

2018 POLICIES

Environmental Permitting

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND PERMITTING REFORM

Minnesota businesses have expressed frustration and concern about the uncertainty and variability in the time required to process environmental review documents and environmental permits. To maximize competitiveness in a global economy, companies seeking permits – for existing, expanding or new facilities – must be assured clarity, timeliness, predictability and accountability in the environmental review and permitting process.

We are blessed with many distinctive natural resources in this state including more than 10,000 lakes and two national parks. Many factors go into a business's decision to update an existing facility, expand or locate a new one. In addition to environmental permitting, factors include energy costs, taxes and workforce availability. While protection of our natural resources is of the utmost importance, environmental permitting must be efficient so that it recognizes and accommodates the global marketplace faced by an everincreasing number of Minnesota businesses. Legislators make critical decisions that directly impact the permitting process and, therefore, the cost of running a business.

OUR KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE 2018 SESSION INCLUDE:

- Increase efficiency and streamline the environmental review and permitting process.
- Promote communication and coordination among state agencies.
- Abide by federal statute or rule. Any implementation of a state plan to comply with the federal Clean Power Plan must choose the least-cost method.

OUR GOALS

We support sensible environmental regulations that will allow Minnesota to maintain a clean environment and a healthy business climate, while fostering the economic change and growth that this will bring statewide. To this end, the state should establish regulatory systems that are structured and operated so most reviews and permits are completed and issued within months, not years. Minnesota's regulatory program should strive to be among the premier permitting systems in the nation – quickly and efficiently completing the rigorous process to ensure environmental protection, while facilitating economic change and growth.

One of our most immediate challenges is to make Minnesota's permitting practices consistent with those established by federal law or rule. There are some circumstances where Minnesota's practices should deviate from the federal government's practices, but these are the exception. Aligning our practices with the federal government also means we must pay special attention to and work to shape any new national standard that affects Minnesota. Of immediate concern is the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed Clean Power Plan, which will limit carbon emissions from power plants. The plan needs to take into account Minnesota's previous actions through energy efficiency programs and renewable energy mandates to reduce carbon emissions, as well as provide flexibility and accountability in meeting the goals of the plan.

INCREASE EFFICIENCY

Increase efficiency and streamline the environmental review and permitting process, specifically the Tier 2 applications. (Tier 1 permits do not have a public-comment period and have a 90-day completion goal. Tier 2 permits require a public comment period and have a 150- day completion goal.)

COORDINATE STATE AGENCIES

Promote communications and coordination among state agencies and modernize public involvement and notifications to reflect current communications and timelines.

FOLLOW FEDERAL LAW

Abide by federal statute or rule unless there is a significant risk unique to Minnesota that the federal statute or rule fails to protect. This reduces administrative complexity and reduces duplication. Where possible, allow flexibility to meet rule and statute requirements.

MINIMIZE COSTS IN CLEAN POWER PLAN

Ensure that any implementation of a state plan to comply with the federal clean power plan chooses the least-cost method. ■