

One Stop: The Future of Managing Environmental Data Electronically

Mississippi Environment November/December 1999

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is reinventing the way it manages environmental data. The goal is to develop a reporting and planning system that is convenient and concise and eliminates as much paper work as possible, while providing more efficient service to environmental stakeholders.

The One Stop reporting initiative is focused on four areas of activity related to MDEQ responsibilities: compliance assurance, permitting, site master file, and activity tracking. Specific computerized processes, called "core capabilities", are being developed for these four areas to support the environmental data MDEQ generates and receives.

"The approach is not to reinvent the wheel," said Melanie Morris, MDEQ Office of Pollution Control Information Systems Manager. "We are building upon the successes of other states, such as Minnesota, New Jersey, and Louisiana and are enhancing and modifying these successes to meet Mississippi's specific needs."

Once complete, the detail design will promote an enhanced exchange of information between MDEQ, business and industry, and the public by allowing for the following features:

- Electronic submittal of permit applications that are customized and eliminate the applicant's need to respond to questions that are not relevant for the applicant's specific organization;
- Effective and efficient notification process to members of the public who would potentially be affected by the proposed activity requiring a permit to promote meaningful public input early in the application review process;
- Comprehensive site master files that include agency-wide information so that all correspondence and data is available at one location; and
- MDEQ work activity tracking data that will provide greater accuracy in staff tasking.

"We believe all of these processes will help individuals, businesses and industry reduce their burden," said Morris. "This single reporting method will also allow the general public greater access to environmental information in Mississippi."

MDEQ will take its first step in the fall of 2000 by beginning to manage environmental data related to permitting, compliance and enforcement, and work activity tracking electronically. The detail design plans also include implementing program specific features required to manage Air related data.

One Stop is partially funded by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Mississippi is one of the first thirteen states to receive the \$500,000 One Stop Reporting Grant from EPA.