

## Ethics: An Employees View

The name of this newsletter is no accident. It describes not only the place we work, but the how and why we work. In doing a first-class job on the public's environmental work as lawyers, scientists, engineers and other professionals, our most important tool is the open, honest--ethical, if you will--professional work setting. In such a Fishbowl work setting, if unethical work is done--by staff or management--it will quickly be exposed and corrected, and the public's business and our collective reputation will be safeguarded.

### In theory.

In practice, our experience teaches that merely claiming to work "in a fishbowl" doesn't make it so--we need a mechanism to keep the fishbowl polished, transparent, and ethically clean.

The Union has been building that mechanism--a code of professional ethics that will be part of our enforcable collective bargaining agreement with EPA.

Ethical guidelines now in place for government workers are mostly aimed at financial wrongdoing and personal aggrandizement. The Union recognizes that we need guidelines that cover protection of intellectual property, "cooking" scientific data, "wiring" jobs, and the like. Here is a condensed picture of the specific ethical principles in the Union's proposal to EPA management:

Promotions and job assignments are based solely on honest credentials honestly appraised.

All EPA work is done in conformity with the letter and spirit of the law, and everyone has a duty and a right to fully understand both.

Uncertainty in analyses are honestly expressed by professionals and honestly considered by choice takers.

Information germane to EPA's mission is never suppressed.

Professionals are responsible for quality control of work under their control.

Managers do not tailor the work of professionals to suit political, social or economic interests.

The content of professional work is reviewed only by other competent professionals.

Intellectual property rights are recognized and respected.

Exposure of plagiarism and scientific/technical fraud is the duty of all EPA employees.

The Union recognizes that legitimate differences of professional opinion will arise, and that those cases do not necessarily involve unethical behavior. Implementation procedures in the proposal include means of sorting real ethical issues from honest differences of professional opinion.

By putting this contract article into place, the Union believes that it and management will have gone a long way toward ensuring both an honorable and stimulating workplace for EPA employees and the very best accomplishment of our Agency's mission.