

# ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



25<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY REPORT

THE COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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# ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



## The Twenty-fifth Anniversary Report of the Council on Environmental Quality



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

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This report will be available on the White House web site (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/CEQ>).

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This edition of *Environmental Quality*, the 25th in the series, focuses broadly on environmental developments over the past quarter century and more specifically on developments in the 1994-95 period. A few notable developments that occurred in 1996 are mentioned here briefly; they will be discussed in more detail in the 1996 report.

Under the direction of CEQ Chair Kathleen McGinty, Chief of Staff Shelley Fidler and Deputy Chief of Staff Wesley Warren, this edition was edited by Robert Livernash, who also served as the primary author. Carroll Curtis coordinated data collection and prepared the figures and tables.

Many individuals assisted in drafting chapters. In particular, we wish to acknowledge: Carolina Katz of the World Resources Institute, for the chapters on environmental justice and the environmental aspects of human health; Harvey Doerksen of the Interior Department, for the chapter on ecosystems; Michalann Harthill of the Interior Department, for the chapter on biodiversity; Kurt Zwally of the Department of Energy, for the chapters on climate change and transportation; Brad Hurley, for the chapter on ozone; Nilda Mesa of CEQ, for the chapter on the National Environmental Policy Act; and Dinah Bear of CEQ, for the chapter on forestry.

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## TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress the Twenty-fifth Annual Report on Environmental Quality.

As a nation, the most important thing we can do as we move into the 21st century is to give all our children the chance to live up to their God-given potential and live out their dreams. In order to do that, we must offer more opportunity and demand more responsibility from all our citizens. We must help young people get the education and training they need, make our streets safer from crime, help Americans succeed at home and at work, protect our environment for generations to come, and ensure that America remains the strongest force for peace and freedom in the world. Most of all, we must come together as one community to meet our challenges.

Our Nation's leaders understood this a quarter-century ago when they launched the modern era of environmental protection with the National Environmental Policy Act. NEPA's authors understood that environmental protection, economic opportunity, and social responsibility are interrelated. NEPA determined that the Federal Government should work in concert with State and local governments and citizens "to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans."

We've made great progress in 25 years as we've sought to live up to that challenge. As we look forward to the next 25 years of environmental progress, we do so with a renewed determination. Maintaining and enhancing our environment, passing on a clean world to future generations, is a sacred obligation of citizenship. We all have an interest in clean air, pure water, safe food, and protected national treasures. Our environment is, literally, our common ground.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

THE WHITE HOUSE

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## STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR

Twenty-five years ago with the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), our nation's leaders understood the need to bring people together to face our common challenges. NEPA declared that the federal government should work in concert with state and local governments and the citizens of this great Nation "to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans."

After all, the environment, as President Clinton has said, is literally our common ground. Our families and communities have a common interest in protecting it, and there is no doubt we have made great progress in 25 years. Our air and water are cleaner, our children are healthier, and we have put more land into conservation.

Over the past 25 years, we have also engaged in a national dialogue about the best ways to protect the environment. In the course of this dialogue, we have all learned something. We have come to appreciate NEPA's prescience in emphasizing widespread participation in the decisionmaking process and in taking a wider view of environmental problems. Fittingly, this 25th anniversary edition of the CEQ annual report looks back over the past 25 years to consider what we have done and where we are heading.

For 25 years, NEPA has been at the forefront of our nation's efforts to protect the environment. When national forest mismanagement threatened communities in the Pacific Northwest, we used NEPA to solve the problem. The President's Northwest Forest Plan works because of the collaboration of five federal agencies, the states of Washington, Oregon and California, local governments, tribes and people in the region—collaboration done under the NEPA umbrella. NEPA helped us develop an ecosystem-based forest management plan and an economic assistance plan that protect our natural heritage and provide a stable economic future for the people of the region.

But despite all of our progress in 25 years, our common ground—the environment—has become a battleground. Somehow, nearly half of the Environmental Protection Agency's work is not the product of our collective will on the environment, but rather, the product of judicial decree. Somehow, we have become a country in receivership, with the courts managing our forests, our rivers and our rangelands.

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President Clinton and Vice President Gore are determined to find a better way. The Administration is building an environmentalism where government acts as a partner, not just as a policeman. The Administration is moving toward collaboration, not just endless confrontation.

Consider the Endangered Species Act. It is designed to be preventive medicine, but too often in the past it has been misused as emergency medicine. It is supposed to be about enriching wildlife habitat, but too often in the past it has been about desperate measures taken in crisis at the last moment as the last of a particular species teeters on the brink of extinction. By failing to look ahead, our nation's leaders failed faithfully to execute the Act and invited "train wrecks" that unnecessarily pit short-term economic interests against the environment.

This Administration has taken a different route. Rather than allowing crises to build, we're getting out ahead of the curve. We are reaching out to private landowners in partnership and helping them to be good stewards of the land. With 70 percent of critical wildlife habitat on private land, we have to work with—not against—private landowners to protect fish and wildlife. We are doing that with Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), voluntary agreements that enable us to preserve the land and protect wildlife while giving landowners the certainty they need to effectively manage their land. The Administration has completed 170 HCPs and is currently negotiating nearly 300 more all across the country. This compares to just 14 that were in place when President Clinton came into office. With these agreements, we are avoiding the train wrecks that might otherwise have been just around the bend.

As the agencies go about the habitat conservation planning process, NEPA—with its emphasis on public review and comment—is the umbrella under which they work. The challenge of harmonizing our economic, environmental and social aspirations, important throughout CEQ's history, is today more pressing than ever. By bringing people together rather than driving them apart, we can unleash the good will, the creative energy, the enthusiasm and drive that are essential to achieving the productive harmony and wholeness called for in NEPA.

We are making progress, and in a way that has meaning for more than just the environment. We are building an environmentalism that builds community; we are building a conservation ethic that builds our sense of citizenship and rekindles our proud connection to this great land.

With respect to environmental policy there are three concepts that help describe where we have been and where we are going: subject, stakeholder and citizen.

Too often in the past, the government treated people as subjects—dictated to from Washington through command and control regulation. Today, we under-



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stand people to be stakeholders in the issues with which we deal and we are inviting them in to share with us the benefit of their views and experience. In these processes, stakeholders come to the table with their special knowledge and special expertise to defend their special interest.

Clearly, our policies are better informed because of this input. But the question arises: Can we go farther? Can we begin to act as NEPA truly intended? Can we, in short, begin to bring people together as citizens not to defend their special interest, but to define the common interest? Our work over the past few years has been an effort—a beginning at least—to do just that.

President Clinton and Vice President Gore believe that government should be a partner that helps give people the tools they need to make the most of their own lives. We must create more opportunity, demand more responsibility and work together as one community to meet our common challenges. This is the central bargain of American life, and it translates directly to environmental protection. To succeed in meeting our environmental challenges we need to create the opportunity for people to collaborate, to work together to improve their families' health, the quality of their surroundings and the fabric of their communities.

For example, people in the South Bronx are using environmental considerations to rebuild their neighborhood. For 25 years, an abandoned rail yard was a cancer on the community. It was polluted, covered with trash and debris, and a hang-out for criminals and drug dealers. Today, a local community development corporation, an environmental organization, a paper company and local publishers have joined together to build a paper plant on that rail yard. With highly sophisticated production, energy efficiency and pollution prevention technology, the Bronx Community Paper Company will be the largest manufacturing facility built in New York City since World War II.

The Bronx Community Paper Company will not use trees to produce paper. Instead, it will recycle a great untapped resource—the vast amount of paper generated in New York offices every day. It will help fund a dormitory for up to twenty local students who do not have stable homes; a health care, child care, literacy and job training center; local libraries and even a revolving loan fund for housing and business development. The Bronx Community Paper Company is located in an Empowerment Zone and the project sponsors credit President Clinton's recycling executive order with helping to create the market conditions for the effort to succeed. The Bronx Community Paper Company is a prime example of what local groups, businesses and government can do when they work together.

We must continue to find new ways to achieve better results, and we will get better results if the community is involved. With Project XL, for example, the Administration is saying to business: if you can get superior environmental per-

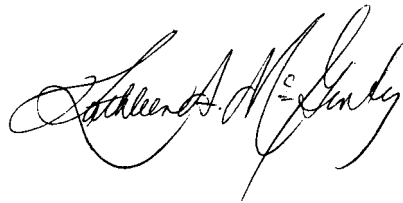
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formance at a lower cost than under the traditional rules, EPA will let you find the best way to do it. But with this new opportunity comes accountability: Project XL requires that the community be part of the plan. The community must have a seat at the table and they must be part of the decisions that are made.

When Alexis de Tocqueville toured this country more than a century and a half ago studying what makes our democracy work, he said that the most vital force of our democracy is the community groups, those organizations and associations that are alive with the plans and the dreams of people working together. Today, people across the country yearn for ways to be engaged in a meaningful way to better their lives and the lives of their neighbors.

We are beginning to see that communities can be engaged more meaningfully in environmental policy, and because of that, we are beginning to see the next era of environmental programs. Throughout all of our efforts, the National Environmental Policy Act will provide the road map for the Clinton Administration. Almost alone among environmental laws, it rejects single media and single dimension solutions. Instead it seeks to ensure that agencies consider the impacts of their activities and make informed decisions based upon that analysis. By providing a mechanism for the federal government and states, local governments, tribes, businesses and individuals to work together for the common good, NEPA will help us build an environmental ethic based on community rather than conflict, partnership rather than polarization.

We are looking ahead to the future with renewed emphasis on one of the country's oldest and most forward-looking environmental laws, the National Environmental Policy Act, and we know we are on the right track.



Kathleen A. McGinty  
Chair



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

The President:

Sir: The Council on Environmental Quality herewith transmits its Environmental Quality Report for the years 1994 and 1995 in accordance with section 201 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4341).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kathleen A. McGinty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kathleen" and last name "McGinty" clearly legible.

Kathleen A. McGinty  
Chair