

116D.04 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS.

Subdivision 1. [Repealed, 1980 c 447 s 10]

Subd. 1a. **Definitions.** For the purposes of this chapter, the following terms have the meanings given to them in this subdivision.

(a) "Natural resources" has the meaning given it in section 116B.02, subdivision 4.

(b) "Pollution, impairment or destruction" has the meaning given it in section 116B.02, subdivision 5.

(c) "Environmental assessment worksheet" means a brief document which is designed to set out the basic facts necessary to determine whether an environmental impact statement is required for a proposed action.

(d) "Governmental action" means activities, including projects wholly or partially conducted, permitted, assisted, financed, regulated, or approved by units of government including the federal government.

(e) "Governmental unit" means any state agency and any general or special purpose unit of government in the state including, but not limited to, watershed districts organized under chapter 103D, counties, towns, cities, port authorities, housing authorities, and economic development authorities established under sections 469.090 to 469.108, but not including courts, school districts, and regional development commissions other than the Metropolitan Council.

Subd. 2. [Repealed, 1980 c 447 s 10]

Subd. 2a. **When prepared.** Where there is potential for significant environmental effects resulting from any major governmental action, the action shall be preceded by a detailed environmental impact statement prepared by the responsible governmental unit. The environmental impact statement shall be an analytical rather than an encyclopedic document which describes the proposed action in detail, analyzes its significant environmental impacts, discusses appropriate alternatives to the proposed action and their impacts, and explores methods by which adverse environmental impacts of an action could be mitigated. The environmental impact statement shall also analyze those economic, employment and sociological effects that cannot be avoided should the action be implemented. To ensure its use in the decision-making process, the environmental impact statement shall be prepared as early as practical in the formulation of an action. No mandatory environmental impact statement may be required for an ethanol plant, as defined in section 41A.09, subdivision 2a, paragraph (b), that produces less than 125,000,000 gallons of ethanol annually and is located outside of the seven-county metropolitan area.

(a) The board shall by rule establish categories of actions for which environmental impact statements and for which environmental assessment worksheets shall be prepared as well as categories of actions for which no environmental review is required under this section.

(b) The responsible governmental unit shall promptly publish notice of the completion of an environmental assessment worksheet in a manner to be determined by the board and shall provide copies of the environmental assessment worksheet to the board and its member agencies. Comments on the need for an environmental impact statement may be submitted to the responsible governmental unit during a 30-day period following publication of the notice that an environmental assessment worksheet has been completed. The responsible governmental unit's decision on the need for an environmental impact statement shall be based on the environmental

assessment worksheet and the comments received during the comment period, and shall be made within 15 days after the close of the comment period. The board's chair may extend the 15-day period by not more than 15 additional days upon the request of the responsible governmental unit.

(c) An environmental assessment worksheet shall also be prepared for a proposed action whenever material evidence accompanying a petition by not less than 25 individuals, submitted before the proposed project has received final approval by the appropriate governmental units, demonstrates that, because of the nature or location of a proposed action, there may be potential for significant environmental effects. Petitions requesting the preparation of an environmental assessment worksheet shall be submitted to the board. The chair of the board shall determine the appropriate responsible governmental unit and forward the petition to it. A decision on the need for an environmental assessment worksheet shall be made by the responsible governmental unit within 15 days after the petition is received by the responsible governmental unit. The board's chair may extend the 15-day period by not more than 15 additional days upon request of the responsible governmental unit.

(d) Except in an environmentally sensitive location where Minnesota Rules, part 4410.4300, subpart 29, item B, applies, the proposed action is exempt from environmental review under this chapter and rules of the board, if:

(1) the proposed action is:

(i) an animal feedlot facility with a capacity of less than 1,000 animal units; or

(ii) an expansion of an existing animal feedlot facility with a total cumulative capacity of less than 1,000 animal units;

(2) the application for the animal feedlot facility includes a written commitment by the proposer to design, construct, and operate the facility in full compliance with Pollution Control Agency feedlot rules; and

(3) the county board holds a public meeting for citizen input at least ten business days prior to the Pollution Control Agency or county issuing a feedlot permit for the animal feedlot facility unless another public meeting for citizen input has been held with regard to the feedlot facility to be permitted. The exemption in this paragraph is in addition to other exemptions provided under other law and rules of the board.

(e) The board may, prior to final approval of a proposed project, require preparation of an environmental assessment worksheet by a responsible governmental unit selected by the board for any action where environmental review under this section has not been specifically provided for by rule or otherwise initiated.

(f) An early and open process shall be utilized to limit the scope of the environmental impact statement to a discussion of those impacts, which, because of the nature or location of the project, have the potential for significant environmental effects. The same process shall be utilized to determine the form, content and level of detail of the statement as well as the alternatives which are appropriate for consideration in the statement. In addition, the permits which will be required for the proposed action shall be identified during the scoping process. Further, the process shall identify those permits for which information will be developed concurrently with the environmental impact statement. The board shall provide in its rules for the expeditious completion of the scoping process. The determinations reached in the process shall be incorporated into the order requiring the preparation of an environmental impact statement.

(g) The responsible governmental unit shall, to the extent practicable, avoid duplication and ensure coordination between state and federal environmental review and between environmental review and environmental permitting. Whenever practical, information needed by a governmental unit for making final decisions on permits or other actions required for a proposed project shall be developed in conjunction with the preparation of an environmental impact statement.

(h) An environmental impact statement shall be prepared and its adequacy determined within 280 days after notice of its preparation unless the time is extended by consent of the parties or by the governor for good cause. The responsible governmental unit shall determine the adequacy of an environmental impact statement, unless within 60 days after notice is published that an environmental impact statement will be prepared, the board chooses to determine the adequacy of an environmental impact statement. If an environmental impact statement is found to be inadequate, the responsible governmental unit shall have 60 days to prepare an adequate environmental impact statement.

Subd. 2b. **Project prerequisites.** If an environmental assessment worksheet or an environmental impact statement is required for a governmental action under subdivision 2a, a project may not be started and a final governmental decision may not be made to grant a permit, approve a project, or begin a project, until:

- (1) a petition for an environmental assessment worksheet is dismissed;
- (2) a negative declaration has been issued on the need for an environmental impact statement;
- (3) the environmental impact statement has been determined adequate; or
- (4) a variance has been granted from making an environmental impact statement by the environmental quality board.

Subd. 3. [Repealed, 1980 c 447 s 10]

Subd. 3a. **Final decisions.** Within 90 days after final approval of an environmental impact statement, final decisions shall be made by the appropriate governmental units on those permits which were identified as required and for which information was developed concurrently with the preparation of the environmental impact statement. Provided, however, that the 90-day period may be extended where a longer period is required by federal law or state statute or is consented to by the permit applicant. The permit decision shall include the reasons for the decision, including any conditions under which the permit is issued, together with a final order granting or denying the permit.

Subd. 4. [Repealed, 1980 c 447 s 10]

Subd. 4a. **Alternative review.** The board shall by rule identify alternative forms of environmental review which will address the same issues and utilize similar procedures as an environmental impact statement in a more timely or more efficient manner to be utilized in lieu of an environmental impact statement.

Subd. 5. [Repealed, 1980 c 447 s 10]

Subd. 5a. **Rules.** The board shall, by January 1, 1981, promulgate rules in conformity with this chapter and the provisions of chapter 15, establishing:

- (1) the governmental unit which shall be responsible for environmental review of a proposed action;

- (2) the form and content of environmental assessment worksheets;
- (3) a scoping process in conformance with subdivision 2a, clause (e);
- (4) a procedure for identifying during the scoping process the permits necessary for a proposed action and a process for coordinating review of appropriate permits with the preparation of the environmental impact statement;
- (5) a standard format for environmental impact statements;
- (6) standards for determining the alternatives to be discussed in an environmental impact statement;
- (7) alternative forms of environmental review which are acceptable pursuant to subdivision 4a;
- (8) a model ordinance which may be adopted and implemented by local governmental units in lieu of the environmental impact statement process required by this section, providing for an alternative form of environmental review where an action does not require a state agency permit and is consistent with an applicable comprehensive plan. The model ordinance shall provide for adequate consideration of appropriate alternatives, and shall ensure that decisions are made in accordance with the policies and purposes of Laws 1980, chapter 447;
- (9) procedures to reduce paperwork and delay through intergovernmental cooperation and the elimination of unnecessary duplication of environmental reviews;
- (10) procedures for expediting the selection of consultants by the governmental unit responsible for the preparation of an environmental impact statement; and
- (11) any additional rules which are reasonably necessary to carry out the requirements of this section.

Subd. 6. **Prohibitions.** No state action significantly affecting the quality of the environment shall be allowed, nor shall any permit for natural resources management and development be granted, where such action or permit has caused or is likely to cause pollution, impairment, or destruction of the air, water, land or other natural resources located within the state, so long as there is a feasible and prudent alternative consistent with the reasonable requirements of the public health, safety, and welfare and the state's paramount concern for the protection of its air, water, land and other natural resources from pollution, impairment, or destruction. Economic considerations alone shall not justify such conduct.

Subd. 6a. **Comments.** Prior to the preparation of a final environmental impact statement, the governmental unit responsible for the statement shall consult with and request the comments of every governmental office which has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental effect involved. Copies of the drafts of such statements and the comments and views of the appropriate offices shall be made available to the public. The final detailed environmental impact statement and the comments received thereon shall precede final decisions on the proposed action and shall accompany the proposal through an administrative review process.

Subd. 7. **Required consideration.** Regardless of whether a detailed written environmental impact statement is required by the board to accompany an application for a permit for natural resources management and development, or a recommendation, project, or program for action, officials responsible for issuance of aforementioned permits or for other activities described

herein shall give due consideration to the provisions of Laws 1973, chapter 412, as set forth in section 116D.03, in the execution of their duties.

Subd. 8. **Early notice.** In order to facilitate coordination of environmental decision making and the timely review of agency decisions, the board shall establish by rule a procedure for early notice to the board and the public of natural resource management and development permit applications and other impending state actions having significant environmental effects.

Subd. 9. **Modification before final decision.** Prior to the final decision upon any state project or action significantly affecting the environment or for which an environmental impact statement is required, or within ten days thereafter, the board may delay implementation of the action or project by notice to the agency or department and to interested parties. Thereafter, within 45 days of such notice, the board may reverse or modify the decisions or proposal where it finds, upon notice and hearing, that the action or project is inconsistent with the policy and standards of sections 116D.01 to 116D.06. Any aggrieved party may seek judicial review pursuant to chapter 14.

Subd. 10. **Review.** Decisions on the need for an environmental assessment worksheet, the need for an environmental impact statement and the adequacy of an environmental impact statement may be reviewed by a declaratory judgment action in the district court of the county wherein the proposed action, or any part thereof, would be undertaken. Judicial review under this section shall be initiated within 30 days after the governmental unit makes the decision, and a bond may be required under section 562.02 unless at the time of hearing on the application for the bond the plaintiff has shown that the claim has sufficient possibility of success on the merits to sustain the burden required for the issuance of a temporary restraining order. Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter the requirements for a temporary restraining order or a preliminary injunction pursuant to the Minnesota Rules of Civil Procedure for district courts. The board may initiate judicial review of decisions referred to herein and may intervene as of right in any proceeding brought under this subdivision.

Subd. 11. **Failure to act.** If the board or governmental unit which is required to act within a time period specified in this section fails to so act, any person may seek an order of the district court requiring the board or governmental unit to immediately take the action mandated by subdivisions 2a and 3a.

Subd. 12. **Impact analysis; large electric power facilities.** No attempt need be made to tabulate, analyze or otherwise evaluate the potential impact of elections made pursuant to section 216E.12, subdivision 4, in environmental impact statements done for large electric power facilities. It is sufficient for purposes of this chapter that such statements note the existence of section 216E.12, subdivision 4.

Subd. 13. **Enforcement.** This section may be enforced by injunction, action to compel performance, or other appropriate action in the district court of the county where the violation takes place. Upon the request of the board or the chair of the board, the attorney general may bring an action under this subdivision.

Subd. 14. **Customized environmental assessment worksheet forms; electronic submission.** (a) The commissioners of natural resources and the Pollution Control Agency and the board shall periodically review mandatory environmental assessment worksheet categories under rules adopted under this section, and other project types that are frequently subject to environmental review, and develop customized environmental assessment worksheet forms

for the category or project type. The forms must include specific questions that focus on key environmental issues for the category or project type. In assessing categories and project types and developing forms, the board shall seek the input of governmental units that are frequently responsible for the preparation of a worksheet for the particular category or project type. The commissioners and the board shall also seek input from the general public on the development of customized forms. The commissioners and board shall make the customized forms available online.

(b) The commissioners of natural resources and the Pollution Control Agency shall allow for the electronic submission of environmental assessment worksheets and permits.

History: 1973 c 412 s 4; 1975 c 204 s 74; 1975 c 271 s 6; 1980 c 447 s 1-8; 1980 c 614 s 88; 1982 c 424 s 130; 1985 c 248 s 70; 1986 c 399 art 2 s 1; 1986 c 400 s 1; 1986 c 444; 1Sp1986 c 3 art 2 s 41; 1988 c 501 s 3,4; 1989 c 209 art 2 s 1; 1990 c 391 art 8 s 27; 1992 c 464 art 2 s 1; 2003 c 128 art 3 s 40; 2004 c 217 s 1; 2010 c 361 art 4 s 65,66