

One equals dozens in world of appointments

By MARK LESLIE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — When the Clinton Administration took over, more than one person moved into the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Carol Browner's entourage: dozens. Their effect: acute, for some.

Although 95 to 97 percent of what one administration does is identical to its predecessors, EPA golf liaison officer Mike Scott said the other 3 to 5 percent magnifies and personifies the change in viewpoint.

"There is a common myth that by the time this stuff filters down, the bureaucrats don't even notice," Scott said. "I don't know how that is in other agencies, but ... within our fairly cozy agency of only 18,000 people, I'm acutely aware of policy changes from one administration to the next. They influence things I do on a daily basis, and I think that's true of most of the bureaucrats.

"Public Affairs is directly connected to the administrator, so I will notice more of that than most people. But, yes, the direction that an administrator and the assistant administrator for research and development wants for the science programs here will affect the daily operation of scientists."

When Browner moved into the EPA directorship, she was not alone as a presidential appointee there. A dozen presidential appointees moved into place, heading every program office — among them the Office of Air and Radiation, Pesticides and Toxics, Solid Waste, Water, Research and Development, Policy Planning, Congressional Affairs, Public Affairs, and State and Local Relations.

And each of those presidential appointees brought with them their immediate staffs, who are not presidential appointees but political appointees.

Known as "Schedule Cs," political appointees are people who probably worked on the campaign or were on somebody's congressional staff before being appointed.

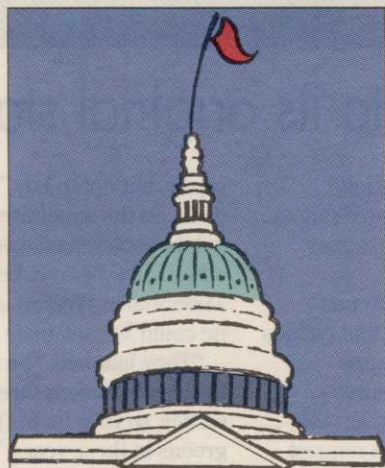
"Add all those folks up, and a few presidentially appointed deputies under them, and you're well into the dozens for EPA alone," Scott said. "And they make their presence known."

How large a role does politics play in the Clinton Administration?

"Statements Carol Browner has made on chlorine and turf pesticides have been very non-scientific, and with some other agenda," said Stuart Cohen, who worked for EPA for 11 years and is now president of Environmental & Turf Services, Inc. in Wheaton, Md. "They have been either based on poor science or no science. With regard to actions, I'm a little distressed that EPA seems to be putting more emphasis on being concerned about detections of pesticides in ground water, period, as opposed to detections of concentrations that might cause some problem.

"In regard to surface water, I'm very pleased EPA is recognizing the important role that computer simulation modeling plays in risk assessment."

Though the head of the Pesticide and Toxics Program is a pediatrician, Browner has appointed more scientists than most past administrators, Scott said. "Basically the agency has been run by scientists and attorneys — not surprisingly, since those are the two key areas of EPA's work. By sheer mathematical probability, we would have had



EPA history fraught with deadlines unmet

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Carol Browner has called for a new policy on scientific peer review to be in place by late September.

Amidst the storm over the agency's non-policy, the General Accounting Office said, "EPA has had difficulty meeting deadlines even without the requirement to conduct peer reviews supporting scientific and technical products."

It said:

- EPA has not established milestones or deadlines for its work group, appointed in early 1993, to develop specific implementation procedures.

- The internal work group which first met in 1993 to develop procedures for managers in peer review decisions has no deadline and as of last December had not even addressed how it plans to deal with flexibility issues such as determining which products should receive peer reviews.

- The panel addressing peer review accountability "has just begun its efforts and has not set a date for recommending a solution," the GAO said.

- And although last year an EPA report on environmental tobacco smoke was prematurely released by an external reviewer, as of late February the agency had not developed procedures to preclude premature release from happening again.

The GAO said a simple stamp "Draft" on a document could be sufficient.

And, until implementation policies are established, the report said, "the universal peer review policy is not likely to have much effect."

a few people from business. But, I'm hard put to think of anyone who has come to the EPA with a background in industry.

"It would be nice if we had some. And it's not just this administration."

Although Browner does not come out of "the science culture itself... she recognizes the importance of strong science and good data as one of her six major themes," said Dr. Don Barnes, executive secretary of the EPA's Scientific Advisory Board. "She's philosophically committed to good science."

He pointed to her appointment of Dr. Bob Huggett to the new post of assistant administrator for the Office of Research and Development. From the Institute of Marine Sciences at the College of William and Mary, Huggett has been a member of the SAB for several years.

EPA labs to be combined, upgraded

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for the Office of Research and Development (ORD) to ease organization along the lines of risk.

- Thoroughly integrating peer review in all scientific and technical products.

- Developing a Science Strategic Plan, guided by a single policy-maker in coordination with the Science Policy Council and Senior Leadership Council.

- Developing a new planning process with cross-agency involvement in the distribution of the agency's research, development and technical services resources.

- Establishing the risk paradigm as the driver for prioritization of resources and organizational changes.

- Increasing the percentage of the ORD budget set-aside for long-term research from the current 35 percent to 50 percent.

- Achieving greater outreach to the scientific community by increasing extramural research from \$20 million to \$100 million in competitive, investigator-initiated grants.

- Creating an internal, investigator-initiated competitive research program to fund innovative ideas and improve the quality of intramural science.

- Expanding the graduate fellowship

program to train a cadre of new scientists for EPA and the country.

Streamlining and re-invention are Browner's goals, she said. Consolidation of the labs is the one issue Browner wants to delay — "until at least June 1996" — because of the labs' complex physical and functional nature.

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Pointing out that the EPA is seeking to gain more accurate laboratory results, U.S. Golf Association Green Section National Director Jim Snow added, "The lab work is only as good as its quality control."

That is where an improved peer-review process is crucial. And Browner expects by Sept. 30 to have a new peer-review policy in place.

Also, in a mid-summer press release the EPA announced "a new broad-range process for developing agency regulations ... to make government more efficient and less costly."

The process will "enable EPA to produce rules more quickly, at less cost and of a higher quality," the agency said. "It will require fewer clearances and greater assurance that rules are based on sound science. Scientific work to support the rules will require more peer review."

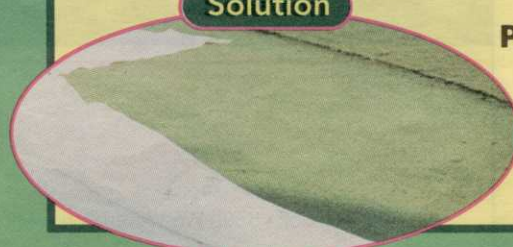
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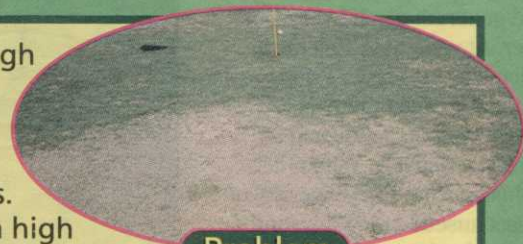
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