

Spotlight on the Office of Environmental Assistance

– By Gary Gulka, Office of Environmental Assistance

We often think of DEC as the environmental regulatory and permitting department. And certainly that is the case, with over 45 permitting programs that deal with water quality, drinking water, wastewater, air quality, and solid and hazardous waste management. The Environmental Assistance Office (EAO), within DEC, is one division that is primarily non-regulatory, and exists to assist the public with understanding and complying with regulations and permits. In addition, the EAO promotes best management practices to minimize impacts on the environment. Here are some of our programs.



EAO Staff Assist Business Owners

Small Business and Municipal Compliance Assistance: Many times, small businesses and municipalities have challenges navigating through the regulatory process and understanding their permit requirements or other regulations they may need to comply with. We often assist businesses over the phone with basic questions about DEC regulations and permits and get them on the right track. Another service offered is on-site assistance visits where we will meet on-site, review business or municipal operations, and make written recommendations on compliance issues identified and possible solutions, as well as suggestions on how to reduce toxic substance use and solid and hazardous waste. We will follow up as necessary to ensure that issues are addressed. This service is offered at no cost and we operate confidentially. Often times, DEC's regulatory divisions will refer a business or municipality to EAO for assistance. Another service that we offer is regulatory compliance workshops and regulatory guidance publications for various business sectors such as vehicle service repair and auto body shops. Assistance Hotline: 800-974-9559 or visit our web site at: www.eaovt.org

Permit Assistance: If you are a homeowner or business and want to know what state permits may apply to your project, the Permit Specialist program that operates out of the five Agency of Natural Resources regional offices can help you answer that question - either in person or by email or phone. Based upon a technical review of projects and an interpretation of regulations for over 100 state permits, the Permit Specialists will develop a Project Review Sheet indicating preliminary jurisdiction for all applicable state permitting programs. Through the use of the Project Review Sheet and the applicant's follow-up communication with DEC and other state agencies, this jurisdiction is confirmed. The Project Review Sheet also provides a jurisdiction for Act 250 applicability. The popular brochure, [Do You Need a State Permit?](#), provides a useful directory of contacts to get you started. The [Vermont Permit Handbook](#) provides a fact sheet on each state permit program.

Recognition Programs: In partnership with the Vermont Small Business Development Center, EAO administers a green business recognition program, the [Vermont Business Environmental Partnership](#) (VBEP), where businesses that meet and maintain a suite of environmental best management practices are recognized as Environmental Partners and Environmental Leaders. Assistance is also available to help businesses meet the program standards. Specific sector programs with the VBEP include: Green Hotels, Green Restaurants, Clean Marinas, Green Links, and Sustainable Grocers, but any business type is eligible to participate.

EAO also administers the annual [Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence](#) to recognize exemplary actions taken by Vermonters to conserve and protect natural resources, prevent pollution, and promote environmental sustainability. To-date, more than 200 award-winning efforts of Vermont individuals, organizations, institutions, public agencies, and businesses have been recognized.

For further information on any of these programs and how we can assist please visit our web site: www.eaovt.org or give contact the EAO Hotline: 800-974-9559