

/CORRESPONDENCE

The President and Bioremediation*To the editor:*

Russ Hoyle's commentary last month, "Clinton's doomed technology-development policy" (*BioTechnology* **11**:1226, November) was seriously misinformed in asserting the lack of a Clinton Administration commitment to assisting private sector development of the promising technology of bioremediation. In fact, this administration is engaged in a series of public/private sector partnerships to advance this technology.

More broadly, the president has signaled the importance he assigns to development of all kinds of environmental technologies by initiating the Environmental Technology Initiative (ETI) shortly after his inauguration. He has asked the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, Washington, D.C.) to lead this initiative and I am committed to ensuring that its implementation catalyzes promising new developments in innovative environmental technologies. The \$36 million ETI program in fiscal year 94 is the beginning of a long-term Presidential commitment projected to total \$1.9 billion over nine years. The focus of the ETI is to support and encourage private sector technology development and commercialization through direct support for technology R&D, and removing regulatory and informational barriers to innovation and diffusion of new technologies.

But let me return to the particular area Hoyle focused on. The EPA Bioremediation Action Committee (BAC) is a unique government/industry partnership dedicated to advancing bioremediation. The BAC provides a national forum for coordination and information sharing and is tackling the barriers that members believe slow the growth of this new technology. Committee subgroups have developed research agendas, testing protocols, and educational programs. EPA has also addressed unnecessary regulatory constraints that committee participants had raised as limiting the application of bioremediation.

Through the Remediation Technologies Development Forum (RTDF), EPA has convened several major U.S. corporations and other agencies who are pooling resources in consortia to address issues such as use of bioremediation to clean up groundwater and soils contaminated with chlorinated solvents. The RTDF is a natural extension of a robust EPA bioremediation research program that includes cooperative research efforts with the private sector through the Federal Technology Transfer Act.

Demonstrating bioremediation in the field is a priority of EPA's program. Under the Bioremediation Field Initiative, EPA is conducting rigorous field assessments in nine locations where bioremediation is being applied *in situ* to clean up contaminated soil and groundwater. The *EPA Bioremediation In the Field Bulletin* reports progress on over 150 sites where bioremediation is an actual or potential remedy. EPA's Superfund Innovative Technology Evaluation (SITE) program has already evaluated six innovative private

sector bioremediation technologies in the field, has eleven more in the pipeline, and is supporting pilot scale-up of another fifteen. EPA is also working with the Department of Defense to establish field test sites at military bases.

Finally, the president's initiative to encourage exports of U.S. environmental technologies will greatly benefit the suppliers of those technologies and associated services. In his Earth Day address the President called for EPA to work together with the Department of Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, and the response from industry was extremely positive, as evidenced by the attendance of many senior executives. This is the first effort of its kind for a broad, coordinated federal effort in this area, and we are committed to making the U.S. a global leader in this competitive and growing market.

Support for technology R&D, establishing a favorable regulatory and policy climate for private sector technology development, and encouraging exports of environmental technologies are three critical pillars of the administration's support for environmental technologies such as bioremediation. EPA is proud to be able to play a key role in this program.

David Gardiner
Environmental Protection Agency
401 M Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Israeli Networking Initiative*To the editor:*

In his Last Word "Peace and Biotechnology in the Middle East" (*BioTechnology* **11**:1196), Articles Editor John Hodgson accurately described how Israel, with the world's highest density of professional biologists "already has in place many of the right elements for national success in biotechnology."

In fact, during the last three years the number of Israeli biotechnology companies has doubled to sixty. Many of these companies have developed novel and commercially viable technology and protected the same through patents. However, post-R&D expertise and investment in product development and marketing is needed for real success. This climate presents great opportunities for strategic alliances between U.S. and Israeli industry, some of which is occurring already.

To help promote and facilitate more strategic alliances between the two countries, I am forming, along with colleagues in Israel, a "U.S./Israel Biotechnology Council" which will, among other things, host an annual networking forum. This nonprofit organization will also alert its members to licensing opportunities. Those interested in becoming involved with this initiative may write to me at the address below.

Jonathan Cohen
Wigman, Cohen, Leitner, & Meyers, P.C.
1735 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 200
Arlington, VA 22202