“Starting” an EJ / Non-discrimination Program in North Dakota

ECOS - EJ Workgroup Meeting - 17 July 2023

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NDDEQ’s Vision is a sustainable, high-quality environment for current and future generations.

NDDEQ Mission is to conserve and protect the quality of North Dakota’s air, land and water resources following science and the law.
Rural Matters initiative: 3000 postcards mailed to 80 communities across North Dakota

Help us share the importance of rural North Dakota!
Tell us your personal view on the importance of rural North Dakota!

Your anonymous comment will be used within a Strengthen ND publication created to clearly show the significance of rural North Dakota. We want to widely share why rural North Dakota matters, and your view is important. Please clearly print your comment of 15 words or less below and return the postcard via mail to us by March 31, 2021.

Fresh air, less being smothered
Living less traffic, knowing your neighbors, fewer seasons, less political issues
Fresh air, four rigorous seasons, and room to roam watching nature and wildlife.

Agriculture feeds the world. Our natural resources fuel the planet. Strong people tend the land.

I like less people. Not crowded. I can breathe!
North Dakota is clean and green.

The quality of air and the freshness of our cornfields is beyond compare.

We have clean air, good roads, and great health care.
North Dakotans care about DEQ’s Vision and Mission too

The Rural Matters initiative helped create a shared foundation and common ground for how DEQ began development of our environmental justice and non-discrimination programs

- How can we work together so everyone can enjoy the benefits of North Dakota’s clean air, clean water and livable land?
- What do we need to do to ensure everyone can participate when decisions are made?
Building NDDEQ’s EJ/Non-discrimination Program

1. Assemble the team - DEQ EJ/T6 Advisory Group
2. Find common ground - Our shared mission!
3. Develop DEQ’s EJ Mission and Objectives
4. Write Proposed DEQ EJ Framework - examine all DEQ programs
   - What are we doing now?
   - What can we do better?
   - What do we need to do differently?
5. Get our house in order (Title VI, policies, guidance, website, etc.)
6. Communication & Training staff & management
7. Spread the word & listen to the people!

Follow science and the law throughout the entire process
Challenges:
1. Staffing - small agency, flat organizational structure. If one person is missing it can have a big impact.
2. Communication - both internal and external
3. “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.” - establishing a new program takes time
4. Jurisdiction / Authority
5. What is EJ in an energy- and agriculture-based economy?
Why a new program?

Compliance with federal or state statute
- Title VI of Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Section 13 of Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972
- Title IX of Educational Amendments of 1972
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975
- ND Human Rights Act

Referring to:
- Race, color and national origin
- Disability (vision, hearing, physical, mental)
- Sex
- Status with regards to marriage or receiving public assistance
- Religion
Example internal presentation communicating how a DEQ team member’s job may (or may not) change as EJ/T6 is implemented throughout the agency:

Communication to Staff: 10 aspects of a person’s job

https://empower.prosci.com/yesterday-tomorrow-exercise-fillable-worksheet
• Use available tools like EJScreen
• Research things that don’t make sense
• Begin to make improvements and develop more comprehensive GIS tools to use ND’s data
• EJ Concerns are often not DEQ’s regulatory authority.
• Creates opportunities for increased collaboration with other agencies.
“I think you all know that I've always felt the nine most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the Government, and I'm here to help.”

President Ronald Reagan at the President’s News Conference August 12, 1986

Comments were about the many problems facing farmers at that time from government-imposed embargos, inflation, and conflicting and haphazard policies related to agriculture during negotiation of a new Farm Bill. He goes on to say that until we “return farming to real farmers. ...the Government must act compassionately and responsibly”
NDDEQ Team members really do want to help our communities that we live, work and play in! How can we grow our rural communities in a positive way? We need to remember that government needs to listen, act compassionately and responsibly.
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