result, today 188 million people are served by public wastewater treatment systems that provide at least secondary treatment. In 1996, Congress created a new federal program enabling EPA to support the construction of public drinking water systems. Since 1997, Congress has appropriated \$2.7 billion for states and tribes, much of which provides low-cost loans and other assistance to states for the creation or improvement of local systems. As of September 1999, 45 tribes have received support for constructing systems and all 50 states and Puerto Rico have received financial assistance.

Safe Drinking Water Act

The EPA implements the Safe Drinking Water Act, which ensures that drinking water is safe to consume. The Act calls for considering special populations such as pregnant women, children senior citizens, and those with compromised immune systems. EPA provides more information on the quality of drinking water than ever before.

Furthermore, the law calls for stronger preventive action by pollution assessment of local sources of water.

[Internet: <http://www.el2a.2ov/OGWDW>]

Water Quality Criteria

In August 1998, the EPA proposed revisions to its methodology for developing water quality criteria, which included revisions to enhance the protection of children and women of child-bearing age. These criteria guide states and tribes as they set standards to protect the quality of the waters within their jurisdiction. These standards ultimately form the basis for controlling discharges or releases of pollutants.

[Internet:<http://www.epa.gov/ost/standards/wqcriteria.html>]

Safe Drinking Water for America

Ground water Contamination

High levels of nitrate in drinking water can cause a potentially fatal blood disorder in infants called “blue baby syndrome” or methemoglobinemia. Pregnant women could be at risk for adverse birth outcomes from exposure to nitrate above the federal drinking water standard. The EPA Region 10 is working closely with numerous federal, state, and local partners

to develop long-term solutions to nitrate contamination of ground water in the Columbia Basin of eastern Washington state. EPA supports a locally driven ground water management area program that specifically addresses widespread nitrate contamination of aquifers that serve as the area’s principal source of drinking water.



CHILDREN AT RISK: Asthma\Lead

Many chemicals are particularly toxic to children. At high levels lead damages the brain and nervous system and can result in behavioral and learning problems. Certain contaminants found indoors are known to play significant roles in triggering asthma episodes in children who have the disease, and in some cases, are causally associated with the development of the disease itself.

“Many of you know all too well that at the end of this century, many public health challenges still remain to be solved, especially in our urban communities. Asthma deaths among children and young people have more than doubled over little more than a decade. Asthma is now the leading cause of hospital admissions for children. Especially in low-income communities, in African-American communities, we have more children than ever before being rushed into the emergency room gasping for breath. Lead poisoning in children is declining, but still, today, nearly a million young children in America suffer high levels of lead in their blood.”

— Carol Browner

Reaching Children with Asthma

An epidemic of childhood asthma is occurring in the United States. Nearly one in 13 school-aged children has it, and the percentage is rising rapidly among preschoolers. EPA is developing outreach campaigns targeted toward women and other care-givers to improve indoor environments and help prevent childhood asthma. EPA distributed a fact-sheet to these groups, entitled “Asthma, Air Quality, and Environmental Justice: EPA’s Role in Asthma Education and Prevention.”

Environmental Tobacco Smoke

Environmental factors such as airborne allergens and tobacco smoke may play a major role in the onset of asthma in children. EPA has developed a National Second-Hand Smoke Campaign that includes publications informing parents and care givers about the risks of second-hand smoke to children and to increase the number of smoke-free homes.

Air Pollution, Motor Vehicles, and Public Health: Public Education Initiative

EPA and the American Lung Association

(ALA) are focusing efforts on fighting asthma in children, providing education on air quality, public health, and the impact of mobile sources. Each year, EPA provides funding to the ALA for community-based projects relating to asthmatic children.

AIRNOW Website

EPA’s Community Right-To-Know Initiative included real-time air quality information to the public via the Internet and other media. It is of particular value to asthmatic children, who are at risk from exposure to ozone and particulate matter. In the first two years of the program (FY 98 and 99), it was successfully implemented in 30 states and DC through the ozone mapping project. The AIRNOW website received over 1.9 million hits in the summer of 1998 and over one million hits per month in the summer of 1999. EPA will continue to build infrastructures in the remaining states to allow for real-time reporting in all states by the year 2001 and to maintain the center. [Internet:<http://www.epa.gov/airnow>]

CHILDREN AT RISK: Asthma\Lead

Puerto Rico

In April of 1996, EPA's Region 2 (New York) sponsored an asthma workshop in Catafto, Puerto Rico. The focus of the workshop was the high rate of asthma in Puerto Rican children and determining how to combat it. The most urgent recommendation was to examine the impact of indoor allergens in Puerto Rico. Because the Puerto Rico Department of Health had no staff available to dedicate to asthma issues, Region 2 granted \$100,000 over three years to support an asthma coordinator whose task is to implement the recommendations of the Catafto Workshop.

Reducing Cockroach and Rodent Infestations without Pesticides

Researchers reported that cockroach and rodent infestations have been strongly linked to asthma. Children are at a higher risk of developing asthma because they spend a large proportion of their time on the floor, where pesticides and allergen-laden dust settles. Indeed, control methods may also put children in danger of pesticide poisoning. EPA's Region 2 has funded a demonstration of simple techniques to reduce or eliminate cockroach and rodent infestations from inner-city housing. Integrated pest management, using only small amounts of low-toxicity pesticides and maintaining a healthier indoor environment, was presented to community members through educational photo literature. They learned the facts about pest infestations, their relation to asthma, and the use of integrated pest management.

Child Health Champion Campaign

In 1998, EPA's Region 2 (New York) selected the Ironbound section of Newark, New

Jersey to be designated as a "Child Health Champion" community. This is a national program empowering local citizens and communities to take steps to protect children from environmental health threats. The Ironbound Community Corporation, a local non-profit organization, has been leading this effort and formed a workgroup to focus on the issue of childhood asthma triggers. The Region and the Corporation have developed a final asthma "action plan" and are working to implement it in the near future. The Ironbound community is highly aware of the condition of its environment. Hazardous waste, Brownfield sites and incinerators exist in the area, and 50 percent of the community's local park space has been closed due to contamination.

The Black Pearls Program

In fiscal year 2000, EPA's Region 2 (New York) will provide \$20,000 to the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health for its Black Pearls program. It is designed to educate black women about risk factors and symptoms associated with significant health issues that are preventable or curable if detected, diagnosed, and treated early. By conducting outreach and training for women through 37 beauty parlors in Brooklyn, New York, the Black Pearls project will reach hundreds of traditionally under-served individuals and provide them with important health information. Women will learn about the health effects of tobacco smoke on their children and about the links between exposure and asthma. Clients will be given information about ways to cut tobacco smoke exposure, as well as to reduce or eliminate other asthma triggers at home.

CHILDREN AT RISK: Asthma\Lead

Campaign Against Smog and Soot

EPA's air quality standards were completed in July 1997. The first update in 20 years for ozone (smog) and the first in ten years for particulate matter (soot), the new standards are a major step forward in public health protection for 125 million Americans, including 35 million children, from the health hazards of air pollution. Each year, these new, stronger standards will prevent approximately 15,000 premature deaths; 350,000 cases of aggravated asthma; and one million cases of significantly decreased lung function in children.

Combating Lead Poisoning

Lead exposure among young children has been slashed dramatically over the last two decades because of the phase-out of lead from gasoline, food and beverage cans, and new house paint, and because of reductions of lead in industrial emissions, drinking water, consumer goods, hazardous waste sites, and other sources. As a result of these past and ongoing efforts, children's blood lead levels have declined over 80% since the mid-1970s. In 1978 there were about 14.8 million poisoned children in the United States. By the early 1990s, that number had declined down to 890,000 children.

Goal:

By 2010, the long-term vision of this strategy is to eliminate childhood lead poisoning in the United States in children through:

Tighter compliance with existing policies concerning blood lead screening; and closer coordination across federal, state and local agencies responsible for outreach, education,

technical assistance, and data collection related to lead screening and lead control.

Community Pediatric Units Specializing in Environmental Medicine

In 1997, EPA and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry jointly established pediatric health units in communities exposed to environmental pollutants. These units focus on education, training and expert consultation, as well as clinical specialty referrals for children. Health impacts on young women and girls in these areas should soon decline.

National Ambient Air Quality Standards

Twenty years ago, automotive sources were the major contributor of lead emissions to the atmosphere. As a result of EPA's regulatory efforts to remove lead from gasoline, the contribution from the transportation sector has fallen dramatically. Currently, the lead NAAQS strategy targets airborne emissions from stationary sources of lead and focuses on attainment of the NAAQS. The result is a program that aggressively implements existing requirements by expanding the monitoring network around sources of concern, followed by inspections of any facility where violations are detected by the monitoring network. The progress of this approach is apparent in the Lead Management Report that tracks compliance, implementation activity, and the status of the monitoring networks on a current basis.

Between 1988 and 1997, maximum quarterly average ambient lead concentrations plummeted 67% and lead emissions dropped 44%.

CHILDREN AT RISK: Asthma\Lead

Section 1018 Compliance Assistance Pilot in New York & New Jersey

Real estate regulations enacted under Title IV of the Toxic Substances Control Act require the disclosure of lead-paint and paint hazards prior to leasing or selling residential property. In addition, the regulations afford prospective buyers the right to conduct lead inspections prior to signing a contract. EPA's Region 2 (New York) implemented a pilot study of the realty community, the primary object of these regulations. The study included on-site compliance assistance visits to Realtors in New York and New Jersey to ensure that they are informing sellers and landlords of their responsibilities and are properly disclosing the information to buyers and lessees. This can have a profound effect on residential property transfers, especially for families with small children, due to lead's devastating effects on children under age six and pregnant women. This study is being used to develop similar compliance/enforcement programs in other regions. [Internet: <http://www.epa.gov/region02/health/leadpoisoning.htm>]

Lead Outreach in Region 2 (New York)

In fiscal year 2000, EPA's Region 2 plans to implement a new Lead project designed to reach children and pregnant women. It will target a sampling of day-care centers, Women Infant and Children (WIC) programs and local health departments throughout the Region (New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands). Presentations will include a talk, a video presentation, and the dissemination of a range of materials.

The Region will target areas with the highest incidence of lead poisoning and elevated blood lead, as well as Environmental Justice communities and minority populations. Educational materials will be available in English and Spanish.

Little Moccasins Program

EPA's Little Moccasins Program, currently under development, will provide information about basic preventive steps to protect children from lead poisoning in American Indian tribal day-care settings. The program teaches lead-safe techniques to members of the community through crafts, songs, and a variety of other activities for children. [Internet: <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/lead/index>]



EPA Action outside of the United States

Pollutants do not stop at geographic and political boundaries, and their propensity to migrate threatens human health and the environment, demanding coordinated international action.

"Our countries are quite different — different in size, culture, language, and pace of growth. But we share a common desire: to have a healthy environment and healthy people, as well as a healthy economy." —Carol Browner

Air Pollution in the Czech Republic

EPA and the Czech Republic joined in a research effort to investigate the impact of air pollution on people in the heavily polluted "Black Triangle" area. Health studies focused on the residents of the town of Teplichay in the northwest section of the country, comparing them to residents of the relatively cleaner district of Prahatichay.

Human exposure and biomarker studies conducted by scientists in EPA's Office of Research and Development and their Czech partners found a significantly higher prevalence of adverse respiratory symptoms and decreased lung function among schoolchildren in Teplichay than in Prahatichay. A pregnancy outcome study found an excess of low birth weights and premature births in Teplichay. These adverse outcomes were more common in infants conceived in the winter months by mothers who smoked.

Although the initial U.S. Agency for international Development-funded collaboration between EPA and Czech scientists was completed in 1997, cooperation and data exchange are continuing because of data gathered on the impact of air pollution on human health, especially women and children.

Improving Water Quality in Central America

According to the United States Agency for International Development, the average woman in El Salvador spends a couple of hours a day walking to or from water sources for household use. Unfortunately, ferrying the water in unprotected or already contaminated containers can compromise the quality of water. Under a new initiative begun in fiscal year 1999, EPA is working with El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras to improve the microbiological quality of drinking water. That will help overcome the water challenges affecting citizens of these countries, particularly women and children.

International Lead Risk Reduction

Although not designed to focus solely on women and girls, EPA's Office of International Activity's worldwide lead risk reduction program effectively targets women in the developing world. Studies show that women may be more vulnerable because lead they absorbed during childhood is released back into their blood streams during pregnancy, harming the developing fetus. Moreover, many significant lead exposures are from sources used primarily by women such as the solder present in food cans, ceramic glazes, and cosmetic jars.

EPA Action outside of the United States

EPA is involved in multiple activities to reduce lead exposure. The Office of International Activities sponsored a two-day policy planning workshop in Bangkok, Thailand, on achieving lead poisoning prevention and outlining a regional approach for such activities in Asia. In Bangalore, India, EPA sponsored and participated in an international conference on the prevention and treatment of lead poisoning and sponsored a training course related to secondary smelting of lead acid batteries in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Working through a grant to the Pan American Health Organization, EPA supported a non-gasoline lead inventory project to identify and prioritize sources of lead exposure in Brazil.

Pacific Islands Conference with Women Leaders of Island Nations

As part of the 1998 and 1999 Pacific Islands Conferences, EPA's Region 9 (California) Deputy Regional Administrator and Regional Administrator met with women leaders of the island nations of Palau, Northern Marianas Islands, Guam, Marshall Islands, Micronesia and American Samoa. These women leaders are policy-makers, legislators, and community members of their nations. The purpose of the discussions was to exchange information on regional environmental issues, learn from each other's experiences and challenges as growing island nations, and ultimately, secure a quality future for the generations to come.

Global Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Negotiations

In 1995 the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Program adopted a mandate to develop an international mechanism for the reduction and elimination of 12 persistent organic pollutants. The persistent quality of these

chemicals allows them to travel long distances from their points of release. Persistent organic pollutants are a concern to women and children and in the global environment, because research suggests that they affect reproduction in women and the development of fetuses and infants.

Countries around the world are participating in negotiations to reduce the threat from persistent organic pollutants to human health and the environment. The International Negotiating Committee, of which EPA's Office of International Activities, Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances, and Office of Air and Radiation are active members, expects to conclude its negotiations in the year 2000 and begin its implementation of reducing or eliminating the 12 persistent organic pollutants to protect future generations. The negotiations also will develop criteria for adding new substances to the treaty.

The Great Lakes Binational Toxics Strategy

The United States and Canada agreed under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1978 (and amended by a protocol in 1987) to better protect human health and the environment against persistent toxic substances. In 1997, Canada and the U.S. developed the Great Lakes Binational Strategy which calls for the virtual elimination of persistent toxic substances in the Great Lakes.

Girls, women of childbearing age, and pregnant women who eat contaminated fish from the Great Lakes are considered the most sensitive population to persistent toxic substances because of the potential harm to reproductive systems and fetuses.

EPA Action outside of the United States

EPA's programs and regional offices continue to implement programs, initiatives, and research to prevent pollution and clean up persistent toxic substances. These activities build on state efforts, such as fish advisories, to reduce potential human exposure to persistent toxic substances.

Partnership with Camden, New Jersey: Reducing Environmental Risk

In 1998, EPA's Region 2 (New York) and Region 3 (Pennsylvania), in partnership with other federal agencies, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Rutgers University began implementation of a broad-based initiative in Camden, New Jersey. An old, industrial city near Philadelphia, Camden experienced severe economic decline and is now one of the poorest cities in the United States.

This initiative will improve the quality of life for Camden residents by reducing environmental contamination; promoting sustainable economic development; and reducing environmental health risks to children, particularly those from lead and asthma. A key component of this project is outreach to persuade mothers to get lead tests for their children. Through this partnership resources are being leveraged and technical assistance is being provided to Camden to assist in the environmental, economic, and educational revitalization of the city.



Women in the Workplace

The U.S. EPA created the Superfund Jobs Training Program because many of the Nation's most contaminated sites are in severely disadvantaged communities. The initiative was also established to address the public's requests to participate in the environmental cleanup and restoration of Superfund sites in their communities.

Access to this training has empowered the six female participants to move from unemployment or low-wage jobs into more promising career fields. These women have gained the technical skills necessary to achieve greater financial independence. Upon completion of the training, the class valedictorian, one of the female participants immediately received employment with the contractor working on the remediation of that Superfund site. On a larger scale, the training program has helped increase the representation of women in the environmental field.

"As women we must never give up our hopes and dreams for a better, brighter future — for ourselves and for our children and for all the generations to come. We deserve no less."

—Carol Browner

Federal Women's Program

EPA's National Administrative Council for Excellence (NACE - formerly the National Secretarial and Administrative Advisory Council) and the National Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) are working with the Agency's Federal Women's Program (FWP) to remove barriers to recruitment, development and advancement of their constituencies. The overriding goal is to improve the employment status of women in the Agency and to develop strategies for promoting women's professional and personal growth.

Women-Owned Firms

The EPA has developed two Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) designed to promote small businesses owned by women.

1. An MOU between EPA and the Small Business Administration, the participation of women-owned businesses in prime and subcontracting opportunities at EPA will be increased.

From 1996 to 1998, approximately \$433 million in awards has been given to women's business enterprises.

2. An MOU between EPA and the Business Women's Network, EPA's outreach efforts to small businesses owned and operated by women will be enhanced, and more information regarding program contract opportunities relevant to the membership will be provided.

Senior Executive Service Framework

EPA provides an outstanding example of women in leadership positions. The Administrator and a significant number of executives in the Agency, and scientific and technical staff, are women. EPA recently established a Senior Executive Service Accountability Framework to make senior leadership accountable for maintaining a workplace free from discrimination. It is expected to raise the number of minorities and women in leadership positions within EPA.

Women in the Workplace

Science Advisory Board

EPA's Science Advisory Board has committed itself to increasing the percentage of qualified female PhDs in its membership. As a result, the percentage of women who are members of the Science Advisory Board has increased from 20 percent in 1994 to 38 percent in 1999.

Regional Mentoring Program

Since 1995, many regional offices within EPA have established mentoring programs for employees. Women constitute a significant number of those participating. The relationship between the mentor and mentoree promotes growth of leadership capabilities and skills and promotes contacts within and outside of EPA.

Assessment on Quality of Life Issues

EPA will conduct an assessment on quality of life and barriers issues for all its employees. This assessment will specifically focus on women as well as other minority employees; it is part of the historical work and mission of the Agency's Office of Civil Rights.

Rutgers University's Douglass College Extern Program

Douglass College of Rutgers University in New Jersey is the nation's largest women's college and is dedicated to the educational development, professional advancement, and personal achievement of women in contemporary society. Since 1994, EPA's Region 2 (New York) has participated in the annual Douglass College Extern Program, providing the students with a short period of work experience and the opportunity to observe and discuss employment opportunities. EPA Region 2 has provided

extern opportunities for over 40 students and has hired one extern as an environmental specialist.

Participation in "Take Our Daughters to Work Day"

"Take Our Daughters to Work Day" was launched by the Ms. Foundation for Women in 1993 in response to disturbing research findings on the development of adolescent girls. Each April, EPA sponsors activities in support of Hundreds of young girls between the ages of nine and 15 come to work with adult mentors, parents, grandparents, cousins, aunts, and friends to learn first-hand the vast range of exciting life options open to them. Young girls receive a better understanding of the Agency's work and are inspired to share EPA's commitment to public service and the environment that sustains all life on this planet. We take girls seriously and listen to their ideas; they begin to believe in themselves, their abilities, and their futures.

The Brownfields Job Training and Development Demonstration Pilots

EPA works to ensure that disadvantaged residents do not bear a disproportionate burden of the effects of environmental contamination. Revitalization of communities that are distressed due to uncertain liabilities related to environmental contamination ("brownfields") typically results in improved job opportunities. To help residents take advantage of their new jobs, EPA initiated the Brownfields Job Training and Development Demonstration Pilots. They focus on residents living in brownfields communities, many of whom are unemployed women supported by welfare.

Women in the Workplace

The training and development pilots will receive up to \$200,000 over two years. To date, EPA has funded 21 pilot projects and plans to award 10 additional ones in fiscal year 2000. The funds are used to bring together community groups, job training organizations, educators, lenders, developers, and other affected parties to address the issue of providing training for residents in brownfields communities.

In addition, EPA has funded a job training initiative to train residents so that they may be hired by companies doing actual cleanup work, thus some funding spent on a clean up will have a direct, beneficial impact on residents, particularly because so many cleanups occur in low income areas. While not targeted specifically to women, a large number of women are participating in this training program and gaining valuable skills they can apply in the workplace.

Superfund Jobs Training Program

This initiative was also designed to address the public's many requests to participate in the cleanup and restoration of Superfund sites in their neighborhoods.

The first Superfund Jobs Training Institute at a National Priorities List Superfund site was held for residents at a site in Illinois. EPA and the National Institute of Health Sciences cosponsored the training from April 1997-March 1998. Recruitment efforts targeted minorities and those most affected by site contamination. Twenty-five participants received specialized, hands-on training in environmental remediation.

This not only prepared the students to get jobs in the environmental field, it also provided them with enhanced life skills, such as interviewing techniques, self discipline and critical thinking. Almost all of the participants have found employment in the environmental field. Access to this training has empowered the six female participants to move from unemployment or low-wage jobs into more promising career fields. These women have gained the technical skills necessary to obtain greater financial independence. Upon completion of the training, the class valedictorian — one of the female participants — immediately received employment with the contractors working on the remediation of that Superfund site. On a larger scale, the training program has helped to increase the representation of women in the environmental field.

“We must stand firm for tough environmental and public health standads so that our children, and their children, and all the generations to come won’t worry as we do about the safety of our air, water, and land. Our worries today should be just memories tomorrow. Our children deserve no less. And we deserve no less.”

-Carol Browner



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