

Meet the New Director – Chris Korleski

Governor Ted Strickland recently appointed Chris Korleski director of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA). He started on February 1, 2007. Prior to his appointment, Korleski served as counsel to Honda of America Mfg., Inc. in Marysville, Ohio, since 1996. While at Honda, he provided comprehensive legal advice and representation in the areas of environmental, safety and HAZMAT law.



Before working at Honda, Korleski was an assistant attorney general in the environmental enforcement section of the Ohio Attorney General's Office. He supervised the Ohio Attorney General's clean air enforcement program from 1993-1995. From 1988-1993, he worked in the environmental enforcement section providing representation and counseling to Ohio EPA in various matters involving air pollution, water pollution and solid and hazardous waste.

Korleski earned a bachelor's degree in agronomy from The Ohio State University College of Agriculture, and a master's degree in agronomy from the University of Nebraska. He received his law degree from The Ohio State University.

What attracted you to working at Ohio EPA?

A life-long interest in environmental protection, starting at age 17 when I worked in the Ohio Youth Conservation Corps, and almost 20 years of working with Ohio EPA from the outside, first as an Assistant Attorney General and then as Honda's environmental lawyer.

Tell us about your previous jobs and how they've prepared you for your new position.

Basically, I've been doing environmental work for my entire adult life, and I'm as excited about it now as I was when I was 17 when I first started working for the Youth Conservation Corps. I worked for the Corps for five summers after I graduated from high school. We worked in areas like state parks and preserves building trails, bridges and completing forest management projects. On the weekends, we were immersed in environmental education. For me, that was a wake-up call. After college, I started out as a soil mapper for the Soil Conservation Service, which basically had me walking the landscape and looking at it in great detail. Ultimately, after getting a masters degree in soil science, I decided to go to law school and practice environmental law.

I started with a law firm in West Virginia in 1987 representing various businesses, but after a year I jumped at the chance to go to the Ohio Attorney General's Office and work in the Environmental Enforcement Section representing Ohio EPA. I loved it, and ended up focusing on air pollution. After almost eight years, I decided I was ready for a change and was given the opportunity to develop Honda's in-house environmental law practice. I was at Honda for 11 years, and ended up doing a multi-media environmental practice as well as OSHA and HAZMAT work. I dealt with air, water, hazardous waste, solid waste, CERCLA, TSCA, you name it. It was great!

And now, I am excited to have this wonderful (and very challenging) opportunity and privilege to serve as the director of Ohio EPA.

What do you hope to accomplish during your tenure as director?

Continue to improve the quality of Ohio's air, water and land resources; foster an appropriate balance between a healthy environment and a healthy economy, recognizing that both are essential to the quality of life in Ohio; and try to better educate the public on what a great job Ohio EPA does, often under difficult circumstances, focusing on the environmental improvements the Agency has helped foster in the last 25 years or so.

What kinds of issues do you think will present your greatest challenges as director?

See the above! The challenges will be countless and difficult, but I am really looking forward to working with the dedicated professionals at Ohio EPA to accomplish them.

What is your approach to problem solving?

Listening and learning, knowing all the facts, knowing all the arguments on all sides, considering whether a consensus-based approach is appropriate, and when appropriate, making a prompt decision.

Powell Staying as Assistant Director

Laura Powell will retain her position as assistant director under Director Chris Korleski.

Powell has served as acting director at Ohio EPA since Joseph Koncelik resigned in late December 2006. She joined Ohio EPA in 1991 as a legislative liaison, and became chief of Ohio EPA's Office of Legislative Affairs in 1999.

Later as a deputy director, Powell oversaw the Agency's legislative efforts and policy and rule development.

Prior to joining Ohio EPA, Powell was a legislative aide to Senator Gary Suhadolnik. She is a graduate of Duke University with a major in public policy studies.