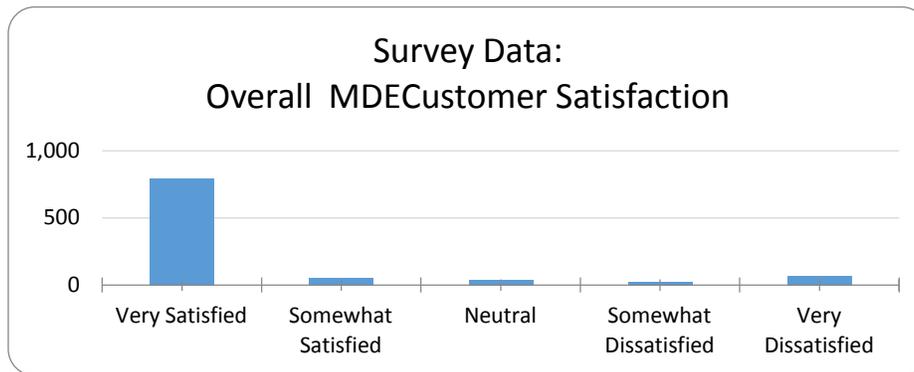




MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT Customer Service Annual Report



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I. FY17 Highlights

MDE enjoyed important customer-service successes in FY17, including those listed in Section IV.D. and the following agencywide highlights:

- consistently positive survey results;
- quantifiable improvements in results and outcomes for customers seeking to comply with lead-paint-related requirements;
- ongoing progress toward bringing Lean Government process improvements to our multiple programs;
- significant improvements in information technology;
- requiring all employees to complete customer service training; and
- a new employee award focusing on customer service.

II. Recognition Given to Employees

A. Semi-Annual Employee Awards in July and December 2016: During MDE's regular employee recognitions, nine employees were recognized for going above and beyond their regular responsibilities to exceptional customer service, both to other employees and to external customers.

B. New Employee Award: In February 2017, MDE created a new award called the ENVEE, and subsequently ENVEE awards were given to six employees in the following categories: Mentoring, Cost Efficiency, Creativity & Innovation, Positive Attitude, Environmental Commitment, and Customer Service. In addition, two teams received an ENVEE Award for exemplifying leadership and customer service.

III. Leadership Analysis of FY17 and Summary of FY18 Approach

We at the Maryland Department of the Environment are proud of our successes in FY17. The percentage of survey respondents who said they were “very satisfied” overall remained in the middle to upper 80s. We issued over 21,000 permits, licenses, certifications, and other approvals, and 96% of those were issued within the published applicable standard application turnaround times. We continued and expanded our Lean Government initiative, providing significant service improvements for lead rental registry customers. Interest in these new Lean approaches is growing around the department.

Information-technology (IT) investments are critical to improving customer service, and we continue to build on the strong momentum gained in recent years implementing online permitting and payment systems. Some of the Department’s significant recent IT improvements include the following:

- ePayments Portal

MDE implemented an ePayments portal that allows customers to pay invoices online using a credit/debit card or electronic check. This is a key milestone for the Department in the advancement of online services, replacing paper processes with automated electronic services

- Online Application and Payment for General Water Discharge Permits Associated with Construction Activities

MDE now offers online submission and payment by permittees for National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Discharge Permits Associated with General Construction Activities. The project was a first effort for MDE in coordination with the State’s eGovernment contractor, NIC, in automating the process for permittees to apply for and make payment for NPDES general permits associated with construction activities. The new system supports the issuance of the new five-year general permit with improved business processes, operations and customer service through the effective use of web technologies.

- Water Supply Information and Permitting System (WSIPS)

The WSIPS project enables the online submission, analysis, and approval of water appropriation permit applications, and the subsequent monitoring of permit

compliance using MDE-specified permit conditions. The WSIPS also enables authorized users to easily check the status of new or renewal permit applications and permits issued. The new system has been made eCommerce-ready, capable of accepting online payments should future legislation allow the Department to collect fees for water appropriation permits.

- Online Lead Rental Registry

This system allows MDE customers to submit new registrations and renewals of properties with lead rental units, and to pay required fees for those units, online.

The following additional IT-related improvements are planned for FY18:

- Environmental Permit Tracking System Modernization

MDE is modernizing its Electronic Permit Tracking System for capturing permit application, inspection, compliance, and enforcement data. The new system will be more efficient and improve customer service by providing greater flexibility to “Lean” business processes while also enabling online permit application submission and payment capabilities.

- The Lead Rental Certification and Accreditation Online Tracking System

This project will provide a new online system with fee payment for the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program to track accreditation entities, property certificates issued to property owners, and enforcement cases. This solution will address many of the constraints currently challenging MDE in achieving requisite operational efficiencies, transparency, and improved customer service. The new system will allow customers to submit and access accreditation, certification, enforcement and oversight information. It will provide payment and tracking of various fees such as certificate fees, accreditation processing fees, enforcement fees and other associated fees.

- Wetlands eCollaboration Permit Review Project

Multiple state and federal agencies are involved in review of wetlands-related permit applications; this layered review process sometimes fails to meet customer needs for timely responses to permit applications. This project will develop an electronic collaboration platform supporting the interagency permit application and review process. One of the key benefits will be shorter review times.

In addition to these IT-related improvements, MDE is working to build on past successes in FY18 in many other ways as listed in Section IV. Agencywide highlights include the following:

- hiring a new business ombudsman to join our Office of Performance Improvement, which will enable that office to improve responsiveness to customer surveys and inquiries, and to engage in proactive outreach and assistance;
- training a senior staff member to facilitate Lean process improvement projects, most or all of which will include a customer-service focus, beginning in spring 2018; and
- ensuring that newly-hired staff receive customer service training within 30 days after they start working with MDE.

IV. Detailed FY17 Results and FY18 Plans

A. Customer Service Survey Results

MDE welcomed Governor Hogan's new statewide Customer Service Survey as an opportunity to solicit for soliciting additional information about customer experiences. In spite of the challenges, inherent to a regulatory agency, of satisfying mostly involuntary customers, the percentage of MDE customers identifying themselves as "satisfied" or "very satisfied" has been in the upper 80s since the ongoing survey began. Our goal for FY18 is to maintain or improve that performance.

At the same time, as with all agencies, individual survey responses have illuminated opportunities for improvement, and MDE's managers have worked to address those issues.

B. Status of Customer Service Training

All MDE employees who were on board by August 1, 2017 were required to take the online training by August 31. New hires will receive it within one month of their start dates. In addition, MDE continues to seek opportunities to provide additional customer-service training as funding allows.

C. Customer Inquiry Response Times

MDE issues over 20,000 permits, licenses, certifications, and other approvals each year. Each type of approval has a standard turnaround time, and MDE tracks performance against each of these standard times. Our goal is to issue 90% of permits and other approvals within the standard turnaround times, and that goal was met in FY17.

Through MDE's Lean initiative, we have employed a variety of process-improvement techniques, such as Kaizen events and Value Stream Mapping, to continually improve internal processes. This initiative will be continued and expanded in FY18.

D. Improving the Customer Experience: Administrations' FY17 Successes

Air and Radiation Administration (ARA)

- Lifoam

The Air Quality Permits Program has been providing technical assistance to Lifoam, an expandable polystyrene manufacturing facility (e.g. coolers, ice packs, etc.) located in Harford County as the company grows to meet increased production demands brought about by a fire at another Lifoam facility located in Massachusetts. In particular, the Permits Program (with assistance from the Planning, Monitoring and Compliance Programs) worked with EPA Region III to allow interprecursor trading (IPT) for Emission Reduction Credits (ERCs) needed as part of the air permitting process. The two ozone precursors are VOCs and NOx. Lifoam needed VOC ERCs for its expansion; no VOC ERCs were available, but Lifoam was able to obtain NOx ERCs. The IPT regulations allow NOx ERCs to be used in lieu of VOC ERCs. Draft IPT regulations are currently undergoing the promulgation process; in the interim, EPA agreed that the Lifoam permit could move forward. Due to the scarcity of VOC ERCs, the IPT regulations have the potential to be beneficial, not just to Lifoam, but to other companies seeking to locate or expand in Maryland.

- BHSL Poultry Manure to Energy

BHSL is an Irish agri-tech company that has patented a system to convert poultry manure into energy for heating, cooling, and electricity generation. The Air Quality Permits Program has been providing extensive assistance with air permitting requirements to BHSL's pilot poultry manure-to-energy project at the Murphy Farm in Dorchester County. The demonstration project commenced full operation in March 2017 and BHSL reported that the unit is performing to its anticipated standard of efficiency. BHSL has repeatedly expressed appreciation for the Department's ongoing assistance as the Murphy Farm project has progressed.

- The Radiological Health Program, in an effort to enhance customer service, began sending reminder e-mails each month to x-ray facilities to remind them of their requirement to undertake preventive maintenance on x-ray machines by a date certain. The e-mails are in a standard format and state that at least one machine at the facility is due for preventive maintenance this month. The e-mails provide a link to registered service providers who can perform preventive maintenance. This practice was started to help facilities avoid noncompliance and potential enforcement actions.

Land and Materials Administration (LMA)

- Solid Waste Program (SWP) and Land Restoration Program (LRP) staff collaborated on the development of guidance for the innovative reuse of dredged materials and a fact sheet for evaluating the use of off-site soil and fill material that is impacted by hazardous substances or oil. Both documents provide risk-based criteria to assist users in ensuring dredged materials and other soil and fill materials can be reused in a manner that protects public health and the environment.
- The Voluntary Cleanup Program within the LRP finalized its *Guidance for Characterizing Masonry Materials Intended for Reuse as Onsite Fill Material and Land Restoration Program Sites*, for use by parties conducting remediation and redevelopment at Brownfield sites in Maryland.
- The Mining Program revised reporting requirements to allow mine operators to submit blasting reports online.
- The Mining Program eliminated the requirement to complete an application for surface mine license renewals where there were no changes from the previous year.
- The Oil Control Program created an online case search tool. As of July 18, there is now a link (<http://mes-mde.mde.state.md.us/caseinformation/>) that allows users to search for Oil Control Program cases by a particular address, county, facility, etc. This live search of the Cases Information database was created in cooperation with MES to increase public access to the Program's information. Interested parties will be able to conduct research on their own and more expediently than having to use a PIA request. Additionally, the tool can be used to submit a more accurate and tailored PIA request, saving time and money for the requester and the Department.
- The Resource Management Program (RMP) has posted new guidance documents on the Department's website to assist customers with the Animal Feeding Operations (AFO) permitting process. The Division also prioritized new construction and expansion of AFOs so that they receive registration under the new AFO permit more quickly.
- The RMP revised the most-frequently-used scrap tire license and Sewage Sludge Utilization Permit application forms to make them easier to understand and complete.
- The RMP created a Sewage Sludge Mixing Authorization to simplify the use of Class A sewage sludge in soil mixing operations.
- The RMP's Waste Diversion Division acted as a liaison between SDAT, DLLR, the Comptroller's Office and others to assist scrap tire license applicants who must clear up tax or other issues before obtaining licenses.
- The Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (LPPP) contacted 57 Pediatric Primary Care Providers and advised them of a CDC/FDA health advisory issued for the

Magellan blood lead analyzer. Providers were informed that the LeadCare testing device potentially can return a falsely low venous blood lead result. The LPPP collected lists of children potentially affected by the advisory that were tested by each provider and offered the relevant list to each provider's office to assist them in following up with parents and potentially retesting children.

- The LPPP assisted customers with questions about Universal Testing and Clinical Guidance for Blood Lead Levels 5-9 µg/dL. Customer service calls from pediatrician offices calling for clinical recommendations increased significantly due to the implementation of Universal Testing and the CDC's "Reference Level" being lowered to 5 µg/dL. Calls increased from parents seeking guidance for children with newly identified blood lead levels 5-9 µg/dl. The LPPP responds to each call with an email or mailing of lead educational material.
- The LPPP reached 108,043 individuals with outreach and educational events conducted by Department staff and local health departments through funding provided by the Department during FY 17.
- The LPPP improved its turnaround times for lead accreditations, meeting the published turnaround time well over 90 percent of the time. Turnaround times for accreditations for inspectors, supervisors, inspection contractors, and building contractors were increasingly met during the fiscal year, reaching over 99 percent in the fourth quarter. Turnaround times for accreditation of instructors were met 100 percent of the time for the entire fiscal year.
- The LPPP processed 100% of the requests for new batches of blank Lead Inspection Certificates (MDE Form 330) within the established 7 business day turn-around-time, provided that inspectors/contractors have submitted all required documentation. Turnaround time tracking was conducted from January through June 2017.
- The LPPP cross-trained its inspectors so that inspectors can perform lead abatement contractor oversight, follow up on lead certificate referrals, and conduct lead inspector oversight. This effort addressed a back log of referrals and complaints to stabilize workload and expedite resolution of referrals and complaints.
- The Lead Rental Registration Section of the Technical Services and Operations Program (TSOP) began a process improvement project employing Lean principles to improve customer service for lead rental registrations. A Lean kaizen event was held in July 2016, and included participation from representatives of the Section's external stakeholders (rental property owners and managers). As a result of the process, the Section has exceeded all objectives related to reducing missed calls, voicemails, and complaints, and responding more quickly to emails.

Water and Science Administration (WSA)

WSA Compliance Program

- Began offering informal meetings prior to enforcement action to provide the property owner an opportunity to share additional information regarding alleged violations.
- Held numerous meetings with the development community and environmental organizations to discuss compliance topics.
- Committed to going the extra mile to help customers understand and implement best management practices for improved compliance, including at the Bennett Companies' construction and demolition processing facility in Fruitland, Modern Industries in Parsonsburg, Sandpiper Energy of Salisbury, and their consultant, Rauch, Inc., of Easton.

WSA Wetlands and Waterways Program

- Reduced the average turnaround time for minor projects; such as Letters of Authorizations and Authorizations to Proceed from an average of 10 months to an average of 8 months.
- Tracked and completed 365 pre-application meetings. Pre-application meetings are requested by the regulated community ahead of filing an application to obtain information about the permit process or to discuss known obstacles that impede swift permitting by the regulatory agencies. MDE responds to the request within five days and tries to hold the onsite meeting, after coordinating with local or federal partners, within two weeks of the request. Many pre-application meetings require the presence of multiple resources within the Program, as well as our local and federal partners.
- Held monthly Joint Evaluation (JE) Meetings with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), Maryland Historical Trust (MHT), Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries. The JE meetings provide applicants with an opportunity to present potential or ongoing projects and get immediate feedback and direction from the agencies. These meetings are unique to Maryland, and MDE has received positive feedback from environmental consultants about the meetings in general and specifically noting that other states do not offer anything similar.

- Implemented an online Pier Regulation Survey Form to receive customer feedback regarding the Pier regulation and permitting process. Fifty-seven responses have been received to date, some with constructive criticism, for which the Program is formulating a response action plan to address concerns.
- Implemented a new application acknowledgement form for tidal wetlands applications which conveys information on screening results, including the Category designation per Army Corps of Engineers requirements, the target timeframe for permitting process, and contact information for the permit reviewer.
- Implemented a new streamlined process for the permitting of TMDL-related stream restoration projects. These projects have met the 90-day turnaround time for permitting more than 90 percent of the time.

WSA Sediment, Stormwater, and Dam Safety Program

- Significantly enhanced dialogue between the Department and the local, State, and federal agencies subject to Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits. This has resulted in creative approaches to helping local governments meet their permit requirements, including trading.
- In an effort to reach out to the development community regarding their experiences with Maryland's stormwater management program, MDE met with developers and members of the Frederick County Council. Future similar meetings are planned.

Other WSA Accomplishments

- Held two workshops (one in Millersville and one on the Eastern Shore) for water quality data collectors throughout Maryland to show interested stakeholders what resources were available to them. The workshops helped improve government transparency by describing the different uses of data, whom to submit data to, and how to ensure that folks are collecting high quality data. Post-workshop surveys had great reviews and enhanced MDE's visibility with the public.
- Created an online calculation tool for groups to use to calculate indices of biotic integrity (IBI) (used for biological data collection in Maryland streams). This simplifies the process for stormwater permittees who may want to calculate IBI scores as well as for internal MDE customers.
- Improved the organization, content, and aesthetics of MDE's webpages that describe water quality standards, water quality assessment, TMDL development, and water quality restoration, and Maryland's Tier II high quality waters webpages to provide more information to both regulated entities and the general

public. One product worth noting on these pages is the “Tier II Story Map”, which provides a light introduction to Maryland's Tier II program with eye-catching graphics and animation. This represents a significant leap forward in terms of improving outreach methods and providing useful tools for the public. The Story Map can be accessed here:

<http://maryland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=763311ce3f2b4ce5970ac592c4319935>

- Created fact sheets for Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) analyses undergoing public review to present the TMDL information in a compact format.
- Provided information to interested stakeholders during the TMDL development process. At the request of stakeholders, we also conducted informational briefings about TMDL projects, including a recent one about the South River sediment TMDL.
- Improved the Chesapeake Bay website on MDE's site and our Local Partners' Pages for better ease of use by stakeholders
- Began quarterly meetings with the MACO MS4 TMDL subgroup with the goal of working cooperatively to identify the best implementation strategies to meet local-State TMDL stormwater waste load allocations and how to demonstrate progress towards these allocations.
- Conducted regional Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) Workshops and the WIP Kick-off webinar to start and continue collaboration with local partners in the development of the Phase III WIP.

WSA Wastewater Permits Program

- Conducted regular permit renewal activity which involves constant contact with permittees to resolve issues/questions they have regarding permit requirements. Requests by municipalities for planning limits for new, upgraded or expanded facilities were treated as highest priority and got quick turnaround to assist the planning and funding application process. Since the beginning of this year, we have fielded and responded to 6 planning limit requests (Chesapeake City, ECI, EPRU, Harbour View, Twin City, Lewis Town Mill).
- Municipal permits staff provided outreach through presentations in public forums on subjects such as nutrient trading and septic system connections to address the questions from municipalities.
- Issued a new General Permit for vehicle washing, providing a shorter time frame for new authorizations.
- Reformed regulations to allow beneficial uses of food processing wastewater, such spray irrigation, for small-scale, typical on-farm operations, i.e. cheese making, beer and wine making, ice cream, small-scale poultry raising and slaughtering.
- Performed annual presentations at trainings held by the Maryland Department of Agriculture for small-scale on-farm poultry processors on wastewater management options.
- Wineries and breweries are a growing industry in the state. The Program proactively worked with the Maryland Winery Association and several Maryland wineries and breweries to develop guidance documents and other useful resources. This effort involved several meetings and site visits, which established a collaborative relationship between the Department and the industries.
- Worked on Medical Cannabis wastewater management guidance document for the Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission. Developed guidance document for potential wastewater management issues and management options at both grower and processor operations
- Provided robust customer outreach and education regarding the change in regulations governing septic systems. Held meetings with county personnel and vendors to discuss the upcoming regulatory changes, and when the regulations were adopted we repeated this process in November/December and January. All customers received responses either by phone, site visits and many written referral responses.

- Increased outreach to industry regarding renewals of general permits. This means being in the field more often, meeting directly with permittees and answering questions.
- Conducted numerous customer visits during the Marina permit development, including many sizes and styles of marinas and a new type of discharge covered, which was dock power- washing. MDE staff heard first-hand how the previous permit impacted their business and water quality. The benefits of these visits cannot be overstated as we try to balance environmental compliance with the practical constraints our customers face.
- Our work with industrial facilities who are under requirements for stormwater restoration has been important for both the State's goal of restoring 20% of the industrial stormwater at the sites, as well as identifying the lowest-cost options.
- Participated in training of pesticide applicators in the state, and have taken multiple opportunities to get out with operators in the field to better understand compliance with Toxic Materials Permit and Pesticides General Permit. As a result we feel our renewed permit will combine the best of both worlds and provide a better tool for all parties to ensure compliance with the State's requirements but in a manner that should be achievable by the customer.
- Reached out to salt terminal operators, who have raised compliance concerns with regards to their exposed salt piles, to identify ways to help them stay in compliance.
- Posted expanded information online to better inform permittees, including USEPA guidance documents and videos (from the state of Minnesota) on collecting samples of stormwater.
- Customized a new application for aquaculture that will simplify the process of applying for and achieving a permit.

Operational Services Administration (OSA)

- Paid over 99% of our vendor's invoices in a timely manner over the last year.
- The Department's front lobby has been refreshed with painting, carpeting, and furniture to be more welcoming to incoming members of the public.
- Policies and procedures for servicing our customers were reviewed and revised.

E. Improving the Customer Experience: Administrations' FY18 Plans

Air and Radiation Administration (ARA)

- ARA Permits Program
 - General permits are much easier and faster to obtain than individual permits. ARA's Permits Program is developing new general permits to for emergency generators and for temporary crushers at demolition sites.
 - Working on finalizing guidance on submitting applications for two permit types:
 - Air Quality Permit Requirements for Crushing and Screening Operations
 - Air Quality Permit Requirements for Hot Mix Asphalt (HMA) Plants
- ARA's Mobile Sources Program had provided leadership in making Maryland's Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program more customer-friendly, and will continue that work in FY18.
- ARA Radiological Health Program: The Radiological Health Program is in the preliminary discussion stage for an online application website that would allow stakeholders to submit applications (documents) and fee payment via credit card. The stakeholder benefits include convenience, faster time to complete applications, and cost savings on postage. Electronic submissions allow for easier management of the application and forms submitted.

Land and Materials Administration (LMA)

- The Solid Waste Program will continue its efforts to scan and electronically store over 100 years of solid waste permits, inspections and site information, to be able to more quickly respond to PIA requests
- The Mining Program will offer pre-application site meetings to applicants to provide guidance to engineers developing site plans and to help engineers recognize areas of the site to avoid.
- The Mining program will develop web accessible maps to allow the public to search for previously mined sites.
- The Resource Management Program will identify opportunities for online permit and reporting submittals.

- The Land Restoration Program will encourage parties conducting remediation and redevelopment at Brownfield sites in Maryland to use the new Fill Material and Soil Fact Sheet in an effort to reduce materials disposed at landfills and reduce costs associated with the importation of fill material during site redevelopment.
- LMA plans to create an instructional video, “How to meet the requirements of the Reduction of Lead Risk in Housing Act: an Instructional Video for Property Owners.” This video will provide step-by- step instructions on how to comply with the Act, and will be posted on the MDE website and distributed through the Department’s social media.
- The Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (LPPP) plans to develop an instructional video, “How to Fill Out a Lead Certificate and Supporting Documentation” for accredited lead inspectors. This video will provide step-by- step instructions on how to complete the documents, reducing invalidation of inspection certificates, which negatively impacts inspectors and inspection contractors, property owners and tenants.
- The LPPP and TSOP will work with DoIT to begin the implementation phase of a new integrated database called the Lead Rental Certification and Accreditation database. In addition to improving the efficiency of the two programs, leading to an improved ability to respond to customers, the database will ultimately allow the public to view the compliance status for rental units they occupy or intend to rent by looking up current Risk Reduction or Lead Free certificates.
- The LPPP plans to improve its website to allow for submission of an online rental property tenant complaint, rather than submitting an email to the MDE webmaster. This will help expedite and improve the Department’s process of responding to complaints. It may include the option of submitting photographs of defective conditions to help in the referral process for MDE enforcement cases.
- The LPPP will plan and execute Lead Inspector/Contractor Forums for the accredited community. Forums for East, West and Central Maryland are being planned for October/November 2017. The Forums will provide education on regulatory requirements and address questions from accredited lead inspectors, contractors, and supervisors.
- The LPPP will review and improve the process for responding to lead inspectors’ requests for blank lead certificates using lean concepts. This effort will include a review and update of standard operating procedures and brainstorming of ideas for expediting the process.
- The LPPP will initiate a lean process improvement activity for managing incoming certificates and referrals to the Lead Accreditation and Oversight Division (LAOD). The process improvement test period will be launched in September 2017 and will serve to improve turnaround times for incoming document processing by evaluating and categorizing documents based on a priority ranking system. Staff will work on document processing at pre-determined time frames during the day to ensure that all LAOD products are progressing through the

work load (certificate referrals, enforcement cases, and oversight of inspectors and contractors).

- The LPPP will revise and standardize letter templates to improve customer service. The current letter templates can be improved to be clearer to the recipient. A team has been assembled to revise and standardize all enforcement letters and other common communications to ensure that the specific violation is clearly cited.
- TSOP will continue to incorporate lean thinking into its lead rental registration process, with a goal of continuous improvement. TSOP will work on additional processes in FY 2018, including leaning the process of notifying and following up with property owners who failed to renew their registrations.

Water and Science Administration (WSA)

The integration of the Water Management and Science Services Administration into the Water and Science Administration (WSA) creates a simpler public-facing organization involved with water quality and quantity issues. In FY18 the agency will work to fine-tune program functions that focus on the effective delivery of water pollution control and public health protection, permit services, and on improvements to the website to reflect this integration.

WSA Compliance Program

- Continue its outreach efforts with regulated communities with regard to compliance with federal and state rules on sediment and stormwater and other topics of interest, and to lean its internal processes for better customer service.

WSA Wetlands and Waterways Program

- Continue development of an electronic processing tool for non-fee-based wetlands applications (i.e. stream restoration projects); to exchange information and comments between the Agency partners with the ability to communicate a permit status on a web-based platform to the general public and interested stakeholders. An early stage of the tool is currently in the testing phase between the partners.
- Electronically provide Public Notices to interested parties to replace mailing paper notices, saving paper and decreasing notification timeframes.
- Develop a plan and strategy for outreach to the public regarding tidal wetlands protection and regulation in coordination with the Board of Public

Works that sets the stage for participation in outreach efforts at public and private gatherings (Waterfowl Festivals, Boat shows etc.) to improve communication.

- Improve the Wetlands and Waterways website to help customers find answers to their questions more easily and ensure that guidance documents and materials that are helpful to applicants are up-to-date and readily available via the Website.

WSA Sediment, Stormwater and Dam Safety Program

- Continue to reach out to local, State and federal agencies to craft workable “next generation” MS4 permits.
- Continue efforts to reach out to the development community and to local government stormwater authorities to hear experiences and issues with the current stormwater management requirements and gather ideas and recommendations for improvement to Maryland's stormwater management program.

WSA Water Supply Program

- Hold the Annual Groundwater Symposium for practitioners, local governments, consulting firms and the academic community, with an emphasis this year on how local governments can utilize technical tools and State and federal funding to connect areas of septic systems to public sewers or decentralized treatment facilities.
- Work with Maryland State Department of Education and local school boards and schools in Maryland to implement HB 270, which requires testing for lead in drinking water in schools

WSA Wastewater Permits Program

- Continue to improve the online public permit portal that gives customers a view of issued and pending permits and reduces need for PIA requests. It now includes a GIS mapping function.
- Use regular staff meeting as opportunity to promote successful customer service opportunities and highlights.
- Considering hosting a seminar for the municipal wastewater superintendents and operators to address common questions regarding our discharge permit conditions.

- Issue General Permit for composting toilets: Many sites installing these are residential homes; a general permit will be much easier for homeowners to obtain than an individual permit.
- Develop a quarterly online newsletter from the onsite division to include well and septic information, upcoming training opportunities, current subjects of interests, latest technology review, well drilling board actions, well construction issues and other issues of interest to the county government departments, septic contractor industry and well drilling community.
- Engage in more field interactions with permittees, both under the general permits and individual permits.
- Reach out both to potable water permittees under our Hyrdostatic Testing general permit, and to seafood processors under our Seafood Operators permit, to better understand customers compliance needs because so those permits can be improved.

Operational Services Administration (OSA)

- Provide in-depth training through a new Management Training Program on customer-service-related topics of active listening and resolving conflict.
- Revise and update telephone greeting and response protocol for all employees.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Maryland Department of the Environment is committed to provided excellent customer service, and to addressing concerns and improvement opportunities promptly. Your feedback and suggestions are welcome; feel free to contact Sue Battle-McDonald, Director of MDE's Office of Performance Improvement, at sue.battle-mcdonald@maryland.gov.

Sample Media Coverage

“What the Hogan administration is seeking to do is something different altogether. It isn’t backsliding on the notion that regulation of auto emissions is of vital importance for the environment and public health, it is merely recognizing that testing new cars after two years isn’t accomplishing anything. Governor Hogan’s move saves motorists a small amount of money and hassle, but more importantly, it conveys the message that the VEIP isn’t some arbitrary exercise in officiousness. Good for him.”

- “Hogan VIP Regs: Clean Air, Less Hassle”, *Baltimore Sun*, July 31, 2017.

Involving Customers of All Ages

