

Unification for Action Needed For Environmental Management

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In starting to consider a comprehensive system for environmental management, it is appropriate to identify the goal of the system before discussing specific components. The goal might be to insure an environment that will confer greatest optimum health, safety, comfort and well being on this and future generations and maximize the economic and cultural benefits of a healthy people.

The next logical step might be to outline major environmental problems to be included in a comprehensive environmental management system. The currently popular air-water-solid waste syndrome is not synonymous with the environment, and a system for environmental management must include not only problems of air, water, and solid wastes, but also environmental injuries; environmental chemicals; radiation; noise; food; space; biological insults such as insects, rodents, and pathogens; and shelter. Many civic and political leaders like to talk "environment" while meaning "air, water, solid wastes." It takes persistence and salesmanship to induce some of these well-meaning but incompletely informed people to be interested in the total environment.

Another aspect of a system for environmental management to be emphasized is that of single-purpose objectives vs. multiple objectives- Many environmental management programs have been geared to only a single-purpose "health" objective. It has become apparent, however, that all environmental problems must be programmed not only on "health" needs, but also giving necessary weight to the comfort, safety, and well-being of man in his environment.

The question of consumer protection and public service vs. special interests also merits some discussion when considering a delivery system. Many jurisdictions have assigned environmental management functions to agencies that promote or protect a special industry or other narrow segment of society. Food and pesticide control functions are assigned to agricultural oriented agencies, radiation protection functions to radiation producing interests, water quality programs to environmental development and utilization agencies, and occupational health programs to labor departments. All such environmental protection functions should be handled by an agency having prime missions of public service, consumer protection, and environmental protection rather than promotion and protection of a special interest.

This leads to the question of unified effort versus fragmented effort. For purposes of economy, effectiveness, efficiency, and public service, all environmental protection regulatory functions must be administered within one agency. These problems are ecologically dependent, and unified effort is necessary to prevent confusion; duplication of facilities, personnel, effort and travel; program gaps; controversy; program imbalance; and haphazard priorities.

The system should be action-oriented, not problem-oriented. Some environmental protection agencies and personnel are so involved with identifying the reasons something can't be done that they become ineffective.

The system must be so organized as to insure visibility, ease and speed of action, adequate funding, reaction to public and environmental needs, coordination with other

involved agencies and groups, and multiple-objective programming. Whether these points can be assured within an existing organization or whether a separate environmental management and consumer protection agency must be formed will depend on local conditions and organizational patterns. Attaining the aforementioned points is essential to an effective program.

In developing programs for a comprehensive environmental management system, we should not blindly follow tradition in terms of programs and program methods that have been followed elsewhere. Problems should be identified, goals and objectives agreed on, priorities established, methods indicated, and programs established on the basis of achieving the stated goals and objectives. After all, a program is a grouping of activities designed to achieve a specified end result. To be perfectly candid, many traditional programs have been less than successful, making re-evaluation and re-grouping appropriate.

As to necessary components in terms of program methods or functions, most of these should be associated or linked with programs of the environmental management and consumer protection agency, but some are also appropriate for citizen groups, industry, and educational institutions. These methods or functions include:

1. Research - an obligation and responsibility of all individuals and groups involved in environmental management and consumer protection.

2. Demonstration - to determine the effectiveness of a given program, method, facility, or equipment.

3. Standards promulgation - a specific statement of environmental quality desired so that regulations may be developed accordingly.

4. Promulgation of regulations - enforceable action of a legally constituted legislative body stating the means of achieving a standard or other environmental objective.

5. Enforcement - a wide array of administrative and legal methods of insuring the effectiveness of a legal requirement. Basic to any program of environmental management and consumer protection.

6. Planning - includes a number of necessary program methods including problem identification, goal setting, stating objectives, determining priorities, evaluation, cost-benefit studies, and budget projections. Each component of the planning process is vital, and arrangement must be made for their inclusion in any environmental management system.

7. Public information - to keep the total public continuously advised of problems, needs, goals, objectives, solutions, gaps.

8. Training - for staff and certain target groups involved in environmental and consumer protection.

9. Management Information - a vital but frequently overlooked component of the system. Basic to planning, programming and executing. Includes data to delineate action, activity, needs, environmental conditions.

10. Environmental surveillance and analysis - to assess contaminant levels and the impact of environmental problems on man's health, safety, comfort, and well being.

11. Coordination - with other agencies and groups to insure exchange of information and coordinate. Cannot be left to chance or good-will. (Hilleboe's Iron Law: Equals Cannot Coordinate Equals.)

12. Legislation - designed to be effective and serve the public rather than creating procedural delays.

13. Fiscal Commitment - basic to all the foregoing.

14. Developing a constituency - perhaps the most important and an outstanding example of long-term, continued failure on the part of health agencies and public health professionals. Conservation groups may well afford the best constituency at this time in history.

While this discussion is primarily oriented to official agencies, do not underplay or under rate the critical importance of agencies and groups such as,

1. Industry - which must cooperate, comply, agree, or be coerced to adhere to the will of the majority of the total public.

2. Consumers - who must eventually pay for environmental quality or the lack thereof.

3. Educational Institutions - not only to educate the environmental managers, but also to research and provide unbiased information for the total public.

4. Citizen Advisory Groups - critical to the effectiveness and success of a control agency.

5. Citizen groups - to provide mechanisms for interested citizens to become constructively involved in the struggle for a quality environment.

Those involved in developing an environmental management system should reassess and question the need for traditional types of environmental management personnel. These types have not always had a record to be proud of. Change should not be made for the sake of change but for improved environmental management.

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