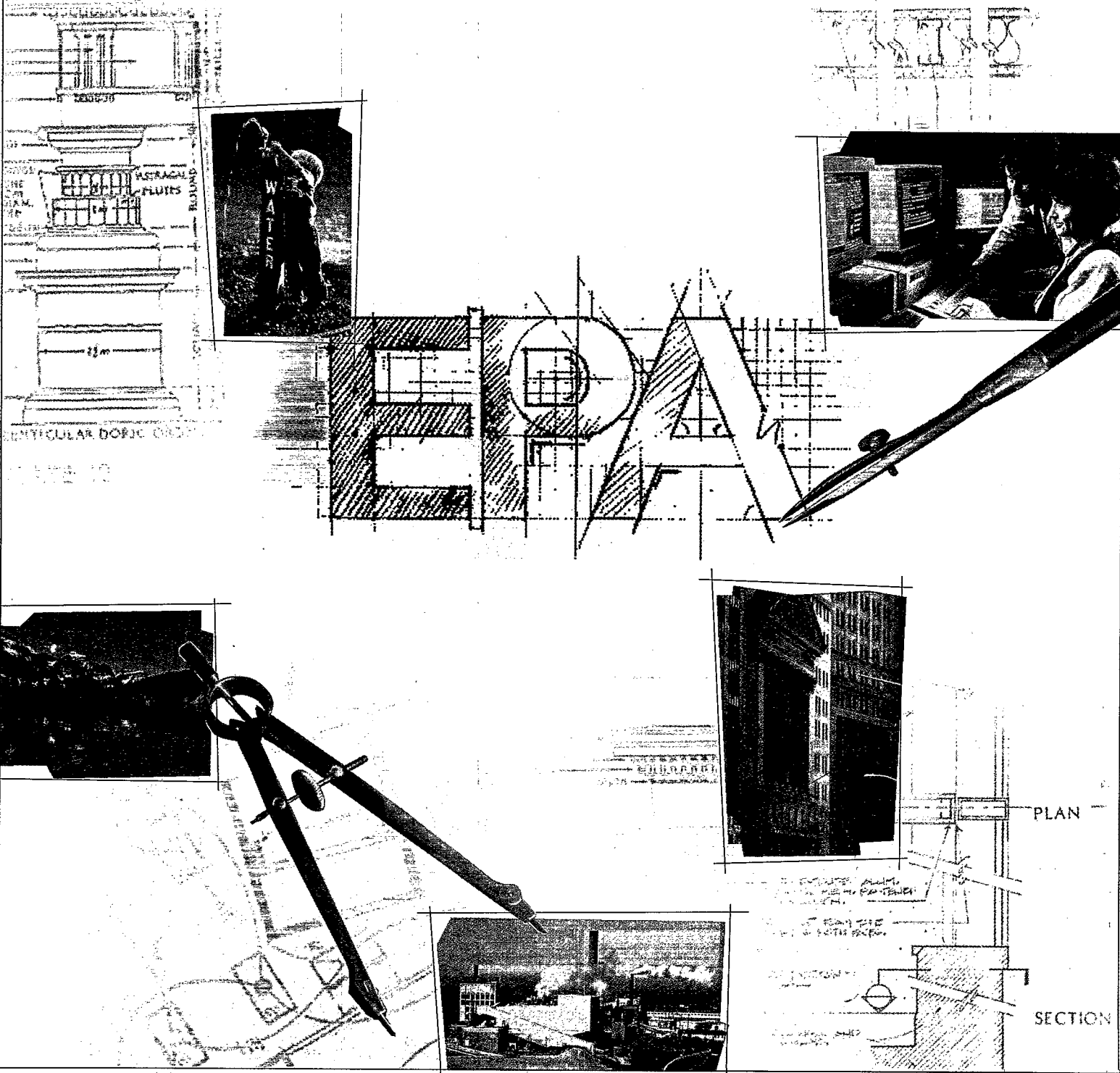




# The Changing Nature of Environmental and Public Health Protection

## Executive Summary





## SECTION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**F**or 3 years, EPA Administrator Carol Browner has led EPA in pursuing an unprecedented agenda for consistently delivering cleaner, cheaper, smarter results from environmental and public health protection programs. This agenda was developed in response to Vice-President Gore's challenge to all federal agencies to reinvent government so that it works better and costs less for the American people. It involves streamlining and innovating within proven programs and testing more integrative, holistic approaches with the potential to better address unresolved problems that threaten our people and the natural environment.

EPA's reinvention agenda comes at a time when a variety of forces are creating pressure for changes to the nation's environmental regulatory system. This year's report explains some of the most significant changes that are taking place in environmental protection as the twenty-first century draws near, and what these changes mean for the way EPA does business. The results — the practical effects for businesses, communities, and individuals — are highlighted below.

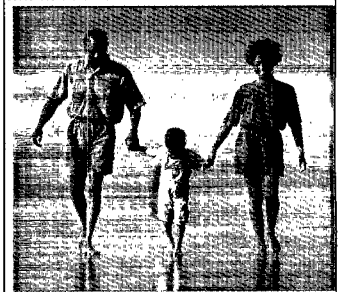
### GREATER PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Because Americans have a right-to-know about environmental risks in their communities and because an informed, knowledgeable public can play a meaningful role in solving tough problems, EPA has expanded public access to environmental information.

**Expanded Reporting on Toxic Releases** — Another 6,400 facilities, representing seven additional industry sectors, are reporting information on toxics released into their communities through an expansion of the nation's Toxic Release Inventory.

### Informing Citizens About the Safety of Drinking Water and Swimming Conditions

Community water suppliers soon will be required to report to their customers on whether their drinking water meets federal public health standards while new assistance for the States aims to strengthen water monitoring and public advisory programs for beaches and coastal areas.



**Established "Plain English" Labeling Requirements** — New labeling requirements for the pesticides industry provide consumers with clearer information for selecting and properly using pesticides and other common household products in and around their homes.

### MORE FLEXIBILITY TO OBTAIN BETTER RESULTS

In an effort to obtain better results, EPA is providing businesses and communities with more flexibility in how they fulfill their public health and



environmental protection responsibilities. By conditioning this offer on a record of proven performance and public accountability, EPA provides assurance that strong protection will be maintained *and* creates an incentive for facilities to improve performance.

**Testing New Ideas** — Through Project XL, EPA is working with 27 companies to develop or test innovative management strategies that offer

promise for getting better environmental results than what would be achieved under current law.

**Promoting Trading** — New policies and programs allow and promote market-based trading as a more cost-effective, environmentally protective option for helping businesses and communities address a variety of problems, such as smog, habitat loss and water pollution.

**Offering Options in Rulemaking** — The nation's first ever integrated (or multimedia) environmental rule, just issued for the pulp and paper industry, allows companies to delay compliance with more stringent water pollution control requirements if they commit to installing more advanced technologies.

## STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS

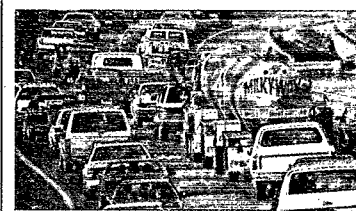
Because many of today's problems cannot be addressed through regulatory action alone, EPA is reaching out to diverse stakeholders to bring all available expertise and resources to bear on the job of protecting public health and the environment.

**Established New Working Relationship with State Agencies** — EPA worked with states, its most critical partners, to create a new framework for jointly collaborating on environmental priority-setting and decision-making to ensure that public health and the environment are best protected. Participation in the National Environmental Performance Partnership System rose from 6 pilot states in 1996 to a majority of 30 states participating last year.

**Implementing Sector-Based Approaches** — Through the Common Sense Initiative, EPA reached an agreement with the metal finishing industry

whereby firms obtain regulatory relief and other benefits in exchange for going beyond compliance — this action, potentially affecting 11,000 metal finishing shops nationwide, could voluntarily cut toxic emissions from the industry by up to 75 percent compared to 1992.

**Encouraging Voluntary Action** — A new voluntary agreement with the car industry means that, later this year, all vehicles sold in the Northeast and District of Columbia will be designed to emit 70 percent less pollution. By 2001, these vehicles will be available throughout the country, providing Americans with safer, cleaner air.



**Supporting Community Brownfields Cleanup and Restoration** — Cleanup of Brownfields — abandoned, contaminated urban property — has accelerated with over \$24 million in seed grants and technical assistance awarded to 121 communities. A new tax incentive and an additional \$300 million investment announced last year will help revitalize some 5,000 more communities in the future.

## MORE COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE

With 1997 bringing the largest fines ever collected in the history of the Agency, EPA's record of enforcing against irresponsible polluters is stronger than ever before. At the same time, EPA is making it easier to comply with environmental regulations through targeted compliance assistance programs. EPA recognizes that most businesses and communities want to operate in an environmentally responsible manner — in some cases, they just need extra help or incentive to succeed.

**Compliance Assistance Centers** — Compliance assistance centers are being established or expanded to provide small communities and businesses in eight sectors with quick, easy access to information on how to control and prevent pollution.

**Providing Incentives for Finding and Fixing Problems** — To promote environmental compli-



ance, EPA is reducing penalties for companies (not engaged in criminal activity) that show good faith towards finding, publicly disclosing, and correcting environmental problems. To date, 247 companies — ranging in size from Fortune 500 companies to small businesses — have voluntarily disclosed violations at more than 760 facilities.

**Support for Local Environmental Enforcement** — To help communities guard against environmental violations, EPA is working with local law enforcement agencies to support joint investigations and to increase understanding of environmental crimes.

## LESS PAPERWORK AND RED TAPE

To ensure that environmental managers in the public and private sectors can focus on the greatest risks, EPA is simplifying and reducing paperwork and regulatory requirements that detract from public health and environmental protection.

**Eliminated Unnecessary Requirements** — EPA has eliminated more than 1,300 pages of environmental requirements representing nearly 20 million hours of regulatory burden — that's the equivalent of returning more than a half million work weeks, with an estimated value of \$600 million, back to business-

es and communities for more productive use.

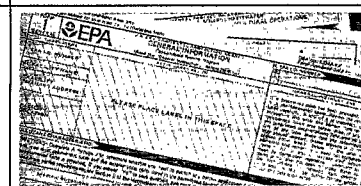
## Avoided Issuing Millions of New Permits

— A common sense, risk-based approach to storm water management prevented millions of small businesses and communities from becoming subject to new permitting requirements.

## Speeding the Cleanup of Toxic Waste

— Through aggressive administrative action, the Superfund Program has cleaned up twice as many contaminated sites in the past five years than in the first 12 years of the program. Cleanups are now 20 percent faster and less costly.

**Increasing Efficiency Through Electronic Reporting** — To modernize the current paper-based reporting system, EPA is working with the states to provide all regulated facilities with a more efficient electronic option for reporting regulatory information within five years.



For more information, contact the Office of Reinvention at 202 260-1849, send an e-mail to [reinvention@epa.gov](mailto:reinvention@epa.gov), or look on our web site at [www.epa.gov/reinvent](http://www.epa.gov/reinvent). For copies of the full report, *The Changing Nature of Environmental and Public Health Protection*, call the National Center for Environmental Publications and Information at 800 490-9198 and ask for publication number EPA100-R-98-003. Our web site also provides access to the report electronically.



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