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North Dakota Department of Water Resources Updates Permitting Processes

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Water Resources (DWR) is implementing updates to its construction and drainage permitting processes to provide greater clarity, consistency, and efficiency for applicants and the DWR. The updates take effect April 1.

The changes to North Dakota Administrative Code establish clearer expectations for the regulated public and the DWR regarding application procedures, review timelines, and permitting standards. The documented review process is intended to create a more predictable and consistent experience for applicants while improving the efficiency of permit reviews.

"This is about creating a clearer and more consistent permitting process for everyone involved," said Director Reice Haase. "By establishing a defined review process and clear expectations up front, we can improve efficiency while ensuring that projects are reviewed thoroughly and responsibly."

Under the revised processes, all construction and drainage permit applications submitted to DWR will first undergo a completeness review to ensure that all required materials are included before formal evaluation begins. Once submitted, application revisions will no longer be accepted unless prompted by the DWR's review. In addition, the collaboration process between the DWR and applicants will be documented to provide clear visibility into each step of the review process.

DWR has also repealed language that previously prescribed how local water resource districts must process permits under their authority. Updated hearing requirements now place responsibility on the DWR to hold public information meetings for drains determined to have statewide or interdistrict significance. These revisions reinforce local

control while aligning review requirements with the entity responsible for issuing the final permit.

Permit applications received by the DWR prior to April 1 will continue to be processed under the previous guiding administrative rules.

Additional rule updates include revisions to the drainage complaint and appeals process, creation of a temporary sovereign lands permit for projects lasting less than 12 months and not involving permanent ground disturbance, updates to the sovereign lands violations fee structure, and implementation of legislative changes adopted during the 2025 legislative session.

For more information, visit www.dwr.nd.gov.

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