

Environmental Performance Partnership Agreement (EnPPA or PPA)

Overview

Introduction

On October 2016, 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 or PPA) introduces more flexibility, accountability, and environmental outcomes into the state/federal relationship.

Background

The EnPPA (sometimes called PPA) 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 (ECOS). (ECOS 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 number-counting toward taking the environment's pulse. The PPA is the joint agreement on how the MPCA and EPA will do this.

Timeframe

The current PPA covers the timeframe between October 1, 2016, and September 30, 2020, (or federal fiscal years 2017-2020). The EPA and MPCA jointly report progress annually. Previous versions of the PPA were incremental steps in the evolution of our commitment to focus on outcomes. This PPA will further the connection between the work we do and the environmental outcomes.

Elements of the EnPPA (PPA)

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 PPA (FFY 2017-2020), the PPG (Performance Partnership Grant) 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 cross media programs, etc.
- **Objectives with supporting measures:** Environmental "targets" within the goals, ideally containing dates

and statements of desirable measures. An example of a water program objective is: “By 20XX, Y percent of watersheds will be intensively monitored.”

- **Outcome measures:** Details on how the objectives will be evaluated. For example, “Reduce direct PM^{2.5} by X percent from 20YY levels by January 1, 20ZZ.” 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: the number of permits issued to stationary sources that emit sulfur dioxide.

Work plan – tables of activities

The PPG work plan is presented as activity tables. This work plan gives details of what MPCA and 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 more and more 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 PPA and the PPG. The PPG provides the money for the PPA activities. Flexibility is also provided in the grant application process. The MPCA is able to apply for several grants at once using the PPG 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 PPA.
- **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 timeframes for achieving the results. Without the timeframe the outcome cannot be easily evaluated. Typical timeframes are one to ten years. However, because it can take longer to show an impact on the environment, some timeframes 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 PPA process to look at what data an activity produces or can produce, who manages it, and where it is located.

EnPPA (PPA) process

The PPA 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 priorities to form its budget proposals to the Legislature. The newest PPA is a four-year agreement, unlike previous two-year cycle PPAs 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 PPA 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 cross media interests. The team and agreement process is coordinated by the EnPPA staff in the Operations Division.