

Whitman Kicks off Performance Track Event, Announces Key Actions to Support Leadership Program for Outstanding Facilities

April 24, 2002

Administrator Christie Whitman today recognized 280 facilities for their participation in EPA's National Environmental Performance Track program and their commitment to go beyond compliance in environmental performance. Whitman opened the 2002 National Environmental Performance Track Members Event by announcing several key actions in support of this unique leadership program.

"As Performance Track members, you represent a superb example of what we can achieve through partnerships among people and organizations with a passion for protecting the environment and serving their communities," Whitman told attendees. "Together we can ensure a cleaner and healthier environment for our children and grandchildren."

During the program's annual meeting, Whitman announced that EPA will propose a rule to benefit Performance Track members. Members are top environmental performers -- companies and communities that voluntarily go beyond compliance with regulatory requirements to attain levels of environmental performance that benefit the environment, people and communities. In order to participate in Performance Track, facilities must have an Environmental Management System in place, demonstrate continued environmental improvements, conduct public outreach, report performance annually to the EPA and have a record of sustained compliance with environmental regulations.

The proposed rule making will simplify reporting requirements under the Clean Air Act's Maximum Available Control Technology program and for Publicly Owned Treatment Works regulated by the Clean Water Act. In addition, Performance Track members will be allowed to store waste on site for an additional 90 days if they have the added protection of secondary containment. Designed only for Performance Track members, the proposed rule will provide incentives for other businesses and organizations to achieve the strong environmental performance required for Performance Track membership.

"This proposal advances the principle that high-performing facilities should be recognized for their accomplishments -- by allowing them to focus more on environmental progress, instead of process," said Administrator Whitman.

During her remarks, Whitman also announced that she will sign memorandums of agreement (MOAs) this evening with Colorado, Virginia and Massachusetts. The states participating in the MOAs offer their own state innovations programs which are similar in nature to EPA's Performance Track program. These MOAs will make it easier for members of each program to avail themselves of the benefits offered by both programs. Whitman will sign the MOAs during a meeting of the Environmental Council of States in Madison, Wis. A similar agreement was signed previously with Texas. Whitman will recognize Texas during a ceremonial signing of the MOA.

Finally, Whitman introduced EPA's new innovations strategy, "Innovating for Better Results," which provides a strategic framework for all of EPA's innovation driven programs. It calls for EPA to strengthen its partnership with states and tribes, to focus innovation efforts on a set of high priority problems, to diversify environmental protection tools and approaches, and to create a more innovation-friendly culture within the Agency. The strategy is a result of the Innovation Strategy Task Force

formed early last year by Whitman. Last April, Whitman asked the Innovation Action Council (composed of Deputy Assistant Administrators and Deputy Regional Administrators) to formulate recommendations to update the strategy in order to leverage the experiences gained in voluntary and regulatory flexibility programs, and to target innovation on environmental priorities. The innovations strategy is available at: www.epa.gov/innovation/strategy/

"The need for broad-based environmental cooperation -- and innovative new approaches -- is becoming greater everyday," said Whitman. "This strategy is a result of over a year of collaboration between EPA and our stakeholders and will require EPA to refine its approach to its mission of protecting public health and the environment."

The National Environmental Performance Track, launched in June 2000, recognizes and rewards members for their commitment to sound environmental management, continuous environmental improvement, local community involvement and strong record of compliance. The 280 members have committed to reducing emissions of volatile organic compounds by 98,000 pounds; lowering green house gas emissions by 26 million pounds, and reducing solid waste by 225 million pounds. Member facilities represent small and large companies from the manufacturing, chemical, dry cleaning and automotive industries, among others.

This year's conference theme, "Partner Today, Preserve Tomorrow," focused on one of the goals of the Performance Track program -- to transform relationships among EPA, states, businesses and local communities. The half-day event gave members a chance to network with peers, exchange best environmental management practices and share information about how they are meeting their Performance Track commitments.

For more information about Performance Track, visit

<http://www.epa.gov/performancetrack/>