



State of Louisiana

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Environmental News

DEQ Meets and Exceeds EPA's Performance Measure

(Baton Rouge) – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) was recently recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for completing several performance measures related to the Louisiana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permitting and enforcement programs. In a letter to DEQ, EPA confirmed that all documents were received before the Dec. 31 deadline, as the federal agency required in the performance measures it set forth early in 2003. Also in the letter, EPA commended the staff of DEQ for its work in submitting the documentation.

EPA Regional Administrator Richard E. Greene said, "The importance of timely permitting cannot be overemphasized. Permits are the primary mechanism to ensure human health and the environment remains protected. DEQ's accountability systems, which EPA helped develop, will help DEQ to meet EPA's goal of reducing the permitting backlog to 10 percent or less by 2005. I am pleased that DEQ has met its numeric goal for water permits in 2003."

DEQ had agreed to issue permit decisions on at least 35 major and 300 minor facilities in 2003. All of these decisions needed to be actions drafted by DEQ personnel, not EPA or contractor support. According to Linda Levy, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Environmental Services, "the agency surpassed that goal by issuing coverage to 36 major and 382 minor facilities." By July 2003, DEQ had exceeded its midpoint performance measure commitments and was extremely confident that the end of year measure would be easily met.

In addition to actions initiated by DEQ staff, permits drafted by EPA or contractor support and then processed and finalized by DEQ staff covered another 18 major and 64 minor facilities. During the same time, DEQ staff also processed 12 major permit modifications and 64 minor permit modifications. The agency also provided coverage to almost 1,700 facilities under general permits and completed a massive cleanup effort in EPA's facility database.

Former DEQ Secretary L. Hall Bohlinger said, "Since acquiring the program in 1996, the staff has continually worked hard to meet the EPA's program requirements. Through hard work and commitment, DEQ surpassed its goals. This accomplishment demonstrates the department's willingness and ability to succeed. We are extremely pleased with everyone's dedication and follow through in reaching this measure."