

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

**Final Charge to the
National Advisory Committee on Environmental Policy and Technology
Subcommittee on Promoting Environmental Stewardship
August 2009**

Introduction

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requests advice from the National Advisory Committee on Environmental Policy and Technology (NACEPT) and its Subcommittee on Promoting Environmental Stewardship (SPES) on how to promote environmental stewardship practices that encompass all environmental aspects of an organization in the regulated community and other sectors, as appropriate, in order to enhance human health and environmental protection. This effort will build on previous work by the NACEPT on promoting environmental stewardship. EPA is seeking advice on the Agency's role in promoting such practices and in encouraging actions that complement and go beyond regulatory requirements to achieve the nation's environmental goals.

Background

In a March 16, 2009, memorandum, EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson noted that "It has been and continues to be EPA's policy to encourage enlightened environmental stewardship." She further noted that EPA will convene a multi-stakeholder NACEPT subcommittee to foster an open dialogue about the opportunities for accelerating stewardship through environmental leadership and the challenges for EPA in designing and managing such approaches into the future.

The Agency has previously defined stewardship as follows: Stewardship means taking responsibility for our choices. Stewardship is a systemic approach to addressing the challenge of sustainability – economic, environmental and social.¹ This charge specifically focuses on broad, organization-wide stewardship. The Agency's interest derives from the fact that stewardship encompasses so many types of decisions. Organizations and individuals affect the environment through many types of decisions they make every day. Environmental stewardship is the product of all the decisions that they make, whether those decisions are regulated or not. Stewardship is also expressly multimedia and aimed at achieving sustainable results in the context of major local and global natural resource systems, including energy, materials, water, land, air and ecosystems.

The focus of this charge on promoting stewardship by members of the regulated community and other appropriate sectors reflects the Agency's interest in improving performance in organizations along the entire environmental performance spectrum. Different mixes of government strategies may be needed to promote stewardship to organizations, depending on where they are along the performance spectrum. Strategies aimed at organizations at the superior end of the spectrum need to fit with strategies aimed at organizations in other parts of the spectrum. The Subcommittee will focus on activities in the EPA regulated community, and will

¹ From *Everyday Choices: Opportunities for Environmental Stewardship*, a report issued by EPA's Innovation Action Council in November, 2005. See <http://www.epa.gov/NCEI/pdf/rpt2admin.pdf>.

also consider possible roles for other businesses, governments (local, state, regional), nonprofit organizations, and communities in promoting and participating in stewardship activities.

In approaching NACEPT for advice on promoting stewardship, EPA is asking the Council to build on some of the principles outlined in its March 2008 report, *Everyone's Business: Working Towards Sustainability Through Environmental Stewardship and Collaboration*, and its March 2009 report, *Outlook for EPA*. In these reports, NACEPT emphasized the importance of inserting stewardship into the Agency's mission as a means for achieving the environmental component of sustainability.

Charge to the Subcommittee

The final Subcommittee report to NACEPT should address the following questions and should outline possible actions by EPA and states that will support and promote broad, organization-wide environmental stewardship.

1. What is the range of environmental stewardship practices and behaviors across all environmental aspects that EPA and the states should encourage? Considerations include:
 - What types of broad, organization-wide principles, practices, and behaviors do organizations that exemplify environmental stewardship display? What forms does such stewardship take and what kinds of strategies are being used? How are the practices, understanding and attitudes about stewardship by these organizations evolving?
 - What should be the government's general role in defining and encouraging environmental stewardship among members of the regulated community?
 - In addition to the regulated community, what non-regulated sectors (e.g., retail, service sector) should EPA and the states consider in this context?
 - Should stewardship approaches be focused on specific environmental priorities or be designed to promote any form of stewardship?

2. What do we know from research and experience about promoting environmental stewardship and leadership? Considerations include:
 - What motivates an organization to be an environmental steward? In particular, what motivates broad, multi-attribute stewardship initiatives? To what extent can EPA and the states influence these factors?
 - What can we learn from state, national and international level government initiatives and strategies that have successfully encouraged environmental stewardship? What common features do they have?
 - What are the lessons learned from recent studies of national and state performance-based environmental programs?
 - What kinds of information, encouragement and interactions do organizations generally need to be environmental stewards and continuously improve?

3. What should EPA and the states and local government do to promote environmental stewardship and leadership? Considerations include:
- What authority, tools and resources do EPA and the states generally now have to promote environmental stewardship? Are additional authorities, tools and resources needed? Are there impediments that need to be overcome?
 - What specific activities should EPA, the states, and local government undertake to promote environmental stewardship? How can EPA, the states, and local government best work with organizations that are undertaking stewardship initiatives? How should these efforts mesh with other ongoing federal and state regulatory and non-regulatory efforts to improve the performance of all members of the regulated community and similar organizations?
 - What should be the role of external partners and stakeholders in the implementation, oversight and evaluation of strategies to promote environmental stewardship and leadership? In particular, how should EPA, the states, and local government work with non-governmental organizations that are also endeavoring to define and encourage environmental stewardship?
 - What role should EPA play related to state and local government performance-based or stewardship programs?
 - What should EPA and the states measure so that all stakeholders and the public can understand the performance and quality of strategies to promote environmental stewardship and leadership?

Proposed Schedule

Two-year subcommittee term – June 29, 2009 to June 29, 2011.

- June 30 – July 1, 2009 Crystal City, Virginia meeting
- August 18-19, 2009 Crystal City, Virginia meeting
- October 6-7, 2009 Crystal City, Virginia meeting
- December 1-2, 2009 Crystal City, Virginia meeting
- January 2010 Interim Subcommittee report/advise letter (design principles and initial observations) and draft recommendations for review by NACEPT and EPA
- June 2010 Final subcommittee report delivered to NACEPT
- August 2010 Final report to EPA

Monthly conference calls