



Designated Rivers LACs Notification Process for DES Water Division Permits



Summary

Conflicts exist between DES permitting timeframes and LAC meeting schedules to review applications.

Using Lean principles, DES was able to bring a shared understanding of all parties' constraints and concerns and identified several ways the process could be improved.

Accomplishments

- Improved weekly permit application notices sent to the LACs.
- Improved Rivers Program information on permit applications.
- Revised instructions provided to LACs on effective commenting.

Team

DES Rivers Program and Land Resources Management Program staff
Representatives of six Local River Management Advisory Committees
Sponsor: Gene Forbes, Director, Water Division

Contact

Facilitator: Bob Minicucci, 271-2941

The Service

In the Rivers Management and Protection Program (RSA 483), Local Advisory Committees (LACs), are established for each designated river. LACs have the right to comment on state permitting applications within the designated river corridor.

The Problem

DES staff have strict statutory and administrative rule timeframes to either approve or deny permit applications. LACs are volunteer groups who meet monthly, they may not have the time to submit comments within the permit review timeframes and due to the requirements of the Right-to-Know Law, they cannot conduct these reviews electronically. Given these limitations, the existing process has not worked well for DES or the LACs.

The Goal

The goals were to establish a notification process that satisfies both DES's statutory and business needs and those of the LACs, and to reach a shared understanding of all parties' constraints.

The Lean Process

Representatives of several LACs, DES permitting staff, and DES Rivers Program staff got together and mapped out the permit application review process.

This mapping process was educational for all parties and brought several details to light where improvements could be made.

One issue occurs when applicants are unaware that they are working within a designated river corridor and therefore need to notify an LAC of the application. Another issue pertained to lack of additional correspondence with the LACs throughout the application process, such as when the permitting staff request more information from the applicant. There was also discussion about the type of LAC comments upon which DES can act and to whom the comments are addressed. For example, there are some LAC

concerns that DES can not legally address, e.g. lighting at a site.

An unexpected benefit was that each of the several LACs present had the chance to see how other LACs conduct their business and to learn from each other.

Staffing limitations at DES and the monthly schedule of LAC meetings formed constraints around which possible solutions to the process were developed.

The Results

Working within those constraints, specific improvements were identified:

Application forms were checked and changed to ensure applicants would have to determine whether their project is within an LAC's jurisdiction.

Improvements were made to the weekly permit notification the Rivers Program sends to the LACs. LAC feedback has been very positive.

Guidance was given to LACs on how to effectively transmit comments, and on the types of issues on which DES has jurisdiction.

DES permitting staff has been reminded that LACs and applicants need to be kept informed throughout the process.

Since application review times vary, LACs need to be provided with better guidance and deadlines.

The expansion of e-permitting in the future will expedite the process for all parties, including application reviews conducted by LACs.

