

the source of all love. If you do, you'll love God, and if you love God, you've got to love your fellow men, even the most aggravating of them, and if you do, you'll have a friendly heart. Thank you very much.

## THE CITIZEN'S ROLE IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

*Remarks of Jack E. Ravan  
Southeast Regional Administrator, EPA  
to the 26th Annual Conference of  
the Southeastern Association of Game and Fish Commissioners  
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We have all heard a great deal about what may happen to us unless we start to respect the inherent limitations of this fragile planet. Some fear that pesticides and other chemicals may eventually deplete our oxygen supply by interfering with the photosynthesis of marine plankton. Others claim that the geometric increase in urban noise levels will cause an epidemic of deafness by the year 2000. Some respectable scientists have predicted that if we continue burning fossil fuels at our present mad pace, the polar ice caps will eventually dissolve from the "greenhouse effect" and inundate all our coastal cities. Other scientists retort that, on the contrary, suspended particulate matter in the atmosphere will cut off so much solar radiation that the earth's temperature will drop and the glaciers of old will march back down from the poles and cover over our proud civilizations. Population specialists predict that within a few hundred years the earth will be so infested with people, so thickly covered with buildings, that the earth's crust will melt from mere inability to radiate waste heat.

My business is not prophecy, and I won't comment on any of these positions. Although I believe the environmental crisis is indeed upon us, I am confident that we can overcome our environmental problems by working vigorously and harmoniously towards a common goal. My purpose in speaking to you today is to show the dimensions of possible citizen involvement in the struggle for a better environment, and to tell you some of the things that the Environmental Protection Agency is doing as well.

If man *made* the problem, man can *unmake* it too.

Just take the matter of water quality as an example. The city of Seattle found after World War II that its recreational pride, Lake Washington, was so badly polluted with sewage effluent that it was unfit for swimming and fishing. Instead of waiting for somebody else to solve the problem or just putting up with it, local citizens decided to pay for modern treatment plants with a special levy on real property. It took ten years to complete the required facilities, but thanks to local initiative, Lake Washington can once again be utilized for outdoor recreation by an entire metropolitan region.

The Los Angeles area, when it became apparent that the automobile was the culprit behind the growing menace of smog, took steps to curb photochemical oxidants in the air, and this was long before air pollution became an issue nationally. The City of Pittsburgh started moving to clean up its air pollution problem more than twenty years ago.

There are many such cases. But only recently has major attention been focused on the enormity of the problem. Only lately have we even begun to grasp what we as individuals and as citizens in our communities can do to create a healthy, safe and enjoyable life for all our people. At the invitations of the

Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held last June in Stockholm, EPA prepared a case study of citizen action in the environmental arena and distributed it as an issue of our "EPA Citizens' Bulletin." I would like to suggest that you consult this for more detailed knowledge of just what citizen action can accomplish.

To speak in general terms, the possibilities are unlimited.

As citizens we can:

- help the schools create environmentally oriented curricula.
- establish special ecology sections in neighborhood and school libraries.
- mobilize the churches, the press and the electronic media to push for environmental action.
- seek support for environmental preservation from other organizations such as chambers of commerce, PTA groups, service clubs, YM and YWCA's.
- promote clean-up campaigns, by all ages.
- ask local officials about their plans to control pollution in all its forms and keep bugging them until they act.
- make the voice of the environment heard at all meetings of zoning boards.
- support specific projects with a lot of inherent dramatic and visible appeal, like cleaning up a lake or stream in an urban area so that its recreational value is enhanced.
- help to create interest in visual blight and insist upon sensible and enforceable regulations to govern commercial and industrial signs.
- insist* that builders leave as many trees as possible on the lots they develop and practice soil erosion control to keep sediment out of our rivers and lakes.

I think we can see a pattern in all these suggestions. The main thrust is to determine what is wrong, communicate these facts and thus bridge the information gap, keep a sharp eye on what government is doing, mobilize citizen groups and set up ecology action centers. In short, become brokers for information and action on a community-wide basis.

Just a moment ago, I mentioned the cities of Seattle, Los Angeles and Pittsburgh as good examples of action on the local level in the cause of environmental protection. I would like to stress now that citizen involvement has taken on considerable proportions in this part of the country, and I could cite many examples. As I travel about the Region, I learn heartening things about citizen concern over the environment and about the concrete ways in which it expresses itself. I would like to learn more. EPA's Regional management has decided to give special recognition to significant cases of environmental improvement, whether brought about by industrial plants, communities or citizen groups. Ten awards will be given each year in the 8-state area of Region IV. I urge you to help make this awards program a success by suggesting potential recipients.

One of the most important avenues of citizen participation in environmental protection was opened by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, which required the preparation of an impact statement for any federally-funded project. The law established an advisory body in the executive branch of the Federal Government, the President's Council on Environmental Quality. CEQ guidelines provide the general public with the right to comment on these environmental impact statements.

Citizen groups availing themselves of the provisions of NEPA have forced environmental studies of the Alaskan pipe line, protected wildlife areas in Texas and Arizona from development, halted construction of a dam in Arkansas, blocked highway construction in environmentally sensitive areas, protected portions of national forests pending decisions of their preservation as wilderness areas, and forced the government to hold hearings to determine if the use of certain pesticides should be banned.

Having brought up the question of Federal involvement in environmental

protection, I would like to speak briefly about EPA.

Since its creation in December, 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency has been trying to develop a coordinated attack on the environmental problems of air and water pollution, solid waste management, pesticides, radiation and noise. Controls which had been invested in a variety of agencies with goals not always related to environmental improvement were brought together under a single agency. This was done in the interest of more efficient administration of existing programs, but also in recognition of the basic fact that the environment is a single system of interrelated parts, none of which operates without an effect on the others.

EPA functions primarily as a regulatory agency with responsibility for establishing and enforcing standards of environmental quality. Our regulations and standards have the force of law. In attempting to be responsive to environmental needs throughout the country, EPA has taken steps to decentralize its decision making procedure by placing as much responsibility as possible in ten regional offices. Each office is staffed with specialists in all program areas and headed by a regional administrator with broad authority to act for EPA in matters within his jurisdiction. At the national level, Administrator Ruckelshaus has designed his organization partly along functional lines with three assistant administrators in charge of planning/management, enforcement, and research/monitoring functions. Two other assistant administrators are aligned along "program" lines, with one in charge of air and water programs and other in charge of pesticides, radiation and solid wastes.

As Federal agencies go, EPA is not large. It currently employs about 9,000 people and administers a \$2.6 billion budget, of which about 80% is earmarked for sewage treatment facilities. The remainder is directed towards research, facilities and operation.

Since beginning operation EPA has devised the first uniform air quality standards under the Clean Air Act of 1970. It has initiated a national permit program to regulate industrial discharges into our waters. It has researched new approaches to the handling and disposal of various types of waste, and now spends \$2 billion a year providing funds to localities for the construction of modern sewage treatment plants. EPA has limited the use of many pesticides and has participated in the safe siting and operations of nuclear reactors through the agency's water pollution control functions by commenting on environmental impact statements for proposed nuclear facilities. The agency has also taken hundreds of polluters to court and has generally practiced a policy of vigorous enforcement under the authority provided by existing laws. In addition to its regulatory and standards-setting roles, EPA also conducts research, monitors and analyzes the environment, studying scientifically the causes of pollution, the techniques of pollution control and the environmental consequences of man's actions.

New legislation proposed by the present administration will, if enacted, enhance EPA's capability to perform its basic task. Ultimately, however, a more fundamental approach will probably make its way into our thinking about environmental control. There is nothing in the environment that is not directly affected by land use policies—or the absence of them. Mr. Ruckelshaus has stated in a public address that "we cannot escape large-scale, profound transformations in the way we handle our dwindling reserves of land." As currently established Federal regulations of land use is to be the responsibility of the Department of the Interior, which is to oversee a system of land use standards set up by the individual states. In any event, each citizen has a duty to consider just what kind of overall land use policy he wants to see emerge in this country. We simply can't leave things in the hands of chance. The stakes are too high, the potential ultimate harm too profound and devastating.

The way we do business, the way we work and play, the assumptions underlying our investments and expenditures as a people—all of these must be transformed. We must stop asserting a right to exploit and pollute without thought for the harm to our neighbor or to our children. We will get in return a clean, healthy, safe, comfortable and yet challenging society in which the individual is free to develop the best that is in him or her.

Whether we achieve that goal depends on the private citizen. These reforms cannot possibly succeed in the long run without his sincere, informed and unqualified support. I know that kind of statement is an all too frequent speaker's ploy, a sop tossed to the audience to flatter its feeling of self-importance in order to put something over on it. This time, it is the literal truth. For without sustained public awareness and support, the interest and dedication of government at all levels will once again fall into the morass of delay, disinterest and general inertia so typical of past efforts. An aroused and concerned public means a responsive Congress and Administration. Let the public keep the pressure up and progress will inevitably follow.

As individuals we must take our share of the blame for what has happened to the environment. Naturally, any one of us is neither, *more nor less*, at fault than the next person, but the point is that we cannot attribute the present conditions solely to greedy corporations or to ineffective government. If we had *pushed* in the past, these institutions would have responded.

One of the most important things for us to realize is the real depth of our influence on children and adolescents. Often it seems they don't listen to us, but there can be no doubt they are watching us. If our actions are not in accord with our professed concern over the environment, we will aggravate the much discussed generation gap and increase the pressures which cause many of the young to want to "drop out" of the established pattern of social relationships.

On the other hand, if adults in the community make their environmental actions match their professed concern, they will help to close the generation gap and strengthen the bonds which hold society together for fruitful action.

Speaking personally, I am an optimist. I think we can break through the "opulence barrier" and adopt more responsible patterns of life and leisure. We must realize that under today's crowded conditions, everyone is downwind or downstream from somebody else.

I believe this country has the brains, the energy, the resources and integrity to do what must be done. We have led the world in establishing high standards of living and in making democracy work. Now a more significant challenge confronts us—to lead the world into the Age of Amenity, in which a civilization is not judged by how much it consumes and throws away, but by its aesthetic, social and spiritual values.

The moral choices facing the individual today are truly complex and often ambiguous to boot. This is not a good time for those who want easy answers and instantaneous solutions. But we do have choices. If we are ready to make the hard choices, to resist the temptations to evade our responsibility or to sink into despair, we can enjoy clean air, good water, quiet skies and streets, more space per person, creative leisure and an uncluttered countryside that provides adequate satisfaction for the city dweller's growing thirst for wilderness.

In the words of the poet, "Time makes ancient good uncouth." And if we do what needs to be done at this time of crisis for the natural environment, our reward *may* be that future social historians will wonder why it took us so long to find a better way, why we tolerated intolerable levels of pollution for so long. If this is to be our fame in history books of the future, so be it. I think it is much more likely that future historians will record this generation's achievements in environmental protection as a major turning point in history, the period in which man, for the first time in his recorded history, took serious consideration of his effect on the world around him and then made a systematic effort to

harmonize his actions with the inherent limitations of nature. I urge you to continue your efforts toward making this turning point a reality—both for the present and the future.