

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**District Department of the Environment**



**Open Government Report 2014**

**Introduction**

The mission of the District Department of the Environment is to improve the quality of life for the residents and natural inhabitants of the nation's capital by protecting and restoring the environment, conserving the District's natural resources, mitigating pollution, and educating the public on ways to secure a sustainable future.

To institutionalize a culture of transparent and open government, accountability, and to expand opportunities for resident participation and collaboration, this Report describes how the **District Department of the Environment (DDOE)** has and will continue to develop and enhance transparency, public participation, and collaboration. In accordance with Mayor's Order 2014-170, this report addresses the following topics:

**1) Transparency**

DDOE relies on several methods to make the activities of the agency more transparent to the public. These include, but are not limited to:

*Public Postings*

- Posting public notices in the *DC Register*.
- Posting public notices and updated regulations on the DDOE website.
- Posting press releases on the DDOE website.
- Posting regularly on DDOE's social media networks including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube page.

*Targeted Communications*

- Updating program content on the DDOE website on a regular basis.
- Sending emails and information to numerous list serves to promote program activities, announce DDOE events, provide updates on important agency initiatives, and invite interested parties to agency roundtables and discussions.
- Creating Guidance and/or Information Documents for the regulated community.
- Issuing Press Releases on a regular basis.

*Public Outreach*

- Attending and hosting stakeholder meetings for various agency programs.
- Attending and hosting ribbon-cutting events and public forums to promote DDOE activities and events.
- Conducting environmental school assemblies for elementary, secondary, and high school students.

- Conducting community outreach events for residential, businesses, and faith-based institutions.
- Conducting paid advertising campaigns for new agency initiatives and programs.
- Conducting trainings on technical regulatory matters.
- Convening Stakeholder Advisory Groups.
- Hosting Agency hearings on regulations that are open for public comment.

Specific examples of actions taken by the Agency to be more transparent include:

- ***Regularly Updated Websites Dedicated to DDOE Programs and Initiatives***
  - ***Sustainable DC:*** A Sustainable DC website (<http://www.sustainabledc.org>) was developed to engage District residents on the Sustainable DC (SDC) Plan and keep them up-to-date on agency performance, implementation activities, and volunteer opportunities.
  - ***For a Cleaner Anacostia River:*** Tagged, *For a Cleaner Anacostia River*, this project is the most comprehensive approach in cleaning up the Anacostia River in its history. The investigation will help identify where toxics are located in the river, who is responsible, the potential clean-up strategies, and projected costs. DDOE has taken the lead on the project and is conducting the remedial investigation and feasibility study to address contaminated sediments.  
  
To ensure that the public is up-to-date on the remedial investigation, DDOE has dedicated a website that provides bi-weekly updates of the river sampling status and other progress updates (<http://ddoe.dc.gov/anacostiasediment>). Additional information regarding the locations of the various projects can be found here: <http://ddoe.dc.gov/anacostiasediment>.
  - ***EnergySmart DC:*** DDOE launched the EnergySmart DC website (<http://energysmartdc.com/>) to provide information to the public through a dedicated web portal regarding the development of a new Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP) for the District under the brand name “EnergySmart DC.” DDOE also convened several public engagement meetings with various community stakeholders to explain the intent of the CEP and ways in which the public can actively participate in the development of the plan
  - ***Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency:*** Information about DDOE’s energy efficiency and renewable energy programs are updated on DDOE’s website to foster greater transparency to the public and help educate residents about the benefits offered through each program (<http://green.dc.gov/page/energy-efficiency-and-renewable-energy-multi-family-buildings> ). The information posted included all pertinent changes to programmatic guidelines, new program offerings, and simple do-it-yourself measures that residents can install in their homes to help reduce their energy consumption.

- ***Online Database of Key DDOE Metrics and Performance Measures***
  - ***Sustainable DC:*** DDOE staff also maintains an online “Green Dashboard” (<http://greendashboard.dc.gov>) released in 2012 which contains approximately 60 periodically-updated metrics: air and water quality measurements; registered numbers of capital bikeshare riders, hybrid vehicles, electric vehicles; numbers of LEED projects and ENERGY STAR buildings; and other data, some of which would otherwise be difficult for the public to find. This beta platform will later be modified and serve as a tool for tracking new metrics related to Sustainable DC.
- ***Development of Information Packages to Key Stakeholders***
  - ***Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP):*** In FY 2013, the Energy Administration’s LIHEAP program developed an information package for the Program’s 22,000 applicants which includes four documents: (1) a summary cover letter; (2) a printout of the information provided by the applicant which DDOE uses to check for eligibility; (3) a detailed “matrix” table adopted each year as per federal requirements showing how funds are dispersed based on income, energy costs, and needs; and (4) instructions on the applicant’s appeal rights. This information package was provided to help ensure that program applicants understood eligibility requirements and program benefits.

## 2) **Public Engagement and Participation**

DDOE has engaged in the following activities to enhance opportunities for public participation in agency decision-making, as well as opportunities for greater public understanding of agency programs and activities:

- ***Public Outreach and Community Events***
  - ***Sustainable DC:*** After the announcement of the Sustainable DC Plan in July 2011, DDOE conducted a series of a series of community meetings and discussions were organized to hear how residents would make DC more sustainable. Every idea was entered online so other members of the community could read and vote on the ideas.  
  
Over the Fall and Winter of 2011, over 700 dedicated volunteers met every other week to draft a vision and develop recommendations for goals and actions within the topics of built environment, climate, energy, food, nature, transportation, waste, water, and the green economy. In the end, the working groups recommended 900 goals and actions for consideration in the final plan.  
  
In the 18 months of planning, over 180 public meetings and events were held, and almost 5,000 people learned about the plan.
  - ***Restoration Community Events:*** The Habitat Restoration Program plans, funds, and oversees activities that protect and restore river, stream and wetland habitats in the District of Columbia.

- ***Training Sessions to Inform and Educate Stakeholders of Upcoming and Existing DDOE Regulations***

- ***Stormwater Management:*** DDOE has undertaken numerous efforts to maximize transparency and engage the public in the development and implementation of the District's new stormwater management regulations and the Stormwater Management Guidebook (SWMG), which provides technical guidance on complying with the regulations.

From FY 2012 to present year (before and after finalizing the regulations), DDOE conducted over two dozen trainings for stakeholders, members of the general public, and sister agencies. Training topics include general compliance with the regulations, participating in the (Stormwater Retention Credit) SRC trading program, and use of the SRC database. DDOE plans to continue to provide these trainings as long as there is interest from the public.

Prior to finalizing these regulations on July 19, 2013, DDOE met on numerous occasions with stakeholders from both the environmental and regulated communities to provide updates and to receive feedback. During the development of the regulations, DDOE updated its website with each iteration of the regulations and the SWMG, as well as the associated comment response documents, public training schedule, training presentations, and other resources. DDOE continues to provide training sessions on stormwater management regulations. A calendar of upcoming sessions can be found here: <http://ddoe.dc.gov/service/training-sessions-2013-stormwater-management-rule-and-guidebook>.

DDOE also maintains an email list to provide updates to interested members of the public on implementation of the regulations and training sessions. The Department maintains contact information on its website so interested parties can easily request to be added to the email list.

- ***Green Area Ratio (GAR):*** DDOE has held various trainings for the regulated community on how to comply with the new Green Area Ratio (GAR) requirements in FY 2013 and FY 2014. These requirements were established as part of the rewrite of the District's zoning regulations. More information on the GAR and the training schedule is available at <http://ddoe.dc.gov/gar>.
- ***Benchmarking Program:*** DDOE, in collaboration with the District of Columbia Sustainable Energy Utility (DC SEU), established a Building Benchmarking Helpdesk to provide building owners with training sessions and individualized guidance on how to comply with the benchmarking requirements specified in the Clean and Affordable Energy Act of 2008.

- ***Frequent Stakeholder Meetings***

- Prior to rulemaking, DDOE staff hosted four stakeholder meetings to gather input to shape the District's new Wildlife Protection Act and Beekeeping

regulations. Notable attendees included prominent District beekeepers, individuals from the National Pest Management Association, USDA Wildlife Services, the Humane Society and its affiliates, the National Park Service, and City Wildlife. Additional meetings will be held in FY 14.

- Prior to rulemaking, DDOE staff hosted stakeholder meetings to gather input and shape revisions to the Districts' Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP) regulations.

- ***Social Media Engagement***

- To help engage the public and inform them of the agency's upcoming events, DDOE maintains a Facebook page, a Twitter account, a YouTube page, as well as a public Picasa Photo Album Account. Links to these accounts can be found below:

- *DDOE Facebook Page:* <https://www.facebook.com/DC.DDOE>
- *DDOE Twitter Account:* [http://twitter.com/ddoe\\_dc](http://twitter.com/ddoe_dc)
- *DDOE YouTube Account:*  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/DDOEPublicInfo>
- *DDOE Picasa Album:*  
<https://picasaweb.google.com/DDOE.photo.albums>

- In addition to the social media platforms, DDOE features an "Ask the Director" component on the agency website to answer questions from the public posted on the website.

- DDOE's Sustainable DC Program also maintains its own accounts:

- *SDC Facebook Page:* <https://www.facebook.com/SustainableDC>
- *SDC Twitter Account:* <http://twitter.com/SustainDC>

- ***Active ListServ and Email Updates***

- DDOE staff also maintains active listservs and mailing lists for residents, organizations, and other stakeholders interested in DDOE updates and activities.
- The SDC team, for instance, maintains a listserv with 3,000 members who receive a monthly newsletter focusing on different aspects of the Plan, as well as periodic updates on major sustainability initiatives such as the Sustainable DC Act of 2013 and the Mayor's Transformation Order.

### 3) **Collaboration**

DDOE has taken numerous steps to enhance cooperation amongst sister agencies, the public, non-profit organizations and private entities to fulfill our mission:

- ***Sustainable DC:*** Sustainable DC has engaged people across the city to raise awareness, gather input, and tap into the wisdom and knowledge of community members, institutions, and organizations. In November 2011,

Mayor Gray kicked off nine different working groups that identified innovative ways to make the District more sustainable. Working groups are made up of volunteer private sector and community leaders, topic matter experts, and District Government staff. All working group meetings are public and welcome public participation and input.

DDOE continues to do extensive outreach to residents and businesses for SDC. Staff, interns, and trained volunteers attended 124 public meetings and events and talked with over 6,300 people about sustainability last fiscal year. Public outreach events ranged from community street festivals to small conversations with ANCs or student groups. Additional coordination with the Office of Aging and the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Engagement facilitated outreach to seniors and non-English speakers.

In addition, DDOE participates in a Green Ribbon Committee of community leaders from the public, private, and non-profit sectors to review plan development from a range of perspectives and make sure the SDC plan is and continues to be beneficial to everyone who lives, works, or plays in DC. DDOE also participates in the District's Green Cabinet composed of agency directors tasked with determining how District agencies can make the city more sustainable while advancing their core missions.

- ***DC Sustainable Energy Utility (DC SEU)***: The DC SEU Advisory Board is a collaborative Board that provides comments and recommendations to DDOE and the Council of the District of Columbia regarding SEU contract, discusses the performance of the SEU with DDOE staff, and helps monitor the performance of the SEU under the SEU contract. Per legislation, members of the Board are multi-faceted and includes the Chair of the Public Service Commission, the People's Counsel, a renewable energy industry representative, a low-income community representative, an electric company representative, a gas company representative, etc (see here: <http://green.dc.gov/page/seu-advisory-board-bylaws>).
- ***Green Construction Codes***: In support of the construction code process, OPS staff presented more than 25 Green Construction Code trainings, and met frequently with stakeholders like the DC Building Industry Association and the Apartment and Office Building Association to get feedback on and support for the new green code. OPS staff also chaired the Green Building Advisory Council, which meets every other month to advise the District on green building policy and programs.

#### 4) **Next Steps**

DDOE is working with the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) and the Executive Office of the Mayor (EOM) to explore ways to better collaborate with the public, open data community, non-profits, and other organizations interested in accessing and using District government data. The Mayor's Order on Transparency, Open Government and Open Data (Mayor's Order 2014-170), for example,

established an Open Government Advisory Group, which will be formally establish in Fiscal Year 2015. DDOE will communicate frequently and work closely with the Advisory Group to help create new policies to establish specific criteria for agency identification of protected data in accordance with FOIA, maintenance of existing data, and the creation of data in open formats. A copy of the Mayor's Order is available on the Open Government website ([www.open.dc.gov](http://www.open.dc.gov)).