

PRINCIPLES OF ENFORCEMENT

March 31, 2000

In an ideal world, regulation is replaced by stewardship; an inherent respect for the environment. In this concept of stewardship, everyone takes responsibility for their actions and the use of resources for the benefit of the community. In the real world, stewardship is sometimes compromised by conflicting capabilities, priorities, values, and perspectives. This creates the need for regulation and enforcement.

The challenge for regulators is to balance the use of compliance tools with the recognition of stewardship efforts. Regulated entities must be made aware of the conditions for compliance, made to feel the consequences of non-compliance, and provided an opportunity to demonstrate behavior beyond compliance. When enforcement is necessary, it should be fair, focused, visible, and timely.

The following principles are embraced to meet this challenge:

1. Compliance is the first step toward the ultimate goal of stewardship.
2. Enforcement will be balanced with education, technical assistance, and incentives to achieve compliance and encourage stewardship.
3. Enforcement will be an effective deterrent against future violations.
4. Enforcement actions will increase in severity for regulated entities with poor compliance histories.
5. The cost of non-compliance should be greater than the cost of compliance.
6. Resources will be used proportional to the potential impact on human health and the environment and in keeping with statutory responsibilities.
7. DENR will support the development and use of alternative tools to traditional enforcement that achieve compliance and encourage going beyond compliance.
8. DENR will trust, empower, and support its employees to make enforcement decisions and use enforcement discretion where appropriate.
9. DENR will ensure that its employees are well trained and informed to make enforcement decisions which are measurably consistent.
10. Enforcement policies, procedures, pertinent data, and other critical information will be accessible to any interested party.
11. Enforcement decisions will be defensible, documented, and proportional to the degree of potential harm.
12. DENR will foster partnerships internally and externally to realize shared responsibilities in environmental stewardship.