

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Joint Policy Statement on State/EPA Relations

(Signed July 14, 1994)

EPA and the states are jointly charged with protecting the nation's environment. To meet this challenge, EPA and the states are striving to build the kind of open, productive relationship that will facilitate effective, joint management of the nation's environmental agenda.

Most federal environmental statutes embrace the concept that states should have primary responsibility for operating regulatory and enforcement programs. Today most states carry out basic regulatory and enforcement functions of traditional environmental programs as well as innovative new approaches to address particular state and local needs.

EPA's relationship with the states should strive to recognize and accommodate the significant variations in the strength of state programs as well as the diversity of environmental conditions that exists among the states. As it pursues national environmental objectives, EPA wants to enable individual states to build environmental programs that are uniquely suited to the human health and environmental threats found in each state.

The underlying basis for the state/EPA relationship is:

- EPA will perform its mandated statutory mission with primary accountability to Congress and the public, including its roles of standards setting, constructive program review, research, collection/analysis/sharing of information, and technical assistance.
- EPA will support the states as they carry out day-to-day operations of environmental programs and in carrying out our joint roles for ensuring compliance with environmental laws and regulations.
- States will continue to assume increased responsibility as primary environmental managers, with accountability for achieving environmental and programmatic results. As such, states share in accountability to Congress and the public for performance in implementing environmental programs and initiatives.
- States and EPA will work together to achieve, to the extent possible, consensus on strategic directions, themes, and goals of mutual interest and benefit. Environmental programs should reflect the consensus achieved.

GOVERNING PRINCIPLES FOR THE RELATIONSHIP

Above all else, collectively and individually, EPA and the states are advocates for protection of public health and the environment. In furtherance of this vision, the following principles should govern the EPA/State relationship:

- **Clear Goals and Expectations**

Each state/EPA relationship must be based on an understanding of -- and agreement with -- clear goals and expectations on behalf of both EPA and the state. These goals should reflect the specific blend of national, regional, state, and local goals that are applicable to that state. Goals and priority setting in each state should be informed by mutual understanding of the resources available to each party.

- **Clear Roles and Responsibilities**

Each state/EPA relationship must be based on an understanding of -- and consent for -- a clear assignment of roles and responsibilities. These roles should utilize the comparative advantages and inherent strengths that each party brings to the relationship. Both parties should continuously strive to avoid duplication. Such roles, once assigned and accepted, should be diligently honored and respected by both parties.

- **Open and Honest Communication**

All state/EPA relationships must be sustained by open, honest and frequent communications. Communication must include diligent efforts to resolve legitimate conflicts and to achieve consensus on major issues whenever possible.

- **Shared Responsibility and Accountability for Success**

An effective state/EPA relationship depends on mutual dedication to shared responsibility and accountability for success in promoting and implementing environmental programs. EPA and the states should strive to coordinate communication with Congress as appropriate. Clear goals, clear roles, result-based performance measures, and effective communications are essential factors in achieving this mutual dedication.

- **Mutual Respect, Trust, and Continuous Improvement**

Each state/EPA relationship is a dynamic arrangement which must be founded on mutual respect and trust and be sufficiently flexible to accommodate different perspectives and needs. We need to ensure that we take full advantage of the wealth of resources and creativity that exists at all levels of government. EPA and the states commit to a joint quest for continuous improvement in environmental performance and to mutually support each others' efforts to obtain necessary resources for environmental programs as needed.

- **Mutual Commitment to Pollution Prevention**

EPA and the states will develop and implement programs with a commitment to pollution prevention as the principle of first choice.

These six governing principles shall serve as the foundation for the state/EPA relationship and provide a sound basis for enhancing environmental management capacity in the United States.

(Signed July 14, 1994 by:)

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