

ENVIRONMENTAL ERA ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

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In the media, or as we talk to legislative and industrial leaders, the decade of the 90s is oft times referenced as the decade of the environment. Clearly, surveys of public priorities, interests, and concerns place environmental quality and related issues either at or very near the top of the public's list of priorities. Increasingly, TV documentaries are being developed that feature the unique nature of our planet, the threats to biodiversity, the "ozone hole" danger, and the list goes on. The popularity of the environmental movement is perhaps best seen in the number of prime time TV shows that are developing themes around environmental issues. Water issues are clearly a cornerstone of these concerns and activities.

Increasingly, federal, regional, and state programming involves new emphasis on environmental issues. Air quality, acid rain, and surface and groundwater concerns top these lists of initiatives. Simultaneously, there is an increasing awareness in some circles of the widening shortfall of scientific capacity to address these important issues.

UCOWR, with its networking of over 100 U.S. universities and foreign affiliates, is in a key position to facilitate the coupling of university strengths in education, research, and outreach with a new public and federal environmental agenda. A vital need exists to continually communicate and educate our federal, regional, and state leaders about the strengths and capacities within the UCOWR member universities. This will lead to an enhancement in the productivity of these organizations while strengthening universities' scientific capacity and ability to train students.

To this endeavor, *Water Resources Update* is devoting this issue to the theme of The **Environmental Era**. We are indebted to the authors who have taken time to share with us the emerging applications and implications regarding this topic.