



A Blueprint for the National Environmental Information Exchange Network

January 2001



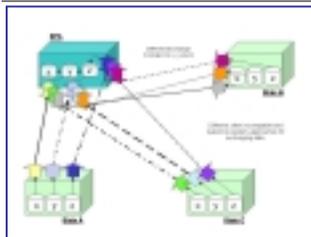
Information – The Foundation

Information is fundamental to the work of environmental protection. EPA and the States are providing better access -- to more environmental information -- by more people than ever before. Environmental decision-makers at all levels need high quality environmental information to make informed decisions. Yet, many of the current systems and approaches to information exchange are not designed to meet these needs.

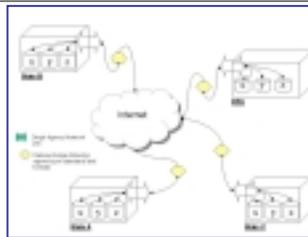
States, through the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are developing a new solution. Together we propose a National Environmental Information Exchange Network, using technologies and approaches that created e-commerce, to exchange data between environmental agencies. These collaborative efforts of EPA and the States, will produce a new world of environmental information.

Exchange Network

The Exchange Network is an Internet-based, multimedia approach to environmental information exchange. The Exchange Network is described in a Blueprint document developed by a State/EPA team. It is based on simple and familiar concepts, and implements these with new Internet-based tools such as data standards -- a common language of terms and their meanings -- and data exchange templates -- an agreed-upon way for packaging the data for exchange. Exchange Network participants will house this information on their own site where it will be available upon authorized request.



Current State/EPA Reporting Relationship



Exchange Network Concept

Exchange Network Benefits:

- Improved Data Quality
- More Efficient Data Exchange
- Reduced Reporting and Accessing Burden
- Improved Data Security
- Enhanced Environmental Decision-Making
- Improved Public Access

"The Exchange Network will be standards-based, highly interconnected, dynamic, flexible and secure, operating with broad-based voluntary participation of the individual States and EPA."

Exchange Network Principles:

- Stewardship of data will be established by mutual agreement between two or more partners who want or need to exchange data.
- Stewards are directly responsible for the quality and availability of this data.
- Network members concur to use agreed-upon technology standards, including data standards.

Network Blueprint

A team of EPA and State information policy and technology experts drafted the Network Blueprint, which describes the technologies and agreements needed to begin and grow the Exchange Network. The Information Management Work Group of EPA and State representatives, endorsed this Blueprint at its October 2000 meeting.



A copy of the Blueprint can be found on the web at: <http://www.ecos.org>

State/EPA Information Management Work Group

State environmental agencies, through ECOS and EPA, have initiated a system-wide approach to address joint information management by forming this Work Group of senior leaders.



The States and EPA are committed to a partnership to build locally and nationally accessible, cohesive, and coherent environmental information systems that will ensure that both the public and regulators have access to the information needed to document environmental performance, understand environmental conditions, and make sound decisions that ensure environmental protection. -- State/EPA Vision 1998

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