



THE
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Alexandra Dapolito Dunn
Executive Director &
General Counsel

December 7, 2016

Dear ECOS Members:

As environmental leaders across the nation, our responsibility to apply our best efforts to ensure that the people in our states have clean air, safe and clean water, and thriving land and economies is not relieved in times of political transition. As we prepare for the Trump Administration, the Officers of the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) have been asked whether ECOS will change its organizational priorities and practices for the new Administration. We are fortunate that ECOS is served by a clear mission, a [Strategic Plan](#), our [Priority Areas for a Time of Political Transition](#) paper, and a dedicated [Executive Committee](#) and membership, which collectively guide us – particularly during times of change. ECOS' mission statement is:

“The purpose of ECOS is to improve the capability of state environmental agencies and their leaders to protect and improve human health and the environment of the United States of America.

Our belief is that state government agencies are the keys to delivering environmental protection afforded by both federal and state law. Further, we believe that ECOS plays a critical role in facilitating a quality relationship between federal and state agencies in the fulfillment of that mission. That role is defined as:

- Articulate, advocate, preserve, and champion the role of the states in environmental management;
- Provide for the exchange of ideas, views, and experiences among states and with others;
- Foster cooperation and coordination in environmental management; and
- Articulate state positions to Congress, federal agencies, and the public on environmental issues.”

ECOS will act consistently with this mission and our plans, and seek the input and guidance of our Executive Committee often.

I want to take this opportunity to reflect on the strong relationship we have developed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over the past eight years. It is the reality of our cooperative federalism relationship that states and EPA often have robust dialogue – and yes, significant disagreement – on the appropriate approaches to both routine and first impression permits, cleanups, standards, programs, and enforcement. Notwithstanding, we have many accomplishments of which to be proud. Among them ECOS, frequently with Cooperative Agreement support from EPA:

- Developed and matured the transformative E-Enterprise for the Environment initiative, culminating in a recent shared [website](#) highlighting over fifty innovative streamlining projects jointly governed by state, tribal, and EPA officials;
- Met annually with EPA Headquarters to provide state priorities for consideration in EPA's annual budget proposal, and welcomed robust high level EPA participation at every ECOS Spring, Fall, and STEP meeting;
- Furthered strong relationships with our public health colleagues and on the environment/public health nexus through a Memorandum of Understanding between ECOS, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, and EPA;
- Created an ECOS Tribal Liaison position and advanced partnerships with the National Tribal Operations Committee;
- Developed and finalized *Principles & Best Practices for Oversight of State Permitting Programs*;

- In the area of business process improvement (BPI), ECOS compiled 700 state [BPI](#) and lean projects and appointed two ECOS members to EPA's Lean Action Board, which held its December 2016 meeting at the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality;
- Advanced flexibility for states through the 2015 renewal of the National Environmental Performance Partnership System and a compilation of over two dozen EPA documents and memoranda in ECOS' [Field Guide to Flexibility and Results](#);
- Engaged with EPA's Office of Environmental Justice on the releases of EJScreen and EJ2020;
- Provided state input into the new Drinking Water Action Plan and released a [report](#) documenting the flexibilities inherent in the Clean Water State Revolving Fund;
- Worked with EPA to document the tangible results achieved with Congress' \$20.8M in 2016 new multipurpose grant funds;
- With the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance, commenced an effort to better leverage, and make available to all states, inspector and related training;
- Grew the [Environmental Research Institute of the States](#) (ERIS) and its relationship with EPA's Office of Research and Development, finding ways to align EPA research to meet state needs;
- Commenced a 2016 project to develop measures and metrics to share with all audiences the environmental and public health results of our collective environmental enterprise effort; and
- Formed a Legal Network with EPA's Office of General Counsel, which held seven joint calls on cutting edge legal topics and regulatory developments.

In addition to these accomplishments with EPA, ECOS worked in dedicated fashion to be part of the new legislation to reform and reauthorize the Toxic Substances Control Act and soon, to allow state coal ash permitting programs under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act.

I encourage all of us to take this time to acknowledge the progress made, the relationships developed, and to enthusiastically work together in our continued collaboration with EPA leadership and staff in the coming years. ECOS has become, and will remain, a valuable organization because of the active and connected role you each play as a member. Together, we are strengthening effective state leadership and governance of the laws we uphold and the programs we implement.

Thank you for your membership, and please do not hesitate to reach out to me, any of the leadership, or ECOS' Executive Director Alexandra Dunn, regarding your comments and thoughts.

Sincerely,



John Linc Stine
Commissioner
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
ECOS President