

Michael F. Easley, Governor



William G. Ross Jr., Secretary

N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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STATE LOOKS TO RECOGNIZE ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPIONS

RALEIGH – As part of its Earth Day celebration, the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is looking for 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 third 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.

“Many North Carolina businesses are doing their best to avoid depletion of natural resources by integrating environmentally friendly practices into the workplace,” said DENR Secretary William G. Ross Jr. “This program recognizes those businesses and encourages others to realize that waste reduction and pollution prevention can increase profit margins and in some cases provide businesses with a competitive advantage.”

Previously, participants could become involved at one of two levels. This year, a third tier has been added to recognize organizations on the path to becoming Stewards, the highest level. The first level or “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 developing an environmental management system (EMS) and to setting environmental performance goals.

The new middle tier or “Rising Steward” level is designed for those organizations that have a mature environmental management program. Rising Stewards must commit to have an EMS in place and must set aggressive environmental performance goals.

The “Steward” level is for those organizations that already display a commitment to exemplary environmental performance beyond what is required by law. Stewards must set aggressive environmental performance goals, demonstrate integration of their EMS into core business functions, and have a process for communicating with the local community. Stewards will receive formal public recognition from the governor and the Secretary of DENR, use of a program logo, established time frames for permit decisions, and consideration for regulatory innovations.

DENR provides technical assistance to all participants as well as a single point of contact regarding regulatory issues. Participating organizations at all levels must commit to environmental compliance and must report annually on progress.

Two organizations have previously been named as Environmental Stewards – Novozymes North America Inc. of Franklinton and ASMO North Carolina Inc. of Statesville. Both facilities were recognized for their environmentally proactive actions and for having a thoroughly defined plan and goals regarding day-to-day dealings with possible environmental impacts.

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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 Tuesday, June 22, with a decision expected in late fall. For those organizations interested in becoming an Environmental Partner or Rising Steward, applications are accepted at any time and will be reviewed on a semi-annual basis.

For more detailed information or to apply for the program, please visit the Environmental Stewardship Initiative Web site at <http://www.p2pays.org/esi> 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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