

July 2023 Environmental Review Implementation Subcommittee meeting

Wednesday, July 19 from 1 – 4 p.m.

Join in person or online

- In person: [520 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155](#), Conference Room 100
 - Online: For the meeting link and more information, visit the ERIS meeting [webpage](#).
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Participating in meetings

Attending in person

The Environmental Review Implementation Subcommittee (ERIS) will convene its meeting in person at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency St. Paul office building. All visitors must sign in at the front desk.

Transportation options:

- Bicycle: Visit the [Saint Paul Bike Map](#) webpage for route information. Outdoor bicycle parking is available to the left of the front doors near the loading dock.
- Transit: Use [Metro Transit's Trip Planner](#) to determine the best routes and times.
- Car: You may park in a Visitor Parking space in the parking lot just outside the front door, or park in one of the visitor lots. The visitor lots are the Blue Lot (Olive St. and University Ave.) and the Jupiter Lot (on Grove St. across from the Ramsey County Law Enforcement Center); please see the [parking map](#). Parking in these lots is free of charge. You must register your vehicle at the front desk upon arrival.

Attending virtually

Members of the public may join the meeting virtually using the Teams link at the board meeting webpage link above. Please review the [Guide to Teams Participation](#) for additional information.

Accessibility

Please contact Environmental Quality Board (EQB) staff at least one week prior to the event at info.EQB@state.mn.us to arrange an accommodation. Meeting materials can be provided in different forms, such as large print, braille, or on a recording.

Public engagement opportunities at ERIS meetings

EQB and ERIS encourages public input and appreciates the opportunity to build shared understanding with members of the public. The opportunities for public engagement for this meeting are below.

Oral public comment

In this meeting, ERIS will accept oral public comment during agenda item 6.

Procedure and guidelines for giving oral public comment:

- If you wish to speak:
 - In person: sign up at the welcome table before the meeting starts.
 - Virtual: when prompted, use the “raise hand” feature in Teams, located at the top of your screen.
- Your remarks will be limited to two (2) minutes. When necessary, the chairperson may limit commenters’ time for remarks to ensure there is equal opportunity for the public to comment.
- When the chairperson calls on you to speak:
 - Introduce yourself before beginning your comment.
 - Please keep your remarks to those facts which are relevant and specific, as determined by the chairperson, to the agenda item at hand.
 - Please be respectful of board members, staff, and other meeting participants. Avoid questioning motives. The chair, vice-chair, or other presiding officer will not tolerate personal attacks.
 - Please note that the chair will use their discretion for directing public comment to ensure the board’s ability to effectively conduct business.

Written public comment

You may submit written comment to EQB by emailing your letter to info.EQB@state.mn.us or mailing to: Environmental Quality Board, 520 Lafayette Road, Saint Paul, MN 55155. Comments must be received by EQB staff **by noon the day before the meeting**.

Staff will compile letters, make them available to members and the public online, and attach them to the public record. Any written comments received after this deadline will be included in the next meeting packet.

All comments will be made available to the public. Please only submit information that you wish to make available publicly. EQB does not edit or delete submissions that include personal information. We reserve the right to not publish any comments we deem offensive, intimidating, belligerent, harassing, bullying, or that contain any other inappropriate or aggressive behavior.

Agenda

1. Welcome and roll call

Sarah Strommen – Chair, ERIS; Commissioner, Department of Natural Resources

- Grace Arnold – Commissioner, Department of Commerce
- Nancy Daubengerger – Commissioner, Department of Transportation
- Katrina Kessler – Commissioner, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Joseph Bauerkemper – Public Member, Congressional District 8
- Rylee Hince – Public member, Congressional District 2
- Paul Nelson – Public Member, Congressional District 6

2. Approval of consent agenda

- Meeting minutes from the October 19, 2022, ERIS meeting on packet page 5
- Preliminary agenda for the July 19, 2023, ERIS meeting

3. Executive Director's report

Catherine Neuschler – Executive Director, EQB

4. Potential Environmental Review FY24 Workplan

Type of Item: Recommendation

Summary: The subcommittee will receive an overview of the environmental review program's workplan for state fiscal year 2024 (July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024). Staff will discuss resources and capacity; review larger proposed projects in more detail; and identify how certain projects support improvements recommended from the continuous improvement process. ERIS will discuss in depth which projects should be added to the workplan as a direct result of the continuous improvement process. More information can be found on board packet page 8.

Outcome: ERIS makes a recommendation to the full Board on the environmental review program related components of the FY24 EQB staff workplan.

Presenter: Catherine Neuschler – Executive Director, EQB; Kayla Walsh – Environmental Review Program Administrator, EQB

5. Odyssey Database

Type of item: Informational

Summary: The subcommittee will be provided with an overview of the new [Environmental Review Projects Database](#). The database will provide access to information on all environmental review projects published in the EQB Monitor. Any information provided about a project as a part of publication requirements will be stored in the database along with all required documents including all project related documents and decision documents. The database stores this information by each specific project and creates a project page to house all documents submitted through the process which can then be downloaded to view. The search functionality allows users to search for projects by specific areas or mandatory categories. The database began storing project information when the EQB Monitor submittal service was updated in May and will house all environmental review project information going forward from that launch date.

Outcome: Subcommittee will be informed of the Environmental Review Projects Database and have an opportunity to provide comments on the current functionality and any future improvement ideas.

Presenter: Jesse Krzenski – Environmental Review Program Administrator, EQB

6. **Public comment**

The board welcomes oral public comment. Please see guidance and procedures on packet page 2.

Comment is especially requested on the topics in agenda items 4 and 5, and comments on those topics will be prioritized if time constraints exist.

7. **Closing and adjournment**



October 2022 Environmental Review Implementation Subcommittee meeting

Wednesday, October 19, 2022 from 1:00-4:00 p.m.

In person 520 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155, lower level conference rooms and online via Webex

Minutes

1. Welcome and roll call

Chair Strommen called to order the regular meeting of the Environmental Quality Board.

Members present: Grace Arnold, Joseph Bauerkemper, Nancy Daubenberger, Rylee Hince, Paul Nelson, Sarah Strommen

Members excused: Katrina Kessler, Jan Malcolm

Proxies: Dan Huff (for Malcolm), Peter Tester (for Kessler)

EQB members present: Gerald Van Amburg, Alice Roberts-Davis

EQB staff present: Erik Dahl, Rebeca Gutierrez-Moreno, Katrina Hapka, Faith Krogstad, Kayla Walsh, Denise Wilson

Others present: Kevin McKinnon (Deputy Commissioner - DEED)

2. Approval of consent agenda

- Meeting minutes from the April 20, 2022 ERIS meeting (packet page #4), Environmental Quality Board meeting.
- Proposed agenda for Oct. 19, 2022 ERIS meeting (packet page #1) Environmental Quality Board meeting.

Motion: Commissioner Tester moved the consent agenda; Commissioner Grace Arnold second. Motion carries with a unanimous voice vote.

3. Executive Director's report

Eric Cedarleaf Dahl – Interim Executive Director, EQB

- Today's agenda and meeting format
 - Continuous Improvement Project/MAD/ERIS

4. Environmental review and climate pilot program conclusions and recommendations - update

- The Board heard an update of Summary of EQB kicked off the Continuous Improvement Project with MAD (Management Analysis and Development). ERIS and the Board will hear an update on the time timeline, scope, etc. in the coming months. This project will be led by Kayla Walsh with support from Denise Wilson.
- ERIS will hear a summary of feedback received from project proposers, responsible governmental units (RGUs), technical consultants and members of the public that participated in the development and review of published Environmental Assessment Worksheets (EAW) that included new questions for greenhouse gas quantification and assessment as well as adaptation and resiliency information. ERIS will also consider the Interagency Climate Technical Team conclusions from their review of pilot program implementation activities and final recommendations for revisions to the draft revised EAW form.

Presenter: Denise Wilson – Environmental Review Program Director, EQB
(denise.wilson@state.mn.us)

Materials enclosed: Interagency Climate Technical Team memo (page #6)

5. Public comment

- Tony Kwilas, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce comments: statistics and data. Limited amount of projects. Time, cost, uncertainty. Guidance documents are confusing. Pause, reflect pilot project. Extend project to go through.
- Amelia Vohs comments: required to analyze effects, legally. Move the form forward. Extending pilot isn't going to more diversify projects.

6. Discussion

- ERIS will consider pilot program conclusions and final recommendations, as well as input received from the public discussion, and direct staff to make any needed changes to the EAW form, before presenting the EAW form to the Board for approval in December 2022.
 - Member Nelson asked to clarify conclusion in packet. Commends staff on work. Found form largely understandable. Stuck on usefulness, and timeline of form. Denise: climate technical team wants to be able to collect information on climate in form. Board is always able to change form.
 - Asst. Commissioner Huff: question for Denise Wilson, did we get enough data? Make sure data is representative. Denise: enough indicators to support decision, what we did and did not hear is how we concluded.
 - Strommen: not surprised by volume of responses. Denise: focus of pilot was to reflect.
 - Daubenberger: MnDOT perspective did not have projects, anticipating revises. Supports EQB effort.

- Bauerkemper: Important to continue to develop project specific guidance. Setting up timeline to reflect/revise form if needed after it is implemented. A way to connect information and guidance. Denise: presenting RGUs options for presenting information and guidance. Do not have in-house point of contact.
- Daubenberger: Having a neutral point of contact at EQB for additional guidance and reference.
- Denise Wilson: Feedback vs. engagement. Having that point of contact to bring parties together.
- Dan Huff: Agree with direction of discussion. Pilot was right decision. Kudos to team.
- Strommen: Final call on any additional comments, etc. Grace Arnold: Appreciative of team.
- Nick Martin: In favor of suggestions and moving form forward.
- Denise Wilson: Continue work, will come back in December.

7. Closing & adjournment

Motion: Sarah Strommen to entertain a motion to adjourn meeting, seconded by Nancy Daubenberger. Motion carries with unanimous voice vote.

Memo

Date: July 7, 2023

To: Environmental Review Implementation Subcommittee Members of the Environmental Quality Board

From: Environmental Quality Board Members

RE: Environmental review work planning draft

EQB staff are developing an overall workplan for the environmental review program for FY24. This includes items identified by the continuous improvement (CI) process that was approved by the board.

Background information

The draft proposed environmental review program workplan aims to recognize the day-to-day work that the environmental review (ER) staff team is responsible for, while focusing on major projects and initiatives that need to get done. Understanding the overall work that the team needs to accomplish is necessary to identify the resources and capacity available to add projects specifically to address the improvements developed in the CI process.

The goal of this Environmental Review Implementation Subcommittee (ERIS) meeting is to:

- Review and discuss the overall planned work for the EQB's environmental review program for FY24;
- Discuss which CI projects should go on the workplan; and
- Reach consensus on the components of the FY24 environmental review program work plan

This ERIS meeting is designed to help accomplish step 5 of the CI process which is to make a recommendation to the board about which CI projects (formed from the scored improvements) should go on the staff's workplan.

During the June 2023 Environmental Quality Board (EQB or Board) meeting, members voted to approve the continuous improvement (CI) process steps:

1. EQB staff solicit ideas for program improvements.
2. EQB staff review the scope of the improvements.
3. EQB staff evaluate and score improvements using a program effectiveness prioritization matrix.
4. EQB staff plan for implementation of improvements.
5. ERIS completes review of implementation planning.
6. Board completes review and directs staff to implement selected projects.

EQB staff recommendation for FY24 ER program workplan

For the purpose of this memo and understanding the resource and capacity needs, discussion of the proposed workplan is grouped into three categories: day-to-day work; general projects/initiatives; and potential improvement-focused projects.

Day-to-day work

Day-to-day work consists of the daily, generally smaller, individual tasks undertaken to ensure the functioning of the program. This list is not comprehensive but includes a general overview of these daily operational items.

- Technical assistance – Providing technical assistance to members of the public, project proposers, responsible government unit (RGU) representatives, and others through phone calls, emails, etc.
- EQB Monitor online service and Environmental Review project database – These two new online tools were launched at the end of FY23, and the staff are spending time: 1) ensuring that the new online submittal service is working and RGU representatives have guidance and support in using it to submit notices; and 2) ensuring that the new database is functioning, and project information from the submittal service is being loaded into it. The 2023 legislative session also included requirements for state agencies to publish notifications of fish kills in the EQB Monitor, so staff will need to work with the agencies to develop a system for getting those notices into the Monitor.
- Outreach, engagement, and collaboration – The staff spend time maintaining connections with environmental review partners (state/local/tribal governments) and stakeholders, as well as collaborating with other state agency programs, such as Minnesota Business First Stop and GreenStep Cities. If a partner program has a specific need, EQB staff may contribute to more defined projects.
- Obsolete rules report – This review of rules has to be developed annually.

General projects/initiatives

This section includes projects or initiatives that are larger, with more defined deliverables. Some of these are required or have previously been developed or approved; others have been identified by the staff as important to improve some component of the program and may address improvement ideas submitted through the continuous improvement process.

- Greenhouse gas emission calculator and source-specific guidance – In the 2023 legislative session, the EQB received funding for standardizing climate data in environmental review through developing a Minnesota-specific greenhouse gas (GHG) emission calculator/assessment tool and source and sector specific emission guidance. This work will likely involve hiring a staff person, completing a contracting process, overseeing a contractor workplan and deliverables, and coordinating a workgroup to provide input on the tools developed.
- Support to energy transition communities – The 2023 energy transitions grant legislation allows the Department of Employment and Economic Development to transfer resources to EQB to provide technical assistance and help with regulatory coordination. We are meeting with DEED on develop the work for this item.
- Master contract update – In conjunction with the Department of Administration, EQB aids in the development and management of the Environmental Review and Technical Services Master Contract. This five-year contract will expire in September 2024, so EQB staff will be working with Admin during FY24 to update and revise the contract for a new five-year period.
- Guidance update – The staff have identified the need to update EQB's Environmental Review program guidance narratives, format, and webpages. The goal of this project is to provide clearer guidance on environmental review, as well as making the guidance more accessible for all the ways people currently find and review information online. In FY23, a contractor provided initial background research and some identification of essential program needs. Staff plan to review this work and move forward with identifying what updates are needed. Revising and updating the current guidance materials can provide a strong framework for implementing some of the suggested improvement ideas.

- Tribal Coordination – The environmental review program plans to work on at least two items related to improving tribal coordination and consultation. This includes developing an EQB-specific tribal coordination and consultation policy and working with tribal nations to develop a prioritized list of environmental review improvements that are important to tribal nations. Once that list of improvements is defined and clarified, specific projects can be considered for addition to the workplan.
- Data Management Plan revision – The staff plan to complete a revision to EQB’s data management plan, taking advantage of the new online services and database to allow us to not just measure how much environmental review is done but also to understand the impact – namely how the ER program affects permitting decisions and, ultimately, the environmental impact of projects. This will improve our ability to monitor the effectiveness of the environmental review program. While completing the data management plan revision, staff will evaluate the potential to implement some of the improvement ideas related to improved annual reporting on the impacts of all approved projects and gathering and reporting information on the final choices (including mitigation) made in permitting projects.
- Mandatory Categories Report – The program is required to conduct an evaluation of the environmental review mandatory categories and complete a report every three years. The legislation requires that the report include:
 - “(1) intended historical purposes of the category;
 - (2) whether projects that fall within the category are also subject to local, state, or federal permits; and
 - (3) an analysis of and recommendations for whether the mandatory category should be modified eliminated, or unchanged based on its intended outcomes and relationship to existing permits or other federal, state, or local laws or ordinances.”

Although the next report is not due until December 2024, work will need to be done in FY24 to ensure that the due date can be met.

As noted in June, all improvement suggestions related to mandatory categories will be evaluated as part of this report. In order to complete the necessary evaluation requested by the improvement suggestions, the staff believe that a more in-depth mandatory categories report will be needed. This will potentially include a more science-based review of whether the category is meeting its intended outcomes. Additional public engagement is also likely to be beneficial.

The proposed plan is to spend the first part of FY24 reviewing past reports, developing a proposed report structure and components, getting feedback on the proposed structure and then develop a project schedule. Report drafting would begin in early 2024.

EQB staff recommendations for CI projects, FY24

This section includes potential projects or initiatives designed to respond to improvements submitted and reviewed as part of the continuous improvement process. In the June board packet (page 13) the staff provided their evaluation and scoring of improvements through the matrix. Staff have since been planning and conceptualizing projects that would support a thorough evaluation and implementation of some key improvements.

EQB staff assessed the top eight improvements that scored highest in the effectiveness matrix. These top improvements are listed in the June board packet on packet page 20. Staff restructured these improvements into project areas. Each improvement is fully reflected in the projects, but the projects are bucketed by work area. Projects also include some elements from ideas that ranked high for individual objectives. The complete list of projects is found in attachment 2 of this memo.

Of the numerous potential projects that come from the CI process, staff recommend pursuing the following two ideas in this fiscal year.

Improvement idea #1: Decision criteria

Re-assessing the decision criteria used in the environmental review process will be fundamental to modernizing the program in a way that reflects current science and understanding of the ways in which projects may impact environmental resources. Ultimately, revisions would mean establishing threshold criteria for significance of impact and improving guidance and criteria for RGU decisions on whether significant environmental effects are predictable from a proposed project. This will help answer questions like, ‘what level of greenhouse gas emissions should require an EIS?’ Updating the decision criteria will be a large and long-range effort, but it will build an essential foundation for future programmatic changes, including ongoing review of mandatory categories.

This project would be completed in phases, each of which would involve significant evaluation and extensive engagement. Phase 1 of reviewing the decision criteria will begin with building a workgroup to provide input; getting input to frame the issues, needs, gaps, and opportunities in revising the decision criteria; project scoping; and resource acquisition (one FTE). In depth review of the opportunities presented by revising the decision criteria provides the potential to evaluate and consider the need for and mechanism to include climate science, life cycle analysis, and cumulative impacts – many ideas which were stressed in the CI process. Phase 2 would involve developing an overall goal and concept for the revisions, scientific evaluation, and rulemaking. The outcome would be rule changes and accompanying guidance. EQB staff would begin Phase 1 in FY24.

Improvement idea #2: Guidance and training

A key role of EQB is to provide more meaningful public engagement and continually identify, document, and disseminate best practices. The EQB staff are interested in increasing our focus on providing more proactive guidance and information, rather than simply reactive information in response to questions.

EQB may convene cohort groups to discuss common issues, develop new guidance, and/or create RGU trainings. Staff may consider the following improvement suggestions: develop best practices around notification policy, including tribal notification; provide guidance to RGUs on how to format documents meeting Section 508 requirements for accessibility and also consider multiple languages; recommend RGUs to use accepted best practices for public engagement that are appropriate for their project needs; advise RGUs to notify local/state agencies when a proposed project will be undergoing environmental review to ensure agencies do not make final governmental decisions on the proposed project until environmental review has been completed. This improvement idea would be implemented using existing staff time and resources. As the project continues, consideration may be given to the need to ask for more resources to implement a larger training program.

Capacity and resources

At the beginning of FY24, the EQB’s environmental review program has two staff members, with the process in progress to backfill the planning director position. Also in process is the hiring of a communication and engagement staff person who will support all EQB staff members. They will support key projects like guidance development and outreach on other projects.

Two projects in the proposed workplan – the proposed GHG emission calculator and the support to energy transition communities – will or may provide additional resources and capacity for implementation. However, some work will have to be done in initial planning for these projects to bring the resources on board.

The capacity does limit our ability to take on all the projects we would like to; in many cases some projects may start as research, planning, and scoping to develop requests for the appropriate resources to support implementation.

EQB staff are also mindful that many of the projects we take on need collaboration with and input from other agencies (in the case of environmental review, particularly from state agencies and local governments that act as RGUs). State agency staff that we have been collaborating with this year asked that we try to identify which projects on our workplan might rely on interagency workgroups. The capacity and resources of those we need to collaborate with will also impact our workplan. The workplan table in Attachment 1 provides this information. Projects that are likely to need the highest level of engagement from others include the GHG emissions calculator project and the mandatory categories report.

Attachment 1: Environmental review full workplan draft

Outcomes/Body of Work	Project	Deliverable(s)	FY24 Tasks and Timelines	Cross-Agency Needs
ER Program Effectiveness	Improving ER Data Collection	Revised ER Data Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and benchmarking against other state environmental review programs • Draft Revised ER Data Management Plan • Review/input from key partners • Final Revised ER Data Management Plan • Proposed metrics for measuring program impact and effectiveness; include consideration of improvement ideas around reporting 	Continuous Improvement Team
ER Program Effectiveness	Mandatory Categories Report	2024 Mandatory Categories Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review past reports by end September 2023 • Identify desired report structure and components by end of October 2023 - Ensure allows for addressing items from improvement suggestions • Get feedback (from state agency RGUs and others) on report plan in last quarter 2023 • Develop project schedule by end 2023 and engagement plan - including process for getting info from state agency RGUs • Preliminary outline/concepts and engagement in Q2 of calendar year 2024 - solicit input on mandatory category issues and needs • Draft report in August 2024; Conduct engagement on draft report • Final report due December 2024 	Tech Reps or Continuous Improvement Team; likely other agency ER staff
ER Program Effectiveness	Potential CI Project 1: Update Decision Criteria	Concept and Plan for Updating Decision Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop plan for steering team and getting input to frame the issue • Identify RGU, partner, stakeholder needs and wants for improved decision criteria • Work towards a white paper/concept plan that defines the problem and the scope of the potential improvements • Identify FTEs and resource needs for a rulemaking 	Tech Reps or ER Representatives
ER Program Effectiveness	Potential CI Project 2: Guidance and Training	RGU trainings and cohort support New guidance	Review improvement suggestions and identify key guidance needs Develop a plan and scope for a pilot test of RGU trainings	Tech Reps or ER Representatives

Outcomes/Body of Work	Project	Deliverable(s)	FY24 Tasks and Timelines	Cross-Agency Needs
Tribal-Recommended ER Improvements	ER Improvement Process Implementation	List of environmental review improvements that are important to Tribal nations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with MNTEC in Summer/early Fall 2023 to review, refine, and prioritize improvements 	
ER Program Effectiveness	Guidance Document Review + Updates	Updated ER guidance narratives, format, and webpages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review FY 23 work (background research, stakeholder engagement, identification of essential program guidance needs) Identify scope of needed guidance updates Develop identified guidance narratives, formats (including accessibility) and design guidance webpages 	Continuous Improvement Team
ER Program Regular Operations	Master Contract	Updated Environmental Review Master Contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July - September 2023 - Ensure current master is extended for one year September 2023 to March 2024 - Work with MMB to develop new master contract Have new master contract in place August 2024 	N/A
ER State Agency/Program Support	Assist energy transition communities with regulatory coordination and technical assistance	TBD in conjunction with DEED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss energy transition community needs and identify EQB support - Summer 2023 Likely to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop interagency technical team for coordination Provide dedicated technical assistance and training focused on AUAR 	DEED
ER Program Regular Operations	Interagency Connection and Collaboration	Liaison to Minnesota Business First Stop, GreenStep cities	As determined by those groups	DEED
ER Program Effectiveness	Biannual ER Improvement Process Implementation	Regular engagement with partners, stakeholders and the public to solicit, evaluate, and report back on ideas for program improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early 2025 - Gather additional improvements from external parties Mid 2025 - Score new improvement and update prioritized list of improvements Mid 2025 - Add any identified improvement projects to EQB workplan 	N/A
ER Program Regular Operations	Obsolete Rules Report	Obsolete Rules Report	Final report due December 1, 2023	Continuous Improvement Team

Outcomes/Body of Work	Project	Deliverable(s)	FY24 Tasks and Timelines	Cross-Agency Needs
ER Program Regular Operations	Technical assistance	Provide regular, ongoing technical assistance to RGUs, members of the public, project proposers, etc. that meets statutory timelines.	Process petitions, publish notices, answer questions, etc.	N/A
ER Program Regular Operations	Outreach and Engagement	Maintain connection with environmental review partners (state/local/tribal governments) and stakeholders.	Provide environmental review information to partners and stakeholders through ongoing relationships, events, etc.	N/A
ER Program Regular Operations	EQB Monitor Production	EQB Monitor online submittal service is used by all RGUs.	Provide ongoing guidance and support for RGUs using the new system to submit notices	N/A
ER Program Regular Operations	ER Project Database	ER Project Database provides easily accessible project information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate about availability and capabilities of the database • Ongoing maintenance and propagation of database • Work to migrate historical projects into the database 	N/A
GHG Emission Estimation for Environmental Review	GHG Emission Calculator	Minnesota-specific GHG Calculator Tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RFP or workplan - Summer 2023 • Final Deliverables - June 30, 2025 	GHG and ER representatives
GHG Emission Estimation for Environmental Review	Sector and Source-Specific Climate Information guidance	Sector based calculator(s) and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop project plan - Summer/Fall 2023 • Final Deliverables - June 30, 2025 	GHG and ER representatives
GHG Emission Estimation for Environmental Review	Professional Judgements for Climate Assessments in EAW	Materials and resources to help RGUs understand how to select tools and resources to answer the climate assessment questions on the EAW form	TBD depending on resource availability	GHG and ER representatives

Attachment 2: Complete continuous improvements projects list

Continuous improvement projects identified by EQB staff	Project details	Resource needs	Timeline
Peer Review Panel/Process	EQB gathers a panel of independent, academic experts to review scientific assumptions contained in environmental review documents and makes them available for RGUs, the public, etc.	Project needs more scoping; could hire additional staff that are scientific experts and able to review documents, or this type of peer review could be done by an independent third party; to be determined.	Long-term
Change Appeals Process	<p>EQB evaluates how concerns about the environmental process are adjudicated and addressed. EQB considers the following suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQB could provide redress short of judicial appeals • Create an appeal process that doesn't involve going to district court • Judicial appeals for projects where state agency is the RGU are held in the county where project is located • MEPA should be amended to give the EQB the authority to intervene and reverse RGU decisions for all state and local projects it believes are inconsistent with MEPA 	Rule changes are needed to give EQB this authority. Requires staff for rulemaking and legal review.	Long-term
EQB Ombudsperson role	EQB creates a role that can serve as a go-between or mediator when process issues arise	One full time employee	Short-term
Change Petition Process	<p>EQB evaluates the requirements for petitioning for environmental review and considers changes. Consider the following suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAW petitions should be automatically granted if 50 or more signees live within 10 miles of the proposed project. • The public should also be able to petition for an EIS if 100 or more people who live within 10 miles of the proposed project sign a petition • Suggestion to allow direct petition from a Tribal government (without requiring signatures) 	Rule changes are needed to give EQB this authority. Requires staff for rulemaking and legal review.	Medium-term

Continuous improvement projects identified by EQB staff	Project details	Resource needs	Timeline
Cumulative Impacts Analysis	Phase 1: EQB scopes this project to maximize impacts and efficiencies. Phase 2: EQB creates requirements and guidance for conducting a cumulative impacts analysis for emissions (air), water, and land impacts	Rule changes are needed to give EQB this authority. Requires staff for rulemaking and legal review. Mapping of impacts will require funding and one staff person.	Phase 1: Medium-term Phase 2: Long-term
GHG Emissions	EQB continues to develop requirements for evaluation of GHG emissions in ER. EQB addresses these suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RGUs should evaluate the significance of greenhouse gas emissions in the context of broader statutory and policy goals • RGU should include lifecycle analysis • EQB should consider creating GHG thresholds for requiring an EIS 	Rule changes are needed to give EQB this authority. Requires staff for rulemaking and legal review. Requires staff for guidance and technical assistance. EQB may benefit from having the internal experts on staff to conduct the GHG analysis for all parties, so that it may be trusted and comparable.	Long-term
Alternatives Analysis	EQB reviews and revises language in the rules regarding the range of alternatives to be examined, the depth of examination, and the format of such analysis	Rule changes are needed. Requires staff for rulemaking and legal review. Requires staff for guidance and technical assistance.	Medium-term
Alternative types of analysis	EQB eliminates the comparative environmental analysis process for pipeline environmental review	Rule changes are needed to give EQB this authority. Existing staff.	Short-term
Lifecycle Analysis	EQB requires and supports the tools for a lifecycle analysis for all environmental impacts of a project	Rule changes are needed. Requires staff for rulemaking and legal review. Requires staff for guidance and technical assistance. EQB may benefit from having the internal experts on staff to conduct the analysis for all parties, so that it may be trusted and comparable.	Medium-term

Continuous improvement projects identified by EQB staff	Project details	Resource needs	Timeline
Decision criteria	<p>EQB reviews and revises the decision criteria in the statutes and rules. EQB addresses the following improvement ideas (some overlap with GHGs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Threshold Criteria for Significance of Impact - Improved guidance and criteria for RGU decisions on whether significant environmental effects are predictable from a proposed project. • Provide clarity that RGUs should evaluate the significance of greenhouse gas emissions in the context of broader statutory and policy goals. • Add guidance about what level of GHG emissions should require an EIS. 	<p>Rule changes are needed. Requires staff for rulemaking and legal review. Requires staff for guidance and technical assistance. EQB may benefit from having the internal experts on staff to conduct the analysis for all parties, so that it may be trusted and comparable.</p>	Long-term
Improved annual reporting/data	<p>EQB improves the EQB data management/gathering plan in order to support improved annual reporting about the impact of environmental review, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve annual public reporting on the accumulative impact of all approved projects, including impacts on water and projected GHG emissions. • Gathering information about the final course of action chosen (including mitigation measures to be carried out); how review documents were used to arrive at it (including reasons for rejection and selection of alternatives), and how the decision complies with MEPA’s policy goals. 	<p>Rule changes are needed. Requires staff for rulemaking and legal review and existing staff to manage data.</p>	Medium-term
Technical Assistance	<p>EQB strengthens their capacity to provide technical assistance; EQB automatically reviews all environmental documents--EAWs, EISs, responses to comments--for completeness and quality</p>	<p>Existing staff can make headway toward strengthening engagement and guidance.</p>	Short-term

Continuous improvement projects identified by EQB staff	Project details	Resource needs	Timeline
Best practices, guidance, training	<p>The EQB should continually identify, document, and disseminate define best practices through its website; trainings or workshops for RGUs, project proposers, and consultants; and supporting documents. In considering what guidance and best practices are needed, consider the following suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage RGUs to bring the public into project discussions early in the process and provide guidance for initiating conversations with the public. • Hold a public hearing in the county where a project is being proposed to take official public comment and answer questions about the proposal. • The EQB should develop best practices around notification policy, including tribal notification. • Provide guidance to RGUs on how to format documents meeting Section 508 requirements for accessibly and also consider multiple languages. • Recommend RGUs to use accepted best practices for public engagement that are appropriate for their project needs. • Advise RGUs to notify local/state agencies when a proposed project will be undergoing environmental review to ensure agencies do not make final governmental decisions on the proposed project until environmental review has been completed. 		