



***Michigan Department of  
Environmental Quality***

***Public  
Involvement  
Handbook***

***A Citizens Guide***

# MICHIGAN

## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



Thank you for taking the time to learn about public involvement opportunities within the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Your involvement in decisions made by the DEQ is vital to the effectiveness and success of our environmental protection programs.

Promoting public involvement is a top priority of the DEQ. In addition, one of the DEQ's key values is inclusion, which encourages our agency to reach out to involve all of our citizens in the decisions that affect their lives.

This handbook hopes to encourage your involvement by providing information on three topics. First, we provide a general understanding of the function and workings of state government. Next, we offer ideas on to how to become informed by knowing how and where to obtain resource information of interest. Finally, we suggest ways that you can use this knowledge to become actively involved in environmental programs.

We hope that you will find this handbook helpful and easy to use. Your participation is very important to us and we look forward to working with you to protect and enhance our shared environment for present and future generations.



# Public Involvement Handbook

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# You are One of Our State's Best Resources

Public involvement in decision-making and in policy formation is an essential element of environmental programs. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) hopes that by sharing information about our duties, powers, and limitations, and offering information about our public involvement processes, we will more effectively communicate with each other.

While being an informed citizen will help if you are faced with an environmental issue, being informed is key to good government. In fact, sometimes informed citizens are the essential element needed to address environmental challenges.

We acknowledge and thank you, because public involvement. . .

**Enlightens us** about local conditions and provides a historical point of reference for resources in your community.

**Proposes unique solutions** for consideration by staff and decision-makers.

**Provides funds for the DEQ and important infrastructure projects** protecting public health and the environment.

**Notifies us** and other government agencies about potentially endangering situations through your participation **in monitoring and preservation efforts.**

Your involvement enhances environmental programs and this handbook will explain the general basis for our department's decision-making so you can most efficiently and effectively share your thoughts and viewpoints. This handbook will also identify the legal limitations of the DEQ when considering public comment. This foundation of understanding will help focus our dialogue on issues within the scope of the DEQ's authority.

As an informed and involved citizen, we hope that you will find yourself interested in, and comfortable with, contacting our Department. For example, you may find yourself wanting more information about DEQ actions based upon a news story that you encounter. If so, then please contact us for more information. Various contact methods are highlighted within this handbook to help foster this communication. Beyond that, if you have recommendations as to how our participation processes or this handbook can be improved, please let us know. Thank you once again for being an informed and involved citizen; we hope that this handbook is useful to you.

# Part 1

## The Basics

### **Protecting Michigan's Environment thereby Ensuring Michigan's Future**

The DEQ is Michigan's state agency working on behalf of the people of the Great Lakes state improving the quality of life and ensuring a sustainable future. In service to the public, we administer programs and enforce laws:

- protecting public health
- promoting the appropriate use of the environment
- preventing adverse effects on the environment
- and restoring the quality of the environment

Our Department is committed to act fairly and consistently, with integrity, and within authority granted by law; we strive for excellence in all we do. We recognize that our success relies on our ability to make the best possible use of financial and other resources entrusted to us. Our success also relies on our ability to engage in partnerships with others, especially you, our informed citizens. We seek to communicate with all interests, welcome input, and respect all viewpoints. We are open to criticism and accept responsibility for our actions; your input can help us improve.

### **Understanding Governmental Structure**

To understand the DEQ's function, consider the different functions of government and how they are split into three branches. These branches are the:

- Legislature (our state House and Senate)
- Executive (made up of the Governor and state agencies, sometimes called "departments," including the DEQ)
- Judiciary (our court system)

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In general, the legislature makes law, the executive implements the law, and the courts resolve disputes related to how the law was interpreted and implemented.

Based upon the framework of our Constitution, state agencies are given the powers and duties by the legislature. Laws (also called statutes) are passed by the legislature, signed by the Governor, and then assigned to an executive agency or other unit of government to implement. This is how the DEQ, being a state agency, receives its duties, powers, and limitations.

The laws provide the framework or system of services implemented by the executive branch. These are called programs. For example, programs implemented by the DEQ include the Acid Rain Permit Program, the Great Lakes Bottomlands Permit Program, and the Scrap Tire Collection Site Registration Program.

If you are interested in reading more about the formation of laws and structure of Michigan government, then consider reading *A Citizens Guide to State Government*. You can obtain a copy from the office of your State Senator, House Representative, or online ([www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/Publications/CitizensGuide.pdf](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/Publications/CitizensGuide.pdf)). You can also contact the State of Michigan Legislative Service Bureau at 517-373-0170 to obtain a copy or for help identifying your legislative representatives. In addition, the Michigan Constitution of 1963 can be obtained through the legislature or online ([www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/publications/Constitution.pdf](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/publications/Constitution.pdf)).

### Recognizing and Finding Michigan Laws

Laws are referred to in different ways. The most common way that the DEQ identifies a law is by listing: Title, Public Act Number, and the year in which it was enacted (or signed by the Governor). This is called a “citation.” The word “as amended” is added to the end of the citation to refer to the most recent version of the law. For example, the legal basis for most of the DEQ regulatory

programs is contained in the Natural Resources Environmental Protection Act, Public Act 451 of 1994, as amended. The shortened version is simply referred to either by the Act number (e.g. Act 451) or by the acronym of its title (e.g. NREPA). NREPA is very large and is broken down into Parts. For instance, the laws that Michigan uses to implement the Permit Program in the federal Clean Water Act can be found in Part 31, Water Resources Protection of NREPA; and the laws that are the basis for cleaning up sites of environmental contamination are within Part 201, Environmental Remediation of NREPA.

Another common way that the same law can be cited is based upon the official compilation of the laws. The official compilation is called Michigan Compiled Laws (MCL). There is also an annotated version (a version with comments) called the Michigan Compiled Laws Annotated. In formal settings, such as in a court case, another compilation called Michigan Statutes Annotated may be used. If you look up the NREPA on the Michigan legislature homepage at: [www.michiganlegislature.org](http://www.michiganlegislature.org), you will notice numbers next to each section. These numbers refer to the MCL compilation (i.e. MCL 324.101 through MCL 324.90106).

The Michigan Legislature web site, in combination with the DEQ laws and rules page ([www.michigan.gov/deq](http://www.michigan.gov/deq), select “key topics” and then “Laws and Rules”), will help you obtain copies of the relevant DEQ laws for each program. There are other resources to assist you:

- For permit programs, the legal basis for the program is identified on our DEQ “Environmental Permits, Licenses, and Certification” web page ([www.michigan.gov/deq](http://www.michigan.gov/deq), select “Permits”).
- Grant and Loan program authority is compiled in the Grant and Loan Catalog ([www.michigan.gov/deq](http://www.michigan.gov/deq), select “key topics” then “Grants and Loans” and finally, “Grant and Loan Catalog”).

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- Regulatory authority is commonly listed through a hot link on program pages.
- Finally, if you have questions about researching Michigan Laws, you can contact the State of Michigan Law Library at 517-373-0630 or e-mail them at **[LMLawLib@michigan.gov](mailto:LMLawLib@michigan.gov)**.

### **Developing, Following and Finding Administrative Rules**

In addition to implementing laws, the executive branch develops and implements administrative rules, sometimes called regulations. The authority to develop rules is given by the legislature to the departments and agencies of the executive branch, such as the DEQ. Rules usually identify the procedures used to implement the program, but they can also provide more detail to a law. In programs with special technical and scientific knowledge, such as those put into practice by DEQ, the legislature often provides the executive branch with authority to use its technical expertise to make rules (e.g. establishing scientific criteria protective of public health and the environment).

Since rules have the same force as law, it is important they are developed in a fair manner. To assure that multiple viewpoints are considered when a new rule is made or amended, the DEQ relies on both informal and formal public involvement processes.

The most frequently used mechanism to gain informal input in the rule drafting process is the “stakeholder group.” Through this process, stakeholders have the opportunity to establish the framework under which program decisions will be made. Through their involvement in meetings, stakeholders representing diverse interests express their viewpoints with the group. This open communication helps the agency draft rules taking into consideration the various stakeholder concerns along with creative ideas produced during the discussion. For example, consider the stakeholder diversity involved in rule development for implementing the Clean Water Fund Program. These rules

provide criteria by which public funds are spent for the surface water quality monitoring plan, and for other identified water pollution controls (e.g. to implement watershed management plans, eliminate illegal connections to sewer systems, and to address failing on-site sewage disposal systems). Within this stakeholder group, there were representatives from 25 different organizations, including associations of local governmental agencies, business interests, non-profit environmental groups, agricultural interests, federal and state agencies, research interests, and watershed groups. In addition, the meetings were open to the public and other interested parties participated, including consulting firms, other non-profit agencies, and governmental entities. Because the DEQ listened to the stakeholder group when the rules were being developed, there were no substantial issues raised by other citizens when the general public was asked to comment on the rules.

The Administrative Procedures Act, Public Act 306 of 1969, was passed by the legislature to govern rule-making by state agencies; the Act has several provisions requiring formal public input. Public input during the rule making process is sought through public notice, hearing and comment provisions. Public notice for rule promulgation is required to be published in three newspapers across the state. In addition, the legislature has the opportunity to directly review proposed rules before they become final on behalf of the public.

The main agency responsible for keeping track of state agency rules is the State Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules (Office). This Office is housed within the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (DLARA) for budget and management support. However, the Office serves all executive state agencies and its director is appointed by the Governor. The Office acts independently from its host, DLARA.

Rules can be found online. Access can be found through the DEQ laws and rules web page ([www.michigan.gov/deq](http://www.michigan.gov/deq), select key topics and then “laws and rules”). In addition, all state agency

rules can be found through the Office's web page **[www.michigan.gov/orr](http://www.michigan.gov/orr)**. Within this page, the rules can be found in the document entitled the Michigan Administrative Code, which is organized by both department and number.

### **Permitting to Prevent Pollution**

The DEQ is a regulatory agency. Its charge of environmental protection is often facilitated through the use of permits, which are issued to prevent adverse effects to the environment. In general, permits can be thought of as a legal contract between the State of Michigan and a regulated entity. For example, consider permitted activities involving treated wastewater and air emissions. In these programs, permits limit pollution and contaminants that can be released into the environment. Other examples of activities that require permits include approving construction plans or requiring an entity to install pollution control equipment. For a complete listing and summary of DEQ permit programs, refer to the DEQ permit program web page located at **[www.michigan.gov/deqpermits](http://www.michigan.gov/deqpermits)**.

Many of the DEQ permit programs inform the public about pending permit decisions through newspaper legal ads, the DEQ Calendar, bulletins, online permit tracking systems, and mailing lists. Often these public notices provide a time period (usually a 30 day public comment period) for interested persons to send comments to the DEQ on a permit before it is issued or denied. Public meetings and public hearings are sometimes held in association with the public comment period. In a public meeting, the DEQ can discuss a proposed action with the public, including answering questions. In a public hearing, the DEQ receives comment from the public on a proposed action, but does not informally discuss the proposal as in a public meeting. To learn whether a permit program offers these public input opportunities, refer to the public notice, or the permit program web page.

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# Being Informed

If you are interested in learning about environmental programs, reviewing information about pollution, or finding actions you can take as a homeowner to protect the environment, the DEQ has many resources available to you. Information and contact resources include the DEQ internet pages, the State of Michigan Library and its library share program, public notice resources such as the *DEQ Calendar*, and two toll-free hotlines for Michigan residents to make direct contact with the Department.

### Finding Readily Available Information

Whether you enjoy computer technology or prefer good old-fashioned hard copy reading, DEQ publications and reports are readily available to you. The State of Michigan, DEQ internet web page has been recognized nationally as a user-friendly resource. The main page address is **[www.michigan.gov/deq](http://www.michigan.gov/deq)**. From this page, be sure to check out the "Community Interaction" information, the "Publication" page, and the "DEQ Reports" page, which are all found under "Key Topics." For information on "Citizen Involvement," please select "News and Events" from the DEQ homepage, and then scroll down to the "Citizen Involvement" link. Additionally, if you are driving by one of our district offices, consider stopping in to browse the DEQ publications available in the reception areas.

The Library of Michigan is the official clearinghouse for State of Michigan publications and their card catalog is available online at **[www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan](http://www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan)**. Select "Library Collections" and scroll down to "Research Sources" for the "ANSWER Library Catalog." If you are not online and would like access to the web or card catalog, you can often use a computer at your local library. While at your local library, ask if

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they participate in the library share program with the Library of Michigan. This program has over 60 participating libraries, so you'll likely have local access to State of Michigan publications.

One publication essential for keeping track of DEQ activities is the DEQ Calendar. The DEQ Calendar is a bi-weekly publication produced and distributed with timely information on:

- Major permit decisions being considered by the DEQ
- Other significant decisions in the DEQ
- Administrative rules promulgation
- Public hearings and meetings
- Division permit contacts
- Environmental conferences, workshops, and training programs

To find the DEQ Calendar online, go to **[www.michigan.gov/deqcalendar](http://www.michigan.gov/deqcalendar)**. You can request to be added to the DEQ Calendar mailing list by calling our Environmental Assistance Center at 1-800-662-9278; or you can subscribe through the web page to receive the electronic versions.

Perhaps the best way to keep track of activities and issues within the various regulatory divisions is through a subscription to the Environmental Assistance Bulletin, the *Loan Arranger Newsletter* (relative to loan programs for municipal water and sewer projects), and the *Environmental Listserver* (latest program information). For online access from the DEQ homepage, select "News and Events" then "Bulletins and Newsletters." For a hard copy, call the Environmental Assistance Center at **1-800-662-9278** to see if you can subscribe, or visit your local library.

### Contacting the DEQ

Many people prefer direct interaction or require quick response to their environmental inquiry. Since the DEQ houses over 1,100 employees, it may be difficult to know who you should call. Understanding the structure of the department may help.

The DEQ is organized based upon function; it is made up of units that contain technical staff specializing in a specific program. There is a chain of command structure where staff within the DEQ report to a supervisor, with the Director ultimately reporting to the Governor. You can learn more about the chain of command by reviewing the organization charts found within our web site under “About the DEQ” then “Contact DEQ.”

The staff specialist involved in the project or program of interest is usually your best contact. They are most knowledgeable of the facts and the supporting regulatory basis for their decisions and they can explain the program elements to you. Sometimes it is best to contact a supervisor. This might be the case if your question is a policy question rather than a technical question, the supervisor has been the main point of contact for the issue, or staff is unavailable during a timeframe to meet your needs (e.g. staff is on leave). If you reach an impasse when working with someone in the DEQ, it is appropriate to ask to speak with that person’s supervisor.

Sometimes it is difficult to find the right DEQ contact, so the DEQ has an Environmental Assistance Center to serve as a single point of entry into all DEQ environmental programs. By calling the Center’s Environmental Assistance hotline, **1-800-662-9278**, from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, you can receive direct one-on-one assistance or referral to technical staff within the DEQ. The Center, in concert with compliance assistance staff, is available to help callers navigate through various environmental regulatory programs. This assistance can include:

- The identification of various regulatory programs that are relevant to your inquiry
- An explanation of how the regulatory programs work together
- Internet or library assistance (identification of relevant resources)
- A direct answer to your question, or
- A referral to the appropriate agency contact

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When speaking to one of the Center's operators, it is useful to explain your question – avoid regulatory jargon – and simply explain the issue prompting your call and the operator will determine the relevant regulatory program. If the operator has any question about where to direct your call, they will direct you to specially trained staff for further help.

In addition, when leaving a voice-mail message, please speak slowly and clearly, leave your name, and include your area code with your telephone number.

### **Attending DEQ Community Meetings**

Another option for information exchange with the DEQ is through DEQ community meetings. The DEQ Director and other DEQ staff periodically hold open meetings in various communities throughout the state. These meetings provide an excellent opportunity to convene with DEQ staff on any environmental issue and also hear about the environmental issues that interest your neighbors.

### **Reporting Spills and Pollution**

When you need to call the DEQ because of an environmental emergency, use the Pollution Emergency Alerting System (PEAS) hotline. The 24-hour toll-free number is **1-800-292-4706**. When you leave an incident report with the hotline operators, it will be directed to the DEQ district offices, where environmental pollution emergencies are addressed. In general, DEQ staff provides technical advice to first responders (such as the hazmat teams, cleanup contractors, and fire fighters) in the event of environmental emergencies. In addition, DEQ incident responders look into environmental complaints, investigate environmental crimes, and work with responsible parties and land owners to restore original conditions or beneficial uses of affected properties.

The DEQ receives many complaints and calls for environmental emergencies. In 2012, approximately 2,000 emergency calls were received through the PEAS and the Environmental Assistance Center hotline. This does not include complaints made directly to district offices. Due to call volume, incident responders must prioritize the calls. Priority is given to incidents that are larger in scope and pose more significant risks, and where the incident is not yet controlled, such as with the release of chemicals to surface water, or to sensitive or otherwise threatened ecosystems.

For a map of the DEQ district offices go to the DEQ homepage, select “About the DEQ,” then “Contact DEQ.”

The PEAS hotline is useful for citizens to report ongoing environmental harm or incidents. Recognize that you are often the first to recognize environmental threats, and so we need to hear from you to mitigate harm to the environment. About one-third of PEAS calls come from concerned citizens, with the remainder coming largely from industry and first responders. There are other ways for citizens to help maintain a healthy environment, for instance through sharing environmental education materials and information with friends and neighbors, participating in local cleanup programs, minimizing the use of chemicals and other raw materials that might end up in the environment or contribute to overfilling landfills.

### **Obtaining Non-Published Information**

Sometimes the information you are seeking is not in a published document, but instead is in information within DEQ files. Sometimes, staff may refer to a technical document when discussing an issue with you. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of a technical document, then ask staff how to best obtain a copy. Fortunately, some of our file documents are available through online permit tracking systems. To view the online permit tracking systems, please visit the DEQ FOIA web site at [www.michigan.gov/deq](http://www.michigan.gov/deq) and go to the quick link column on the

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right for DEQ FOIA Information. If staff ask you to file a request under the Michigan Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Public Act 442 of 1976, then ask how the document is identified (title of the document and file location). While simple requests can be handled directly, extensive file searches and requests for many documents require a written request under FOIA. FOIA sets requirements for the disclosure of public records by public agencies in the state. In general, most records are covered by FOIA, but there are some exceptions. For example, confidential communications between the DEQ and the Department of Attorney General for the purpose of obtaining legal assistance are exempt from being disclosed to the public. Another example of a document not subject to FOIA is a document reflecting a communication that is preliminary to a final policy decision. In addition to these exemptions, the request must be for an existing document. Staff can not create a new document for you.

Under FOIA, the DEQ may:

- Charge a fee for the necessary copying of public documents. The fee must be limited to actual duplication, mailing and labor costs. The first \$20 of a fee must be waived for a person who is receiving public assistance or presents facts showing inability to pay because of indigence.
- Charge for search, examination, and review for the separation of exempt information in those instances where failure to charge a fee would result in unreasonably high costs to the DEQ.

If you want the DEQ to provide an estimate of the cost of fulfilling your request before actually searching for and copying documentation, then this should be indicated in the request.

To request information from the DEQ under the FOIA, go to **[www.michigan.gov/deqfoia](http://www.michigan.gov/deqfoia)** for instructions.

Please provide as much detail as possible about the information you are seeking, including the street address, city and county of a facility or property. Include your name, mailing address, fax number, e-mail address, and daytime telephone number.

After receiving a request for a public record, a public body has five (5) business days to respond. The public body may also extend the time by 10 business days by notifying the requestor in writing thereby making the due date 15 business days from the date of receipt of the request.

Effective December 2, 2012, the Aboveground and Underground Storage Tank (AST/UST) regulatory programs were transferred from the DEQ to DLARA. The Leaking Underground Storage Tank Program remains in the DEQ.

All FOIA requests related to the AST/UST regulatory programs should be submitted directly to DLARA at the address below:

AST/UST FOIA Coordinator  
Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs  
Bureau of Fire Services  
P.O. Box 30700  
Lansing, Michigan 48909  
Fax: 517-335-2245

**\*\*Effective March 1, 2013, the DEQ will issue a "Records Don't Exist" letter for AST and UST FOIA requests. The requester must forward these requests to DLARA.\*\***



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# **Being Involved**

Much of the information has focused on the function of the DEQ as a state agency, and on the exchange of information. But there are other opportunities for more extensive and direct involvement related to DEQ programs and activities. These include attending a DEQ workshop or advisory board meeting and joining a community group to coordinate an environmental improvement. Even a voluntary monitoring project may be of interest.

### **Participating in Rule Development**

If you are interested in providing input to help establish the framework for DEQ decision-making then you may want to participate in the rule-making process. Public involvement opportunities are either informal, through participation with the stakeholder group, or formal, by providing comments through the public hearing and comment period. For informal participation, consider attending a stakeholder group meeting or asking to become a member of the group.

The best way to learn about proposed rule changes is either through the DEQ Calendar, which publishes the hearings and comment period, or through your local newspaper legal ad section. The public notice will identify when your comments are due and where to send them. Consider subscribing to the Department Calendar, by calling the Environmental Assistance hotline 1-800-662-9278, to keep current on these formal rule-making activities. After the public comment period is over, the agency will categorize and summarize comments into a public hearing report. This report will also contain the agency's response to the comments.

## **Commenting on Proposed Permits**

If you are interested in providing comments to the DEQ about a certain permit, (either at a public meeting or pursuant to a public notice and comment period), then consider doing the following:

- Read the public notice materials, the proposed permit, and, if possible, the program web page to learn more about the permit program (**[www.michigan.gov/deq](http://www.michigan.gov/deq)**, select “Permits”). That way, you can learn about the public involvement opportunities associated with the permit program. It will also be easier to understand what the program is intended to do, and what decisions are made by the DEQ related to that permit program.
- Assure comment submittal during the public comment period. If sending by mail, most permit programs accept public comments post-marked on the final day of the formal public comment period.
- Stick to the facts and the regulatory legal basis (laws and rules) for your comment. Express your comments briefly, and factually. Comments should explain how the proposed activity conforms to or violates the program-specific rules or law, which form the basis for the proposed permit action. The DEQ only has authority to approve or deny actions based upon the laws set by the legislature and the relevant programmatic rules. The fact that a community or individual simply does not want a proposed facility in their community is generally not a factor that can be considered by the DEQ in reaching a decision on a proposed permit. Local governmental officials may have authority to consider local preferences when making zoning decisions.
- Direct your comment to the decision-maker as defined in the public notice.

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- Provide your contact information, including your name, address, and telephone number including area code.
- Write to express instead of trying to impress. Use your own terminology instead of using jargon, which will help avoid multiple meanings to your statements.
- Submit your comments in writing to create a public record for the file, even if you also provided the comments verbally at a public hearing.

### *Examples of Permit Activities and Programs Administered by DEQ*

| Permitted Activities                                                                     | Permit Name                                                                             | Michigan Law                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Discharge of wastewater into waters of the state                                         | National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System and State Groundwater Discharge Permits | Part 31, Water Resources Protection of NREPA  |
| Construction or modification of equipment that emits air pollution                       | Permit to Install                                                                       | Part 55, Air Resources Protection of NREPA    |
| Construction or alteration of hazardous waste facilities (landfills, incinerators, etc.) | Hazardous Waste Treatment, Storage or Disposal Facility Construction Permits            | Part 111, Hazardous Waste Management of NREPA |
| Construction of solid waste disposal areas (landfills)                                   | Solid Waste Disposal Area Construction Permit                                           | Part 115, Solid Waste Management of NREPA     |
| Construction activities at or below the land/water interface                             | Inland Lakes and Streams Permit                                                         | Part 301, Inland Lakes and Streams of NREPA   |
| Construction work in, across or under Wetlands                                           | Wetland Protection Permit                                                               | Part 303, Wetlands Protection of NREPA        |

## Attending Advisory Board Meetings

Many DEQ programs receive advice from advisory boards. Most advisory board meetings are open to the public and meeting notices can be found on the associated advisory board web page. If you are interested in DEQ boards and meetings information, then review the “Boards and Advisory

Groups” found on our web page [www.michigan.gov/deq](http://www.michigan.gov/deq). On the right-side you will find a quick link under “Contact Information.” Participation on advisory boards is often time consuming so representatives are generally from organized groups. However, if you are interested in participating on a particular advisory board, then contact the staff responsible for the program to see if an opportunity exists.

### **Attending DEQ Conferences and Workshops**

To learn about participating in DEQ programs, consider attending a DEQ sponsored conference or workshop. At these events, we provide information on environmental requirements, pollution prevention practices, and other topics related to the protection of Michigan’s natural resources. You can learn more about these workshops online from our homepage select “News and Events” then “Training and Workshops.”

### **Joining Local Groups**

Perhaps the best way to directly implement an environmental protection activity is through participation in a local community organization, such as a watershed group. Community and citizens’ groups can multiply the impact of individual effort. Such groups provide a focal point where citizens can participate in decision-making processes. The State of Michigan, DEQ has many programs designed to promote the formation of these groups and to assist their efforts. You can learn whether a watershed group is active in your area through the United States Environmental Protection Agency Surf Your Watershed web site. This site ([www.epa.gov/surf/](http://www.epa.gov/surf/)) provides the ability to find your watershed along with a list of citizen groups working in your area. In addition, feel free to contact the DEQ Environmental Assistance Center. We can identify watershed groups that implement watershed studies and improvements through our grant and loan programs. We can help you find active volunteer monitoring groups in your area associated with Michigan’s

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Clean Water Corps. The Corps assists the DEQ in establishing a comprehensive statewide volunteer water quality monitoring network. We can also put you in touch with others that can help you locate other types of organizations that share your interests.

### **Closing**

Thank you once again for being an informed and involved citizen. We hope that this handbook is useful to you and that it helps identify information resources or activities that are valuable to you. We look forward to working with you to protect Michigan's beautiful resources.



The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality  
Office of Environmental Assistance  
800-662-9278  
P.O. Box 30457  
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7957  
*[www.michigan.gov/deq](http://www.michigan.gov/deq)*



The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will not discriminate against any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, religion, age, national origin, color, marital status, disability, political beliefs, height, weight, genetic information or sexual orientation. Questions or concerns should be directed to the Quality of Life - Office of Human Resources, PO Box 30473, Lansing, MI 48909-7973.

