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## Permit Program Review and Permitting Enhancement Work Plan

### PERMIT PROCESS

In late 2012, as part of its commitment to address foundational issues, DTSC commissioned an independent review of its hazardous waste facilities permitting program. This external feedback and extensive departmental analysis found several issues with the permitting program, including unclear standards for denying or revoking permits; the need for earlier and more meaningful public involvement; and the absence of standard processes that resulted in lengthy delays in permit decisions and a backlog of pending renewal applications.

The analysis found:

- Lengthy delays in permit decisions resulting in a backlog of pending renewal applications.
- Lack of a management structure within the permitting program
- Lack of defined and universally applied processes for making permit decisions
- Lack of staff training
- Lack of criteria for determining when to deny or revoke a permit
- Lack of performance metrics

### PERMITTING ENHANCEMENT WORK PLAN

Therefore, in early 2014, DTSC developed a Permitting Enhancement Work Plan to significantly upgrade and strengthen the Department's permitting program and to ensure that the problems of the past do not resurface in the future. The Work Plan serves as a comprehensive roadmap to guide DTSC's efforts to improve the permitting program's ability to issue protective, timely, and enforceable permits using more transparent standards and consistent procedures.

Key provisions of the Work Plan include:

- Clear and updated permitting standards
- Decision-making criteria
- Increased and early public participation
- Development of performance metrics
- Improved data and project management
- Enhanced enforcement actions
- Timely and reliable support from other DTSC programs and units
- A commitment to developing new and more effective engagement strategies for communities overburdened by multiple pollution sources



## APPROPRIATION:

DTSC received \$699,000 and five limited-term positions – who report to the Special Assistant for Program Review – to implement this Work Plan.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF DTSC'S PROGRESS

The Department has made significant progress, and several key deliverables have already been completed. For example, DTSC:

- Received recognition from the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development for completing the Lean Six Sigma training program, which is expected to result in 80 percent of technical permit reviews to be completed in 13 months, compared to the current 20 percent.
- Mapped, for the first time, the entire permitting process and memorialized it in the form of a baseline flow chart that staff can work from and incorporate future improvements. DTSC has completed a second Lean Six Sigma analysis that will be used to make the permitting process more effective and reduce processing time to an average of two years for 90 percent of permits.
- Finalized a public reporting system to track progress on permitting decisions.
- Initiated evaluating potential legislative and/or regulatory processes that would further support and clarify DTSC's determination when a permit application will be denied or when a permit will be suspended or revoked.
- Started drafting Roles and Responsibilities Documents between the Office of Permitting and its support programs, such as Enforcement and the Office of Planning and Environmental Analysis, to improve and develop standardized procedures for intra-Departmental coordination.
- Finalized an Interagency Agreement with the UC Davis Extension Collaboration Center to help modernize its public participation processes as they relate to permitting and site cleanup, and to develop a new engagement strategy to address the needs and concerns of residents early in the process, particularly in disproportionately burdened environmental justice communities.

**Permitting  
Enhancement  
Work Plan  
Action  
Item Status**

