Online Democracy: National Dialogue on Public Involvement in EPA Decisions

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Public Participation in Nanotechnology Workshop

May 30-31, 2006

Overview

- National Dialogue on Public Involvement in EPA Decisions
- Attributes of Model
- Participation and Demographics
- Participation Dynamics
- Results
- Challenges

National Dialogue on Public Involvement in EPA Decisions

- Revise and implement policy
- Complement notice and comment process
- Two weeks, July 2001
- Information Renaissance, Resources for the Future, EPA, Hewlett Foundation
- www.network-democracy.org/epa-pip/

Objectives

- Primary: Provide EPA with information from a variety of viewpoints for public participation policy and its implementation
    - Explicitly <u>not</u> to build consensus.
- Secondary:
    - Open up new lines of communication between the public and agency staff
    - Educate and inform participants
    - Encourage formal comments on the policy
    - Test a new approach to public participation

Threaded Asynchronous Discussion

- Public Comment and Consultation on Permits and Rules [Permits and Rules], **Bob Carlitz, Info Ren Staff** (*Tue, 17 Jul 08:19*)
- Improve Input to Permitting [Permits and Rules], **Charlie Atherton, Panelist** (*Tue, 17 Jul 08:19*)
  - RE: Improve Input to Permitting [Permits and Rules], **Marci Kinter, Panelist** (*Tue, 17 Jul 09:07*)
  - RE: Improve Input to Permitting [Permits and Rules], **Bill Aird** (*Tue, 17 Jul 10:14*)
    - RE: Improve Input to Permitting [Permits and Rules], **Charlie Atherton, Panelist** (*Tue, 17 Jul 12:25*)
  - RE: Improve Input to Permitting [Permits and Rules], **Charlie Atherton, Panelist** (*Tue, 17 Jul 23:49*)
  - Improve input to permitting [Permits and Rules], **Ron Anzalone** (*Tue, 17 Jul 12:12*)
  - Improve input to permitting [Permits and Rules], **Charlie Atherton, Panelist** (*Tue, 17 Jul 13:57*)
    - RE: Improve input to permitting [Permits and Rules], **Marci Kinter, Panelist** (*Tue, 17 Jul 15:14*)
      - RE: Improve input to permitting [Permits and Rules], **Charlie Atherton** (*Tue, 17 Jul 19:22*)
    - RE: Improve input to permitting [Permits and Rules], **Verena Owen** (*Tue, 17 Jul 17:48*)
- Permits and Rules [Permits and Rules], **Andrea Stoeckel** (*Tue, 17 Jul 08:20*)
  - RE: permits and rules [Permits and Rules], **Marci Kinter, Panelist** (*Tue, 17 Jul 09:07*)
  - RE: Permits and Rules [Permits and Rules], **David Clarke, Panelist** (*Tue, 17 Jul 10:07*)
  - Permits and Rules [Permits and Rules], **Katherine Carlitz, Info Ren Staff** (*Wed, 18 Jul 08:28*)
    - Re: Permits and Rules [Permits and Rules], **Earpwm** (*Wed, 18 Jul 10:12*)
    - RE: Permits and Rules summary [Permits and Rules], **Rich Puchalsky** (*Wed, 18 Jul 13:53*)
- Welcome - July 17, 2001 [Permits and Rules], **Rebecca Astin, EPA Host** (*Tue, 17 Jul 08:50*)
  - RE: Welcome - July 17, 2001 [Permits and Rules], **Marci Kinter, Panelist** (*Tue, 17 Jul 15:14*)
- Improving public input to permitting [Permits and Rules], **David Clarke, Panelist** (*Tue, 17 Jul 09:00*)
- Getting information to the public on CCA [Information], Charles Franklin (15:44) [Permits and Rules], **Karsten A. Rist (Mr.)** (*Tue, 17 Jul 09:37*)
  - RE: Getting information to the public on CCA [Information], Charles Franklin (15:44) [Permits and Rules], **Michael Glaab** (*Tue, 17 Jul 12:13*)
- Small Business Participation [Permits and Rules], **Tom Kelly, Panelist** (*Tue, 17 Jul 09:37*)
- Small Business Outreach [Permits and Rules], **Tom Kelly, Panelist** (*Tue, 17 Jul 09:42*)
  - Small Business Outreach [Permits and Rules], **Tom Kelly, Panelist** (*Tue, 17 Jul 10:08*)
  - Small Business Outreach [Permits and Rules], **Tom Kelly, Panelist** (*Tue, 17 Jul 10:14*)
- Recruiting Small Businesses for Rulemaking [Permits and Rules], **Tom Kelly** (*Tue, 17 Jul 12:12*)
  - RE: Recruiting Small Businesses for Rulemaking [Permits and Rules], **Michael Glaab** (*Tue, 17 Jul 13:57*)

Agenda

Day		Topic		
July 10	Tuesday	Introductions/Goals	Panelists	Summary
July 11	Wednesday	Outreach	Panelists	Summary
July 12	Thursday	Information	Panelists	Summary
July 13	Friday	Assistance	Panelists	Summary
July 14	Saturday	Catch-up		Summary
July 16	Monday	Collaboration	Panelists	Summary
July 17	Tuesday	Permits and Rules	Panelists	Summary
July 18	Wednesday	Local Issues/Superfund	Panelists	Summary
July 19	Thursday	States/Tribes/Municipalities	Panelists	Summary
July 20	Friday	Evaluation	Panelists	Summary

Hosts and Panelists

July 16, 2001

Host: EPA Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center

- Denise Anderson
- Deborah Dalton
- Veronica DeCosta
- Willam Hall
- Barbara Marx

Panel:

- Greg Bourne, Center for Civic Participation and Renewal
- James Creighton, Creighton and Creighton
- Deborah Dalton, EPA Conflict Prevention and Resolution Center
- Marcia Kinter, Screenprinting and Graphic Imaging Association International
- Tim Sherer, EPA Office of Cooperative Environmental Management

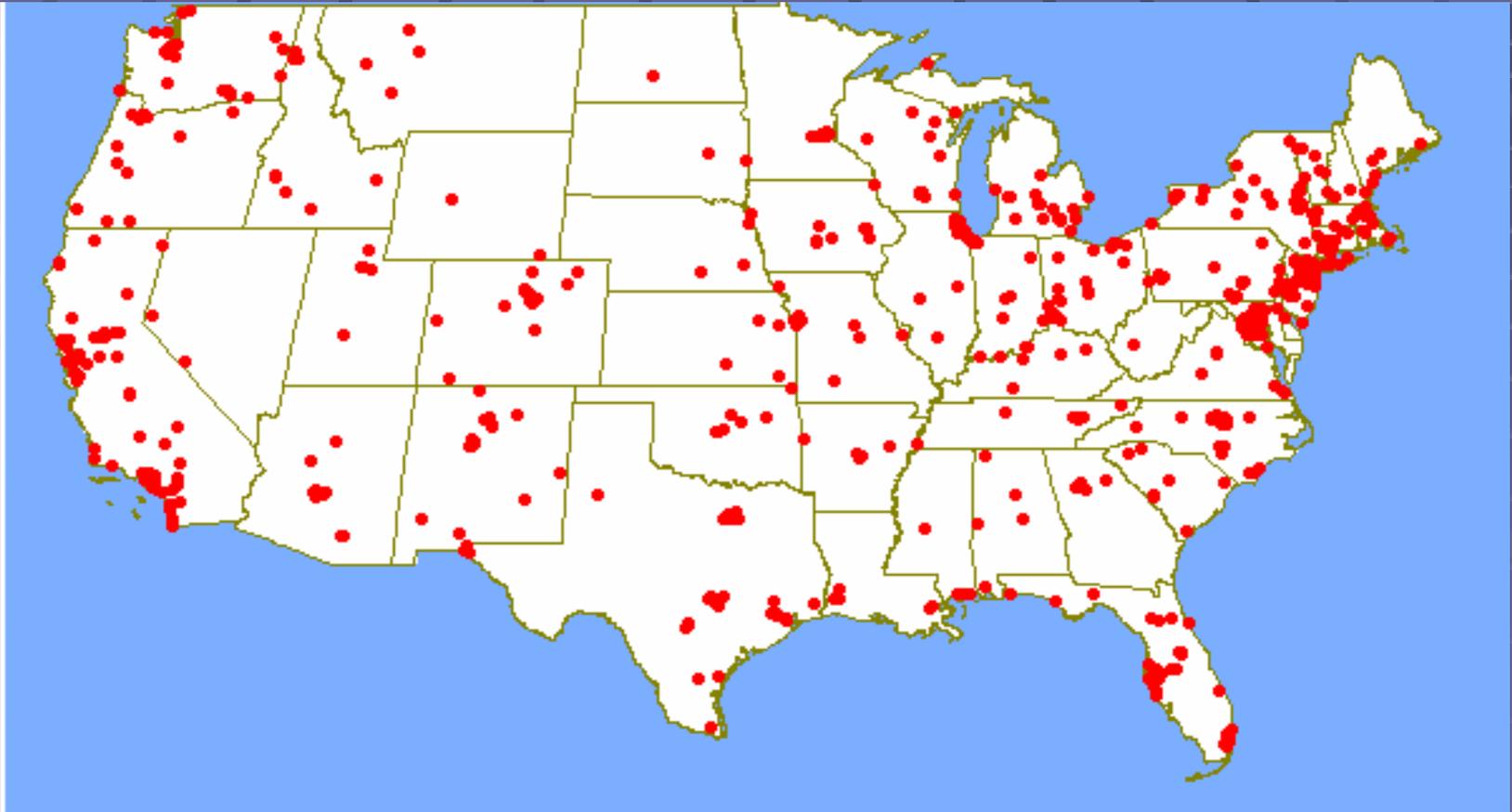| Panelists:	July 10 11 12 13 16 17 18 19 20
	Discussion Agenda

Other Attributes

- Active advertising for participation
- Open participation with registration and commitment
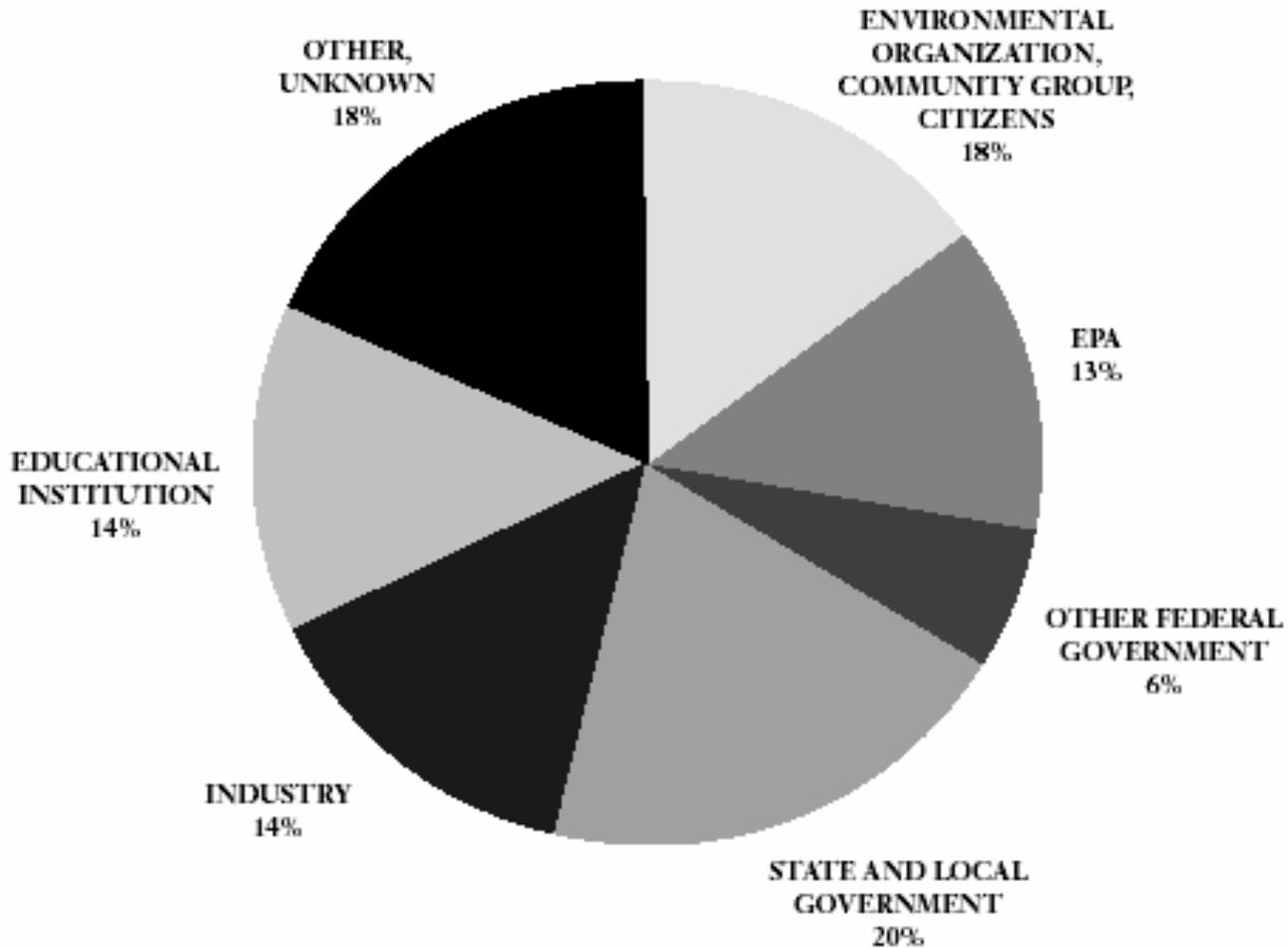- Briefing book
- Daily summaries

Participants

- 1,166 registered (70% as active)
- 320 posted 1,261 messages
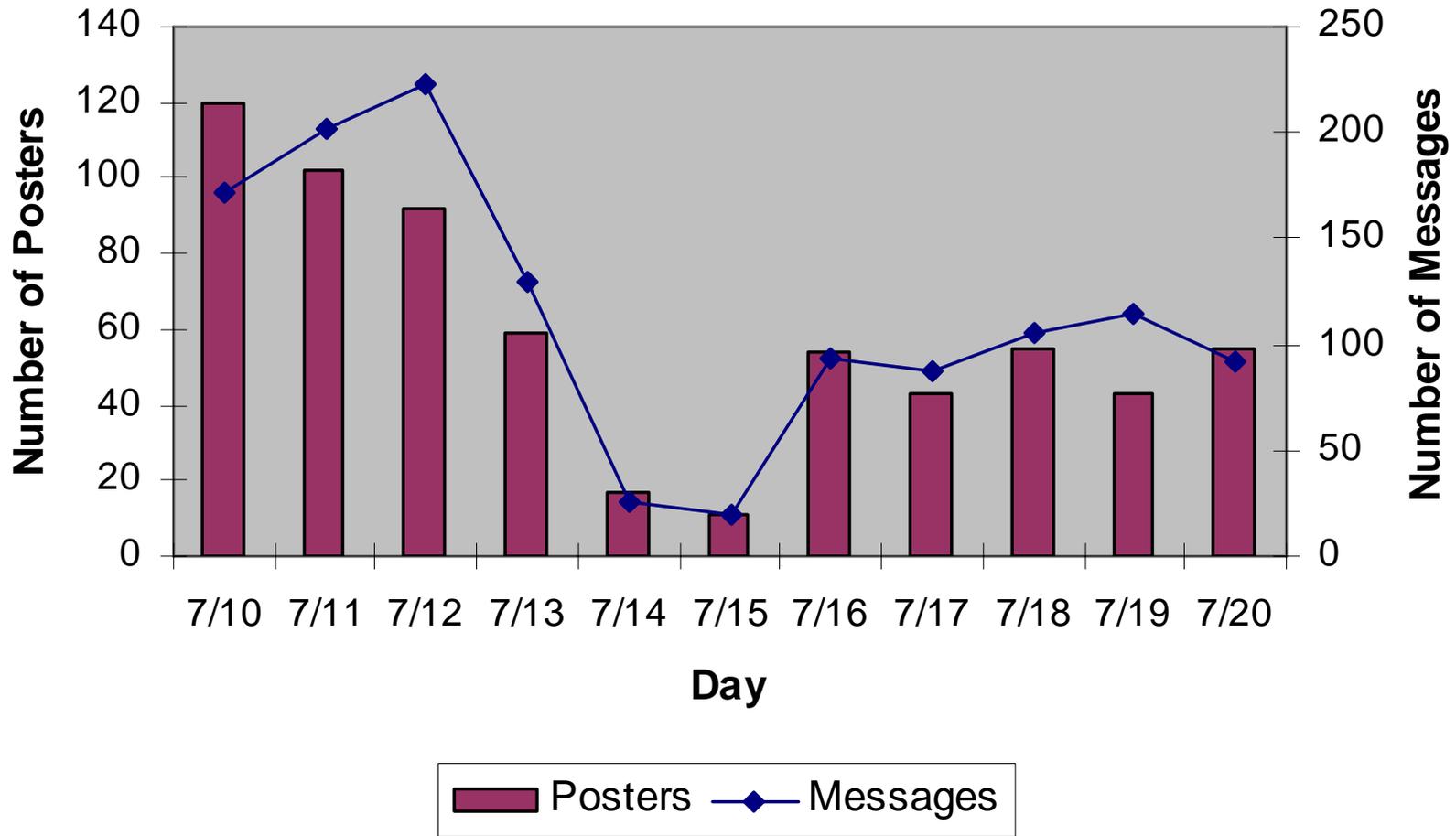- 70 messages read for each posted

Locations

Affiliations

Some Characteristics of Participants

- More white, older, female than national average
- 40% involved with EPA at least once a month
- 76% very or somewhat familiar with EPA public participation policies
- 86% used Internet at least 10 times per week
- 66% had graduate or professional degree

Pattern of Participation

Dynamics

- Reciprocity:
  - 50%-70% of daily messages were replies to previous messages
  - 83% of messages were part of a thread
- 78% said communication was respectful
  - But, dissenting voices sometimes marginalized
- High level of responsiveness to questions
  - Responses were sometimes formulaic or bureaucratic
- "Insiders" contributed 33% of messages
  - But, 66% of threads were started by less-frequent posters

Results

- Primary
  - EPA achieved goal of more, and more diverse, input into the PIP and its implementation
- Secondary
  - 76% of participants said they learned a lot (mainly about each other)
  - 43% of participants said they felt more positive about EPA (only 6% said they felt more negative)
  - Participation resulted in only a few formal comments on the policy.
  - 73% made no personal contacts—not a networking opportunity for most.

Challenges

- Time consuming; need better filtering and navigation tools
- The volume and nature of the content made it hard to process
- Participant demographics suggest the "usual suspects" were participating
- Bureaucratic challenges inherent in real-time interaction

A Niche for Online Dialogues

	Participation	Communication	Output
Public Comments	Broad	Static	Information Exchange
Public Hearings	Broad	Static	Information Exchange
Advisory Committees	Narrow	Interactive	Recommendations
Negotiations	Narrow	Interactive	Agreements

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