

EPA InSight **POLICY PAPER**

This supplement to EPA InSight contains up-to-date policy information from the Administrator/Deputy Administrator to all EPA employees.

NEW DIRECTIONS AT EPA

December 1993

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Below are remarks by Administrator Carol Browner at a "town meeting" with EPA employees on November 22, 1993:

Today marks an important milestone for our Agency: We have formally sworn in almost all of our assistant administrators, and our new team is ready to lay out its vision for the Agency.

Today, we are here to celebrate the Agency's accomplishments over the last ten months, to present our new team's vision for the next three years and beyond, and to have an open discussion about where EPA is going.

Let me begin by thanking the team of senior career leaders and all of you who have carried the Agency for many months during this transition. You have done an exceptional job under sometimes difficult circumstances, and I thank you again.

With your help, we have begun to build the base for a new energized agency that is confident of its place as the leading environmental organization in the world.

Let me just review some of the remarkable steps EPA has taken in the last ten months. Some of them have been new initiatives. In other cases, I have been able to assist you in completing work that began before I joined the Agency.

Presidential Initiatives:

- EPA helped to shape the President's Earth Day commitments on biodiversity and climate change.
- We helped to draft the very important executive orders on federal pollution prevention, recycling, and environmental justice.

Agency Initiatives:

- EPA announced the Combustion Initiative for hazardous waste incinerators, the Great Lakes Water Quality Initiative, and the pulp and paper cluster rule--three important actions that had been bottled up in the Agency for years.
- We proposed or finalized a significant number of new air rules.
- EPA took significant steps to make pollution prevention the central ethic of all we do.
- EPA reorganized our enforcement office and took groundbreaking enforcement actions.
- EPA announced an ambitious legislative agenda, including NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) with its environmental side agreement, the Food Safety package, the Drinking Water SRF (State Revolving Fund) and Reform package, the Clean Water Act reforms, and Superfund reform.

Agency Management:

- EPA opened up management to employees at all levels of the Agency through our Enforcement Reorganization, our open budget process, and our very successful NPR (National Performance Review) effort.

- At the same time, we have been working day in and day out to tackle the most daunting regulatory and implementation agenda of any agency anywhere in the federal government And we've done it under difficult working conditions and under difficult financial constraints.

These accomplishments are yours. You are the people that made them all happen. And today, I want to lay out for you my vision for where we go now--and to ask all of you to help me in making it a reality.

My vision for the future is based in large part on what I have heard from all of you, from the NPR process, and from the Agency's career leadership.

When I leave EPA, I hope to have accomplished two things First, with your insight and help, we will have established new directions for protecting our nation's health and environment--a major change in our nation's environmental policies The food our children eat will be safer because of EPA's food safety program...Our air will be improved because of EPA's aggressive implementation of the Clean Air Act...Our nation's waters will be cleaner as a result of EPA's non-point source program and our new watershed approach to clean water Our drinking water will be safe for our children to drink The contaminated sites across our nation will be on their way to productive redevelopment because Superfund will be working faster, fairer, and more efficiently.

But, as important as these policy initiatives are, the second accomplishment I hope to achieve is even more important The greatest legacy I could hope for is leaving each of you with a fundamentally different view of your job I want each of you to view yourselves as environmental leaders.

Like most of you, I came to EPA because I fundamentally believe in what we do here. But today, we stand at a critical crossroads in our quest for a clean environment.

In the last twenty years, an entire infrastructure and body of command-and-control laws was created, virtually from scratch, to protect the environment. Beyond a doubt, these improved our environment. We no longer have lead in our gasoline. Lake Erie and many rivers and streams are cleaner than they were before. We have begun cleaning up the nation's toxic sites.

But, our strategies for environmental protection are still not where they should be.

Perhaps most disturbing, environmental policy has become remarkably polarized and adversarial. At any given time,



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several hundred lawsuits are pending against EPA.

Our laws have, in some cases, simply moved contaminants from one medium to another—from air to land, from land to water.

States, localities, and businesses are concerned about regulatory burdens and the costs of environmental protection.

We have learned that different populations are vulnerable in different ways to different environmental contaminants, yet we have few systems in place to accommodate this understanding.

You and I have the opportunity in the next three years to address these problems and make EPA the leader of a new generation of environmental protection—to make fundamental changes that could well be felt for the next three generations.

Despite the problems facing us, support for environmental protection in the general public and in the federal government has never been stronger. Many of the laws that govern environmental protection are up for reauthorization. EPA has an opportunity and a responsibility to strengthen and refine these laws and change the way we do business.

We won't have an opportunity like this again for a long time. I say, let's seize the day. Let's lead the new generation of environmental protection. And, let's do it by adhering to two important principles:

One—that EPA's overarching responsibility is the protection of our people and our environment. By protecting our environment, we are protecting human health.

Two—that EPA must have an unyielding commitment to this nation's environmental goals combined with common sense, innovation, and flexibility in achieving these goals.

To implement these principles, I believe we must focus on three areas:

- Fixing our environmental decision-making process;
- Re-focusing on management; and
- Implementing a strong, new policy agenda.

First, we must fix the process by which EPA arrives at environmental policy. I'm asking each one of you to help us get away from the gridlock, expensive litigation, and inefficiencies of the past. Every one of us must create incentives to solve problems and eliminate hyperbole and conflict. We must work in complete partnership with Congress and other federal agencies, with states, tribes, and localities, with the public, with all stakeholders. We must break down the false choice between environmental protection and economic development. You and I must look for ways to incorporate the public earlier in the process. Our Enforcement Reorganization Task Force and our Superfund NACEPT (National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology) process are excellent examples.

Second, we must make EPA one of the best-managed agencies in the federal government. Not an easy job—and a particular challenge when we face finite resources in the federal government and the need to streamline our operations. EPA has hundreds of day-to-day responsibilities for regulating, rulemaking, contracting, protecting, enforcing, permitting. We must be dedicated to continuous improvement in every one of these areas. We must help you get the resources you need to do your jobs.

The 400 EPA employees working on the National Performance Review have set the course for change. Now we

are ready to begin. We will use their recommendations to make EPA an organization where empowered employees work creatively to accomplish clear objectives, to meet deadlines, and be responsive to the public.

You and I must tie together the budget process and the environmental objectives of the Agency. To do this, today I am announcing that we will undertake an effort to produce a five-year strategic plan by March of 1994. I am also confirming that I am committed to identifying concrete, measurable environmental goals.

But, none of our goals can be achieved unless we nurture the dedication and competence of each individual. You and I must re-dedicate ourselves to make human resource management a priority.

In the coming years, we will face substantial financial and hiring hurdles. I am committed to doing all I can to secure the resources we need to do our job. But, we will need to use the NPR recommendations, work together, and re-think the way we do everything from rulemaking to permits to procurement. If you and I take this opportunity, we can cut red tape and make our work more productive and more satisfying.

Finally, you and I must lead the new generation of environmental protection with a strong, new policy agenda. Again, we need an unyielding commitment to the nation's environmental goals combined with common sense, innovation, and flexibility in achieving these goals.

EPA's new agenda means preventing pollution, not waiting to clean it up.

EPA's new agenda means pursuing environmental justice in everything we do. We must use all the tools at our disposal to protect all Americans.

EPA's new agenda means developing new environmental technologies, market-based mechanisms, and incentives to steer private sector decisions.

EPA's new agenda means comprehensive approaches, not piece by piece, site-specific thinking. We need ecosystem protection, watershed protection, cross-media protection, fighting pollution industry by industry.

EPA's new agenda means quality science. We must employ the best possible science, educate the public about science and risk, and invest strategically in research and development for the science of tomorrow.

My vision and my agenda for this Agency have come together through many hours of working with you, with the senior management, and with the results of the National Performance Review. Again, I thank all of you for all your good work. We're on our way.

In all that we do, let's remember that protecting our environment means protecting public health. Let's remember that no agency in this government has a greater impact on the lives and the livelihoods of Americans than EPA. Real people in real communities with real problems are counting on us to make their lives a little bit safer, a little bit healthier, a little bit cleaner. We take that responsibility seriously.

After twenty years of environmental protection, it's time to focus on the results, not the rhetoric. Let's work together to get the job done.