



N.C. Division of Environmental Assistance and Customer Service N.C. Environmental Stewardship Initiative

The Department of Environmental Quality's Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) is designed to promote and encourage superior environmental performance in North Carolina. ESI is a voluntary program administered by the Division of Environmental Assistance and Customer Service (DEACS) and is available at no cost. This program seeks to reduce member impacts on the environment beyond measures required by permit or rule, resulting in the conservation of natural resources and creation of long-term economic benefits.

ESI members are required to set and implement performance-based goals. To support members, ESI provides technical assistance and advises on strategies to reduce water and energy usage, and waste generation.



Networking



ESI program offers opportunities for members to connect about their environmental management programs and efforts. The ESI promotes networking through:

Environmental Benchmarking Series: Events hosted by ESI members to highlight a specific environmental topic and provide tours to attendees to show project implementation.

Annual Conference: Updates members on regulatory programs, pollution prevention strategies, recognition for member achievements and program advancement, case studies, and connection between members

Listserv: A platform to share regulatory and program updates and announcements, and to promote sharing between members on environmental questions and challenges.

One-on-One Member Connections: Facilitation between members based on similar goals and specific requests.

Environmental Training

ESI provides training on management system development based on the ISO 14001 and 50001 standards and internal auditing training. ESI also host educational webinars on sustainability topics including energy and greenhouse gas reductions, water conservation, waste prevention or member requested topics.

Coaching

Every ESI member is assigned a coach, who provides technical, regulatory, and programmatic assistance. The coaches facilitate member interactions and connect them with members and others to assist with reaching their environmental goals.

Additional Benefits

- ESI Program logo
- Electronic newsletter
- Recognition awards
- DEQ Senior leadership interactions
- Promotion of member success stories
- Social media recognition
- Listing on the ESI website



Technical Services

- Technical and compliance assistance
- Waste, water, energy audits
- Personalized on-site EMS assistance
- EMS gap analysis
- Internal audit assistance
- Waste sort assistance
- Use of the energy toolkit equipment



Which Level is Right for You?

Members can enter the Environmental Stewardship Initiative program at one of three levels. Partners are considered the beginners in the program.

Partner

The Partner level is designed for a broad range of organizations interested in beginning the process of developing a systematic approach to improving their environmental performance.

Partners must:

- Demonstrate commitment to compliance;
- Set environmental performance goals; and
- Agree to report annually.



ESI Partner, Cape Fear Public Utility Authority, conducted a waste sort to educate employees on recyclable items that can be diverted from landfill disposal.

Rising Steward

The Rising Steward level is designed for organizations that have a mature environmental management system (EMS). Rising Environmental Stewards must meet the Partner level criteria plus:

- Demonstrate a mature EMS;
- Set measurable environmental performance goals; and
- Demonstrate a commitment to go beyond compliance.



Mecklenburg County Solid Waste, an ESI Rising Steward, hosted ESI members for a training on internal auditing of environmental management systems.

Steward

The Steward level is for organizations that already display a commitment to exemplary environmental performance beyond what is required by law.

Environmental Stewards must also demonstrate:

- Aggressive environmental performance goals;
- Commitment to meet and go beyond compliance;
- EMS that is integrated into the core business functions; and
- Communication with the local community regarding program activities and progress toward performance goals.



ESI Environmental Steward, Pfizer in Sanford, maintains beehives and an herb garden managed by their green team for use in their company café.

ESI Member Achievements

1,726,042

Tons of recycled material collected.

16.28 Billion gallons of water saved.

4.37 Million tons of landfilled waste reduced.

89.7 Million Btus of energy saved.

116.9 Million dollars saved on projects.

6,926 Tons of hazardous waste reduced.

1.12 Million metric tons of GHG reduced.

Based on member reported data from 2004-2023.

Contact

Renee Kramer
ESI Manager
919-707-8126

Renee.Kramer@deq.nc.gov
esi@deq.nc.gov