



ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION FOR WISCONSIN SMALL BUSINESSES

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DNR seeks comment on new process to open up agency guidance development to the public

MADISON – In an effort to improve transparency and provide more opportunities for the public to give input on key natural resources decisions, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is developing a new process to standardize how the agency develops guidance for complying with state and federal rules and requirements.

“For several months now we’ve heard concerns about a lack of transparency and participation in some of the department’s decision-making,” said DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp. “We’ve developed a new process aimed at alleviating those concerns, a way to develop internal program guidance that includes an opportunity for public comment.”

Programs in the agency develop guidance documents that direct staff on how to approach making decisions when there are not specific details in a law or code. Guidance often informs decisions on permits intended to protect air or water quality and the implementation of fish and wildlife programs.

Stepp said the concerns voiced by agency stakeholders relates to the DNR setting guidance that directly impact various customers without those individuals or businesses either being notified or being able to provide input into the process.

“This new initiative is a major change and promotes participation and transparency,” said Stepp. “While many agency programs involve stakeholders in making decisions, currently there is no consistent formal process that provides an opportunity for all interested parties to participate in developing program guidance. With this initiative, any member of the public will now be able provide input.”

Under the proposed process, new draft guidance documents will be available on the DNR website. There would then be a period during which the affected businesses, municipalities and general public would be able to submit comments on the proposed guidance.

Information on the new guidance development process is available by going to the DNR website and typing in the keywords “program guidance.” An example of program guidance is also posted on that Web page.

The public can comment on the new proposed guidance process until March 22, 2013. After considering all comments, the agency plans to present the new process to the Natural Resources Board in May for approval.

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