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Public Participation Ideas Due To DEP Citizens Advisory Council April 26

The [Citizens Advisory Council](#) to the Department of Environmental Protection is asking the public for ideas on how to improve public participation in developing environmental regulations and policies, according to John Walliser, Council Chair.

Public suggestions are due April 26.

"The Department of Environmental Protection is now updating the agency's public participation policies which have not seen significant changes in more than a decade," said Walliser. "The Council believes this is a unique opportunity to ask the public for ideas on how they can be better informed about regulations and policies under development and how they can offer their comments and suggestions."

Walliser noted DEP is also updating its public participation policies covering permit reviews and environmental justice reviews, but the Council and the public will be reviewing those changes separately.

"Giving the public-- from individual citizens to affected businesses-- the opportunity to have an impact on regulations and policies developed by DEP is a fundamental principle the agency has embraced," said Walliser. "At the same time, the Council is aware there is always room for improvements."

DEP now has [22 active advisory committees](#) with over 300 members covering issues as varied as waste management, air pollution, coal mine safety, environmental justice, low-level waste disposal and radiation protection, oil and gas management, on-lot sewage systems and water quality.

DEP has also developed tools like the [Public Participation Center](#) on its website, its six-month [Regulatory Agenda](#) and a [Regulatory Update](#) to keep the public informed of regulatory and policy development. In addition, it also publishes proposed regulations and policies in the Pennsylvania Bulletin for review and holds hearings on key proposals.

Through DEP's eNOTICE email notification service, the public can sign-up for email notices of regulations and policies going through the process.

In recent years several issues related to the regulatory and policy development process have been brought to the attention of Council which might help guide the public in making suggestions for improvement:

-- Infrequent updating of advisory committee webpages to include advisory committee agendas and handouts in time for public review before meetings and basic information like committee membership and agency contacts;

-- Lack of public notice for some advisory committee and subcommittee meetings and conference calls;

-- The eNOTICE system could be used more effectively to provide information growing through the regulatory and policy development process; and

-- The lack of a single calendar of upcoming advisory committee and subcommittee meetings and conference calls on the agency's website.

"For the next 30 days we are inviting the public to email the Council their suggestions for improvements to the regulation and policy development process," said Walliser. "The Council will also be contacting each member of DEP's advisory committees for their first-hand suggestions on improving public involvement."

The Council has established a special webpage at: http://goo.gl/UuOEu for background on existing DEP public participation requirements and an email address for submitting improvement ideas: RA-epcontactcac@pa.gov. Public suggestions are due April 26.

"The Council will collect and evaluate all the ideas we receive and forward the recommendations to DEP and the General Assembly," said Walliser.

Walliser noted once formal changes to the regulatory and policy development public participation process are proposed by DEP they will undergo their own comment period managed by the department.

For more information, visit the Citizens Advisory Council webpage.