

## Testimony

Hearing on Modernizing the Business of Environmental Regulation and Protection

House Committee on Energy and Commerce,

Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy

Wednesday, July 23, 2014

By

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### Main Points

1. The Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (department) recognizes the importance of providing the public with procedures to obtain and provide information electronically
2. The department has taken a number of steps to modernize reporting for the public and our own employees through:
  - a. Point Source Emissions Inventory
  - b. Semi-annual monitoring and annual compliance certifications for Air Permits
  - c. Hazardous waste generation
  - d. Discharge monitoring reports
  - e. Mobile inspections that can be uploaded from the field to the web
3. The department is continuing to develop and expand its electronic offerings through:
  - a. ePortal - an online system that will provide online permitting
  - b. mobile apps that will allow residents to submit complaints from their smartphones

Ladies and gentleman of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to speak today about my department's ongoing efforts to modernize environmental regulations through electronic reporting. The Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality strives to be responsive to members of the public, whether they're seeking water quality data, filling out a Title V air permit or reporting an environmental concern.

We all realize that electronic reporting doesn't completely replace traditional ways of doing business. A citizen in Rose Bud wanting a speaker for a local club will probably still pick up the phone and the owner of a small salvage yard in Romance will most likely mail in their stormwater permit. But electronic reporting puts a wealth of information and opportunity at a user's fingertips and greatly benefits the department. Users save time and money, not to mention the sparing of a few trees. From the department's standpoint, electronic reporting allows us to more quickly respond to complaints, review permits and upload data. In this day and age, the large majority of the businesses and residents we serve are tech savvy so it behooves the department to keep up.

I'd like to talk briefly about what ADEQ has done to modernize reporting and how we plan to improve and expand electronic offerings in the future.

Since 2012, ADEQ has used the State and Local Emissions Inventory System, or SLEIS to allow permitted facilities to submit point source emissions inventory data online. SLEIS is compliant with the Environmental Protection Agency's Cross-Media Electronic Reporting Regulation, commonly called CROMMER. ADEQ used an EPA grant to develop the system in partnership with environmental agencies in Arizona, Delaware, New Hampshire, West Virginia

and Tennessee. The system has proven popular in our state with 90 to 95 percent of reporting facilities entering their data directly into the system.

Hazardous waste generators and treatment, storage and disposal facilities in Arkansas can use a CROMMER-approved system to submit annual reports that detail how much hazardous waste a given facility generates or manages.

Clean Water Act permit holders can submit discharge monitoring reports electronically using a “NetDMR” system developed by EPA and used nationally.

Again, these reporting tools streamline the reporting process not only for the public, but for ADEQ’s employees as well, resulting in the saving of both public and private resources.

An example of how modernized reporting has made the department more efficient is the use of electronic tablets in our Regulated Storage Tanks Division. Each inspector at ADEQ carries such a tablet when performing facility inspections. The inspection forms are loaded onto the tablets and the inspector is able to fill out the form on site while in the presence of the facility operator. Once the inspection is complete, the facility operator signs the inspection report and with the use of secure software the form is locked to ensure the signature can’t be copied or the form changed without the facility operator’s knowledge. The inspection report can be printed on site and given to the facility owner, who can start addressing potential issues instead of waiting for a copy of the report to arrive through traditional mail services.

We’re excited about the strides we’ve made to modernize reporting in recent years, but in many ways the best is yet to come.

I often say that the citizens of Arkansas are our eyes and ears. Our inspectors insure that facilities across Arkansas comply with their permits, but they can't be everywhere all the time. Currently citizens can submit complaints online 24 hours a day or call our offices directly when they see something they view as an environmental hazard. Our staff is developing a mobile application that would allow users to submit complaints, along with GPS coordinates and photos, from their phones. Those details will aid our inspectors in determining the severity of any violation as well as the exact location of the area of concern. This information will be invaluable in addressing violations in a timely and efficient manner.

Finally, we're in the late stages of developing an ePortal system that will allow applicants to apply for permits, licenses and registrations online. The ePortal system, which we hope to roll out in the fall, was developed using CROMMER standards and is currently being reviewed by EPA. The first feature to go live will be the online permit applications submission process. The development of this system has involved an incredible amount of staff time and resources, a good bit of trial and error and a lot of testing. But we are confident the end result will be well worth the effort.

Electronic reporting has allowed the department to be more efficient and more responsive. We hope to continue to improve and expand our offerings to meet the demands of the public in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Thank you for your time. I'd be happy to answer any questions.