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Straw Principles for the Future of Environmental Data Sharing

These straw principles from states, Tribes, and EPA provide direction for future discussions about a shared vision for the future of environmental data sharing. Inclusion in this list does not indicate formal endorsement by any specific agency. Several overarching concepts will continue to influence the application of these straw principles and will shape data sharing conversations:

- Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) is an evolving issue and there are ongoing efforts by Tribes and regulatory partners to determine the appropriate approaches for sharing, using, and handling this Knowledge.
- Participatory Science data is becoming more prevalent and more sophisticated as technological innovations continue and is increasingly supplementing environmental data collected by EPA, states, and tribes.
- Environmental justice and equity principles are a priority for EPA, states, and tribes, and will continue to guide environmental protection efforts.

This document has been developed for the E-Enterprise partnership (comprised of states, Tribes and US EPA) to be used as design guidelines for environmental data sharing activities related to E-Enterprise. The document does not necessarily reflect past, current, or anticipated US EPA or federal policy.

1. **Commitment to Data Sharing:** Data shared among states[1], Tribes[2], and EPA[3] is a cornerstone of making equitable environmental policy decisions and should have a specific and demonstrable use that:
    - Contributes to public understanding and decision-making about environmental and health risks in their communities.
    - Supports agencies' ability to effectively manage environmental programs.
    - Enables regulators, legislators and other oversight bodies, and the public to measure the success of programs in delivering environmental results.
    - Respects Tribal Data Sovereignty, the right for Tribes to govern the collection, ownership, and application of Tribal data.
    - Through metadata provides the context, purpose, reliability, and collection methods to enhance users' understanding and use of data.

2. **Commitment to the Digital Strategy:** States, Tribes, and EPA should recommit to the [E-Enterprise Digital Strategy](July 2019) and its principle to implement an information-centric approach that unlocks the value of digital information and enables seamless integration of real-time data. An information-centric approach ensures all partners follow the same "rules

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1 The term "states" is inclusive of states, territories, and the District of Columbia.
2 The term "Tribes" is inclusive of Tribal Nations, Reservations, Pueblos, Bands, Communities, and Native Villages.
3 The term "EPA" refers to U.S. EPA Headquarters, Regions, and Offices.

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of the road" by using agreed-upon standards to ensure that data is F.A.I.R. (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable).

3. **Commitment to the Exchange Network approach to Standards, Service Development and Implementation:** States, Tribes, and EPA should reinvigorate the longstanding Exchange Network principles of respect for existing delegations, mutual accountability, early and meaningful engagement, joint governance, and shared stewardship of data exchange standards and services.

4. **Commitment to Transparency and Openness:** States, Tribes, and EPA recognize that data transparency and openness must be accompanied by respect in the use and dissemination of other agencies' information. Communication between all parties is essential to achieving this balance, particularly in enforcement contexts. All data should be put in proper context with the understanding that:
    o Tribes may have certain information too sensitive to share as it relates to data sovereignty.
    o Data may also be determined to be sensitive from states over their own data collected with non-federal funds and should respect tribal concerns at it relates to provenance.
    o All data must be properly secured with risk mitigation mechanisms.

5. **Commitment to Tribal Data Sovereignty:** States and EPA understand that Tribes are sovereign nations and have the ability and right to govern the collection, ownership, and application of data, information, and knowledge about its peoples, lands, and resources as appropriate under federal law and EPA policy.

6. **Commitment to Open-mindedness:** States, Tribes, and EPA support reimagining past approaches to data sharing. We need a new operating model that reflects federated program delegations and responds to the needs of data users, rather than stove-piped databases. We also need to understand the variance in capacities and the unique needs that many partners, especially Tribes have when it comes to data sharing and exchange, ensuring that all parties of the partnership are being supported.

7. **Commitment to Reduce Duplication:** States, Tribes, and EPA support the adoption of policies, processes and technologies that will minimize the duplication of datasets in disparate data systems. Maintaining multiple copies of data is expensive and redundant and leads to data quality issues when copies get out of sync.

8. **Commitment to Cost Sharing:** States, Tribes, and EPA support the availability and independent alignment of grant resources and other funding sources to help all agencies implement technologies and processes that enable a transition to an information-centric environmental protection enterprise. The use of Exchange Network Grant funded solutions that are provided by 3rd party vendors as a subscription service, should be freely shared with other States and Tribes. Partnership coordination on investments in data sharing standards

and technologies is critical in building an environmental protection enterprise that is interoperable, agile, and respects variance in environmental capacity.

9. **Commitment to 'Build Once, Use Many':** States, Tribes, and EPA support seeking out existing solutions, reusing information and services, and jointly governing shared services to address customer needs, timely communication, planning, increased data integration, and dissemination of evolving best practices.