



Environmental Stewardship in New Jersey - Enforcement Broadens Its Scope

Encouraging the regulated community to move beyond compliance and into stewardship is the goal of the new Environmental Stewardship Program established by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Enforcement program in 2008.

Recognizing the growing environmental challenges we face, the Department sought a new method to take us beyond the traditional approach of regulatory enforcement. The Environmental Stewardship program uses the existing enforcement infrastructure to educate the regulated community about the various environmental stewardship activities that a facility can pursue and offers recognition to those facilities that engage in these activities.

The Department has a well established and highly effective enforcement program which routinely inspects more than 1,000 facilities a month. An overall inspection-based compliance rate around 80% is due to the vigilance of the well trained staff. The question "How to achieve even greater compliance and resulting environmental benefits?" has always been the challenge.

Because the structure was in place to implement such a program, the first step in initiating it was training of staff, so that during routine inspections, inspectors could point out to the regulated community opportunities for environmental stewardship activities.

Training of all enforcement staff was conducted in the first three months of 2008. By spring of 2008, all inspectors conducting enforcement inspections were also educating the regulated community about the new Environmental Stewardship program and documenting environmental stewardship on the Department's database system. A Web page was designed providing program information to the public as well as reports that show the environmental stewardship activities being performed by members of the regulated community. This page can be found at www.nj.gov/dep/enforcement/stewardship/.

In June 2008, the Department began issuing certificates to all facilities in recognition of their environmental stewardship activities. As of April 2009, 281 certificates had been issued to sites engaging in environmental stewardship activities. Among the categories that stewardship activities can be recognized are hazardous materials reduction, greenhouse gas calculations, water use reduction and environmental management systems.

The Department is looking closely at the results of the program and the demand this is having on the enforcement workforce. Going forward with this program may require some adjustments to streamline and make the documentation process more efficient.

An online submittal process is being considered that would mirror other similar Departmental online submittal processes by using the existing New Jersey Environmental Management System infrastructure.



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As the program grows, the Department will expand the data available to the public, providing a closer look at individual success stories and evaluating the positive environmental impacts resulting from the efforts of the environmental stewards in New Jersey.