



Letter to the President



May 5, 1999

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

At your request, the President's Council on Sustainable Development has worked together for the past six years to envision a new American dream. In our dream of a better future, prosperity, opportunity, and a healthy environment are inseparable threads woven into the fabric of America. We are pleased to provide you with the Council's May 1999 report, *Towards a Sustainable America: Advancing Prosperity, Opportunity, and a Healthy Environment for the 21st Century*. It highlights means by which every American can realize this vision at work, at play, with our families and communities, and among nations.

America's challenge is to create a life-sustaining Earth, a future in which prosperity and opportunity increase while life flourishes and pressures on the oceans, Earth, and atmosphere diminish. Even as we see evidence that damage to natural systems is accelerating, we also see individuals, companies, and communities working together to find solutions that work. We believe the United States can meet the challenge if all Americans strengthen their will and capacity to find agreement on important issues about our future.

In our report, we articulate the goal of a sustainable America with concrete ideas, examples of success, and proposals for national policy. Our report presents consensus recommendations on how America can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and take other steps to protect the climate; create a new environmental management system that promotes better corporate bottom lines, community involvement, and improved environmental protection; develop new metropolitan and rural strategies for building livable communities; and foster U.S. leadership abroad to promote simultaneous economic growth, environmental protection, and social justice.

With the submission of this report, the Council concludes its work by co-sponsoring the National Town Meeting for a Sustainable America (NTM). On May 2-5, 1999, the NTM, with events in Detroit, Michigan and points across America, built on the collective efforts of the Council and others to define and achieve a better future for America. The meeting brought together over 3,200 people in Detroit and more than 100,000 in events across the country. People all across America and the world could participate in the NTM on the Internet. The NTM program showcased best practices that promote sustainability from around the country, highlighted the relevance and importance of the Council's recommendations, and demonstrated significant public support for action to achieve a sustainable future.

We are convinced that America's economic prosperity can go hand-in-hand with a healthy environment and a high quality of life for its citizens. As the awareness of sustainable development continues to increase in Americans from all walks of life, we hope that a consensus will build in the land, as it has over the last six years in the Council itself, that sustainable development is both right and smart for America. Our hope is for people all across the United States to use this document to advance sustainability and the quality of life in their own communities to achieve these ambitious and essential goals.

On behalf of the entire Council, we thank you for the honor and privilege of serving on this panel. This has been an extraordinary opportunity to join together with leaders from different sectors to work out the difficult decisions we face, to serve as a national symbol of our nation's commitment to a sustainable future, and to get the word out that sustainable development holds promise for all Americans. We believe that it is important to preserve the social capital invested in forging this consensus-building process and keep it working for a sustainable America. To that end, we urge you to find the means to continue the progress on sustainable development initiated by the Council, and to assure the existence of some forum for the thoughtful consideration of sustainable development issues by high-level leaders from all sectors.

Sincerely,

Ray Anderson

Council Co-chair
Chairman and CEO, Interface, Inc.

Jonathan Lash

Council Co-chair
President, World Resources Institute