



The Environmental Case for Green Tier

Moving from Compliance to Performance

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GREEN TIER

Major regulatory programs have done a great deal to protect Wisconsin's air, land and water in the past 30 years. Through the 1970s and 1980s, their focus on compliance and enforcement was necessary to halt severe environmental abuses. Now, our environmental challenges are different. Our focus on compliance may be limiting the capacity of regulators and the regulated community to pursue innovative approaches to environmental management.

Under our traditional environmental regulatory system, we have utilized a "one-size-fits-all" approach to environmental protection, prescribing specific technologies in an attempt to control environmental behaviors. Lacking flexibility to try new environmental approaches, companies have adhered to inefficient practices that often fail to yield meaningful environmental results.

Competitive pressures on Wisconsin's business community, combined with state budget deficits, compel us to seek a new model that can unite competitive pressure with environmental goals to achieve superior environmental performance. Green Tier offers the opportunity to enhance the protection and management of our natural resources, as well as our economic and institutional assets.

Changes in Business Practice

Measurable Improvement in Environmental Performance

Using Green Tier, Wisconsin's business community can apply new initiatives to improve environmental performance beyond current standards. These initiatives may include application of new pollution control technologies, production process changes, or introduction of sustainability strategies. Green Tier participants commit to measurable environmental improvement, which is a substantial step above the current "compliance monoculture" that persuades companies to meet only minimum performance requirements.

Higher Assurance of Compliance

Participating companies conduct annual assessments of their environmental performance, including their regulatory compliance status. Results of these assessments are provided to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). These assessments reduce the potential for noncompliance, help facilities move above the compliance threshold, and improve overall environmental performance.

Increased Access to Information

Providing Information, Seeking Feedback

Communities, neighbors, and other interested parties have increased access to information about facilities enrolled in Green Tier, and they have greater opportunities to share comments and concerns. Participating facilities commit to working more closely with their local communities and those potentially affected by their operations.

Annual Reporting

Green Tier participants give details about their environmental performance in annual reports. These reports document the company's regulatory compliance issues, stakeholder involvement activities, and performance improvements. The report is also an opportunity for participating companies to showcase their innovative practices and environmental successes.

Improvements Across Business Sectors

Green Tier allows groups of businesses or public entities to join together in establishing charters that share environmental performance goals. Green Tier Charters leverage the efforts of DNR to encourage measurable environmental improvements at multiple facilities simultaneously.

Focus on Environmental Management Systems

Participants in Green Tier implement environmental management systems (EMSs) that make the environment a formal part of business decision making, challenging a company to move from compliance to continual improvement. An EMS requires proactive planning by company managers, employee participation, and examination of business processes that have potential environmental impacts. Using EMSs, Green Tier participants are more likely to identify and minimize potential environmental risks not addressed by our existing compliance-based programs.

Redirection of Agency Resources

Focusing on Facilities that Need Assistance

Business participation in Green Tier reduces the administrative burden placed on DNR. This can allow DNR staff to focus on facilities that need help to achieve or maintain compliance with environmental regulations. DNR can focus efforts where expertise is most needed.

For more information about Green Tier

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