

# Aggregate & Ready Mix Association of Minnesota

## AUG 1ST PERMITTING EFFICIENCY REPORTS

The DNR and PCA issued reports on August 1st about how they're progressing on streamlining their permitting processes. Here are some noteworthy remarks:

### MPCA

For March 4 - June 30

- Classifies construction projects as "priority."
- Received 1,342 permit applications; 841 were for construction projects.
- 90% of construction projects were issued permits.
- Is updating forms, checklists and other tools on its website.

### DNR

For March 4 - June 30

- Received 153 water appropriations applications and 179 public waters work applications.
- 86 permitting decisions were made for each set of applications.
- Have specific definition for application completeness.
- A management team is reviewing thresholds for mandatory environmental reviews and permits, potential for general permits, duplication between environmental review and permitting, and the EAW form.

## The frustrating aggregate permitting process in Minn.

If an aggregate producer chooses a mining site and begins the permitting process, he knows he's in the project for the long haul. He really has to want that aggregate.

It's not so much the number of permits he'll have to apply for, although that is time-consuming and tricky. For example, a project involving a 60-acre dormant mine in a Washington County city involved applications for two city permits; a watershed district permit; an MPCA stormwater permit and air emissions permit; a DNR water appropriations permit, and a MnDOT access permit.

And it's not the community meetings he'll have to attend to explain what he'll do to address concerns about noise, dust, hours of operation, traffic and trucking hours, water use, and reclamation plans.

Rather, what makes an aggregate producer swallow hard is the costly redundancy and arbitrariness of decision-making by many regulating governmental units (RGUs) about environmental concerns.

For instance, a producer knows how to mitigate environmental impacts, has completed numerous Environmental Assessment Worksheets, and even Environmental Impact Statements in the past. And yet the latest RGU will require him to do it all over again, even when he knows the outcome.

Bob Bieraugel, manager of environment and land services for [Aggregate Industries North Central](#), has been involved with environmental permitting for years and can predict what his company will find.

"In many of the permits we've gotten, the same environmental issues

have been examined and, in almost every case, there's little or no impact."

Bieraugel, too, is familiar with the variety of permitting standards from community to community.

"Depending on where you go in Minnesota, one county will be different from the next, and cities or townships will have their own wrinkle," said Bieraugel.

Mike Caron, director of land use affairs for [Tiller Corporation](#), says the lack of a standard permitting process among RGUs hurts competition.

"The thing that's frustrating is where a community doesn't have a standardized way of handling permitting so we're not on a level playing field with our competition," said Caron. "A community can require one thing from Operator X but then can put more requirements on Operator Y who comes along later."

Caron also said he wished that local elected officials understood that state and federal government agencies have very tight control over producers and would point to that when feeling political pressure from local citizens.

The frustration about environmental permitting is best summed up by an engineer who helps a lot of producers through the permitting process.

"Do we really need to reinvent the wheel every single time there's a proposed mining operation?" asked Kirsten Pauly, PEPG, of [Sunde Engineering](#). "There are enough studies to show how to mitigate the same issues. Why not take all that knowledge and develop a standard that's applied to everybody?"



## From the Executive Director

If there's a silver lining in the government shutdown debacle, perhaps it's a newfound awareness among legislators and state leaders about the burden of licensing and permitting on small and large businesses, and ordinary people. Contractors, bar and restaurant owners, hairdressers, teachers, child care workers and countless others were held hostage by the shutdown and let local legislators know it.

One of the more interesting interviews I heard after the shutdown was between Tom Crann of Minnesota Public Radio and Kathleen Blatz, the special master. Even though she had served in the legislature and on the state Supreme Court for some 27 years, she was astounded by how interconnected government and the private sector are. She had not realized how severely businesses could be impacted when licensing and permitting activities shut down.

When asked whether all that interconnectedness is a good thing, she replied, "I think a lot of it should be looked at. I do understand there's some safety considerations . . . , but you really have to question the stoppage that can occur if a permit's been issued and then it's been suspended."

There's hope yet. - Fred Corrigan

## ARM Member Case Study

### Superior Shores Resort expansion



#### Project description

Superior Shores Resort on Highway 61 just north of Two Harbors added an exterior pool, hot tub, fire ring and patio area in the summer of 2010. The pool contractor did the concrete work which included shotcrete for a pool and hot tub along with decorative flatwork for the pool deck and fire ring area. The site constraints of working adjacent to an existing, fully operational resort during peak season called for extreme care in delivery and placement of concrete to minimize the disturbance at the resort.

#### Special project challenges

The contractor, due to site access constraints, needed to pump the entire project with his trailer pump and a 2" diameter line. We had to find just the right concrete mix combination that could be pumped through that line. A 3/8" exterior mix was used along with a retarding admixture to allow the contractor the proper amount of time to place and finish the concrete. They also pumped the shotcrete and decorative flatwork with this mix and pump.

#### Team

Contractor: J and J Pools

Owner: Superior Shores Resort

Readymix supplier: **Arrowhead Concrete.**

For more information about this project, contact Jeremy Carlson at [jeremy@arrowheadconcreteworks.com](mailto:jeremy@arrowheadconcreteworks.com).

# Q&A

## Great River Energy

Great River Energy has won a Healthiest Employers award two years running. We spoke with Jason Vollbrecht, benefits lead, about their emphasis on employee wellness.

**Tell us about the award and what you learned from participating in the contest.**

The Minneapolis-St. Paul Business Journal has a Healthiest Employers award program. We won in 2010 in the 500-1,499 employees category with a score of 73. It was fun to see where we fit in the whole pendulum of company wellness programs; we were right up there with Target and General Mills. We won again this year in the 500-5,000 category and we increased our rating to 85.

**What are the key elements of your wellness program and how do you get employees to participate in it?**

We have an online health management program; all employees and eligible spouses complete the online health questionnaire and receive a report detailing their status. On site health screenings help them track reducing cholesterol, weight, exercise and they earn wellness points. Employees who've accumulated 10,000 points can earn an incentive payment. We also have educational videos. We feel that if people understand what their health risks are, they're likely to take action.

**Where does this commitment to employee wellness come from?**

The emphasis started at the top in mid-80s with wellness walks and healthy food options in the cafeteria. The board supports wellness because they realized the investments were financially paying off in lower claims. Our senior staff embraces wellness because we sincerely believe our employees are our number one asset. Our wellness program makes them better employees but also, healthier and better people in general.

For more information, contact Jason Vollbrecht: [jvollbrecht@GREnergy.com](mailto:jvollbrecht@GREnergy.com)

# Q&A

## Braun Intertec

Targeting LEED certifications for a building is a great way to build your business but the drive for credits may sacrifice product quality and long-term durability of concrete. We interviewed Alf Gardiner, manager of Braun Intertec's concrete consulting group, to learn what specifiers should be aware of working on a LEED Project.

**How does concrete and recycled concrete fit on LEED certified projects?**

Concrete fits in many ways, from helping heat island affect to managing stormwater runoff. Most people associate recycled content as a way to acquire LEED credits, usually in the form of recycled cementitious content like fly ash, slag cement or silica fumes and recycled aggregates. Some specifications are pushing the replacement of fly ash or slag cement to 40 percent and higher to achieve more credits.

**Have you seen issues on projects with high recycled content?**

Yes. In one case, the specification required 20 percent post consumer recycled aggregate, usually classified as crushed concrete. At the time, there wasn't enough supply of this material. To meet the specs, the producer planned to cast concrete in the yard and crush it to be supplied as aggregate in the delivered concrete. In a case like that, I think it's important to ask ourselves, does this really meet the desired outcome of LEED?

**How do high volume replacements affect concrete quality?**

They've been used successfully on some projects but an understanding of the material's performance is required. Some ready mix producers who've never used these levels are being pressured to do so and shouldn't be.

**Should you use high volume pozzolans in concrete for LEED projects?**

Yes. With proper care and understanding of the materials, high volume replacement can be used. Understanding your materials and a history of proper testing is the key. LEED certified projects are no different when it comes to the successful use of concrete. Long-term durability along with short-term construction issues should be considered with choosing concrete mixture proportions.

For more information, contact Alf Gardiner at [agardiner@braunintertec.com](mailto:agardiner@braunintertec.com)



## MPCA No Exposure Flyovers begin

ARM members who have a No Exposure industrial stormwater exclusion should be aware that the MPCA will soon be conducting flyovers of as many as 15 -20 facilities in the state who are “at risk” of having exposure. These will include sand and gravel facilities.

According to Melissa Wenzel of the MPCA, a flyover in March found that the facilities they viewed had exposure.

“The common sources of exposure for these facilities included outdoor exposed storage areas of raw material and fueling stations,” said Wenzel. Other problems that are easily viewed from a plane: Leaky storage drums, exposed grinding work, and material storage runoff.

John Potokar, an environmental scientist at **Wenck Associates**, recommends that you review your No Exposure permit with all employees to make sure you are complying with the language within the permit at all times.

“The MPCA can hand you a Notice of Violation, which if not corrected within 30 days, can lead to a fine of up to \$27,000 per day,” said Potokar. “Not following the guidelines will cost you a lot more than having a stormwater permit and complying with it.”

The MPCA has written “Steps to Compliance” on the Industrial Stormwater section of the MPCA website to address questions and provide examples of violations. To learn more, and to request the Industrial Stormwater News e-bulletin, contact Melissa Wenzel at 651-757-2816.



**PO Box 14345**

**St. Paul, MN 55114**