

The Montana DEQ is the state's primary environmental regulatory agency. Our mission is to protect, sustain, and improve a clean and healthful environment to benefit present and future generations. Education, compliance assistance and enforcement are the tools central to achieving our mission and protecting the public's health. Our philosophy is to prevent first through education and assistance and to prosecute when necessary. I think that throughout this report you will see how our emphasis on compliance assistance first allows us to resolve most violations before we are forced to seek formal enforcement.

We believe that by training both our staff and the members of the regulated community we can prevent most violations before they happen and so we try to take every opportunity, within our resources, to provide this service. We use many of our day-to-day activities, such as inspections, to provide information and guidance to the individuals and companies we regulate. In addition, we provide traditional educational methods such as workshops, newsletters, brochures and our Internet site to provide the information people need to be in compliance.

Even though our federally delegated programs don't mandate high levels of compliance assistance, we continue because we believe that, if given a choice and the right information, most people want to comply with the laws. In fact, more and more of our regulated community is beginning to understand that the DEQ's compliance and enforcement efforts prevent violators from coming out ahead economically to the disadvantage of companies that comply with the law.

Some would argue that we spend too much time on "paperwork" violations. In fact, it's the paperwork violations that can and are most easily resolved by compliance assistance alone. There are some serious violations of monitoring and record keeping, however, that merit swift enforcement

actions. A good example of this is violations resulting from a failure to monitor public water supplies for contamination. Without strict oversight of recordkeeping, public health could be seriously endangered.

An increasingly important part of our enforcement strategy is to utilize supplemental environmental projects or SEPs. SEPs allow us to substitute projects that allow violaters to put penalty dollars to work to benefit the environment in the community affected by the violations..

One message you will hear throughout this report is that by having adequate staff to identify violations and provide the compliance assistance needed to get the violaters back on track ^{compliance} is improved. Where staff has been approved we have been able to reduce backlogs and assist the regulated community to adapt to new rules and regulations. You will also see information in the report about areas in which we believe additional staff is needed in order to keep up with rising demands from the public. Our asbestos program is a good example of that.

Our department is organized into permitting and compliance divisions and an enforcement division. In this way, the permitting and compliance staff is able to identify violations and determine the appropriate response – either compliance assistance or formal enforcement. Steve Welch and Sandi Olsen will address the compliance activities in their respective divisions and John Arrigo will address the enforcement activities in his division.

Thank you for taking the time to read the information we have presented. I look forward to your questions and comments.