

Director's Corner

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

April 2010



As we enter into the final stretch of the Legislative Session, I find myself marveling over the ever present and ever increasing use of technology. We at DEP talk of “going green” and striving to be a paperless society, and it’s actually fun to see it happening downtown as well during this session of lawmaking and budget negotiating! No longer are Committee packets printed out and delivered to members prior to meetings. They are posted online for everyone to access! To add to that, e-mail is prevalent on all levels for keeping information flowing and having questions answered. That can be both a blessing and a curse as we enter the final weeks of the session when new versions of bills pop into inboxes while we sleep at night! Still...at least we’re in the loop! But, the latest technology implemented this session is Transparency Florida. This is a new online tool that allows the public to view the budgeting process and track the expenditures of all state agencies throughout the year. Transparency Florida is intended to meet the public’s demand for timely information that is easily accessible in a user-friendly format.

Meanwhile, here in the Division, we too have great successes in the e-world to brag about when it comes to electronic management of our documents. As I’m sure most of you know, we’ve placed a priority for several years now on getting documents scanned into OCULUS™. Thanks to everyone who participates in that effort...from the scanners, to the quality assurance reviewers, to the project managers who do the pre-indexing. To date we have over 2.5 million documents scanned into our “electronic filing cabinet” and we’re already reaping the benefits. In addition to getting rid of the paper files, we’ve made the process of public records requests much easier to handle. When requests come in for information or copies of specific documents, it is often as easy as providing requestors a link to OCULUS™ and letting them retrieve what they need and more. We’ve also provided a valuable tool to the regulated community and the consulting world. For example, it’s not at all uncommon to hear stories of cleanup contractors checking up on their competitors by virtue of poking around in OCULUS™.

Our success has now inspired the Division of Water Resource Management to also get in the game and water program documents are steadily being incorporated into OCULUS™. As more programs come into the system, the Document Management Center (DMC) continues to grow and develop into a multi-division operation. For those of you who haven’t yet had the opportunity to meet her, Angela Bonds is the new manager of our DMC. Angela has worked in MIS for several years and is very excited about taking on this new duty, although I’m sure there are days she wonders just how big can this effort get? Nancy Kraeft has moved to the Storage Tanks Regulation Section where she will lead the effort to complete the inclusion of the storage tank registration files into OCULUS™. In addition to converting documents to an electronic format, it is also our hope that one day we will have online processing for all Division registration programs so maybe the paper flow will get trimmed at both ends of the process!

And please forgive the segue...but the term “trimmed” reminds me of the phase the Legislature is heading into now as it begins conferencing on the budget and preparing the

wind-up of another Legislative session. As a Department, we've got our fingers crossed that our budget cuts will not be too deep or too painful. As you've read in the newspaper, we do expect some trimming of both money and vacant positions Department-wide. From the Division's perspective, I'm extremely optimistic that we'll emerge with enough cleanup dollars to carry on with our duties. Look for more on this topic when the 2010 Legislative Session concludes.

M.J.