

# Open Letter to the People of New England

Today's most significant environmental challenges require EPA and state environmental agencies to adopt some very different strategies and approaches from those we have used in the past. And, most importantly, they require us to better connect our efforts to those of our citizens who are deeply involved in environmental issues in their own communities.

EPA-New England recognizes that need very clearly. This has led us to restructure our enterprise, use stronger science and smarter economics in our work, and most notably, to forge coalitions with others— among them businesses, environmental advocates, and municipal leaders. All of this and more goes into our vision of EPA-New England as a laboratory for bold experimentation in new approaches to environmental protection.

Although we continue to learn and experiment, the results in this report show we are achieving some real success:

- An EPA-led community collaborative is bringing environmental improvements to the Charles River in Boston, as we move towards our goal of making it fishable and swimmable by Earth Day 2005.
- We are working with a dynamic group of New England mayors to clean up contaminated sites and re-energize urban economies. And our Urban Environmental Initiative has built community coalitions in Hartford, Providence, Boston and elsewhere to help neighborhoods in these cities win their battle against asthma and lead poisoning.
- Major clean-up agreements have been achieved in New Bedford and Pittsfield, Massachusetts and Burlington, Vermont through the involvement of local citizens, resulting in substantial environmental gains without years of costly lawsuits.
- Substantial improvements in environmental and economic performance are being achieved through our assistance and pollution prevention efforts—the most ambitious in the country.
- A targeted, risk-based enforcement strategy has led to more criminal penalties and more people going to jail for environmental lawbreaking than under any previous administration in EPA-New England's history.

Huge challenges still lie ahead: Sprawl and unplanned development are eating up our open spaces and wildlife habitat. Our waters are contaminated by stormwater run-off and other diffuse sources of pollution. Our health is threatened by persistent chemicals like mercury and excessive chlorine in our drinking water. And our planet is faced with the specter of climate change.

These problems will not be solved without a shared commitment and cooperative approach. As Benjamin Franklin, a son of New England, said in describing citizen activism in his times, "We must all hang together, or we shall all hang separately." That is true for us today as well. We must continue to work together to shape our vision and guide our efforts as we strive to bring common sense to common problems for the common good. That remains our firm commitment to all New Englanders.

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