



## EQB: Environmental Review Efficiency

### FY 2016-17 Budget

The Environmental Quality Board (EQB) is a state agency that acts as a centralized point to coordinate policy, facilitate communications with other state agencies and provide oversight for environmental review statewide. The Environmental Review Program is the principal responsibility of the EQB, and is designed to inform governmental decision makers and the public about a proposed project's potential environmental impacts and possible mitigation measures. The EQB continuously seeks ways to improve environmental review efficiencies for the public, project proposers and units of government completing the review.

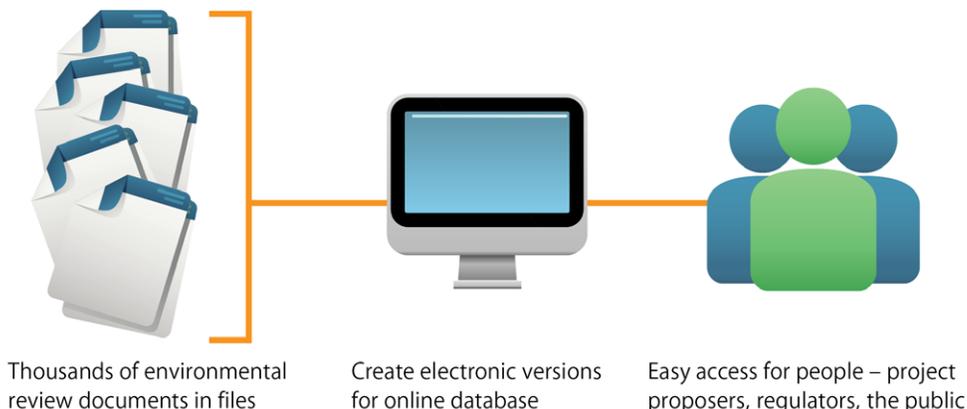
Governor Dayton's 2016-17 Budget recommendations include funding for two EQB Environmental Review Efficiency projects: Updates to the Environmental Review Program and the Development of an Online Environmental Review Database.

### What's the issue?

The environmental review program was established in the early 1970's. Over the course of four decades, much has changed, as regulators and communities have gained experience with a host of different projects, and as technology has enabled the evolution of project designs and mitigation measures. Meanwhile, over that same time period, thousands of environmental review documents like Environmental Assessment Worksheets, Environmental Impact Statements, and Alternative Urban Areawide Reviews have been created for a variety of projects. The vast majority of these documents are stored at the MPCA, with only a very rudimentary filing system in place, preventing easy access to documents for government agencies, the public, and project proposers to review.

### What we propose:

The development of an online database to make Environmental Review documents accessible to external audiences, enabling easier access to information for project proposers, regulators, and the general public. Funds would be used to assess the existing data, create electronic versions, and associate geospatial data with these records to create an electronic portal for this information, on EQB's website.



**Timely and regular rule updates to the Environmental Review Program.** Funds would support rulemaking staff to propose rule changes recommended in the 2013 mandatory category report, and other potential changes based on recent concerns raised over issues such as propane availability, or expanding solar energy initiatives. It would also support the consideration of feedback from citizens, project proposers and responsible government units (RGUs).

## Fiscal impact

FY2016	FY2017
\$750,000	\$250,000

## How it will help

This proposal will provide EQB with resources to support timely and regular updates to the Environmental Review Program. This request will enable the Board to update mandatory category thresholds that determine which projects require environmental review. It will also enable the Board to consider process efficiencies.

The public and all stakeholders will be able to participate in the environmental review process earlier and more easily with a new online public portal. Project proposers and government agencies will have immediate access to historical environmental review documents. This will make government more transparent and accessible to citizens, reduce costly delays, and improve the quality of decision making.

## Proposed contact

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