Director's report

June 2016 EQC meeting

It has been a little over a year since I joined the NDEQ team, and I have enjoyed getting to know the EQC members and address some of the challenges we face. Overall, I am very pleased with how NDEQ staff (individually and as a team) has taken on some of the change management issues and have moved forward.

Compliance assistance and making it easy to be in compliance or (easy to do good) continues to be my focus at NDEQ. That does not mean we won't hold people accountable if they are not abiding by the regulations or are breaking the law. It means we will work to make our complex rules easy to understand and that we will be willing to listen to our compliance focused regulated community in a partnership way. There are many tools in the compliance toolbox; we will use "the ones we need" to achieve compliance. I just want us to start with the "Nebraska Nice" tools first.

We continue significant progress in our overarching goals to:

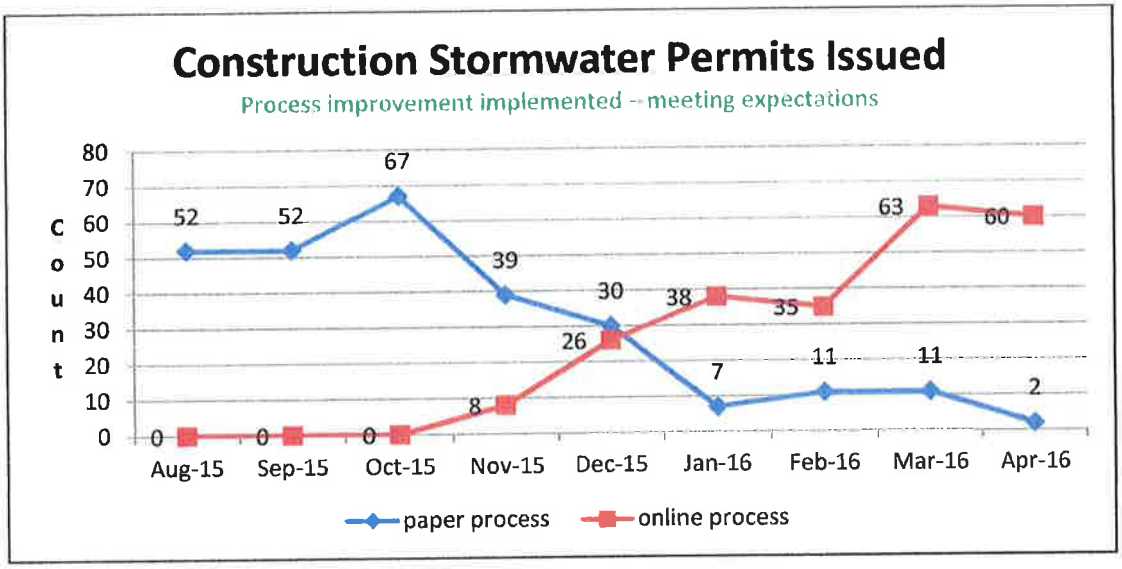
Make Compliance Easier for Everyone

- Provide Assistance and Training
- Go out to Nebraska, be proactive in education
- Streamline Process
- Develop Performance Goals and Objectives

We now have a core team in each section trained on permit assistance. I want ALL of us to be able to proactively help our regulated community understand what it takes to be in compliance. When we schedule training outside the central office and partner with our field office staff and other cooperative entities (NRD's, other state agencies or organizations), I want us to enter the room fully engaged in a "how we can work together" fashion to solve problems, the complex and seemingly small ones. I continue to hear great reports from key Nebraska leaders on how good it is to work with NDEQ. We want to continue to work with people in proactive manners to make Nebraska a great place to live and work.

We just completed the spring series of Environmental Updates in North Platte, Lincoln and Omaha. Amazing attendance at all three locations; especially at North Platte where attendance increased from 5 to 27! We had significant interaction at all three locations, staff and regulated community openly discussing issues is a wonderful sight to behold. More updates this fall will focus on specific compliance issues.

The process streamlining is also gaining momentum, almost 400 on-line applications submitted and approved for Air and Construction Storm Water general permits. We are one of 4 states that offer these permits and staff is actively working to Grow these process improvements next year by about 15%. Increasing our internal process efficiencies will allow us more flexibility with our limited staff resources.



Other goals for the coming year are:

- to maintain Air compliance,
- make sure those that start VCP, petroleum or other clean-ups finish on time (making all Nebraska land usable) and
- eliminate regulatory uncertainty by making compliance and permitting actions in a timely manner.

Communication is a key to making all this happen. We have reinstituted an internal departmental newsletter. You should be receiving this and I also want you to feel that you can be present at some of our departmental or state sponsored events. Starting with this newsletter, the Management Team will list significant policy or departmental issues you and the regulated community you serve.

Finally, the other significant change I am making is to involve staff with some of the day-to-day management issues. Several months ago we instituted a policy review group of staff comprised from each program area and with varied seniority. They are instrumental in helping define internal policy development and address some complicated issues. Also we are organizationally working on a true leadership development process and career progression. While this is far from perfect, and we have to accomplish this within budget and NAPE contract limitations. We are striving to do what we can to organize and retain a quality workforce.

Respectfully submitted

Jim Macy

NDEQ Director