

APPENDIX H

Brief Summary of the Ohio Comparative Risk Project

BACKGROUND OF THE OHIO COMPARATIVE RISK PROJECT

From March 1994 to December 1995, more than 100 volunteers participated in the first phase of the Ohio Comparative Risk Project. "Comparative risk" refers to a science and citizen-based process that endeavors to evaluate and rank potential environmental risks to human health, ecosystems, and quality of life. During the 17 months of Phase 1, volunteers gathered data about 45 potential threats to Ohio's environment. Public outreach exercises involved more than 20,000 citizens. A major accomplishment of Phase 1 was the first ever *Ohio State of the Environment Report* published in 1995.

The *State of the Environment Report* evaluates 45 potential threats to the human health, ecosystems, and quality of life in Ohio. The report also summarizes public outreach activities that took place during Phase 1. Five chapters in the report discuss local comparative risk efforts that were simultaneously occurring in communities around Ohio, while the statewide project was underway. As of July 1997, more than 5,000 copies of the 508-page *State of the Environment Report* were in circulation. In addition, more than 8,000 copies of its companion, *Facts and Figures About Ohio's Environment*, have been distributed to schools, community groups, businesses, local and state government agencies, and interested citizens. The information compiled by participants in Phase 1 has proven to be an invaluable education tool.

Although the *State of the Environment Report* is among the most significant accomplishments of Phase 1, a ranking of the 45 potential threats is also an important outcome. After much research and discussion, members of the Project's Public Advisory Group (PAG) ranked the threats in seven groups; the final ranked list is shown in Figure 1. Groups at the top of the list were deemed to present a greater overall risk than groups near the bottom of the list. PAG members were concerned about suggesting false precision in the rankings so they decided not to distinguish among issues within the same group. Instead, they agreed to alphabetize the issues in each of the seven groups and this is how the list was presented to the public.

The list of ranked issues presented in Figure 1 does not tell the complete story of why issues are ranked the way they are. To understand the ranking, refer to Chapter 1 in the *State of the Environment Report*.

FIGURE 1. Phase 1 Ranking of 45 Potential Threats to Human Health, Ecosystems, and Quality of Life in Ohio

Group 1
Abandoned industrial sites
Drinking water at the tap
Exposure from consumer unawareness
Inadequate infrastructure
Indoor air quality
Industrial/commercial wastewater discharges
Municipal solid waste disposal facilities
Mobile source emissions
Ozone-depleting substances
Unregulated/abandoned hazardous waste facilities
Group 2
Filling/diking/draining of wetlands
Loss of species diversity
Loss of wildlife habitat
Population change
Uncontrolled development
Group 3
Combustion by-products
Mining activities
Nonpoint source/agricultural runoff
Pesticide spraying
Regulated hazardous waste facilities
Stationary source air emissions
Group 4
Abandoned water wells
Natural food toxins
Oil and gas exploration
Pesticide residues on foods
Tire management
Underground storage tanks
Group 5
Channelization of streams and rivers
Disposal capacity
Floods
Illegal dumping
Litter
Municipal wastewater discharges
Storm water runoff from non agricultural areas
Group 6
Construction and demolition debris
Construction of dams
Fugitive dust
Harvesting natural resources
Overconsumption of natural resources
Recreation
Sludge disposal
Spills and accidental releases
Transportation of waste
Group 7
Other natural hazards
Yard waste
