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### **OECD issues environmental report card for the US**

A new OECD review of environmental policy in the U.S. recommends more efficient use of energy and water as a way to safeguard economic prosperity while protecting the environment and human health. Despite progress in some areas over the past decade, more effort is needed in others. The OECD recommends that the U.S. play a more proactive role in dealing with global environmental concerns.

The review evaluates the ways in which the U.S. manages air quality, water resources and biodiversity and how it integrates environmental concerns into economic and fiscal policies. It also assesses how well the country meets its international environmental commitments.

On the basis of this evaluation, the report recommends that the U.S. should:

- use energy more efficiently in order to remain internationally competitive in the face of rising energy prices while responding to concerns about global warming;
- make more use of economic instruments to reinforce environmental objectives, and to apply the user-pays and polluter-pays principles;
- allocate water more rationally and address persistent quality problems in surface water;
- develop and implement a national environmental health strategy, targeting cost-effective reductions of environmental health risks;
- better integrate nature conservation and climate adaptation concerns into land use and coastal zone planning;
- follow through on undertakings in relation to international environmental co-operation, with particular focus on climate protection, biodiversity and managing chemicals.

The report also recognizes a range of achievements since 1996, including:

- reduced emissions of lead, nitrogen oxides and other substances, combined with systematic use of cost-benefit analysis to support air-quality management;
- leadership in environmental science, which has raised international understanding of environmental health risks and costs ;
- renewed focus on results-oriented environmental management, building on historically strong legislation, effective regulations and their enforcement;

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- effective use of tradable permits, for example for control of air pollutants and ozone depleting substances and for management of water resources, that set international best practices;
- initiatives by states, municipalities, and corporations to address climate change concerns.

Overall, the OECD report urges the United States to increase the efficiency of its environmental management and energy use, projecting that doing so would yield economic benefits. The report also points to a need for greater U.S. leadership in addressing global environmental concerns on climate change, biodiversity and toxic chemicals.

This report is part of the OECD's series of Environmental Performance Reviews of member countries. To obtain a copy of the report or additional details, journalists are invited to contact the OECD's Media Division (tel (33 1) 45 24 80 97 or <mailto:news.contact@oecd.org>).