

Brief summary of input received from the 2nd Meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Group to consider changes to the Endangered Resources Review Program

Wednesday November 5, 2008 from 10:00 a.m. – noon

Stakeholders were appreciative of the opportunity to participate in this process, and thought that the Review Program had done a good job of gathering, summarizing, and responding to their input.

Stakeholder priorities for the ER Review Program:

- It is critically important to have a complete, up-to-date NHI database as our foundation in making decisions that affect the regulated community. This leads to more predictability in the review process and fewer surprises. The backlog of records waiting to be entered into the NHI database needs to be addressed.
- Expand sharing of detailed NHI data to a much broader group of customers and partners to help customers better plan their projects and help streamline the ER review process.
- Create an NHI Certification Program for people with whom we share detailed NHI data to provide training and ensure appropriate use, interpretation, application, and security of the data.
- Improve consistency in the ER review process across all DNR programs in how projects are screened for ER concerns, how the NHI data are interpreted and applied to projects, and recommendations for avoiding negative impacts to rare species.
- Provide more online species and life history information, management recommendations, and avoidance guidelines for more high priority rare species.
- Ensure predictable and short turnaround times for ER Reviews on a consistent, long-term basis by shifting staffing of this service from limited-term to long-term positions.
- Ensure timely, high-quality technical support to help customers use and understand NHI information by providing this service via long-term staff who have the ability and security to expand their skills and knowledge through time and build trust and relationships with customers.
- Provide more online tools, forms, and information, including user screening tools/guidelines which would help customers make preliminary, informed ER screening assessments for projects.
- Provide better access to regional and species experts (including for site consultation/visits to determine if a species may be present and to recommend measures to avoid impacts)

Additional changes stakeholders would like to see:

- Other state agencies need to be held accountable for reviewing projects for ER concerns (e.g., Dept of Commerce stormwater permits for commercial projects).
- Stakeholders would like to see the NHI Program better use volunteer efforts, particularly related to filling geographical gaps in the NHI database.

Concerns:

- Concern that we keep the conservation mission and goals of the DNR and the ER program, including our regulatory role and responsibilities, as our top priority as we consider ways to better serve our customers.
- Continued concern about the potential misuse and misinterpretation of the detailed NHI data (generally believed that a comprehensive Certification Program would address this concern).
- Concern that the time and money involved in Certification would be prohibitive for some customer groups (e.g., small forestry consultant businesses, towns, municipalities)