



RENEWAL OF COMMITMENT TO THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE PARTNERSHIP SYSTEM MARKING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY

September 2015

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the states recognize the National Environmental Performance Partnership System (NEPPS) for the significant and crucial impact it has made and continues to make in strengthening and advancing partnerships which are at the very foundation of and central to the success of the nation's environmental protection system. These partnerships must be based on consultation, collaboration, and shared accountability to make the most effective use of our respective bodies of knowledge, our existing authorities, and our resources.

On May 17, 1995, EPA and the states entered into a joint agreement to establish NEPPS and committed to direct federal and state resources to improve environmental results, allow states greater flexibility to achieve results, enhance accountability, measure progress, and use environmental performance agreements.

Over the intervening 20 years, EPA and the states have achieved notable success implementing NEPPS while navigating unforeseen and constantly evolving challenges such as constrained resources. At the same time, there has been a dramatic advancement in the tools and technologies to implement environmental programs more effectively. A significant number of states have taken advantage of a key NEPPS feature by entering into Performance Partnership Agreements and Performance Partnership Grants (PPGs), the primary tools for setting priorities and deploying resources which provide significant benefits such as increased programmatic, financial, and administrative flexibility.

EPA has worked with the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) to modernize and revitalize NEPPS to improve efficiency and achieve additional flexibility by:

1. Instituting new approaches to increase state involvement through earlier and more meaningful engagement in the development of national priorities in EPA's National Program Manager (NPM) guidance;
2. Providing a clearer understanding of where flexibility is available and seeking to share information with states, EPA Regions, and NPM offices where this has been put into practice;
3. Reducing administrative burden;
4. Transitioning to a two-year NPM guidance cycle and aligning many programmatic grant guidances on the same two-year planning cycle;
5. Strengthening worksharing by developing mutual principles and best practices for negotiating worksharing agreements; and
6. Developing Grants Policy Issuance (GPI) 15-01, "Performance Partnership Grants for States," to encourage greater PPG use, ensure consistent PPG implementation and management, support the use of multi-year grant workplans to better align them with two-year NPM and programmatic grant guidances, and increase administrative efficiency.

EPA and the states are partnering to develop E-Enterprise for the Environment which can achieve process efficiencies, burden reduction, and transparency that was unattainable 20 years ago. In addition, EPA and ECOS have worked in cooperation to implement initiatives begun under Plan EJ 2014 such as engagement on EJSCREEN, an environmental justice screening and mapping tool to identify places with potentially elevated environmental burdens and vulnerable populations, and fostering community-based partnerships.

As part of this renewal of commitment to NEPPS, EPA and the states emphasize:

1. Support for the principles embodied in the original 1995 NEPPS Agreement, and for the new approaches which have been instituted to ensure that NEPPS continues to be an important, valuable, and viable collaborative mechanism;
2. The need to work jointly to demonstrate sound program performance, leveraging credible, efficient, and effective oversight of state delegated programs such as through the State Review Framework and state-EPA work to develop state delegated permitting program oversight principles and best practices;
3. Support for continuous improvement throughout the programs based on lessons learned, incentives for strong state performance, and the availability of assistance and training to state programs that request assistance;
4. The desire to move towards reporting environmental progress using indicators that are results-based rather than activity-based;
5. Commitment to embrace flexibility and innovation. EPA and the states will collaborate on the development and implementation of innovative and effective alternative compliance monitoring strategies, efficient approaches to utilize appropriate and effective flexibility in implementing programs, and efficient approaches to implement mutually agreed upon worksharing agreements;
6. Willingness to share and develop environmental justice tools through efforts such as Plan EJ 2020, and to seek opportunities to use new and existing partnerships to build revitalized and resilient communities; and
7. Continuation of work through E-Enterprise for the Environment to modernize how government delivers environmental protection. EPA and the states will streamline business processes and share innovations across agencies and programs resulting in enhanced services to the regulated community and the public, and improved environmental results.

Approvals:



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