



# Community Engagement

Becoming better informed is an important first step in providing effective public comments that can influence permit conditions and help you stay involved in DHEC's permitting processes.

## **How do I get involved?**

DHEC begins accepting comments on a permit application and/or draft permit when it is placed on public notice. The application and/or draft permit and related documents are available for review during the public comment period. Comments may be submitted through U.S. Mail or electronic mail. All written comments received during the public comment period will be considered before a decision is made on the permit application. An applicant may be required to submit additional information to address issues that are raised.

Public meetings and/or hearings are held before a permit decision is made. A public meeting is typically an informal gathering to learn more about a proposed project. A public hearing is a formal gathering with a set agenda where comments are accepted and recorded by a court reporter. Interested persons are encouraged to attend any public meetings or hearings about a proposed project to learn more, voice concerns, and ask questions. Both written and oral comments are accepted at a public hearing. DHEC will consider all written and oral comments concerning the proposed project before a permit is issued.

## **How can I influence DHEC's decision?**

Although DHEC is required by law to permit activities that can meet all applicable federal and state environmental regulations, permit conditions may be influenced by public comments. Local community members provide a unique perspective and are valuable resources in addressing community concerns in the permitting process. Information provided during the permitting process can influence conditions of a permit. Effective comments are those that include accurate, specific details about the site of a proposed project, inaccuracies in the permit application, technical errors in the draft permit, or any other information demonstrating that a proposed project cannot operate in compliance with environmental regulations.

## Can DHEC consider my other concerns?

While DHEC values all comments received, it is important to understand that commenting on a proposed project is not a “vote” on whether or not the proposed action should be permitted. The agency does not have the authority to regulate or consider some common issues related to mining operations when making a permit decision.

- Truck traffic, access to public roads, weight limits, and traffic patterns are governed by the South Carolina Department of Transportation and the local county.
- Operating hours and industrial development are governed by the county through zoning and land use planning.

Beginning a conversation early about these and other quality of life issues is an effective way for communities to work together with local officials and company representatives to find solutions and reach common goals.

## How can I stay engaged in DHEC’s permitting processes?

- Stay informed of the status of environmental permit applications with DHEC’s Environmental Application Tracker: <https://www.scdhec.gov/permits-regulations/permit-central/environmental-application-tracker>
- Stay informed of public comment periods by visiting DHEC’s public notice webpage: [www.scdhec.gov/PublicNotices](http://www.scdhec.gov/PublicNotices)
- Learn about DHEC’s community engagement efforts: [www.scdhec.gov/HomeAndEnvironment/CommunityEngagement/](http://www.scdhec.gov/HomeAndEnvironment/CommunityEngagement/)
- Make plans to attend public meetings and hearings scheduled on DHEC’s calendar: <https://www.scdhec.gov/events>
- Contact your local DHEC Environmental Affairs office: [www.scdhec.gov/HomeAndEnvironment/DHECLocations/](http://www.scdhec.gov/HomeAndEnvironment/DHECLocations/)
- Request copies of DHEC’s files by contacting the Freedom of Information Office: <https://www.scdhec.gov/about-dhec/request-copies-records-foi>

