

**Remarks of Governor Christine Todd Whitman,  
Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,  
at the  
Society of Environmental Journalists Annual Conference  
Portland, Oregon  
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Thank you for that introduction.

Though it would be easy to allow the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the weeks following to dominate our activities at the EPA, the fact remains that what was important for the environment on September 10<sup>th</sup>, remains important today. Your presence here indicates an understanding that we all have a responsibility to carry on the work we have been given to do, not just out of a sense of duty, but also from a sense of obligation to those who have died.

Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity today to discuss with you not only EPA's critical role in response to the attacks on our nation and ongoing terrorist threats, but also our continuing work to protect the environment and public health consistent with our mission.

I'm proud to say that the EPA has been at work both in New York City and at the Pentagon since just hours after the attack on our Nation. Our people have been monitoring for possible environmental hazards to protect the safety of rescue workers as well as the general population, and we will work as long as necessary to protect public health and the environment through this recovery period.

In addition, EPA is working very closely with the White House, the National Security Council, and with our colleagues across the government to do everything we can to defend our country from further attacks. I would like to detail some of what we are doing.

EPA has important responsibilities for defending the integrity of America's water systems. Throughout America, more than 168,000 public water companies provide drinking water to American households. While EPA does not have direct authority for monitoring on a regular basis the quality of drinking water, we have been working to provide water utilities with the information they need to secure the facilities against attack.

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We have been working very closely with AMWA — the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies — and with others to disseminate this information and advice. In addition, through the FBI, we have contacted every local law enforcement agency in the country to help them educate the cop on the beat about warning signs that might indicate a breach of security at a water company. We are also working with the FBI to check the names of the 100,000 employees of America's largest water companies against the FBI's watch list. We want to try to make sure no known terrorists have already infiltrated a major water company.

As concern grows about the water supply, I also think it's important to keep things in perspective. Contrary to what some believe — and have even reported — poisoning a water supply is an extremely difficult undertaking. Given the volume of water involved in even a relatively small system, it would take an enormous amount of contaminants to threaten the safety of a public water supply. It would be extremely difficult for someone to perform such an act of terrorism without being detected.

That being said, however, we are also taking steps to help ensure that we are ready to respond should an attack occur. The vast majority of the contaminants about which we are concerned we know how to treat. And for those we don't, we're working with the Center for Disease Control to make sure we soon do.

Similarly, we have been working to help secure chemical and pesticide facilities and stocks from acts of terror. Again, while we don't have the authority to mandate actions, we have been working hard to ensure that these manufacturers and users have the information they need to take actions to protect themselves and our country.

Earlier this week I had a very productive meeting with representatives of hundreds of America's chemical and pesticide companies. It was probably the first time chemical interests and the EPA sat down together without the air turning blue. Instead, we found an eagerness to work together to do the right thing for America. Decades of mistrust have been replaced by a real spirit of cooperation when it comes to protecting our country against terrorist attack.

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Some of the other steps we have taken include removing information from our web site that could give terrorists a road map as to how and where to launch an attack. We want to balance the public's right to know with the needs of prudent security and we are reviewing all our web data to ensure that the proper balance is struck.

EPA also plays an important role when a biological attack is launched. During the recent anthrax events, EPA has helped FEMA and the FBI in responding to the events in Florida, New York, and here in Washington. Although normally our assistance is limited to clean-up after an area has been secured and investigated, our federal partners have been calling on us from the start to help them ensure the safety of all those who may have come into contact with a hazardous substance.

Under the leadership of my friend, Governor Tom Ridge, every aspect of the federal government will be working closely together to ensure the safety and security of our country and its people. I met with Tom several times at the White House this week. He is sobered by the task ahead of him but resolved to get the job done — and he will.

As we continue to prepare ourselves for every contingency, President Bush and others have spoken eloquently about the importance of keeping America moving forward. I believe the highest tribute every American can pay to those who have died is to carry on the work of our country, from accountants to zookeepers. That is, after all, what those who died were doing on September 11th. We owe it to them to do all we can to make America an even better place for those they left behind.

That is what we are striving to do in our work at the Environmental Protection Agency. The Agency I have the honor to head is charged with the responsibility of protecting our environment and the public from environmental hazards. It's a broad and expansive mission that reaches into so many facets of American life, from the cars we drive and the food we eat, to the clothes we wear and even the air we breathe.

But while our mission is complex, my goal for my tenure at the EPA is simple. When I leave office, I want to be able to say that America's air is cleaner, its water is purer, and its land better protected than it was when I arrived.

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That goal reflects a lesson I learned at a very young age from my parents — always leave any place you go better than you found it.

Underlying this simple, but powerful, goal is what I believe represents a profound change in the way the EPA approaches its mission.

It suggests that we should stop measuring environmental progress by quantifying how much process we've been able to devise. Instead, we must measure our success by measuring the state of the environment. Is our air cleaner or not? Is our water purer or not? Is our land better protected or not? It's time to start asking those questions, not just about our overall progress, but about individual programs and regulations. Calling, for example, an air pollution prevention program a success because a record number of fines were issued doesn't make sense if the air isn't any cleaner.

There is no doubt in my mind that the next generation of environmental challenges requires a new set of results-driven solutions. That is why we are working at EPA to develop what I call an environmental report card, so that every year the American people can have the information they need to measure the success — or failure — of our efforts.

Government actions over the past three decades have reversed and in some cases eliminated some of the most challenging environmental issues America has faced. Yet, most people believe the exact opposite. Clearly, we need to do a better job educating people about the results of 30 years of environmental progress, just as we need to let them know what steps we will need to take to achieve the next generation of environmental progress. An environmental report card will help us do both.

I'd like to share with you three examples of how I believe we can make measurable improvements in our environment — in our air, land, and water — in the coming years.

The first concerns air pollution. Shortly, the Administration is going to put forth a proposal that will seek to establish mandatory reductions by power plants of NO<sub>x</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, and mercury, while also providing the flexibility needed to achieve these reductions in ways that make both environmental and economic sense. We believe this proposal will, on its own, result in substantial improvements to air quality in most of the United States.

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The President's proposal is modeled on the very successful Acid Rain program which has, over the past decade, achieved more air pollution reductions, more cost-effectively, than all other air programs combined. The wide acceptance of this program — industry compliance is at 100 percent — and the efficiency with which it is run — it takes fewer than 20 EPA employees to run it — makes it a model worth following.

Another thing the acid rain program proves is that we can make progress that people do notice. Because this program has succeeded in meeting clear and measurable goals, acid rain has virtually evaporated as an issue in the public's mind. When people know what we're trying to accomplish, and know how to judge our progress, it makes a real difference.

Another area where we are making important progress is our effort to reclaim America's brownfields. These properties — often old gas stations or abandoned small factories — are a blight on their neighborhoods and a drain on the economic vitality of their communities.

Reclaiming brownfields for productive use provides enormous benefits and calculable results. Every acre of brownfields reused saves 4.5 acres of green space. Every dollar of federal money spent on brownfields has leveraged two-and-a-half dollars of private investment. And, of course, when a brownfield is turned into a ballfield or park, or a new doctor's office, or a community center, the neighborhood's quality of life is greatly improved.

Earlier this year, the Senate passed — by a vote of 99 to nothing — brownfields legislation that will help encourage the restoration of thousands of America's brownfields. This bill embraces principles the President campaigned on last year — including giving states more latitude to set cleanup standards and protecting redevelopers with protection from Superfund liability. The bill is awaiting House action, and I am hopeful we will see it enacted by the Congress in the near future.

Having talked a bit about the air and land, let me address our water challenges for a minute. Water is likely to be the major environmental issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is clear that the next generation of environmental progress in water demands the adoption of a watershed-based approach. I recently heard a watershed defined as "Communities connected by water," and I think that's a good definition.

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When a suburban homeowner uses a certain pesticide on their lawn, or changes the oil in their car in the driveway, rain can carry the residue far from where it was originally deposited. When farmers aren't careful about how they manage their waste, a small creek can carry those pollutants from the farm all the way to a lake miles away.

When city dwellers aren't careful about what is deposited on their streets, that waste can wind up in the ocean.

Today, the primary cause of most of America's water pollution challenges is caused by this type of nonpoint source pollution. Accordingly, we at EPA are shifting our focus from point sources — such as a pipe discharging directly into a river — to nonpoint sources.

Some of the most controversial decisions we are facing at EPA concern this issue — and there are no easy answers. But as we move forward, I intend to keep our focus less on process and more on results. That is how I believe we must proceed in meeting every challenge we face.

So when the day comes that my time at EPA is over, I hope it will be very easy to determine whether or not I've succeeded at what I set out to do. If we can say that our air is cleaner, our water is purer, and our land is better protected, then I will know the answer is yes.

I am pleased to say that I do believe we are laying the foundations that will make this possible. I am excited about the environmental progress I expect we will be able to achieve in the months and years ahead. As long as we stay firmly focused on our goals, we will make America's environment cleaner than it is today.

Thank you.

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