



# Environmental Performance Partnership Agreement

Overview

## Introduction

On October, 2008, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 5 entered into an agreement that specifies how we will jointly protect Minnesota's environment. The Environmental Performance Partnership Agreement (EnPPA) introduces more flexibility, accountability, and environmental outcomes into the state/federal relationship.

## Background

The EnPPA is part of a wider effort called the National Environmental Performance Partnership System (NEPPS), an initiative between the EPA and the Environmental Council of States. (The Environmental Council of States is the association of state environmental commissioners or directors.)

The objective is to strengthen protection of public health and the environment by giving the states flexibility to focus on activities that achieve the best environmental results. No longer can we rely solely on counting permits, enforcement actions, and dollars spent, assuming that there is a corresponding environmental benefit. Along with flexibility, comes a greater emphasis on accountability (e.g. how did we do?).

Under NEPPS, the states and the EPA are shifting toward measuring the environment to determine the tangible environmental benefits all this activity produces. In other words, they are moving away from bean-counting toward taking the environment's pulse. The EnPPA is the joint agreement on how the MPCA and the EPA will do this.

## Time Frame

The current EnPPA covers October 1, 2008, through September 30, 2012, (or federal fiscal years 2009-2012). Progress is reported by the EPA and the MPCA every year. Previous versions of the EnPPA were incremental steps in the evolution of our commitment to focus on outcomes. This EnPPA will further the connection between the work we do and the environmental outcomes.

## Elements of the EnPPA

The current agreement is a concise, strategic document that focuses on common goals, well-defined outcomes, and strategies with program tools and resources targeted at the most important environmental problems. It includes both MPCA and EPA work. It also includes a set of joint priorities detailing high level critical performance measures and commitments for the base environmental programs.

## Environmental Commitments

For the current EnPPA (FFY 2009-2012), the Performance Partnership Grant (PPG) work plan needs to connect to EPA's strategic plan and its environmental goals and objectives (which are in general, similar to those of the MPCA's)

- **Goals:** Broad statements relating to air, water, land, and Compliance and Enforcement Programs, etc.
- **Objectives and sub-objectives:** Environmental "targets" within the goals, ideally containing dates and statements of desirable measures. An example of a water-based objective is: "By 2012, use pollution prevention and restoration approaches to protect the quality of rivers, lakes, and streams."

- **Outcome measures:** Details on how the objectives will be evaluated. For example, “By 2015, reduce the population-weighted ambient concentration of ozone in all monitored counties by 14 percent from the 2003 baseline.” Outcomes are directly linked to the environment. Outputs may or may not be linked directly to the environment. If they are linked, the connection is less obvious.
- **Output measures:** Provide information on the activities that the Agency or society does to achieve a measure or an objective. An example of an output measure is: the number of permits issued to stationary sources that emit sulfur-dioxide. Output measures are currently located in the “State Negotiated Measure” sections of the PPG work plan.

## Work Plan - Tables of Activities

The PPG work plan is presented as activity tables. This work plan gives details of what MPCA and EPA Region 5 will do during the life of the agreement. The work plan is designed to link the work performed with the environmental outcomes desired. The current activity tables are detailed and exhaustive. In future agreements, we hope to focus attention on those important activities that directly support the identified Outcome Measures and Objectives.

## Key Concepts

- **Flexibility:** The ability to spend dollars on multiple projects at the same time and starting projects before money is received are two advantages provided by the flexibility of the EnPPA and the PPG. The PPG provides the money for the EnPPA activities. Flexibility is also provided in the grant application process. The MPCA is able to apply for several grants at once using the EnPPA as the grant application.
- **Focus on the outcome:** Activities support an objective or outcome measure. We will increase focus on future activities that will help us meet measurable objectives. Other activities may continue but will receive less emphasis.
- **Evaluation of progress:** Through the annual self-assessments, the MPCA and EPA evaluate the progress we are making toward achieving our environmental outcomes. Self-assessments are a reporting mechanism that also serves as a preparation for the next EnPPA.
- **Measurability:** Outcome measures will be critical to our work in the future. Measuring these will provide the link between our work and the state of the environment.
- **Targets:** Outcome measures are linked to specific time frames for achieving the results. Without the time frame, the outcome cannot be easily evaluated. Typical time frames are one to ten years. However, because it can take longer to show an impact on the environment, some time frames may be longer.
- **Data management:** None of this will be possible without improved data collection and management. It is critical as we move forward with the EnPPA process to look at what data an activity produces or can produce, who manages it, and where it is located.

## EnPPA Process

The EnPPA process begins by defining the shared priorities for both agencies. Setting these priorities is the most critical step to having an agreement. The MPCA drafts the agreement including updated data based largely on the previous self-assessment. The two agencies then negotiate an agreement.

The MPCA considers the shared priorities to form its budget proposals to the Legislature. The newest EnPPA is a four year agreement, unlike previous two year cycle EnPPAs that tied in well with the state legislative process. The activities flow have changed somewhat making the process less dependent on the state biennial budget process. With each cycle of the EnPPA and self-assessment, we evolve from an exercise of collecting information, evaluating our progress, and updating or modifying the agreement as appropriate. The current process uses a team of staff representing air, water, land, and groundwater interests. The team and agreement process is coordinated by the Performance Management and Quality Unit of the Environmental Analysis and Outcomes Division. For more information, you may contact the MPCA at 800-657-3864 or 651-263-6300.