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EPA InSight **POLICY PAPER**

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

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The Earth is in Your Hands **Working together, we can achieve a new generation of environmental protection**

Below is an Earth Day message from Administrator Carol Browner, which will appear in the Earth Day issue of the EPA Journal.

Earth Day 25 is a time to reflect on how we're doing in protecting our environment. Twenty-five years ago, in the wake of the first Earth Day, our nation created, virtually from scratch, the most advanced system of environmental protection in the world. In the course of a very short history—a mere quarter-century—we have made tremendous progress. We no longer have rivers catching on fire. Our skies are cleaner. And U.S. environmental expertise and technology are in demand throughout the world.

In the years since the first Earth Day, EPA banned lead in gasoline, lowering lead levels in our air by more than 90 percent and protecting millions of children from harm. We banned dangerous and widely used pesticides like DDT. We closed unsafe local garbage dumps all over the nation and helped to make recycling a household habit. We provided American towns with substantial funding for wastewater treatment—the second biggest public works effort in U.S. history—resulting in cleaner rivers all over the United States. All cars and trucks now have standards for fuel economy, set by EPA, that allow consumers to choose a car for its energy efficiency. And EPA has played an important role in ensuring that companies and others comply with our environmental laws or face stiff penalties.

Perhaps most important, the nation has gained a new understanding. More Americans than ever understand that to ensure a good quality of life for ourselves and our

children, we must act as responsible stewards of our air, our water, and our land.

More to Do

But much remains to be done.

Thirty years after Rachel Carson warned us in *Silent Spring* to reduce our dependence on pesticides, we have doubled our pesticide use. Twenty-five years after the garbage-filled Cuyahoga River spontaneously caught on fire, 40 percent of our rivers and lakes are not suitable for fishing or swimming.

In 1993, people in Milwaukee, New York, and Washington, DC, were ordered to boil their drinking water. In Milwaukee, hundreds of thousands of people got sick from contaminated water; 100 died. Twenty years after passage of the Clean Air Act, two in five Americans still live in areas where the air is dangerous to breathe. Fourteen years after Love Canal, one in four Americans lives within four miles of a toxic dumpsite. Asthma is on the rise. Breast cancer is on the rise.

And the past 25 years have left us with a complex and unwieldy system of laws and regulations and increasing conflict over how we achieve environmental protection.

The result of this history? An adversarial system of environmental policy. A system built on distrust. And too little environmental protection at too high a cost.

The Challenge We Face

In the next 25 years, we must maintain the progress we have made, and we must build on that progress. We must continue to protect the health of the people of this country, the health of our communities, the health of our

economy, our air, our water, and our land.

The environmental problems of the future will be more complex than ever. We can work together to address these problems today, or we can handle them as expensive crises tomorrow.

When President Clinton and I arrived in Washington two years ago, we believed that we needed a fundamentally new system of environmental protection. One that protects more and costs less. And one that builds on the strengths of the last 25 years but overcomes the deficiencies of the past.

We have an opportunity to reinvent a system of strong public health and environmental protections—to find solutions that work for real people in real communities. We must do it with common-sense, cost-effective measures that produce the very best environmental results for the least cost.

In this new system, we need a firm commitment to public health and environmental goals combined with flexibility, innovation, and creativity in how we achieve those goals. We must move beyond the one-size-fits-all approach of the past. We must work industry by industry, community by community to prevent pollution, rather than clean it up after the fact. We must involve those who will live with environmental decisions, to ensure that they have every opportunity to be a partner in making those decisions.

New Strategies for the Future

In the last two years, the Clinton Administration has initiated a variety of strategies to reinvent environmental protection—to move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach

and move toward a flexible yet firm approach to pollution protection. These strategies will allow us to achieve results that are cleaner, cheaper, and smarter.

Last year we launched the Common Sense Initiative, a fundamentally different way of doing business that takes us beyond the pollutant-by-pollutant, crisis-by-crisis approach of the past to an industry-by-industry approach for the future. Beginning in six industries, we are bringing together leaders of business, state and local government, the community, labor, and the environmental movement to sit down and examine environmental protection in these industries from top to bottom.

By working together, we will be able to find answers to the tough questions and arrive at solutions never before thought possible—solutions that will be cleaner for the environment, cheaper for the taxpayer and industry, and smarter for the future of this country.

Through our Brownfields Action Agenda, we are working in partnership with state and local government, communities, industry, and small business, to clean up the contaminated pieces of land that sit idle in cities across this country—to bring them back to life, to remove a blight on the neighborhood, to create jobs, to create hope. We recently lifted the Superfund stigma from 25,000 sites around this country.

Recognizing the need for quality science in all that we do, we recently launched our STAR program—Science To Achieve Results—bringing the best and the brightest from across the scientific community to assist us in our work, so we can direct our resources to the highest risks and do it using the highest quality data. Five thousand graduate students in science are competing for 100 fellowships in research at EPA. We've expanded our use of risk assessment and cost-benefit analysis. In fact, the National Academy of Sciences has recognized EPA as a world leader in using risk analysis.

These are some of the strategies we are using to reinvent environmental protection. All of these strategies work for business, for communities, and for people across the country. All of these are new

strategies that will take us to the future.

We Must Reinvent, Not Repeal

Last month, the President, the Vice President, and I announced the Clinton Administration's regulatory reinvention of environmental protection. Through a package of important reforms, we will trust honest business people as partners, not adversaries—without sacrificing one ounce of public health protection.

We will cut paperwork by 25 percent, saving 20 million hours a year for business and communities. Time and money should be invested in making a product, not filling out forms.

We will allow a six-month grace period—to give small business owners a chance to fix compliance problems instead of paying a fine. We will reward companies that take responsibility for finding and fixing environmental problems. Our goal is compliance with the laws that protect public health and the environment—not punishment.

We will institute one-stop emissions reporting and consolidate our air-pollution rules. Instead of a dozen different rules and a dozen different forms, our goal is one rule, one permit, one report.

Under our new Project XL—excellence and leadership—we will choose 50 businesses and communities and say to them, "Here's the pollution reduction goal. You know your operation better than anyone else. If you can figure out how to reach the goal and exceed that goal, then you can throw out the rule book."

Through the Clinton Administration's regulatory reinvention, we are refining environmental protection to make it more flexible, more effective, more sensible, and more affordable—to achieve the very best environmental results for the least cost.

These reforms will move us beyond rigid, one-size-fits-all regulation. But unlike proposals for regulatory reform being debated in Congress, these reforms do not cross the line to one-size-fits-all deregulation.

We need to reinvent environmental regulations—not repeal public health protections. The Clinton Administration's regulatory

reinvention will help us work together to protect our health and our environment and do it through common-sense, cost-effective measures.

After all the progress we've made since the first Earth Day 25 years ago, we cannot go back. We must go forward.

Every American Must Help

It is the job of government to protect the public. But government cannot do the job alone. We need every American to help ensure strong public health and environmental protections. Joining together is not a matter of choice—it is a necessity. We all breathe the same air, drink the same water, and work and play in the same environment. That's why EPA is using this 25th anniversary of Earth Day to remind parents and kids, communities and companies that "the Earth is in your hands." If we join together, we can take the common sense steps we need to take—and be proud to pass along a safe, clean world to our children and our children's children.

NOTE. The Winter 1995 Earth Day issue of the EPA Journal, including this message, is available on Videotext through ALL-IN-1 by typing VTX at the Email menu; then 7, "Newsletters and Other Publications" and 7 again, "EPA Journal." To access Videotext through LAN, please contact your LAN administrator for instructions. EPA Journal is also available on Internet through EPA's Gopher server (earth1.epa.gov) and the WorldWide Web (www.epa.gov).

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