



# National Dialogue on Access to Environmental Information

## What is the National Dialogue?

The National Dialogue on Access to Environmental Information ([www.epa.gov/nationaldialogue](http://www.epa.gov/nationaldialogue)) is EPA's approach to exploring how we can better meet our customers' needs for environmental information. The goal is to improve access to EPA's environmental information and to make EPA information more valuable and useful.

Environmental information is a key strategic resource for accomplishing EPA's environmental mission – protecting human health and the environment. Easy access to high quality environmental information is critical for supporting sound decisions by EPA and its many environmental customers and partners in federal, state and local governments, business, communities, academia and the news media.

People want environmental information to help them make environmental decisions – whether it's about energy savings, climate change, drinking water quality, the effects from natural disasters, or exposures to chemicals. Today's generation expects to locate this information in seconds, not in days, or hours, or minutes.

The World Wide Web continues to grow exponentially as both a resource for information and avenue for social networking. As more and more information is made available on the Internet, searching for and organizing information becomes a bigger challenge. How do we ensure that we are getting the right data and information to the right people at the right time?

With these three things coming together – providing access to information to our customers and partners; the increasing demand for environmental information; and the exploding resources on the Internet - it means that EPA must find ways to organize our vast information resources for better access and sharing, and leverage technologies to support these activities. This means treating environmental information as a strategic asset. The National Dialogue will help us to build that strategy.

## What Is Our Approach?

The Dialogue will offer a variety of forums for participation: online and in-person forums, stakeholder sessions, and special events. At those different events and on the National Dialogue Web site, you can help by suggesting actions EPA should take to improve information access.

The Web site ([www.epa.gov/nationaldialogue](http://www.epa.gov/nationaldialogue)) has an area for comments. As the National Dialogue progresses, the site will include more interactive features to facilitate greater participation.

After we hear from participants about information needs, we will develop a multi-year strategy detailing the steps EPA could take to ensure greater access to environmental information. We will identify and implement some changes while we are developing the strategy. Other changes will be implemented over the next several years.

National Dialogue Web Site – [www.epa.gov/nationaldialogue](http://www.epa.gov/nationaldialogue)



# National Dialogue on Access to Environmental Information

## Who Can Participate in the Dialogue?

All interested individuals are welcome to participate, including:

Concerned citizens	Researchers, and Librarians
Parents	Educators, Students
Regulated Community	Partners
Industry	Small Business
Government Environmental Agencies	Public Health Agencies
Environmental and Community Groups (NGOs)	Media
EPA Employees	Individuals

## What Is Our Timeline?

The National Dialogue on Access to Environmental Information is scheduled throughout this year and will be completed in October 2008. Throughout this period, we will be getting feedback from our participants, hosting events, and compiling our findings. Below are key milestones of the National Dialogue.

Molly A. O'Neill, EPA's Chief Information Officer announced the National Dialogue at the National Environmental Information Symposium in St. Louis in November 2007.

EPA launched the National Dialogue Web site so interested members of the public can provide their thoughts, experiences, and expectations on important information topics.

The National Dialogue will offer a variety of forums for public input, including a few special events that participants may wish to attend in person. EPA will update the National Dialogue Web site to provide feedback about what we're hearing in the various forums.

EPA will compile what we are learning into a strategy document during the summer. We expect that it will be available to review in the late summer so we can have an initial product by October 2008.

## For More Information

To learn more about the National Dialogue on Access to Environmental Information and to participate, visit the National Dialogue Web Site. For additional questions, e-mail us at [NationalDialogue@epa.gov](mailto:NationalDialogue@epa.gov).

National Dialogue Web Site – [www.epa.gov/nationaldialogue](http://www.epa.gov/nationaldialogue)