

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

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This Circular is an edited transcript of TRB Session 99, *Environmental Regulatory Process: Does It Work?* The TRB Ports and Waterways Committee sponsored this session jointly with the TRB Environmental Analysis and Transportation Committee, chaired by Thomas L. Weck.

This session consisted of eight individuals, the first four of which represented four major seaports and offered the "regulated's" perspective. The next four presentations responded to the seaports by offering the perspectives of the "regulator's" and the environmental community. A question and answer session followed, giving participants the opportunity to query one another. To conclude, Dr. Terry Huffman synthesized the dialogue with a summary of the problems and the potential solutions on this complex issue of perceived "process gridlock."

Our committees planned this session in response to the *TR News* feature in the September/October 1993 issue which contained a summary of the TRB staff visits to the states and various transportation institutes in order to identify key transportation issues. This article mentioned, "there is a strong belief among the states that the current environmental review processes are: a) too arbitrary and inflexible; b) have too many reviews and concurrence points; and c) do not really reflect comparative risks and costs." It was further observed that the environmental review process had become the major impediment to the development and basic operation of our nation's ports and waterways. This problem is critical when one realizes that over a billion tons of the nation's overseas trade moves through these ports.