SECTION I - OVERVIEW

The Environmental Protection Agency submitted its National Strategic Plan to Congress on September 30, 2003. Region 10 is committed to implementing and supporting the goals of cleaner air, purer water and protecting and restoring the land. The character and approach of how best to implement these goals is clearly affected by regional and local conditions. Achieving environmental improvements requires concerted partnerships with State and local environmental agencies, Tribes, public interest groups and other federal agencies. In this Regional Plan, Region 10 sets out our approach to fulfilling our national commitments and addressing regionally significant issues.

Nationally, EPA has been working with the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) to better align EPA and state work. Better alignment would result in a more integrated partnership between EPA and the States, including a bottom-up information flow that would allow State strategic thinking and priorities to be integrated into EPA's guidance and priority setting. In the fall of 2003, our Regional Administrator and Deputy Regional Administrator met with the State Directors of Oregon, Washington and Idaho to discuss topics of regional importance and joint interest. As a pilot project for the national EPA-ECOS alignment effort, the States of Idaho, Oregon and Washington agreed to work with Region 10 on four jointly developed projects: Permitting and Compliance, Air Quality Impacts from Diesel, Information Technology and Agriculture. The initial outlines of these initiatives can be found in their entirety in the Appendix. Additionally, we have integrated key elements of the EPA/State Joint Pilot Projects in Section II of this plan which describes the regional strategies for achieving national goals and objectives. Over the next year, we are committed to working with our States and EPA National Program Managers to further develop and refine these EPA/State Joint Pilot Projects, and to see how best we can implement them.

Over the past year, all ten Regions have been tasked with better articulating how we will meet the objectives set forth in EPA's National Strategic Plan. Preceding this effort, Region 10 had identified Six Priorities that focus on regionally significant issues in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. Region 10's Six Priorities are: 1)The Coeur d'Alene Basin, 2) The Columbia River Basin, 3) Oil and Gas, 4) Clean-Up of Contaminated Sites, 5) Tribal Environmental Health, and 6) Fine Particulates from Smoke and Diesel Emissions. Some of these priorities, like the Clean-up of Contaminated Sites and particulate matter impacts are easily linked to the national goals and objectives defined in EPA's National Strategic Plan. Other priorities reflect a geographic, multi-media or sector approach to addressing environmental problems. Throughout the attached Regional Plan, we highlight how Region 10's Six Priorities are linked to the national goal structure. What should be emphasized here is Region 10's continued commitment to implementing these priorities. As is discussed in the accountability section, senior management in the Region will continue to evaluate implementation of the Six Priorities as well as the five national goals.

What makes Region 10 unique?

Comprising Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington, Region 10 possesses multiple and diverse ecosystems, environmental conditions and people. The Region spans from the temperate conditions of the coast to deserts in eastern reaches of the Region to permafrost fields in Alaska. Elevations range from sea-level to over 20,000 feet. Region 10 is also home to 271 Tribes, almost half of all the federally recognized Tribes in the United States. Balancing the impacts of these diverse ecological conditions in

combination with the cultural and economic conditions in the Region makes protection of the environment a challenging and often controversial endeavor.

As with other western states, Region 10 has experienced a dramatic increase in population in recent years. In the 1990's, all four States in Region 10 faced profound increases in population, from over 28 percent in Idaho to approximately 20 percent in Washington and Oregon to 14 percent in Alaska.[1] This trend is projected to continue. Current projections for population growth show an additional increase of 25 to 30 percent regionally by the year 2020.[2]

The pressures from increased population occur simultaneously with the growing realization that the traditional focus on controlling point source pollution is insufficient to deal with human health and resource protection concerns. Historically, the environmental protection laws in our country have been aimed at easily identified sources of pollution such as factories, sewage outfalls and other specific point sources. As these sources have been controlled, environmental threat has shifted to extensively distributed and numerous non-point sources that, when added together, account for large portions of pollutant loading. Common forms of non-point source pollution include pesticide and nutrient run-off from urban and agricultural practices, sediment runoff from agriculture and forestry land uses, and emissions from cars, ships and planes.

The importance of non-point source controls is clear when you consider the historical patterns of land use and ownership in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska, including our historical dependence on resource extraction such as timber harvesting, grazing, energy production and mining. Non-point source impacts from timber harvesting can range from increased sedimentation of water bodies from soil runoff due to clear cuts to increases in stream temperature from loss of shade trees to air quality impacts from the burning of residual slash. Mining extraction can pose significant and long-term degradation due to leaching from mine tailings and sediments. In recent years, changes to forestry and mining practices have resulted in improved environmental impacts, but the impacts of these landscape size activities cannot be underestimated.

Unlike the eastern United States, western states have significant federal land ownership. The Federal government owns 67% of Alaska, 65% of Idaho, 56% of Oregon and 33% of Washington.[3] Much of these federally owned lands are overseen by the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service, and have been designated for rangeland and forest use. In Oregon alone, about 24 million acres of Oregon's total 61 million acres are forested. Of the forested area, almost 60% is publicly owned and federally managed.[4] Additionally, many state-owned lands are dedicated to forestry and timber production.

Our Region is blessed with tremendous natural resources. Yet, what seemed like a limitless abundance several decades ago has proven more fragile than we thought. There are currently 120 listed and endangered species in Region 10, including the majority of listed salmonid and trout species in the United States.[5] Protection of species and the larger issues of protecting their habitat have far reaching impacts on EPA's work. As is the case with non-point sources, species and habitat protection demand that EPA approach its work in a holistic way to ensure that ecological, habitat and species concerns can be met in the context of economic and cultural forces.

Addressing these larger landscape sources requires EPA to work in partnership with other organizations to create new solutions. In some ways, we are aided by the large amount of public land ownership. Region 10 has made significant investment in working with the federal and state resource protection and land management agencies in order to develop land management plans that can affect these large uses. An example of this is the Northwest Forest Plan that seeks to preserve and expand

habitat for the spotted owl and salmonid species while permitting logging. Region 10's Forests and Rangelands Team is engaged in a number of collaborative efforts with the agencies that manage natural resources in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska to help ensure protection of water quality, species and beneficial uses that these high quality waters support. These interagency efforts include participation on executive policy groups that establish direction, policy, and funding priorities for land management and restoration as well as on technical groups that pursue collective agency monitoring and assessment efforts. Decisions on species preservation are derived from the balancing of many competing concerns and the complexities of trying to maintain viable ecosystems. Examples of this collaborative work include the Provincial Interagency Executive Committees, and the Washington States Forests and Fish effort.

Monitoring is a fundamental aspect of adaptive land management. EPA is a key member of the interagency Pacific Northwest Aquatic Monitoring Partnership (PNAMP). PNAMP coordinates monitoring of project effectiveness, watershed conditions, and fishery monitoring efforts in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and California. The Partnership is working towards the consistent application of probabilistic sampling designs that will allow data from different efforts to be integrated in a more cost effective way. The probabilistic sampling designs would result in more precise assessments, and data that could be used at different scales..

Regulating pollution sources is never far removed from impacts to, and the condition of, the economy. Recovery from the economic recession is far more tenuous in our Region, due to permanent job losses in resource-extraction dependent industries and manufacturing, as resources are depleted or products cannot compete with lower cost raw materials and labor overseas. The Pacific Northwest and Alaska have faced serious economic challenges in the last several years resulting in budgetary shortfalls in all four States. Declining revenues have resulted in budget cuts and staff reductions in many of the environmental protection programs in our States. The increased demands on existing staff and resources elevate the need for more effective federal, tribal and state partnerships.

Can't do it alone

The scale and complexity of the environmental issues facing the Region necessitates collaboration and input from many sides. As primary implementers of environmental regulations, States and Tribes are crucial partners. Region 10's commitment to working in partnership is evident even in our structure. Unlike most Regions, Region 10 has a dedicated Operations Office in each of our States. Moreover, in the past eight years, Region 10 has sought to increase our outreach and participation in local issues by investing in place-based personnel in all four states. Simultaneously, the Region has sought to provide better coordination, planning and information sharing through sector work. Multi-media sector teams focus on agriculture, forest, mining, and oil and gas. Region 10 has a dedicated group focused on Tribal outreach, grant support and coordination.

The Environmental Protection Agency takes its responsibility for working with Tribal governments and people very seriously. As mentioned before, 271 Tribes reside in Region 10. Tribal governments and capacities for dealing with environmental issues vary widely, from Tribes with well-staffed, sophisticated environmental programs to Tribes that are only beginning to develop an environmental program. As with the national program, Region 10 has initially focused its work with tribes on developing tribal environmental protection infrastructure and providing basic environmental

services, such as safe drinking water, sanitation and sewage treatment. However, Region 10 is also actively trying to assess and account for the environmental and human health impacts from different cultural practices and beliefs. This attention is exemplified in the Region's consideration of more clean-up and remediation options focused on tribal risk and exposure pathways in our work in the Columbia River Basin.

Region 10 worked with the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission to design a survey of toxic contaminants in fish. The survey assessed fish consumption patterns of native peoples and determined that, due to increased consumption, tribal members faced an increased risk primarily due to exposures to PCBs, dioxins, furans, DDE and arsenic in various fish species. One of Region 10's many responses to these findings was to develop a comprehensive program to identify potential sources of PCBs in order to prevent future releases to the Columbia Basin waterways from leaking electrical equipment located in federal dams and from privately-owned public utilities. In 2003, 47 dams and utilities were inspected. A pollution prevention by-product of these inspections was to encourage federally-run dams to replace PCB transformers with state-of-the-art alternatives. This partnership with native peoples has promoted a better understanding of risks to native populations that better enables EPA to target its compliance inspection and outreach efforts.

Region 10's commitment to greater collaborative target setting and decision making is evident in our work on air quality. Over the past two years, Region 10 has undertaken an enormous and innovative joint strategic planning effort with stakeholders from around the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. The leadership team for the Northwest Collaborative Air Priorities Project (NW CAPP) was composed of leaders of federal, state and local agencies, Tribes, business organizations, companies, academics, non-governmental organizations and environmental organizations. In June 2003, the NW CAPP held an Air Summit which was attended by nearly 200 delegates from throughout the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. At this summit, the delegates jointly decided on the top air quality priorities for the next 5 to 10 years. The findings of the NW CAPP are discussed under Goal 1 in the Regional Plan.

Our longest standing and most established relationships are those with our States. The States are the primary implementers of most environmental protection programs. While EPA may provide a base level of grant funding, states devote significant resources to environmental protection beyond these federal monies. States and local agencies have a greater understanding of the immediate impacts of different regulatory decisions, and have more direct contact with many of the involved parties. In an era of shrinking federal and state resources, it is essential that we most efficiently address the highest environmental priorities through concerted federal and state actions.

Region 10 seeks strong collaborative relations with our States, yet we recognize that a basic tension exists due to the Region's oversight role and our need to maintain basic regulatory equity among sources nationally. This situation has been particularly evident in Alaska, where environmental and ecological conditions pose many unique concerns. Over twice the size of Texas and with lands extending beyond the Arctic Circle, Alaska's cold, rugged and remote conditions often affect regulatory choices and context. Alaska faces serious economic challenges as oil revenues have declined. Region 10 would like to use this strategic planning effort and the larger NEPPS process to improve the collective understanding of the environmental priorities and management strategies of each agency, in order to maximize efficiencies and better respond to the issues. Need to find a better way

Region 10 is actively developing innovative and market based solutions to environmental

problems. In partnership with Office of Air and Radiation, Region 10 originated the pollution prevention in permitting program (P4), which focuses on providing operational flexibility within Title V Air permits. Region 10 received numerous national awards for this work. Region 10 continues to support the development of this pioneering work to leverage economic incentives. Region 10 is also a national leader in developing a water quality trading model, with the development of the Lower Boise River demonstration project. Our recently published Water Quality Trading Assessment Handbook was well received and will act as the template for the national handbook. The Region continues to actively promote water quality trading as a useful tool to attract both point sources and non-point sources to the table to identify cost-effective ways to achieve important water quality goals.

The Region is also promoting voluntary ways to affect markets. Regions 9 and 10 were instrumental in forming the Federal Network for Sustainability (FNS). Consisting of 13 federal agencies, this group is a voluntary, collaborative network of federal agencies on the West Coast seeking to promote sustainable environmental stewardship.[6] The FNS seeks to use the government's leverage as a consumer to influence markets. Initiatives have focused on environmental management systems, green power, recycled copier paper, electronics products stewardship, and developing sustainably designed buildings. In 2003, the White House awarded the FNS the Closing the Circle Award for leadership in federal environmental stewardship, and the President's report cited it as a model that should be replicated in other parts of the country.

Region 10 is actively developing new tools and technology focused on our regional needs. Region 10 is building capacity for regional-scale air quality modeling for Pacific Northwest States, Tribes and local air pollution control agencies. The Northwest International Air Quality Environmental Science and Technology Consortium was recently chartered by Northwest Air Directors and Canadian air program managers to integrate diverse air quality modeling and monitoring projects to provide sound science for air quality management. This includes the development of AIRPACT, the first fully operational air quality forecast system in the United States focused on ozone and particulates. Subsequent work will expand the domain from the Puget Sound area to include parts of British Columbia and Oregon, and to address air toxics in addition to ozone and particulates.

By focusing on partnering and innovative solutions, we do not mean to minimize the importance of the traditional regulatory programs. Authorized by Congress, and repeatedly tested and refined in the courts, these regulatory programs have laid out the fundamental structure of environmental protection in the United States for the past thirty years. Permitting, standards, clean-up and enforcement provide the very structure for environmental protection. Region 10 is perfectly cognizant of the tremendous economic and environmental impact that our actions or inactions can have. Region 10's commitment to these traditional regulatory programs is evident throughout this plan.

The EPA-ECOS pilot projects underline the importance of improving the regulatory components of our programs as well as developing innovative and voluntary means of addressing regionally significant problems. The four Pilot Projects that Idaho, Oregon and Washington are developing with Region 10 focus on agriculture, permitting and compliance, information technology and diesel. These initiatives are being developed with the idea of jointly aligning state and federal work to better allocate and direct our resources. While we are still in the incipient stages of developing these proposals, the breadth of issues considered, and high level commitment to work cooperatively on these proposals sets forth an encouraging framework for future joint planning.

Region 10's plan lays out our commitment to meeting EPA's national goals and objectives, while simultaneously addressing concerns important to our region. We have long recognized the need to work collaboratively with our partners, and are committed to better dialogue and negotiations with the goal of achieving joint objectives. Over the next five years, we will continue to advance the regional priorities and to employ regulatory and voluntary means to address environmental and human health risks in the Pacific Northwest.

Endnotes:

1. United States Census, 2000 Census.
2. Center for the American West at the University of Colorado at Boulder. See *http://www.centerwest.org/publications/tracking_site/population.html*.
3. National Wilderness Institute, see *http://www.nwi.org/Maps/LandChart.html*.
4. Oregon State University Extension Service, "Timber in Oregon: History and Projected Trends." January 1994.
5. United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Threatened and Endangered Species System, see *http://ecos.fws.gov/tess public*.
6. Members of the Federal Network for Sustainability include the Air Force, the Army, the Navy, Corps of Engineers, Bonneville Power Administration, Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency, General Services Administration, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Park Service, and Postal Service.