

For The **B E N E F I T**

The 1991 session of the Tennessee General Assembly has now drawn to a close. Among the legislation enacted by the state House and Senate are three bills that will have a positive impact on Tennessee's environmental quality.

The first piece of legislation I would like to discuss is the **Solid Waste Management Act of 1991**. The overall goal of Tennessee's first statewide comprehensive solid waste plan is to establish and support an integrated solid waste management system that will protect the public health and environment of Tennessee's citizens. The eight objectives of the plan can be summarized as follows:

1. To protect Tennessee citizens and the environment from unwanted out-of-state wastes;
2. To plan adequate capacity for the collection, treatment and disposal of solid wastes through the year 2000;
3. To reduce and/or recycle 25 percent of the wastes now sent to incinerators or landfills;
4. To improve the collection of solid wastes in Tennessee so that every citizen has access to collection services;
5. To strengthen the regulation of solid waste collection, treatment and disposal;
6. To develop systems for the segregation, collection and safe disposal of "problem wastes";
7. To provide planning and technical and financial assistance to local governments, businesses and institutions; and
8. To educate Tennesseans about solid waste issues, options and costs.

There are a number of reasons why I believe this plan is a good one. It is proactive, requiring counties and regions to plan before a crisis develops. It is flexible in that it encourages regional solutions but allows counties and regions to decide for themselves. It promotes waste reduction and builds a recycling infrastructure across the state. And the plan supports the construction of convenience centers or improved collection systems to serve all Tennesseans.



The Tennessee Environmental Protection Fund Act of 1991 is legislation that establishes a new funding mechanism to pay for increased environmental oversight. An increase in the fees charged to regulated industries will provide money to hire additional environmental field staff. With more knowledgeable professionals at work across the state, Tennesseans will see more oversight in the areas of air and water quality, X-ray machines and radioactive materials, landfills and hazardous waste disposal, and toxic waste site cleanup. In addition, septic tanks, underground gasoline storage tanks, water supply and waste water treatment facilities are fields that will also benefit from the act by gaining additional regulators.

The goals of this legislation are more timely, permitting more detailed and timely inspections and more responsive enforcement of the state's environmental regulations. Better communication between regulators, regulated industries and the public is another important objective.

To help us retain our regulators, the fund will enable the department to pay more competitive salaries. Other planned improvements will include the creation of an environmental information computer system, the establishment of strict guidelines and schedules for regulatory activities and additional training for our environmental regulators.

The Tennessee State and Local Parks and Recreation Partnership Act of 1991 is legislation that will also enhance the quality of life in our state. The act increases the real estate transfer tax by 4 cents and extends, indefinitely, an existing fee whose proceeds go for wetlands acquisition.

It is estimated that this legislation will raise approximately \$8 million in revenue each year, of which \$1.75 million will be given by the department to local governments as matching grants for local parks. An estimated \$1.5 million will go into the Agricultural Non-point Source Water Pollution Control Fund that will be used to abate water pollution caused by agricultural practices. Approximately \$3.25 million generated by the transfer tax increase will be earmarked for the acquisition of wetlands, and \$1.5 million will be used by this department to acquire additional state park and forest land or natural areas.

At the new Department of Environment and Conservation, we're excited about the benefits that these three pieces of legislation will bring to all Tennesseans.

J.W. Luna
Commissioner