



Compliance & Enforcement Launches New Environmental Stewardship Recognition Program

Who is affected by this initiative?

Most any business or organization regulated by the DEP may be eligible for special recognition as a responsible steward of the environment.

What has occurred?

Leading organizations are finding that behaving as a steward of the environment is an important element of sustainable activity and a profitable business practice that is demanded increasingly more by citizens and customers. There is also a growing recognition that while compliance is mandatory, it is only a minimum standard of environmental performance.

During compliance evaluations, inspectors have observed improvements at facilities that are beneficial to the environment and exceed any regulatory requirements. However, in the past there has not been a way to recognize the efforts of these environmentally proactive businesses.

What is DEP doing?

The DEP is creating an opportunity to be "caught" doing something positive for the environment while increasing awareness and knowledge of stewardship practices leading to sustainability.

Beginning January 2008, the DEP launched a recognition program to highlight Environmental Stewardship as part of its compliance assurance efforts.

The Stewardship initiative is a voluntary program that utilizes existing Department infrastructure and personnel to capture information during routine compliance inspections. Recognition will be given to members of the regulated community who are engaging in positive activities that benefit the environment. The goal is to encourage all businesses and organizations to evaluate their current facility operations and consider incorporating stewardship initiatives as part of their daily operations. **While DEP seeks to broadly encourage stewardship, this recognition program is initially limited to observations at those sites the DEP already plans to visit to ensure compliance.**

This initiative represents a new role for the DEP and especially for compliance personnel. We expect to learn as much as we educate others and anticipate some evolution of the program going forward. You may see regular updates to our online guidance, to our checklist and to the publication/promotion of those acting as stewards.

COMPLIANCE ADVISORY

How can I participate?

Everyone is encouraged to learn about and make choices that represent stewardship. However, only those who are inspected will be asked to respond to our environmental stewardship survey during the normal inspection process. The DEP will publish results to acknowledge and promote stewardship practices. The activities or policies that may be recognized as part of stewardship have been organized into a series of questions in a checklist form - this is the survey. You can be best prepared for this survey by doing the following things:

1. Review our companion guidance document online at stewardship.nj.gov. Note that this document may be updated regularly.
2. Be sure that anyone who will be dealing with a DEP inspector is well aware of any activities or policies that go beyond environmental compliance at your site.
3. Consider completing the survey yourself ahead of time and be prepared to explain or demonstrate to an inspector where you think you qualify for recognition.

Who should I contact with questions?

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Bureau of Enforcement and Compliance Services

Where can I get more information?

The following web sites can be accessed for additional information regarding this advisory:

Compliance & Enforcement's Stewardship Information stewardship.nj.gov

Office of Planning and Sustainable Communities <http://www.nj.gov/dep/opsc/>

Visit the following Web site for general information:

Contact NJDEP: <http://www.nj.gov/cgi-bin/dep/contactdep.pl>

To comment on this advisory:

<http://www.nj.gov/dep/enforcement/survey.html>

Please note this advisory is intended to be a summary explanation of a department initiative. It does not include all potentially applicable requirements. If you have any questions related to compliance with this initiative, please contact the number listed above.