

MDEQ Reorganized

In response to budget reductions and an “early out” retirement program that has resulted in the early retirements of many senior level Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) officials, MDEQ director Russell Harding has announced a major reorganization of the department.

In a July 1, 2002 memorandum, Harding proposed to reorganize MDEQ by consolidating the nine MDEQ program divisions into six new divisions. The six new divisions will be organized as follows:

Air Quality Division (AQD) The AQD will remain largely intact. Personnel from the Dry Cleaning Program of the Drinking Water and Radiological Protection Division (DWRPD) will be moved into AQD. The only personnel who will be transferred out of AQD will be the AQD toxicology section, which will be moved to the new Environmental Science and Services Division.

Water Division (WD) This new division will be formed by combining the current Surface Water Quality Division (SWQD) and DWRPD. In addition, the Groundwater Program from the Waste Management Division (WMD) and the Soil Erosion and Inland Lakes and Aquatic Nuisance programs from the Land and Water Management Division (LWMD) will be added to the Water Division. As noted above, the Dry Cleaning Program of the DWRPD will be transferred to AQD.

Geological and Land Management Division (GLMD) This new division will be formed by combining the existing Geological Survey Division (GSD) with the LWMD. As noted above, the Soil Erosion and Inland Lakes and Aquatic Nuisance programs of LWMD will be transferred to WD.

Waste and Hazardous Materials Division (WHMD) This new division will be created from the current WMD. The Storage Tank Technical Review and filed inspection units of the current Storage Tank Division (STD) will be added to WHMD.

Remediation and Redevelopment Division (RRD) This new division will be created by combining the current Environmental Response Division (ERD) and the cleanup program for the STD. The grant and loan responsibilities relating to Site Assessment and the Clean Michigan Initiative will be transferred to the new Environmental Science and Services Division (ESSD) discussed below. As noted above, the Storage Tank Technical Review unit is being transferred to the WHMD. The enforcement staff from the current STD will be divided between RRD and WHMD. The RRD will also assume responsibilities for overseeing state site cleanups currently performed by the Office of Special Environmental Projects.

Environmental Science and Services Division (ESSD) This new division will be created by joining the current Environmental Assistance Division (EAD) with the Environmental Laboratory from the existing DWRPD, the toxicologists from the existing AQD, SWQD, ERD and WMD, and the grant and loan administrative responsibilities from the ERD, DWRPD, SWQD, and LWMD.

According to the July 1, 2002 memorandum, the reorganization was necessary in light of the pending retirements of five division chiefs, one assistant division chief, 15 section chiefs, 26 unit chiefs and 14 level specialists. Because MDEQ will be allowed to hire only one new person for every four early retirees, it was decided that a reorganization was necessary.

The July 1, 2002 memorandum states that an additional reorganization of the sections and units within each division will be announced shortly.

As part of the reorganization, MDEQ will close its Shiawassee District Office.

Employees of that district will be relocated to MDEQ headquarters in Lansing.

Harding expects to implement the reorganization of MDEQ by September, although the closure of the Shiawassee District Office may occur later in 2002.

Harding stated that the reorganization was designed to minimize the impact on MDEQ employees and the functions of MDEQ:

I know that any restructuring provides uncertainty to many individuals. I am committed to providing details as they are finalized and minimizing impacts on employees to the maximum extent possible. These concerns are why the chosen organization structure involved the consolidation of programs rather than going to a functional structure (permitting division, inspection division, etc.) which would have been more disruptive. I encourage each of you to focus on your current job responsibilities until the new structure is implemented. Much important work needs to be accomplished this summer.

More details on the planned reorganization are expected to be announced in the near future.

S. Lee Johnson