

United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

EPA 200-2-94-001
July 1994

Office Of The Administrator

(1101)



The New Generation Of Environmental Protection

A Summary Of EPA's Five-Year Strategic Plan



Message From The Administrator

I am proud to present EPA's five-year strategic plan, *The New Generation of Environmental Protection*. This plan represents the combined insight, energy, and forward thinking of EPA's senior leadership, employees, and its stakeholders as they define the Agency's role and direction into the next century. This plan lays out the guiding principles that EPA will emphasize as it works to achieve the goal of a sustainable environment and economy: ecosystem protection; environmental justice; pollution prevention; strong science and data; partnerships; reinventing EPA management; and environmental accountability. I believe that we can achieve the goals we have set for ourselves by working with our partners and following these guiding principles. If we achieve what is detailed in this plan, we surely will pass on to our children a better world than we inherited.

The New Generation of Environmental Protection is the first step in a planning process that will continue to involve EPA's partners in environmental protection. A critical part of this process will be the availability of sound environmental programmatic and fiscal information that will guide our future management and resource decisions. EPA will revisit its strategic plan and update it, where appropriate, to ensure that the Agency is focusing its efforts and resources most productively.

This is an exciting time for EPA as it charts new directions in environmental protection. This plan provides us with a shared vision of our future and points us towards greater opportunities to harmonize environmental protection and economic growth. In the spirit of partnership embodied in this plan, I encourage your comments, participation, and continued assessment of the plan and its implementation.



Carol M. Browner

This is a summary of EPA's Strategic Plan, *The New Generation of Environmental Protection*. For information on how to order the full plan, please see the last page of this pamphlet.

Introduction

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is at a crossroads in its history. The world is rapidly changing, and the Agency's understanding of the environment is rapidly increasing. The methods EPA has used to protect the environment over the past two decades will not, by themselves, be sufficient in the future.

The changes at EPA will be many—changes in thinking, changes in priorities, changes in programs, and changes in the makeup and training of personnel. This long-term strategic plan is a blueprint for change at EPA. *The New Generation of Environmental Protection* will guide the Agency's planning, resource allocation, and decisionmaking processes over the next five years (1995—1999). The plan sets direction for the changes that will shape EPA's environmental agenda into the next century.

EPA will be guided by a set of seven principles that apply to all programs and activities. These principles are the core of EPA's strategic plan.

Guiding Principles

Ecosystem Protection

Environmental Justice

Pollution Prevention

Strong Science and Data

Partnerships

Reinventing EPA Management

Environmental Accountability

EPA's Challenge

EPA was established in 1970 in response to growing concerns about unhealthy air, polluted rivers, unsafe drinking water, endangered species, and waste disposal. Congress gave EPA responsibility for implementing an ambitious set of federal environmental laws. The laws have grown in number and broadened in scope over time, and the Agency's administrative and programmatic structure has evolved to mirror these legislative responsibilities.

Over the past two decades, the implementation of federal laws has contributed to improvements in environmental quality in this country. In virtually every American city, the air is cleaner than it was 25 years ago. Water quality in thousands of miles of rivers and streams is much improved. Hun-

dreds of hazardous waste sites are being cleaned up, and the use of several especially hazardous chemicals has been restricted or banned entirely. The United States is proud of this record of environmental accomplishment, and EPA is proud of the role it has played.

Still, as the end of the 20th century draws near, it is clear that the environmental policies and programs that served so well in the past will not be as effective in the future. Over the past quarter century, scientific understanding of the environment has improved. Because of technological advances, new options are available for solving old problems. Some new problems, like the cumulative effects of multiple pollutant exposures on people, are just beginning to be understood—they are not so obvious as past problems, nor are the solutions as apparent.

EPA's past experience with environmental policy has given the Agency a better sense of what works to protect the environment, and what does not work. For example, the *command-and-control* regulations that played such an important role during the Agency's first 20 years have proven to be blunt instruments—overcontrolling in some instances, undercontrolling in others. As a consequence, EPA is beginning to look at new, non-regulatory mechanisms for protecting the environment, mechanisms that build on regulatory requirements but go beyond them by encouraging voluntary actions as well.

EPA's emphasis on integrated, cross-media programs that target geographical areas is growing. In the past, the Agency's division into air, water, and land programs led EPA to overlook both the cross-media effects of some pollution problems and the potential for new kinds of cross-media programs. The Agency now is beginning to tailor its programs to meet the environmental needs of specific places. These "customized" programs are combining traditional enforcement of environmental law with a new commitment to voluntary pollution prevention.

In short, as EPA prepares for a future that will bring new, unanticipated problems and the need for more creative solutions, it is committing itself to new ways of protecting the environment. While renewing its dedication to traditional environmental goals, the Agency recognizes that the achievement of those goals demands innovation and flexibility.



The Need For Strategic Planning

This plan is meant to give EPA's employees, Congress, and the American people a sense of where the Agency is headed. This plan also is intended to bring cohesion and common direction to the diverse, multi-faceted programs that EPA administers, so that the effectiveness of the Agency as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Some programs are required by law; some are initiated by EPA in response to the Agency's sense of environmental needs and opportunities. Taken together, all of the programs are intended to protect the environment on which human health, vital natural ecosystems, and a robust economy depend.

EPA's Vision

EPA envisions a world in which:

- All individuals and institutions value the environment and choose to act in a manner that ensures achievement of sustainable environmental and economic goals.
- The natural balance of all living things is no longer threatened, and all individuals—rich and poor, young and old—share in the benefits of a healthy environment.

EPA will strive to become an Agency recognized for:

- Leadership in environmental protection and environmental science—domestically and worldwide.
- Strong and effective working relationships with its partners in environmental protection.
- Integrity in the stewardship of its resources and the management of its programs.

EPA's Mission

The people who work at the Environmental Protection Agency are dedicated to improving and preserving the environment in this country and around the globe. Highly skilled and culturally diverse, we work with our partners to protect human health, ecosystems, and the beauty of our environment using the best available science. We value and promote innovative and effective solutions to environmental problems. We strive to protect and sustain the productivity of the natural resources on which all life and human activity depend.

EPA's Guiding Principles

EPA will be guided by a set of seven principles that apply to all programs and activities. These principles are the core of EPA's strategic plan.

Ecosystem Protection

The United States and other parts of the world are experiencing a serious loss of essential natural resources. If this trend continues, this loss will result in a long-term threat to the nation's economic prosperity, security, and the sustainability of remaining ecological systems. Because EPA has concentrated on issuing permits, establishing pollutant limits, and setting national standards, as required by law, the Agency has not paid enough attention to the overall environmental health of specific ecosystems. In short, EPA has been *program-driven* rather than *place-driven*.

EPA must collaborate with other federal, tribal, state and local agencies, as well as private partners, to achieve the ultimate goal of healthy, sustainable ecosystems. The Agency will act to solve integrated environmental problems through a place-driven framework of ecosystem protection and in close partnership with others. This approach will match environmental management with human needs, consider long-term ecosystem health, and highlight the positive correlation between economic prosperity and environmental well-being.

Objectives

Within five years, the Agency will upgrade its ability to protect, maintain, and restore the ecological integrity of the nation's lands and waters, including human health, urban areas, and plant and animal species, by adopting a place-driven focus.

Strategies

The work of the Agency will be driven by the environmental needs of communities and ecosystems. For any given "place," EPA will work with others to establish a process for determining long-term ecological, economic, and social needs and reorient its work to meet those needs. The ecosystem approach requires coordinated, integrated action by federal, state, tribal, and local agencies, between government and private enterprises, and most importantly, between government and the people for whom services are being provided. EPA will enlist the support of a spectrum of participants in priority-setting and decisionmaking processes. In addition, EPA must work to increase the availability and facilitate the flow of this information in order to empower individuals and communities.

To move toward an encompassing, place-driven approach, EPA, working with appropriate partners, must:

- Identify stressed or threatened ecosystems;
- Define environmental goals and indicators;
- Develop and implement a joint action plan based on sound science;
- Measure progress and adapt management to new information over time; and
- Identify tools and support that can be provided at a national level.



Environmental Justice

The remedies EPA adopted to upgrade environmental quality during the past two decades did not always benefit all communities or all populations within a community equally. Many minority, low-income, and Native American communities have raised concerns that they suffer a disproportionate burden of health consequences due to the siting of industrial plants and waste dumps, and from exposures to pesticides or other toxic chemicals at home and on the job and that environmental programs do not adequately address these disproportionate exposures.

EPA is committed to address these concerns and is assuming a leadership role in environmental justice initiatives to enhance environmental quality for all residents of the United States. Incorporating environmental justice into "everyday" Agency activities and decisions will be a major undertaking. Fundamental reform will be needed in Agency operations

Objectives

The Agency looks ahead to the time when:

- No segment of the population, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, as a result of the EPA's policies, programs, and activities bears disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, and all people live in clean and sustainable communities.
- Stakeholders are educated and empowered to ensure improved public participation in and access to information on environmental and human health issues.

Strategies

To achieve its environmental justice objectives, the Agency intends to:

- Make sure environmental justice is part of all the Agency's programs, policies, and activities;
- Identify methodologies, research, and data needed to identify and evaluate populations at disproportionately high environmental or human health risks, and ensure that these needs are considered in developing the overall federal research program;
- Use currently available data systems to identify and prioritize how the Agency can most effectively support the needs of affected communities and populations;
- Target compliance monitoring, inspections, and enforcement in cooperation with stakeholders; and

- Promote outreach, communication, and partnerships with stakeholders, and ensure sufficient access for stakeholders to training, information, and education.



Pollution Prevention

The Agency, and the nation as a whole, focus most of their efforts on solving environmental problems long after they have been created—when solutions are more likely to be costly and less likely to be effective. Yet pollution prevention—anticipating problems and stopping them before they occur—is far more cost-effective and protective of the environment.

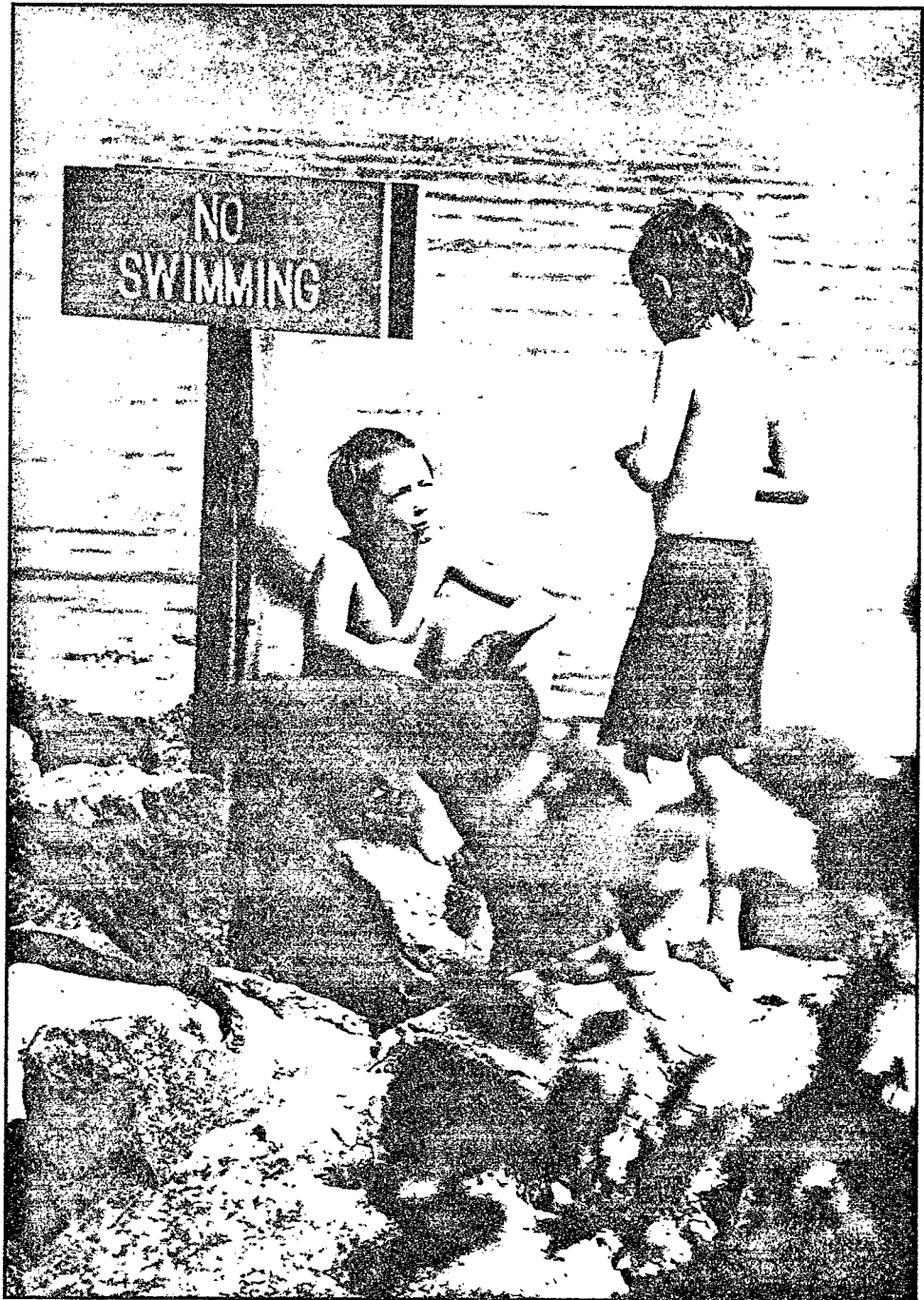
Objectives

During the next five years, EPA will lead the nation in reorienting efforts to reduce and eliminate pollution at the source. Pollution prevention will be the first strategy considered for all programs at EPA.

Strategies

The Agency will work to prevent pollution by:

- Incorporating multimedia prevention principles into the Agency's mainstream environmental programs;
- Strengthening partnerships with state, tribal, and local governments;
- Developing new cooperative efforts with the private sector;
- Promoting prevention with other federal agencies;
- Providing information to the public;
- Encouraging technological innovation and diffusion; and
- Working to change existing environmental legislation, where necessary.



Strong Science and Data

Sound science and data provide the foundation for EPA's environmental protection programs. Science helps the Agency understand the processes and practices that cause pollution, evaluate the risks that pollution poses to humans and ecosystems, and develop technologies and policies to prevent or mitigate risks. Without a strong knowledge base, the Agency could not understand the causes and effects of pollution or solve environmental problems. Without the ability to access and integrate data and information from a variety of sources, advances in scientific understanding would be limited.

Through the turn of the century, strong science and data will continue to be critical to the environmental community. What are the best ways to protect, and restore, the necessary functions of whole ecosystems? What harmful pollutants are people exposed to, and how can these exposures be reduced? What technologies and other tools can be used to prevent pollution before it happens? How can people be motivated to adopt environmentally sound practices? These and other questions must be answered in order to develop and implement effective environmental policies.

Objectives

EPA will ensure that the nation's environmental policies are based on the best science and information available.

The Agency will expand its scientific capability to study environmental problems, evaluate trends in environmental quality, and identify and analyze emerging environmental issues—50% of EPA's research resources will be targeted toward long-term research efforts. EPA will improve the environmental information infrastructure to ensure that people both inside and outside EPA have access to timely, meaningful information. EPA will lead in the development of environmental technologies, methods, and innovative policy tools to enhance environmental quality.

Strategies

EPA will strengthen science and data by:

- Promoting scientific excellence—in the physical, biological, engineering, and social sciences—to assure sound EPA decisions;
- Ensuring that environmental data are accessible and useful to policymakers, scientists, and the public;
- Measuring environmental progress, and using the results to improve environmental protection;
- Guiding creation of a national and international environmental research agenda;

- Establishing a new focus for EPA's research program—emphasizing research that reduces uncertainties associated with risk assessment and improves the tools for managing environmental problems;
- Expanding partnerships with the scientific community, other agencies, and the public, including an expanded, competitive external grants program; and
- Creating opportunities for scientific and technical achievement at EPA.



Partnerships

Since the inception of EPA over 20 years ago, the nature of environmental protection has become increasingly complex. It has become clear that all stakeholders must work together to better the nation's environmental quality. EPA's partners in this task include Congress, other federal agencies, state governments, tribal governments, local governments, international partners, the private sector, and the general public.

One of EPA's principal tasks over the next five years will be to help its partners carry out their responsibilities, working together to define respective roles. EPA will listen and be responsive, and work with its partners to develop and implement more innovative, effective, and efficient approaches to environmental protection and sustainable development. It also will weigh carefully the burdens environmental controls can impose on the economy and society at large.

Objectives

Over the next five years, EPA expects to: focus partnerships on environmental results; ensure that the goals and efforts of the different members of the environmental community are consistent and compatible; and, enhance the capacity of partners, especially tribes and small and medium-sized businesses or governments, so they better define and meet their environmental goals.

Strategies

To achieve its partnerships objectives, the Agency will:

- Implement EPA's *National Performance Review* recommendations to "reinvent" the way EPA does business with its partners, i. e., promote risk-based priority setting, develop alternative management approaches, establish a new spirit of collaboration, simplify environmental rules and regulations, and build an infrastructure for the future.
- Foster independent partnerships between other entities.
- Improve grants policy, process, and flexibility.
- Reduce transactional costs between EPA and its partners.
- Ensure EPA regulatory and policy activities involve partners early on in the process.
- Improve communications and data sharing among all partners, e.g., computer bulletin boards, network data transfer.



Reinventing EPA Management

During few times in the history of the federal government has the climate been as receptive to change in management practices as it is now. EPA has embraced this opportunity to explore the way it does business and to make changes for the better. The Agency realizes that to achieve its goals, it must be totally committed to reinventing its management systems and processes so that there is renewed and continual emphasis on quality, efficiency, and integrity.

Objectives

EPA is striving to become one of the best managed agencies in the federal government. The Agency is reinventing its management culture to ensure the most effective use of its people, programs, and resources in achieving the nation's environmental goals. EPA will carry out its work in a way that best serves the American people and retains the public trust in its stewardship responsibilities. At the same time, the Agency will invest in its people to help them understand their new roles and to equip them with the tools they need to do their jobs well.

EPA seeks to promote and achieve:

- Organizational changes that support customer-oriented, results-driven approaches that allow the Agency to work quicker, more flexibly and more responsively;
- More effective stewardship and resource management to reassure the public of the integrity of all of EPA's programs, activities, and information;
- Empowered employees who have the decisionmaking authority, accountability, knowledge, and ability to achieve quality results;
- Streamlined and realigned services, systems, and processes to better support EPA's environmental mission and meet customer needs;
- Partnerships among EPA staff, unions, external customers, and other stakeholders to ensure open, collegial, and participatory interaction; and
- Increased cultural diversity of EPA's workforce.

Strategies

EPA's senior leadership will set a clear direction for the Agency by establishing policies to bring about this cultural change. In employing this guiding principle as they carry out the goals for their programs and functions, EPA managers will:

- Implement NPR recommendations and streamline their processes to realize management improvements and resource savings, and reinvest these savings within the Agency;
- Make full use of advanced technologies to cut costs, boost productivity, enhance communications, and speed the flow of information;
- Integrate processes for planning, budgeting, financial management, management controls, and program evaluation;
- Identify EPA's primary customers and their needs, define and set customer service standards, and achieve greater customer satisfaction;
- Measure performance to assess whether EPA programs and activities are achieving their intended results, and to comply with the *Government Performance and Results Act of 1993* and the *Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990*; and
- Increase mentoring, rotational, training/retraining, team-participation, and Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) assignment opportunities and other tools to foster and sustain employee learning and growth.



Environmental Accountability

EPA will stress that everyone in society is accountable for protecting and enhancing the environment. The cornerstone of EPA's effort will be a strong compliance and enforcement program. The Agency will promote responsible environmental behavior by: setting out clear compliance requirements for the regulated community and communicating them through comprehensive guidelines and technical assistance; aggressively responding to non-compliance so violators are penalized; and encouraging others in the regulated community to meet their obligations. In addition, the Agency will provide information, education, and environmental data that inform the public, and the regulated community, and promote the kind of responsible behavior that leads to and beyond compliance with the nation's environmental laws.

Objectives

During the next five years, EPA will utilize a combination of sector-based, multimedia, and media-specific approaches to gaining compliance with the nation's environmental statutes. EPA will develop integrated enforcement and compliance strategies for targeting noncomplying sectors of the regulated community, sensitive ecosystems, and sensitive populations, and for fostering risk-based, multimedia, whole-facility approaches that emphasize pollution prevention and innovative compliance techniques. In addition, EPA will reach out to its partners in states, tribes, local governments, and the environmental community to increase their capacity for obtaining and moving beyond compliance.

Compliance assistance approaches will be geared to those in the regulated community with the will to comply but whose efforts are handicapped by a lack of information or sophistication. This assistance, coupled with a strong deterrence-based enforcement program, will establish the type of climate that motivates compliance, encourages innovation, and promotes prevention. By providing the information, education, and environmental data necessary to inform the public and the regulated community of their environmental responsibilities, the Agency will increase everyone's accountability for the protection and enhancement of the environment.

Strategies

The Agency will assure the environment is protected by:

- Promoting Compliance;
- Ensuring Effective Enforcement; and,
- Promoting Environmental Restoration.

Related EPA Initiatives

EPA is pursuing a number of special projects designed to strengthen the management, effectiveness, and efficiency of Agency programs and operations. *The New Generation of Environmental Protection* sets direction and provides a cohesive framework for these interdependent efforts; at the same time, successful implementation of *The New Generation of Environmental Protection* and its future iterations depends heavily on the success of each of these projects and the productive integration of their results.

Together with the strategic plan, these projects will provide better information about the management of the Agency's resources and the results of its programs. The availability of such information will: enable managers and policymakers to make more informed decisions concerning environmental investment; provide EPA and its partners with better information about the effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's efforts; and strengthen the public's trust in EPA's ability to manage its programs and resources effectively.

EPA's key management initiatives include the following legislative mandates, government reform efforts, and internal Agency activities.

- **Implementation of the *Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA)*.** GPRA holds federal agencies accountable for the tax dollars they receive by requiring: strategic plans with long-range goals and objectives for all programs; annual budgets, performance plans, and indicators for each program; and annual program performance reports that review progress toward achieving annual and long-range goals.
- **Implementation of the *Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 (CFO)* and the *Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act of 1982 (FMFIA)*:** While GPRA focuses on the results of programs and the success of agencies in achieving their goals, the CFO Act and FMFIA focus on the financial accountability of federal managers in carrying out and evaluating their programs. Combining accountability with program results helps to address the public's concern that their tax dollars are spent appropriately and wisely.
- **Implementation of the *National Performance Review (NPR)* recommendations.** The NPR recommendations aim "to redesign, to reinvent, to reinvigorate" federal government and make it "both less expensive and more efficient." Toward the same ends, EPA developed a number of additional recommendations through an internal performance review. Collectively, the recommendations cover both administrative and programmatic areas and, in many cases, align well with the guiding principles in this strategic plan.

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- **Integration of information resources planning.** The availability of timely and useful information is integral to everything EPA does. Recognizing that access to information is critical to its work, EPA is strengthening the strategic planning of information resources management activities on an agency-wide basis.
 - **Development of national environmental indicators.** To manage for environmental results, the Agency needs meaningful, credible, and understandable indicators to measure the quality of the environment, nationally and internationally. The Agency is working with other federal agencies to develop a set of indicators that are useful across government for measuring environmental quality.
 - **The National Environmental Goals Project.** EPA is working to produce a set of long-range, national environmental goals. As of April 1994, the Goals Project had developed 13 broad, environmental goal areas. The National Environmental Goals Project, and its relation to *The New Generation of Environmental Protection* is describe more fully below.

EPA's Environmental Goals

One measure of EPA's success is the extent to which legislated requirements are met. But regulations promulgated and permits issued tell only part of the story. Ultimately, EPA's success should be measured by how well human health and ecological vitality are protected and preserved.

With this concern in mind, EPA is developing a detailed set of measurable, national environmental goals. A preliminary list of the broad environmental goal areas is included here to identify the range of environmental concerns critical to EPA and its partners, and to establish the Agency's commitment to develop measurable environmental goals.

After a series of public meetings and discussions with Federal, State, tribal, and local officials, EPA plans to publish the national environmental goals on Earth Day, 1995. Beginning in 1995, future iterations of the Agency's strategic plan will focus specifically on the nation's measurable, environmental goals. Meanwhile, the Agency is developing a goals-based budget for FY 1996 using the current environmental goal areas.

National Environmental Goal Areas
(Preliminary List)

Clean Air

Clean Surface Water

Cleanup of Contaminated Sites

Climate Change

Ecological Protection

Improved Understanding of the Environment

Prevention of Oil Spills and Chemical Accidents

Prevention of Wastes and Harmful Chemical Releases

Safe Drinking Water

Safe Food

Safe Indoor Environments

Stratospheric Ozone Layer Protection

Worker Safety

Additional Information

If you would like to receive additional copies of this summary document or the full version of EPA's strategic plan, The New Generation of Environmental Protection (EPA 200-B-94-002), please contact the EPA Public Information Center (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Mail Code 3404, Washington, D.C. 20460, phone: 202/260-7751). These documents may also be accessed via Internet (GOPHER at Futures. WIC.EPA.GOV) and EPA's All-In-1 Electronic Messaging System.