

## Governor Dayton Issues Executive Order On Environmental Review

By [Matthew J. Lemke](#) on November 21, 2011

Last week Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton issued an Executive Order calling on the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) to recommend ways to further simplify and improve the State's environmental review process. The EQB is made up of nine state agency heads, five citizen members, and a representative of the Governor.

Streamlining the environmental review and permitting process has been a signature initiative of the Republicans who took control of both the House and the Senate in last November's elections. During the 2011 legislative session, the Republicans, at the urging of many in the business community, made environmental review and permit streamlining a top priority introducing their proposal as House File 1 (HF1).

Some view the Governor's action as a rare instance of political harmony between the Governor and the Republicans. Despite significant pressure by certain environmental groups urging him to veto HF1, the Governor signed the bill and now has issued an Executive Order that calls for further simplification of the State's permitting process in order to wipe out redundancy and confusion. He also directed the State to develop a report card to track and publicize the State's performance.

Others see this as nothing more than a political maneuver by the Governor to steal the Republican's thunder on environmental streamlining. Prior to the Legislature passing the 2011 bill, the Governor issued a similar Executive Order directing the heads of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Pollution Control Agency (PCA) to speed up the permitting process. It is widely speculated that another bill is currently being drafted that intends to build on last year's legislation. It is unlikely that the Legislature will agree to wait until November 15, 2012 for the EQB to issue a "Report Card," or until January of 2013 to see what a "Congress" on the State of Minnesota's environment comes back with, as the Governor recommends.

Publicly, both sides are only saying positive things about environmental review and permit streamlining and that further efforts will help improve the business climate in the State. Sen. Ingebrigtsen (R-Alexandria) who chairs the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee, said that he thinks the Governor's actions are "a step in the right direction," and shows that the Governor believes more reform is needed.