



DEFINING, MEASURING, AND COMMUNICATING RESULTS FROM PERFORMANCE-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

Over the past decade, performance-based environmental programs (PBEPs) have become an increasingly important element of the environmental protection strategy in the U.S at both the national and state level; the National Environmental Performance Track program (Performance Track) has grown to a membership of nearly 500 facilities and there are currently more than 20 similar programs at the state level. The fundamental goal of these programs is to achieve continuous environmental improvement that extends beyond regulatory requirements. To accomplish this goal, PBEPs tend to focus on reducing the environmental footprint of facilities, encouraging stewardship behaviors, transforming relationships, and introducing new ideas and practices that promote improved environmental performance.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) and the Multi-State Working Group (MSWG) recently initiated a collaborative project to study the results and outcomes of PBEPs. All three groups share a common interest in exploring this topic and learning from the results of this project.

The project plan involves conducting general research on the current state of knowledge of PBEPs; surveying and analyzing the documented results of various existing programs; and drafting two position papers that collectively describe the current state of defining, measuring and communicating results of PBEPs, propose new ideas for improving the measurement and communication approaches used by these programs, and identify areas needing additional research. EPA has selected a team that includes nationally recognized experts and academics to help draft these papers, including Cary Coglianese from the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Jennifer Nash from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and Allen White from the Tellus Institute.

Another important aspect of this project involves gaining insights from key stakeholders by conducting several dialogue sessions with representatives from businesses, state and local regulatory agencies, NGOs, and academia. Over 100 people participated in the first session, held on May 8th at the National Environmental Partnership Summit in New Orleans, and shared their views on how best to define the objectives and goals of PBEPs and issues associated with measuring and communicating the results of these programs. An additional dialogue session was held at the MSWG's June meeting in Madison and was discussed at the ECOS Fall meeting in September in Sun Valley.

The information gained from the research, dialogue sessions and position papers will be presented at a workshop, at the Kennedy School of Government on March 11-12, 2008.

For further information, please contact:

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