



Environmental Quality Board

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Dear Interested Minnesotan:

The Minnesota Environmental Quality Board met in June 2011 to start a discussion about how the board might best position itself to serve the long-term interests of Minnesotans and the environment. Now we would like to bring you and our other stakeholders into the discussion.

By way of background, the issue of how to position EQB relative to the other entities with responsibilities for environmental protection has come up repeatedly in the recent past. In fact, two separate EQB subcommittees have wrestled with the question. The first was established in 2007 and included the commissioners of economic development and pollution control, the board's chair (also the commissioner of agriculture), and its citizen vice chair. The second was established in 2010 and consisted of the board's five citizen members. The two reports can be viewed on the [EQB website](#).

To summarize, both committees determined that the board is in a unique position to serve the state's long term interests by coordinating statewide environmental and strategic planning activities. No other forum serves this function, and in today's era of tight budgets the function is as important as ever.

At its June 2011 meeting, the current EQB board agreed with the conclusions of these previous groups. In thinking about the legacy they would like to leave, members also identified elements of a vision for an effective EQB:

- ***Foster public awareness and buy-in.*** When the public understands the issues well, it can be more effective in helping the board and others find the best solutions.
- ***Take concrete actions.*** The board needs to translate big ideas and big thoughts into concrete actions that make a difference.
- ***Understand, address and communicate environmental implications of decisions.*** Possible strategies include preparation of a routine "state of the environment" report, use of environmental notes (think fiscal notes), and cumulative impact analyses that help people understand the likely effects of decisions.
- ***Gather public input to influence decisions.*** The board might engage the public in several ways, such as through a citizen's advisory committee, town hall meetings and Web-based discussions.

- ***Define clear roles and responsibilities to clarify structure and formalize interactions.*** Whether through EQB or another forum, it will be important to make sure someone “owns” the coordination job and has the structure and procedures to make it happen. A unified vision could be a catalyst for successful coordination.
- ***Anticipate environmental outcomes by “defining” (stewardship of and enlarging) the sweet spot where society, economy and environment converge.*** Being proactive and thinking holistically, while not always associated with governmental actions, are important to this vision.
- ***Coordinate environmental vision.*** A unified vision will help agencies speak with a common voice on environmental issues and ensure a constructive conversation about state goals and how to collaborate in achieving them.

The challenge the board now faces is how to help the state achieve this vision. What should it do to refocus the state’s attention on Minnesota’s most pressing environmental and economic needs? How can it help unify government actions to protect the environment and encourage economic development?

To help us address this challenge, I invite you to share your views with the board at its meeting on Wednesday, September 21, 2011. The board will meet in the Pollution Control Agency Basement Hearing Room at 500 Lafayette Road in St. Paul beginning at 9 a.m. The meeting will continue until we hear what every citizen in attendance has to say. Alternatively or in addition, you may send your ideas to the board in care of John Wells, EQB Strategic Planning Director, at john.wells@state.mn.us.

As the Governor’s representative and board chair, I look forward to hearing your views about this most important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David J. Frederickson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David J. Frederickson, Chair
Minnesota Environmental Quality Board