

U.S. Department of Defense News Release

State Environmental Officials Endorse Efforts for Common Approaches to Emerging Contaminants

The Environmental Council of the States (ECOS), a national association of state environmental commissioners, has endorsed the efforts of the Emerging Contaminants Task Group—comprised of officials from the states, Department of Defense (DoD) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—in the search for common methods of handling new or emerging threats to human health or the environment. Emerging contaminants either have no currently published health standard or an existing health standard that is evolving. As such they can pose special problems when deciding whether and how to undertake site-specific risk assessments.

At its annual meeting in Branson, Missouri, on Sept. 21, 2008, ECOS members passed the resolution, *Supporting Work on Contaminated Site Response to Emerging Contaminants and Related Risk Communication Issues*. The resolution endorses the work of the Emerging Contaminants Task Group, which is a subgroup of the ECOS-DoD Sustainability Work Group. It also supports continuation of the collaborative process the task group has used to develop a common understanding of emerging contaminants and exchange of information.

ECOS' passage of the resolution caps more than three years of effort by the Emerging Contaminants Task Group. The task group has collaborated to write several defining issue papers. North Carolina Commissioner Bill Ross, who co-chairs the ECOS-DoD Sustainability Work Group, said he was appreciative of the task group members' hard work. He said the products they have developed are valuable resources for ECOS.

Since 2005, the Emerging Contaminants Task Group conducted a state survey and prepared three issue papers that frame the concerns with emerging contaminants:

- “Risk Communication Principles and Resources” that sets forth a framework for clear communications to the public on emerging contaminants science and risks
- The “Provisional Values Paper” that discusses identification of appropriate toxicity values and criteria for risk assessment in the absence of EPA Integrated Risk Information System values
- The Resource Triggers Paper, formally titled, “Initiation of Emerging Contaminants Characterization and Response Actions for Protection of Human Health”

The papers are available on the ECOS-DoD Sustainability Work Group website:
http://www.ecos.org/section/sustainability_work_group

The ECOS-DoD Emerging Contaminants Task Group seeks to develop a common understanding of chemicals or materials that are a perceived or real threat to human health or environment, and have either no currently published health standard or an existing health standard that is evolving. A better understanding of emerging contaminants will increase public confidence in government's abilities to protect public health and the environment, and help sustain DoD's mission. The task group is co-chaired by Eric Noack, Chief, Bureau of Waste Management, Nevada Division of Environmental Protection; and Shannon Cunniff, Director of Emerging Contaminants in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Representatives from several states participated in discussion and development of the Emerging Contaminants issue papers, including Alabama, Alaska, California, Massachusetts, Minnesota and Nevada.

ECOS and the DoD formed the ECOS-DoD Sustainability Work Group in 2004 to exchange ideas across jurisdictional boundaries, and to help create sustainable bases and ranges in harmony with local communities. The Sustainability Work Group is comprised of state and federal stakeholders who work to find solutions to complex environmental challenges, such as compatible land use and emerging contaminants. Co-chairs of the work group are Bill Ross, Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources; and Alex Beehler, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Environment, Safety and Occupational Health).