



## Join the Partnership for the Environment

**The Partnership for the Environment** is a coalition of grass-roots groups from across the state that formed in 1998 to explore ways to improve environmental protection in South Carolina. Partnership members spent a year studying the issue and meeting to discuss how they could work together to better protect their communities and the health of their children.

While South Carolina is a beautiful state, it is also a poor state. Over the years it has developed policies designed to attract industry with promises of cheap labor and lax environmental regulations.

When the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) was created in 1973, the legislature structured the agency to reflect South Carolina's pro-business agenda.

As a result, South Carolina now bears far more than its share of the nation's garbage. Each year, hundreds of thousands of tons of hazardous and toxic waste from around the country are dumped here.

South Carolina is the perpetual custodian of the country's leading

radioactive waste dump, ChemNuclear in Barnwell. When the dump closes, its title reverts to the taxpayers.

Polluting industries, often in trouble with their home state's environmental agency, have relocated in South Carolina. They know that DHEC has granted permits to companies with criminal records and that the agency does not have the power to check a company's past compliance with environmental regulations. They also know that hazardous industries in South Carolina can easily locate in poor and minority communities that lack the financial, legal and political resources to protect themselves.

Because so many of the state's pollution problems can be traced back to the agency charged with protecting our environment, the Partnership concluded that improving environmental protection in South Carolina must begin with reforming DHEC. The Partnership contends that DHEC has structural flaws that prevent it from being the responsible environmental steward South Carolina needs and deserves.

The Partnership recommends that DHEC be reformed to correct its:

### ▼ CONFLICT OF INTEREST

DHEC operates under a legislative mandate to maintain "reasonable" environmental standards while maximizing

employment and industrial development. The Partnership believes the dual responsibilities pose a serious conflict of interest.

### ▼ POLITICIZED BOARD

DHEC's seven-member board is appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. DHEC's board members are not required to possess relevant experience or expertise.

Democratic as well as Republican governors in South Carolina traditionally have appointed to the DHEC board businessmen and developers who were their political supporters. The Partnership seeks a more diverse and qualified board.

### ▼ LACK OF PUBLIC INPUT

DHEC is not always required to notify the public when an industry applies for a permit to pollute. All too often, a community finds out a landfill, chemical plant or corporate "farm" is moving into the neighborhood after the company's permit has already been issued.

### ▼ WEAK REGULATIONS

DHEC does not consider a company's past environmental record when issuing a permit to discharge pollutants. Time and again, industries that have been run out of other states for environmental violations have found safe haven in South Carolina. Furthermore, companies here have operated for years on "provisional" permits or out of compliance with regulations.

### ▼ NARROW VISION

DHEC is not required to consider the long-term environmental and social impact a company will impose on a community before issuing it a permit.

## Support the Environmental Accountability Act

The Partnership for the Environment has drafted legislation to reform DHEC, and has launched a grass-roots campaign to pass the Environmental Accountability Act in the year 2000.

Senate bill 800 and House bill 4099 were introduced late in the 1999 legislative session. They would reform DHEC to:

- amend its mission statement to require a long-range strategy for preserving and protecting the state's natural resources;
- create uniform requirements for advance public notice and meaningful public participation in the licensing of potentially dangerous companies;
- eliminate its conflicting mandates to maximize employment and industrial development while protecting the environment;
- implement a merit selection process to ensure that board members have professional and practical experience relevant to the agency's mission;
- require DHEC to consider the social, cultural, aesthetic or long-term environmental impacts that a company may have upon a community before issuing it a permit; and
- allow DHEC to consider a company's past environmental record before issuing it a permit.

For details, call 800-849-1803, or see the full text of the Environmental Accountability Act online at [www.scpronet.com](http://www.scpronet.com).

## Join the Partnership!

**The Partnership for the Environment** is a coalition of conservationists, community leaders, labor organizers and environmental groups from across the state working together on a campaign to reform DHEC, the state's environmental agency.

Passing the Environmental Accountability Act will mean taking on some of the most powerful and moneyed interests in South Carolina. While the Partnership is confident a broad-based grass-roots campaign can succeed in changing the way DHEC does business, we need your help to make that happen. Add your organization or name to the Partnership.

The founding Partners includes:

- League of Women Voters of South Carolina
- South Carolina Coastal Conservation League
- South Carolina Progressive Network (a coalition of 30 grass-roots groups)
- South Carolina Sierra Club

### YOU can help!

- Send me information about volunteer opportunities to advance the campaign.
- Send a speaker to my group/class/church to talk about the campaign.
- Send \_\_\_\_\_ handouts with information about the campaign.
- You may list my group in promotional materials as a partner in the campaign.
- I want to support the educational work of the campaign.
  - \$25 - \$49 partner
  - \$50 - \$99 senior partner
  - \$100 - \$499 steward
  - \$500 and above - senior steward

Make checks to the Partnership for the Environment. Visa/MasterCard. Donations are not tax-deductible.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_



#### Partnership for the Environment

PO Box 8325  
Columbia, SC 29202



**We can't make more...**