



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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STATE LOOKS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPIONS

RALEIGH – As North Carolina celebrates the environment today on this 33rd observance of Earth Day, the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is once again looking to recognize and partner with organizations that keep the environment in mind throughout the year as part of their daily business practices. These organizations are invited to apply for membership in the Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI), a voluntary program designed to promote and encourage superior environmental performance.

In its second year, the ESI establishes incentives to stimulate regulated organizations to develop and implement programs that use pollution prevention and other innovative approaches to meet and exceed their regulatory requirements. This program seeks to reduce the impact on the environment beyond measures required by any permit or rule, producing a better environment and a stronger economy and conserving natural resources.

“We’re looking to recognize companies that integrate the environment into their day-to-day business practices,” said DENR Secretary Bill Ross. “We view companies that seek to go beyond compliance and move toward environmental sustainability as true stewards who know that in return these practices save money, materials and resources.”

Participants can become involved at one of two levels. The “Partner” level is designed for adoption by a broad range of organizations that are interested in beginning the process of developing a systematic approach to improving their environmental performance. Partners must commit to environmental compliance, to developing an environmental management system (EMS), and to setting environmental performance goals. DENR provides technical assistance to Partners and a single point of contact regarding regulatory issues.

The “Steward” level is for those organizations that already display a commitment to exemplary environmental performance beyond what is required by law. Stewards must have implemented an EMS, have aggressive environmental performance goals, and demonstrate a commitment to exceed compliance. Stewards will receive formal public recognition from Gov. Mike Easley and Ross, use of a program logo, established time frames for permit decisions, and consideration for regulatory innovations. Both Partners and Stewards agree to report annually on progress.

Franklinton’s Novozymes North America Inc. was named the state’s first Environmental Steward during the program’s initial year. Novozymes was recognized for its environmentally proactive actions and for having a thoroughly defined plan and goals regarding its future day-to-day dealings with possible environmental impacts.

Any organization that operates a facility in North Carolina is eligible to participate in the initiative. This includes but is not limited to manufacturers, businesses, agribusiness, service providers, government agencies, schools and nonprofit agencies. Applications to become an Environmental Steward will be accepted until Monday, June 23, with a decision expected in late fall. For those organizations interested in becoming an Environmental Partner, applications are accepted at any time and will be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

For more detailed information or to apply for the program, please visit the Environmental Stewardship Initiative Web site at <http://www.p2pays.org/esj> or contact Beth Graves of the Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance, at (919) 715-6506 or beth.graves@ncmail.net.

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