



**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

**SUBJECT: Policy on Public Involvement
In Department Programs and
Activities**

Number: 09-007

Date: April 5, 2002

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**Revision: February 21, 2003
January 14, 2005**

ISSUE:

Public involvement is a vital part of many programs administered by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). A successful public involvement process would ensure that those who are most likely affected by a DEQ decision are notified, understand the proposed decision, and have an opportunity to provide meaningful input prior to DEQ action.

POLICY:

The legal framework of public involvement in DEQ activities is established by the various enabling statutes administered by the DEQ and the Administrative Procedures Act, 1969 PA 306, as amended. While some specific aspects of public involvement are particular to the statutory and regulatory framework of individual programs, public involvement in the DEQ will be based on the following underlying principles:

- The decision-making process should foster fairness and understanding. It should be transparent, occurring in steps and in a time frame that is understood and predictable by involved parties. The decision-maker should be readily identifiable before the decision is made. Each decision should be based on the technical merits of a proposal and decision-making criteria established by law. The basis for the decision should be available to the public, and the DEQ is accountable for the decision.
- The public should have the opportunity for a meaningful role in the DEQ's activities: The public should be able to contribute to a decision on a proposed program or activity that could affect their quality of life. The public should have access, consistent with state law, to information and the evaluation of information involved in the decision. The DEQ should be able to explain its decision and how relevant and timely comments were considered in that decision thereby affording an involved participant the ability to ascertain that his or her interests were heard and considered.

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It is the policy of the DEQ to continually improve public involvement in DEQ programs and activities based on these principles. Because of the differences in the details among the variety of DEQ programs, this policy does not describe how such improvements are to be made or a specific process to facilitate public involvement. Rather, each program division and office should continually consider and implement means to improve public involvement in the administration of its programs. In doing so, program managers should consider, at a minimum, the following:

- Increasing staff skills for working with the public, including communication skills, conflict resolution, and public meeting facilitation.
- Encouraging staff involvement in work-related professional organizations and their local communities.
- Identifying opportunities for increasing the effectiveness of public involvement, including the timing and nature of public notice and input.
- Facilitating public understanding of issues before the DEQ, including notice of pending decisions, the factors that the DEQ considers in reaching a decision, the technical information that DEQ has before it in the decision-making process, and the basis of the decision when it is made.
- Advancing the public's understanding of, and ability to work within, the DEQ organizational structure and decision-making processes.
- Improving working relationships with local units of government and non-governmental organizations, including stakeholders and the media.
- Improving the technical means by which the DEQ conveys and receives information, including use of the internet.

In order to implement this policy, each Deputy Director, and program Division and Office Chief will have as an annual performance objective the improvement of public involvement in programs administered by that person.

Approved: _____



Date: _____

1-14-05