

MaineToday.com

Portland Press Herald
KENNEBEC JOURNAL
Morning Sentinel
NEWS 8 WMTW

Press Herald

ONLINE

NEWS

HOME · NEWS · SPORTS · BUSINESS · VIEWPOINTS · OBITUARIES · CLASSIFIEDS · SPECIAL REPORTS · PERSONALS · ARCHIVE

Thursday, May 22, 2003

[E-mail this story to a friend](#)

Maine environmentalists worry as EPA chief resigns

By MEREDITH GOAD, Portland Press Herald
Writer

Copyright © 2003 Blethen Maine Newspapers Inc.

HOME

CLASSIFIEDS

- Careers
- Homes
- Wheels
- Marketplace
- Place an ad
- WebPix

NEWS

- Local and state
- Midday/4PM Reports
- In Depth
- Week in Photos

WEATHER

- 5-day forecast
- On the Ocean

SPORTS

- High schools
- Pirates Cove
- Sea Dogs
- Running

BUSINESS

- News
- Resources
- Maine News Direct
- Classifieds
- Business Services

ENTERTAINMENT

- Movies
- Dining
- Music
- Theater
- Art

CALENDAR

- Southern Maine
- Central Maine

TV LISTINGS

- Search your area

TRAVEL

- Visiting Maine
- Trip Talk
- Vacation Rentals
- Lodging guide

OUTDOORS

- Fishing
- Hiking
- Nature Watching
- More activities
- Campground Guide

20 BELOW

- Teen writing
- Views and reviews

CAREERS

- Classifieds
- Advice and info
- Featured employers

HOMES

- Classifieds
- Advice and info
- Featured agents

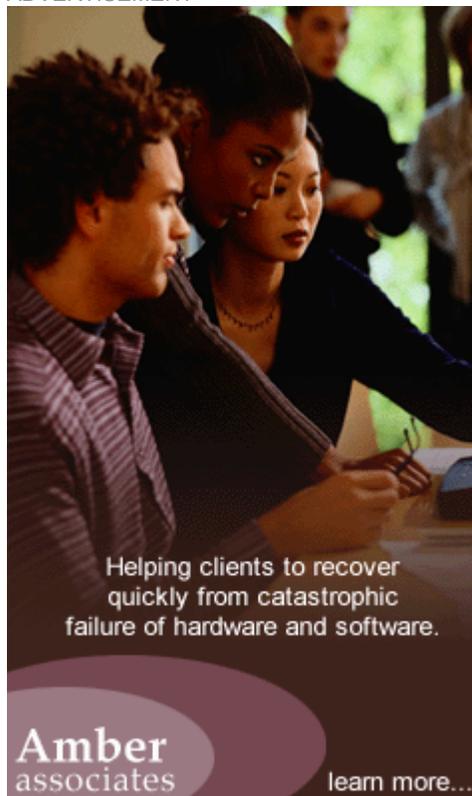
Maine environmentalists said Wednesday they are not surprised that Christie Todd Whitman resigned from her job as head of the Environmental Protection Agency, only that she didn't do it sooner.

Whitman announced on Wednesday that she will leave her position as the nation's top environmental officer to spend more time with her family in New Jersey, where she once was governor.

As a moderate Republican governor, Whitman had a reputation for leadership on clean air issues and global climate change, two issues that are particularly important to Maine. Mainers with respiratory problems suffer from air pollution that drifts into the state from upwind industrial facilities, and Maine has joined in a lawsuit against the Bush administration demanding that it regulate carbon dioxide, the pollutant considered the primary cause of global warming.

Whitman's appointment as EPA administrator initially was viewed

ADVERTISEMENT



Helping clients to recover quickly from catastrophic failure of hardware and software.

Amber associates learn more...



THE GREAT GIVEAWAY

The Great Giveaway

Entry available

What Maine



MAINE

CLICK ON A THING TO GO VACATION RE RETIREMENT

KENNEBEC

WESTERN LAKES & MTS.

GREAT

SOUTHERN

ONLINE

Moving to Maine
Retiring in Maine

WHEELS

Classifieds
Resources and info
Featured dealers

MILESTONES

Weddings
Obituaries

MARKETPLACE

Classifieds

DIRECTORIES

Medical Directory
Education Guide
and more

ADVERTISING

Advertising products
Request a quote

About Us

Help/site guide



by Maine environmental groups as a hopeful sign that the Bush administration intended to pursue a moderate course on the environment.

But after Whitman joined the Bush team and had to backpedal on some of her previous positions, "it must have been very difficult for her to serve," said Susan Sargent, Maine representative for the National Environmental Trust.

"We just didn't understand how she could have lasted this long," Sargent said.

As governor, Whitman set New Jersey on a course to significantly reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 2005. Yet as EPA administrator, she saw the United States withdraw from an international treaty designed to combat global warming.

Most recently, Whitman was at odds with the administration over a bill that would have exempted the Department of Defense from the nation's major environmental laws. A Senate vote modified the provision Wednesday.

Pete Didisheim, advocacy director for the Natural Resources Council of Maine, noted that Whitman, as governor of New Jersey, put pressure on Midwestern power plants to clean up the smokestack pollution that inevitably ended up in her own backyard - and in Maine.

As EPA administrator, however, she touted the administration's "Clear Skies Initiative," which among other things weakened a requirement that older power plants install state-of-the-art pollution controls when they upgrade their facilities.

"It's going right to the heart of the Clean Air Act, and she's had to be the spokesperson in support of that initiative," Didisheim said. "Within the environmental community, it wasn't a question of if she would resign, but when she would resign, because there's just been a sense that a person having taken those positions as a governor couldn't possibly stomach what she's having to do indefinitely."

There was mixed reaction to Whitman's resignation Wednesday from Maine's congressional delegation.

Sen. Olympia Snowe, a Republican who has supported tougher air pollution standards than those proposed by the Bush administration, called Whitman "a clear, pragmatic centrist voice as EPA administrator."

Snowe praised Whitman's efforts "to ensure clean air for the nation," including a recent crackdown on diesel pollution.

Rep. Tom Allen, a Democrat, said Whitman brought "relative moderation to an administration that has otherwise mounted an unprecedented assault on our nation's environmental policy."

"Administrator Whitman's inability to advance environmentally sound positions is further evidence that moderates have no place in the administration or within national Republican leadership," Allen said.

Ed Miller of the American Lung Association of Maine said his group will be watching closely to see who replaces Whitman.

"With her in office, at least we had someone who is living in the same basic air shed as we do in Maine and having some similar kinds of problems with (air pollution)," he said. "And even with that in her background, that was not enough for her to champion the kind of strong clean-air laws that we need in this country. We're very concerned that any successor not be someone who will be even more likely to try to dismantle the Clean Air Act."

Environmentalists are not hopeful that the views of Whitman's replacement will conform to their own.

"We would be shocked if they appointed somebody who had her reputation or better on environmental issues, and we assume that the president will nominate someone who has no record and who doesn't have a vision," Didisheim said. "Or more likely, they will select someone who has deep roots within the business community."

Four people - Deputy EPA Administrator Linda Fisher, former Michigan Gov. John Engler, Florida Environmental Protection Secretary David Struhs, and the auto industry's chief Washington lobbyist, Josephine Cooper - emerged as favorites to replace Whitman.

Fisher is a former vice president at the chemical firm Monsanto.

Engler, now a vice president at the technology firm EDS, proposed to ease state standards for the carcinogen dioxin just before leaving as Michigan's governor.

Struhs works for the president's brother, Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, and is the brother-in-law of the president's chief-of-staff, Andrew Card.

Cooper, president of the Washington-based Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, was an assistant EPA administrator under President Reagan. She was a vice president for both the American Forest & Paper Association and the Synthetic Organic Chemical Manufacturers Association.

"I think it's only going to get worse, whoever they put in," Sargent said. "Why would any moderate, environmental Republican want to step into that position after seeing what happened to administrator Whitman? Why would anyone put themselves in that place?"

The AP and Knight Ridder Newspapers contributed to this report.

Staff Writer Meredith Goad can be contacted at 791-6332 or at:

mgoad@pressherald.com

[To top of page](#)

Portland Press Herald
TODAY'S HEADLINES

Get an e-mail with the day's headlines each morning.

Your e-mail:

Signup now

... or visit our [signup page](#) for more information.

Careers

Featured Employers



Enhance your
career search
experience

[Copyright](#) © Blethen Maine Newspapers Inc.