

1998 EPA REGION 1 ENFORCEMENT SURVEY FINAL RESULTS

[Response Rate = 38 %]

I. OVERALL EVALUATION

1. The Region's enforcement program has become more effective as a result of the leadership of the Regional Administrator.

14% Agree 67% Disagree 19% No Opinion

2. The Regional Administrator has worked to ensure consistent enforcement outcomes.

14% Agree 69% Disagree 17% No Opinion

3. EPA enforcement policies are routinely followed by the Regional Administrator.

25% Agree 50% Disagree 25% No Opinion

4. I feel supported by the Regional Administrator in my dealings with the regulated community.

31% Agree 53% Disagree 16% No Opinion

II. ROLE IN ENFORCEMENT

To my knowledge or in my experience:

5. The Regional Administrator has personally intervened in enforcement cases.

78% Yes 6% No 16% Don't Know

6. The Regional Administrator has engaged in negotiations with violators without the participation of enforcement staff assigned to the case.

69% Yes 11% No 20% Don't Know

7. Violators have received preferential treatment after contacting the Regional Administrator.

64% Yes 14% No 22% Don't Know

8. The Regional Administrator has allowed the offices of federal and/or state elected officials to influence enforcement negotiations.

47% Yes 14% No 39% Don't Know

9. Within the past four years, I have been directed to ignore a violation of an environmental statute, regulation or agency policy.

19% Yes 75% No 6% Don't Know

III. PERCEPTION OF INTEGRITY

10. There is a perception in the regulated community that violations can be negotiated directly with the Regional Administrator.

69% Agree 17% Disagree 14% No Opinion

11. Certain violators excessively influence the Regional Administrator's enforcement decisions.

33% Agree 22% Disagree 45% No Opinion

12. The Regional Administrator has personally ordered enforcement outcomes which violate national policy.

39% Agree 19% Disagree 42% No Opinion

13. The Regional Administrator's intervention into individual cases has compromised the integrity of the region's enforcement program.

56% Agree 22% Disagree 22% No Opinion

IV. WORKPLACE ATMOSPHERE

14. Employee morale is good in Region 1.

17% Agree 78% Disagree 5% No Opinion

15. The Regional Administrator values employee input.

19% Agree 67% Disagree 14% No Opinion

16. I fear job retaliation from the Regional Administrator for reporting improper activity.

42% Agree 33% Disagree 25% No Opinion

17. In order to improve agency operations, the Regional Administrator should be removed.

47% Agree 36% Disagree 17% No Opinion

EMPLOYEES SPEAK OUT ON THE QUESTION...
“The greatest challenge facing this Region is:”

1. John DeVillars

Can we survive DeVillars? Unlikely--he is the worst manager/public servant I have ever encountered.

John DeVillars unequal, biased intervention into enforcement cases merely to advance his political career.

John DeVillars has had a negative impact on routine civil enforcement. Also, lingering effects of reorganization, which redirected many personnel out of enforcement.

Cases that normally would have taken several months take years to close. Staff spend more time trying to convince JDV to make violators comply with the law than they do fixing the environmental problems.

After 4 long years of dealing with JDV, we have all become inured to his emotional & verbal abuse but his tampering with enforcement cases has reached a fever pitch...Enforcement at the federal level is no longer a fair and equitable process.

State agencies who are “partners” of JDV or big companies that might be able to make or break JDV’s career get breaks in the enforcement world.

To restore confidence among staff & management in the Regional Administrator’s office...

2. Attacks on John DeVillars

To stop feeling paralyzed by staff dislike of DeVillars and to get work done. DeVillars is difficult, he disrespects people, and is motivated often by political concerns, but he isn’t Satan. It is possible to get good results working with him.

A small number of unhappy staff spreading misery like a plague.

DeVillars has his “pluses and minuses.” However, he is not a major problem. Region 1 personnel like to use him as “El Nino”--all negative events are attributed to him.

Getting through red tape, out-dated thinking; not looking for new solutions to old problems. Employees are not accountable enough for their results to management. DeVillars is working to change all of these.

That many employees do not like change or facing new challenges. John DeVillars has effectuated enormous changes in EPA’s dealings with the community- for the better!!!

I am embarrassed and frustrated by this ridiculous witch hunt... Our time would be better spent figuring out how we can do our jobs better.

Getting employees to adjust to EPA's new "vision" of environmental education and partnerships with the regulated community. This new vision requires hard work and creativity which "experienced" federal employees have not traditionally done.

3. Enforcement Issues

Reinvigorating the enforcement program; Balancing enforcement with compliance assistance--the RA's priority, currently, at the expense of enforcement.

EPA Region 1's enforcement program has become a laughingstock among the regulated community.

Lack of professionalism and integrity in the enforcement program, due to Mr. DeVillars.

Enforcement resources used for non-enforcement activities.

Reaching level and quality of enforcement that Region had prior to the appointment of the current RA.

[T]he significant redirection of civil enforcement priorities as a result of the RA's enforcement philosophy. Civil enforcement has been compromised by 1) diversion of staff resources to assistance programs; 2) lack of consistency and predictability in case development and resolution due to the RA's involvement in particular cases; 3) perception in the regional office and the regulated community that violators, directly or through their Congressional representatives, are able to get a better "deal" from the RA; and 4) huge and unprecedented transaction costs associated with staff and manager efforts needed to justify to the RA decisions to initiate certain enforcement actions and/or the terms of case resolutions.

4. Management

An ineffective organizational structure & very ineffective leadership

Lack of leadership in management; Lack of managers who are allowed to make decisions on their own or have the guts to!

Weak middle management and unclear and conflicting directives from headquarters.

Getting the staff to be inspired by their management team to work together towards common goals...

No accountability; everyone does their own thing. Managers refuse or are afraid to tackle tough issues.

Morale - Lowest I've ever experienced in any job here or anywhere.