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Santa Fe, New Mexico

As certified by  
Ben Grumbles  
Executive Director

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES DATA AND METRICS**

WHEREAS, ECOS represents states, territories, and the District of Columbia, throughout this resolution the term “states” indicates states, territories, and the District of Columbia; and

WHEREAS, the states affirm their belief that quality data should support decisions made to protect human health and the environment; and

WHEREAS, continued improvement in the breadth, depth, and quality of environmental performance and outcomes data and metrics provides a firmer foundation for policymaking to protect human health and the environment; and

WHEREAS, sound data and robust metrics are critical to demonstrating to all stakeholders the results gained from investment in environmental and human health protection; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. EPA and state environmental agencies through cooperative governance of environmental programs share this data; and

WHEREAS, the overwhelming majority of data in U.S. EPA’s national environmental databases is collected by state, territorial, local, and tribal officials, and includes diverse and extensive information on ambient environmental conditions, compliance and enforcement actions, and permitting; and

WHEREAS, U.S. EPA collects and maintains significant additional data that is important to states for managing programs, and U.S. EPA has unique data analysis capabilities; and

WHEREAS, in addition to what is required to be reported to U.S. EPA, states often collect additional data to meet their own requirements; and

WHEREAS, to meet requests for new data from U.S. EPA due to new regulations, programs, and requirements, states need time to change state regulations, adjust data systems, and collect and verify the data; and

WHEREAS, U.S. EPA has adopted CIO 2135.3 “Enterprise Information Management Policy” in October 2024 and the “U.S. EPA Open Government Plan 5.0” in September 2018 in part to comply with the E-Government Act, Digital Government Strategy, the Open Government Initiative, and their associated Executive Orders and Office of Management and Budget directives, and the Evidence Act of 2018 has now turned many of these standards into law. The goals of this policy and plan are ensuring that information is easy to discover, understand, access, and reuse in a secure manner including release of information in open and machine readable-format to support greater knowledge-driven decisions and more fully harness the power of this information. A number of states have similarly adopted laws, executive orders or other means relating to open government principles and initiatives; and

WHEREAS, U.S. EPA has committed through its Open Government policies to publish information in open formats following open standards, to help stakeholders understand information with descriptive and informative metadata, and to enhance information use by leveraging web services and tools to enable the public and other organizations to better leverage the abundance of information available; and

WHEREAS, states believe that data transparency, clarity, comparability, and quality will be essential to maintaining the public trust and environmental performance; and

WHEREAS, e-reporting, where feasible, can help with data entry burdens; and

WHEREAS, publicly-accessible, well-maintained databases that meet state requirements for maintenance of public records can increase transparency and potentially alleviate burdens from Freedom of Information Act requests; and

WHEREAS, careful state-EPA coordination with a focus on efficient data management is essential to realize benefits to the regulated community, regulators, policy makers, and the public from sound data and robust metrics and to effectively manage costs associated with collecting, verifying, and evaluating data and maintaining systems.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL OF THE STATES (ECOS):

Recommends that U.S. EPA ensure that its compliance, violation, and enforcement dataset be complete and transparent to the public as appropriate;

Recommends that U.S. EPA consult with states regarding the proper metrics and interpretation of state reported data, as well as, how this data is presented and displayed in public-facing websites, and to identify data and metrics that may be used for benchmarking environmental and public health outcomes;

Seeks from U.S. EPA balanced, targeted, clearly defined, and adequately disseminated data submission requirements in its oversight of delegated programs that considers early and meaningful state input and allows states to focus their efforts on program implementation;

Recommends U.S. EPA work with states in its oversight of delegated programs, to improve data accuracy, streamline data requirements, and facilitate two-way data transfers including through the National Environmental Information Exchange Network;

Recommends that U.S. EPA work with states when revising data requirements to ensure that data collected meets the decision-making needs and requirements of U.S. EPA and states;

Recommends that U.S. EPA share federal data and data analysis tools to assist states in managing programs and measuring performance and that EPA incorporate state needs for communicating with the public about environmental program performance as appropriate;

Submits the need for U.S. EPA to provide states with additional funding assistance and appropriate time for implementation including time for U.S. EPA to adequately update federal databases so that states can prepare for and update state data systems to meet any new data requests;

Believes that adequate training and instruction materials are imperative to train new staff and for the implementation of revised data requirements and that states and U.S. EPA should plan this training together;

Recommends that U.S. EPA recognize the on-going costs of data collection, evaluation, and management and consider these costs an integral part of program management and provide the states the flexibility necessary to allow data cost to be covered under program grants; and

Urges U.S. EPA to continue to work strategically and cooperatively with states through E-Enterprise for the Environment to modernize data systems, implement open government programs, and develop policies and procedures that manage information as a strategic asset.