



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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DENR Secretary announces merging of state water programs to create efficiency, better customer service

Also, state's stormwater program will move to energy division

RALEIGH – John Skvarla, secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, announced today the state agency is consolidating several of its programs to create greater efficiency at protecting water resources in North Carolina.

The state divisions of Water Quality and Water Resources are merging into one program called the N.C. Division of Water Resources, effective today. Merging the divisions will bring together about 484 employees, with more than two-thirds of them from the water quality program. The programs will remain headquartered in the Archdale Building, part of the state government complex in Raleigh. Water quality programs are responsible for ensuring North Carolina's water is clean while water resources programs are responsible for ensuring people have enough water for everyday uses.

“Making DENR a more efficient organization supports Governor McCrory's mission to make state government more responsive to our citizens,” Skvarla said. “Moreover, it just makes sense to integrate our regulation of water quality and quantity. It doesn't matter how much water you have if it's not clean, and likewise a shortage of water, even if it is clean, isn't acceptable. This merger will enable DENR to address water quality and water quantity issues holistically rather than separately, similar to placing doctors of different specialties in the same office together.”

While the changes will enable department programs to operate more efficiently, North Carolina's businesses, citizens and others who depend upon the state's water programs should be unaffected by the changes, Skvarla said. For example, water quality inspections will be conducted as usual and any permits previously issued to individuals, businesses and others will not be affected by the changes.

In the short term, programs and personnel in the divisions will remain unchanged. However, one of the goals of the consolidation is an evaluation of existing programs and the subsequent blending of water quality and quantity management structures to increase program efficiency. The division also plans to form an outside involvement committee of citizen and regulated stakeholders to get additional input for the process of division consolidation and regulatory review.

In their present forms, the Division of Water Quality was formed in 1996 and the Division of Water Resources was formed in 1980. However, consolidating the state's two water agencies has been discussed for more than a decade, said Tom Reeder, director of the Division of Water Resources. Reeder and other senior staff members in DENR are conducting a review of all programs in the two divisions to determine those that may be outdated or in need of modification.

“Regarding the final structure of the new division, the actual consolidation of the two divisions will be a lengthy process that will probably not be finalized until sometime early in 2014,” Reeder said.

In addition to the consolidation of the two water agencies, the program devoted to stormwater regulation and education will be moved from the N.C. Division of Water Quality to the N.C. Division of Energy, Mineral and Land Resources, or DEMLR. Under this organization, stormwater programs, including state permits for new construction and coastal development and federal stormwater permits, will move to DEMLR. About 30 stormwater staff members from the central office in Raleigh and regional offices statewide will be reassigned to DEMLR, but their locations and phone numbers will remain the same. The central office's Mail Service Center mailing number will change to MSC 1612. For more information on the state's stormwater programs, visit its website at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/lr/stormwater>.

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