



Newsletter

Environmental Connection

Month 2010

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Sponsored by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality

Donna Kemp Spangler, Editor

2010 Legislative Session: DEQ Seeks Passage of Trio of Waste Management Bills

Three waste management related bills are in the Legislative hopper, all of which the Department of Environmental Quality hopes will sail through the 45-day session that begins Jan. 25, 2010.

Rep. Ronda Menlove (R-Garland) and Sen. Curt Bramble (R-Provo) plan to sponsor a bill that will help reform the financially strapped Environmental Quality Restricted Account, (EQRA) a fund that pays for oversight of waste management in the state but is faced with a projected \$2 million deficit. The legislation is expected to increase fees the state collects from landfills and hazardous waste facilities and remove an annual \$400,000 appropriation to the state's General Fund.

"We are pleased with the commitment of the stakeholders and support of the Governor to find sustainable funding levels for the EQRA – protecting Utahns by maintaining adequate levels of waste oversight and inspections," said Amanda Smith, executive director of DEQ.

Two other waste-related bills call for reauthorization of the Hazardous Substances Mitigation Act (used for emergency cleanups) and the Waste Tire Recycling Act – both set to expire in 2010. In May, the Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee recommended that these acts be reauthorized for another 10 years.

The Waste Tire Recycling Act collects a small surcharge from consumers when they buy tires to help pay for the clean up of waste tire piles and recycle them. The fund is expected to come up short so DEQ has also been working with Rep. Neal Hendrickson (D-West Valley) to adjust the fees that would keep the fund self-supporting. The legislation would increase the fee – from \$1 to \$2 on large truck tires to help cover the cost of recycling.

Another potential bill that could emerge from the 2010 session is the establishment of a Great Salt Lake Commission. The Great Salt Lake Advisory Council, established by former Gov. Huntsman, recommended that a Commission be established to oversee the Great Salt Lake.

More information on bills that have been filed is available at www.leg.state.ut.us.

DEQ Faces Added 3 Percent Cut in General Fund

Governor Gary Herbert unveiled an \$11.3 billion spending plan for 2010 that orders state agencies to cut an additional 3 percent but gives directors leeway on where to make the cuts.

Herbert issued an executive order mandating the cuts that will last through June 30, 2010.

Faced with additional General Fund cuts, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will try to avoid furloughs and hope for vacancy savings while continuing to look for efficiencies. DEQ already has imposed a hiring freeze, cut back on travel and equipment purchases, and offered eligible employees early retirement incentives.

“We will continue to look at our overall operations to find opportunities to become more efficient,” said Amanda Smith, executive director of DEQ. “We support the Governor’s spending plan and are prepared to provide the Legislature ways we can meet these economic challenges.”

Smith also praised the Governor for recommendations that include not dipping into the Environmental Quality Restricted Account that pays for overseeing oversight of waste management. Historically, \$400,000 a year is transferred from that account into the General Fund. Herbert has suggested that transfer be eliminated.

“We are very pleased Herbert has recognized the money is needed in order to cover a projected deficit of about \$2 million,” Smith said.

Herbert, however, is optimistic there will be economic recovery next year and has built his budget to reflect that. He calls for no cuts in public or higher education and no tax increases.

“Over the past couple of years, the nation’s economy has seen the biggest downturn since the Great Depression. Utah has not been immune from these troubling times. We are, however, better positioned economically than nearly any other state and, moving forward, we have reason to be cautiously optimistic about our economic future. Economic indicators are stabilizing and Utah was recently ranked by the American Legislative Exchange Council as the state most likely to emerge first from the recession,” Herbert said in his budget.

DEQ received a small percentage of financing from the General Fund – about 21 percent under the proposed budget. The remainder of DEQ’s overall budget is funded by a combination of federal funds (40 percent), restricted funds (21 percent) and dedicated credits (18 percent).

Herbert’s proposed budget recommends DEQ be funded as follows:

- Air Quality - \$11.3 million.
- Solid and Hazardous Waste – \$8.4 million
- Environmental Response – \$8.6 million

- Radiation Control – \$3.2 million
- Water Quality – \$10.5 million
- Drinking Water – \$4.7 percent
- Executive Director’s Office – \$5.1 million

Herbert’s entire budget recommendations are available online at: www.governor.utah.gov/budget.

End of an Era: DEQ Veteran who Rose to Ranks Now Retires

In 1977, Bill Sinclair left the U.S. Air Force to become an environmental health scientist reviewing solid waste permits for the Department of Health’s Bureau of General Sanitation. Nearly 30 years later, he retired as Deputy Director of the Utah Department of Environmental Quality, including nearly a year-long stint as the Acting Executive Director.



Sinclair takes center stage. Shown here Deputy Director Brad Johnson with Executive Director Amanda Smith and Administrative Assistant Bev Rasmussen.

“This is a great place to work,” Sinclair said at his retirement party held December 11. “I started at the bottom and worked my way up. I’m proof that if you work hard you can really succeed. I leave DEQ in good hands.”

Shortly before his retirement, Sinclair was honored with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his environmental achievements throughout his career. Most notably, Sinclair forced the federal government to do an environmental impact statement that ultimately led to the removal of cold-war era uranium mill tailings from the banks of the Colorado River to a permanent disposal site near the town of Crescent Junction.

“We at EPA appreciate Bill as a tireless advocate of the environment, his work ethic, and his fabulous sense of humor,” Carol Rushin, acting director for EPA Region 8 in Denver, said at a recent partnership meeting where she presented Sinclair with the award.

DEQ Executive Director Amanda Smith said there’s no doubt that Sinclair has made his mark in Utah and beyond.

“He spent his entire career protecting the environment, which has had a significant impact for the state,” Smith said. “He has kept this organization running. But it’s his huge smile, easy laugh, and making people feel at ease that DEQ will miss.”

Smith appointed Brad Johnson as Sinclair’s replacement. Johnson, formerly the director of the Division of Environmental Response and Remediation, joked that he couldn’t be like Sinclair even if he tried. “I could never duplicate that hillbilly twang,” he said.

Sinclair grew up in Virginia, served in the U.S. Air Force before joining the state health department's Bureau of General Sanitation.

While in the Air Force, he married LouAnn, who recently retired from the Davis County School District. They have three grown children they raised in Layton, and now have six grandchildren.

He soon became the Branch Manager of the Bureau of Solid and Hazardous Waste two years before DEQ became an agency in 1991. In 1993, he was appointed as director of the Division of Radiation Control. He was appointed Deputy Director in 2003. Nearly six years later he found himself at the helm of DEQ after Rick Sprott retired to New Mexico.

It was his battle with colon cancer three years ago that had the biggest impact on him and his family.

"I pulled through it and it made me think about what's important in this life," he said, "family."

Longtime District Engineer Retires, Rides off Into the Sunset

Roger Foisy describes himself as a "country boy." Born and raised in Richfield, the 62-year-old can be found traveling the back roads of Central Utah on a four-wheeler or horseback to help with a water or sewer connection. These days, he'll have more time to saddle up just for enjoyment now that he's retired after 25 years serving as the District Engineer for the Central Utah District.



Foisy with Director Amanda Smith and retired Deputy Director Bill Sinclair

"Retiring is a tough thing to do," he said at a recent retirement party. "It's like going to heaven. You want to get there but you're not quite sure you're ready, yet."

Foisy said he'll find plenty to do, including a long list of "honey-dos" his wife, Beth of 40 years, has planned for him. It will include tending the garden and his fruit trees, doing some wood-working in his shop and riding his 4-wheeler, for fun. Foisy is the founder of the Rocky Mountain ATV Jamboree, having retired after 10 years of managing it.

"Roger is riding off into the sunset on his ATV as he ends his career here at DEQ," said Bill Sinclair, deputy director of DEQ who also retired in December. (See related story.)

Foisy received a civil and environmental engineering degree at Utah State in the spring of 1973, the first graduating class to hold such a degree. In 1985 he went to work for the Department of Environmental Quality as the District Engineer for Central Utah. Among the perks of the job was to be able to walk down the street to his office in Richfield.

“I’d rather be out in the field than sit at a desk,” he said. “What’s really rewarding to me is to help people I know and see all the time. It’s the personal relationships I’ve developed over the years and the satisfaction of being able to help them fix a problem.”

Foisy will be replaced by John Chartier who is moving from his headquarters in Cedar City to Richfield. Newly hired District Engineer Paul Wright will divide his time in Cedar City and St. George as the Southwest District Engineer, replacing Randy Taylor who retired earlier this year.

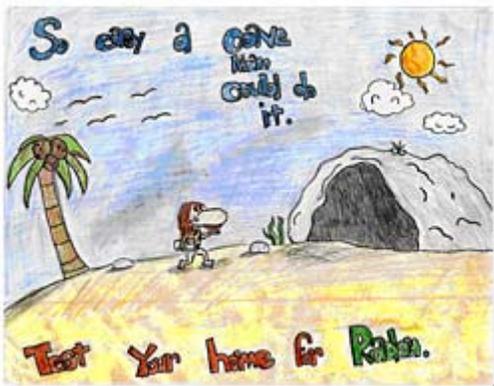
Amanda Smith, executive director of DEQ, said District Engineers offer an important service to rural Utah. Foisy has been a fixture throughout the Central Utah District, which spans from the Nevada border to the Colorado River.

“The reputation you have built in that area has been wonderful,” she told Foisy. “We appreciate your work out in the field.”

Foisy has been a mentor to District Engineers David Ariotti, Scott Hacking and Chartier, who describe him as dependable, consistent and hard working. “It wouldn’t surprise me if two days before he retires, Roger schedules a water system inspection,” Ariotti said.

Stop Radon from Threatening Your Health: January Designated as National Radon Action Month

Cutting back on chocolate cake and high-sodium drinks may be smart New Year resolutions to help you stay healthy but there is one big action that has even greater potential for protecting your health—radon testing.



Artwork by Joshua Basilio,
Spring Creek Elementary, Provo, Utah
2010 National Radon Poster Contest

Radon exposure kills an estimated 21,000 people in the U.S. each year—a number that could be dramatically reduced by easy, inexpensive home testing and repair.

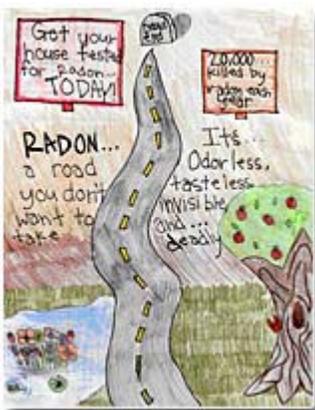
Radon is a naturally occurring, radioactive gas that can accumulate in your home and can cause cancer in you and your children. Radon usually comes from the surrounding soil and can enter through cracks and openings on the lower levels of your home.

Many people don't know about radon because you can't see, smell, or taste it. But exposure to radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States and the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. Although lung cancer can be treated, the survival rate is one of the lowest for those with cancer.



Artwork by Emily Pinnock,
Olympus Jr. High, Salt Lake City, Utah
2010 National Radon Poster Contest

Radon levels vary around the country, but no home is free from risk. The only way to know if you are at risk for radon exposure is to test your home. Conducting a radon test is as easy as opening a package, placing the detector in a designated area, and after a minimum of 48 hours, sending the detector back to the lab for analysis. Test kits are available through local hardware stores and the Utah Safety Council. In conjunction with the National Radon Action Month, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality is offering do-it-yourself radon test kits for only \$6 (includes lab fee). To order a radon test kit, go to: www.radon.utah.gov or call 1-800-324-5928. If your home does have an elevated level of radon, a qualified radon mitigation contractor can make repairs to solve the problem and protect your family.



Artwork by Anna Pinnock,
Cottonwood Elementary,
Salt Lake City, Utah
2010 National Radon Poster Contest

The U.S. Surgeon General recognizes radon as a health risk and recommends that all homes across the country be tested for radon. “Testing your home, and making necessary repairs, is a small price to pay for the health of our loved ones,” noted Christine Keyser, radon program coordinator. “Life is full of unknowns and potential hazards like radon, but thankfully, we can mitigate radon before it threatens our health. Life is short enough—we can’t afford to let something as easy to fix as radon make it even shorter.”

This article was written by Christine Keyser, the radon specialist for the Division of Radiation Control.