

Citizens Advisory Council

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cc:
C-215
11-1-01

to the Department of Environmental Protection

P.O. Box 8459 • Rachel Carson State Office Building
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Please Note: Our New Fax Number is 717-787-2878

October 30, 2001

Terry Fabian, Deputy Secretary for Field Operations
Robert Barkanic, Deputy Secretary for Pollution Prevention and Compliance Assistance
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
16th Floor - Rachel Carson State Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2063

Dear Bob and Terry:

Let me begin by thanking you and your staff, on behalf of the Citizens Advisory Council, for your efforts to implement the Environmental Futures Planning Process (EFP2). Many of us on the CAC are intrigued with the program's potential and the opportunities presented by the Department adopting this results-based approach. EFP2 can proactively enhance the regulatory mission of the Department. As the Department shifts its priorities to support this approach, it is particularly important that EFP2 succeeds in involving the public. Council concurs with your assessment that EFP2 calls for more than public participation, it *requires* public engagement, in the field, where the problems are and where the people live.

This is a critical element. Without public engagement EFP2 is little more than an academic planning exercise. There needs to be much more aggressive and intentional effort towards engaging the public. The fact of their absence at public meetings indicates a lack of understanding of what is being implemented among the traditional stakeholders, much less the general public EFP2 proposes to involve.

While we appreciate the need for EFP2 to develop differently across the Commonwealth, efforts to engage the public have been far too passive. Public participation efforts need to be consistent and results based, just like all the programs being evaluated through EFP2. We sense a danger that as the program becomes more evident to stakeholders as business as usual, it will be opposed for lack of understanding. We have specific concerns and recommendations:

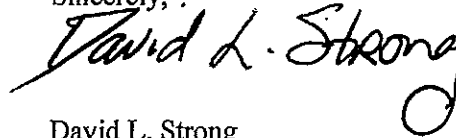
1. The Department needs to do more than schedule periodic open meetings. Key environmental as well as civic and community leaders need to be identified in each area of the state to explain the program, why it is important, and to solicit their assistance to engage the larger community.
2. The Department needs to clarify its message. The notions of this process resulting in any real or significant change or that public engagement can play a key role in how DEP proceeds just don't come across. DEP needs to provide specific, tangible examples of the types of changes that might result from implementation of this process.



3. Someone in the Department needs to be in charge of coordinating and ensuring adequate public outreach across the state. While most of the work may need to happen in the field, at the moment no one person is in charge of facilitating public engagement. The process also needs to leave enough lead-time between the announcement of the meeting and the gathering to be properly promoted.
4. The Department needs to assure that each public meeting is consistent in format, presentation and content. Facilitators must be trained. Participants need to know that their time is well spent so they will continue to be involved and invested in the program.

We hope you share our concerns, and look forward to discussing this in more detail in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David L. Strong". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "D" and "S".

David L. Strong
Chairperson