

Alex Kaplan On Local Environmental Units



Preventing
marine and
water pollution
and restoring
rivers



Reducing air
pollution from
transportation
and industrial
sources



Treating
municipal,
industrial and
agricultural
waste



Catalyzing
economic
growth and
national
interests



Improving the
environment
and preseving
open spaces



Developing
tools for
improving
service and
professionalism



What were the major environmental achievements of 2005 on the local front?

In 2005, former Minister of the Environment Shalom Simhon spearheaded a major change in priorities which saw a dramatic growth in the ministry's budgetary allocation to local environmental units. At the beginning of 2005, environmental units covered 50% of Israel's geographic area and 70% of the population. Today environmental units cover 90% of the land area and provide environmental services to 85% of the population.

How many new units were established in 2005?

We issued a call for proposals which invited local authorities to join an existing local unit or to establish a new unit made up of several neighboring local authorities with our funding. As a result, 10 new units were set up in 2005. They include six new units in the north of the country, a new unit in the Shoham area in the central region, a new unit in the Givataim area in the Tel Aviv region and two new units in the south including one in the vicinity of Beersheba which serves the Bedouin sector. We also provided these new units with a one-time grant for the purchase of dedicated equipment for soil sampling, noise and radiation monitoring and more.

How does the Ministry of the Environment support these units?

All of the environmental units, old and new, are professionally guided by the directors of the Environment Ministry's regional offices under

Head of Project and Environmental Units Division

Local environmental units play a critical role in advancing environmental issues on the municipal level and serve as the local arm of the Ministry of the Environment. The Environment Ministry is professionally responsible for the operation of 47 local environmental units, regional environmental units and associations of towns for the environment, eight of which serve the Arab sector.

the supervision of a national coordinator in Jerusalem. However, their budgetary allocations are divided between the ministry and local authorities. The rate of support is determined according to objective criteria and varies between 50% for new and small units to 10% in older, established units.

What do environmental units deal with?

The units are responsible for environmental activities and services, including, among others, industrial inspection and business licensing, environmental planning, treatment of noise nuisances, recycling, environmental education, pest control and agro-

ecology. Some are also responsible for air pollution monitoring systems or wastewater treatment systems. Over the years, authority for additional subjects has gradually been transferred to local units, including incorporating environmental conditions in business licenses of C-level businesses (classified as lower pollution risk level plants) and granting Poisons Permits to premises dealing with hazardous substances. Recently, responsibility for the Reading Power Plant in Tel Aviv was also transferred to the relevant local unit.

We are convinced that local authorities are better equipped to respond to local problems since they are closer to them, more familiar with them, and as a result, more concerned about them. By providing financial assistance to local units, everyone wins - the Environment Ministry, the local authority and the residents themselves.

 For more about the local environment, see p. 31.