

# LONG TERM PLANNING TO HELP YOU WIN

**P**lanning is an important part of any successful group's efforts. Pretty obvious, right? But for being so obvious, planning for the long term seems to fall by the wayside for a lot of groups.

There are plenty of reasons groups don't get around to doing a long term plan. Keeping up with the latest public hearing, research needs, or group meeting is plenty to do. Reacting to the demands and developments of a local environmental fight can leave a group struggling to keep up. But often, reacting is all that groups are doing, when instead they need to be taking the offensive in order to win. Most environmental struggles take a long time. So take some time to think about how to get to your goal.

Why plan for things beyond the upcoming hearing, group meeting, or press conference by the local polluters? Because long term planning can offer some structure to make sure that those next steps serve as stepping stones on the path toward your ultimate goal, not just reaction to the latest move by industry or regulators. Where does that task force, permit hearing, or study fit into the big picture? How does it get you closer to your goal? To answer these questions, you have to have already defined what your ultimate goal is, who can help you achieve it, and what steps to take to reach it.

A long term plan can also help you divide the big, daunting goal of "winning" into more approachable smaller steps. Beating city hall is kind of intimidating. So break beating city hall into smaller steps that you can check off along the way.

Documents like the Cerrell and Epley reports, which described the demographics of communities that are least likely to resist the siting of noxious facilities, show us that industry has put time and effort into planning for the long term. Their

long term goal is to site and operate their polluting facilities without being bothered by community opposition. They consider that long term goal when they study which characteristics make a community least likely to resist solid waste facilities (in the Cerrell report) or nuclear waste dumps (in the Epley report), or work to weaken regulation. Shouldn't we spend as much time as our opponents deciding what we ultimately want and how we're going to get it?

## DECIDING WHAT YOU WANT

**'L**ong term" is a fairly vague phrase. Exactly how far into the future are you supposed to go? That depends on your goal. The amount of time covered by your plan isn't as important as what you are planning for. What does your group want? Again, a seemingly obvious point, but deciding on your goal is the first step in long term planning.

An example to illustrate the long term planning process is a community group CHEJ has been working with in Baltimore. As described in previous issues of *Everyone's Backyard*, this community is surrounded by industrial facilities. Their health is impacted by the facilities' emissions, their quality of life is damaged by the hundreds of trucks that roar by their houses every day, and their safety is threatened because they are trapped if an accident closes the only road which leads in and out of their neighborhood. The community group has been fighting for relocation. So there is a goal — relocation. But that's fairly vague. It's not likely that anyone is going to just agree to relocate this community. And what would a fair relocation look like? The group needed to decide what they really wanted.

After lots of discussion, the group had a stated goal — to find funding for relocation to

comparable houses in safe neighborhoods. And they had a list of conditions, including amounts of money needed for homeowners and renters, which would determine what a fair relocation would have to include. They were ready for the next step.

## WHO CAN GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANT?

**I**dentifying targets will help you focus your efforts and define your strategy. Think about who has the power to make the things you have identified as goals happen. If you want a facility's permit application to be denied, then the state or federal agency making that decision (and the elected official who is their boss) is your target. Targeting a candidate for city council may not be the most effective use of your time in this case. If the city zoning board can give you what you want, a letter writing campaign to Al Gore isn't going to be that effective.

For the group in Baltimore, this step was about finding sources of money. It wasn't likely that it would all come from the same place, so the group came up with several targets. They decided that the city, state, and federal governments, as well as the industries themselves, could give them what they wanted, which was funding for relocation. Now it was time to think about tactics.

## MILESTONES

**I**ou have a long term goal and at least one target to go after. So how do you get there? It's time to think about how to break up your fight into smaller pieces. The goal of each smaller piece or phase of the fight can be marked by a milestone. When you reach that milestone, it's time to move on to the next phase. In Baltimore, the question was who to go after first. It would be exhausting and probably not very effective to try to pressure all four targets at once. So, while keeping the big picture in mind, the group decided in what order to go after their sources of funding. The milestones along the way to reaching their goal were commitments from each of the targets. Their first milestone was a commitment from the mayor. Next were commitments from the state government, the federal government, and the industries. The last milestone in their long term plan was getting all these groups together to work out the relocation deal.

Sounds pretty simple — five milestones on the way to their goal of relocation. The long term plan doesn't have to be complicated. It just serves as a guide to keep your efforts moving in the right direction, towards your long term goal. Many opportunities to expend your time and energy will come your way in the course of your fight. Some

of them might be worthwhile, but they could also deplete your energy, waste your time, and keep you from going after those that can give you what you want. Some common activities that pull groups off track are task forces and studies. Use your long term plan to help you decide if something will move your group forward. Also think

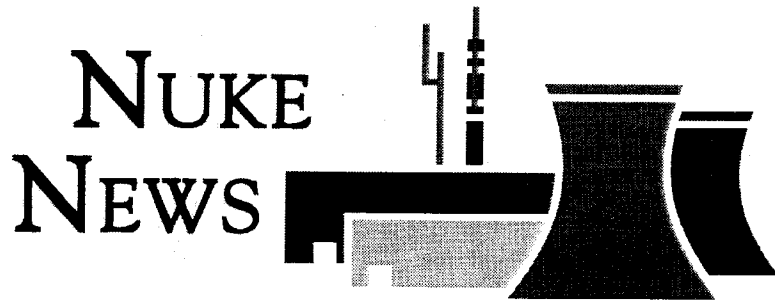
*DOCUMENTS LIKE THE CERRELL AND EPLEY REPORTS, WHICH DESCRIBED THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF COMMUNITIES THAT ARE LEAST LIKELY TO RESIST THE SITING OF NOXIOUS FACILITIES, SHOW US THAT INDUSTRY HAS PUT TIME AND EFFORT INTO PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM... SHOULDN'T WE SPEND AS MUCH TIME AS OUR OPPONENTS DECIDING WHAT WE ULTIMATELY WANT AND HOW WE'RE GOING TO GET IT?*

about timing. Participating in a task force or study now may not help you reach your next milestone, but would it be more useful in later efforts?

Your plan shouldn't list every action or tactic you take. You can't plan those things that far in advance. You have to fill them in as you go along, considering what will work under current circumstances. The group in Baltimore had a long term plan that fit entirely onto one sheet of paper. It didn't dictate every move they would make. The plan said pressure the mayor. The group decided to picket city hall, generate media coverage, and flood the mayor with phone calls as they worked toward that milestone. A long term plan is not an excuse to be inflexible because you've planned out every little detail in advance and refuse to adapt to new situations. It is a guide to help you focus as you work out your next move, considering what has changed and what you have learned along the way.

As you reach the milestones in your long term plan, check them off the list, take a step back and look at the big picture. Remind yourselves how far you've come. Talk about how you got there and

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## ARE NUCLEAR WEAPONS PLANTS MAKING PEOPLE SICK?

An investigative series by *The Tennessean* detailed "a mysterious pattern of illnesses" found around the nation's nuclear weapons plants. The series was based on interviews with more than 400 people who live near or work at thirteen Department of Energy sites across the country. The stories describe the general unresponsiveness from all levels of government found by those who told officials of their health problems. One example is the considerable expense and effort DOE goes to in order to defend itself and its contractors against health claims made by neighbors of facilities. The series can be found at [www.tennessean.com/special/oakridge/part3](http://www.tennessean.com/special/oakridge/part3).

## NEBRASKA DUMP PLAN HITS ROADBLOCK

The state of Nebraska announced its intention to deny US Ecology a license for its proposed low level radioactive waste dump in Boyd County, citing groundwater testing data withheld by the company. This is good news for those who have spent years fighting the dump, which was slated to accept waste from five states. But dump opponents warn that more needs to happen before the proposal is dead. They have proposed a seven point plan, including calls for an end to expenditures for site development and the state taking legal action against US Ecology because of its irresponsibility in site selection, to bring the issue to a close in Boyd County.

## REGULATORS ELIMINATE TERRORISM-PREVENTION PLAN

In order to cut costs, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) eliminated its seven year old program for testing the ability of commercial nuclear power plants to withstand terrorist attacks. The testing program included checks on alarms and other security measures, and found that almost half of plants tested had serious security lapses. Eleven NRC officials have written objections to the elimination of the program, warning that plants will not provide adequate security without government oversight.

## LONG TERM PLANNING

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what you learned along the way. What worked? Will it help you get to your next milestone? Congratulate yourselves on the progress you've made and then start thinking about how to take the next step.

The community group fighting for relocation in Baltimore followed their plan over the course of six months and got the city, state, and federal governments to the table to talk about how to fund a relocation. All the parties at the table are interested in getting the fourth target, industry to commit as well. The work they did at the beginning of their fight to develop a long term plan guided them and now they are much closer to their goal of a fair relocation.

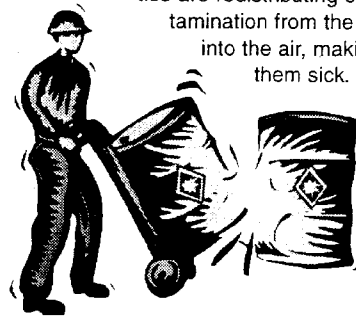
## ACTION LINE

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Conservancy sponsored a "Mountaintop Review" weekend to show citizens exactly how destructive the mining practice of "mountaintop removal" is. This highly mechanized mining technique involves scraping away rock from hills and dumping it into adjacent streams and valleys. Activists have termed the practice "mountaintop massacre" and spent the weekend learning about the effects of this practice and developing a plan to stop it.

## WISCONSIN

The cleanup of a South Milwaukee waste site is getting concerned neighbors involved. The site was once a drum "recycling" operation which basically dumped the contents of drums and cleaned them out so they could be used again. After the operation closed homes were built near the site, and now many residents are sick. They are concerned that cleanup activities are redistributing contamination from the soil into the air, making them sick.



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