



## **Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Renewals of Erosion and Sediment (E&S) Control Permits for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Timber Harvesting or Road Maintenance Activities Over 25 Acres**

**September 6, 2013**

***DISCLAIMER: The process and procedures outlined in this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) are intended to supplement existing requirements. Nothing in the SOP shall affect regulatory requirements.***

***The process, procedures and interpretations herein are not adjudication or a regulation. There is no intent on the part of DEP to give the rules in this SOP that weight or deference. This document establishes the framework within which DEP will exercise its administrative discretion in the future. DEP reserves the discretion to deviate from this policy statement if circumstances warrant.***

This SOP describes the procedures and work flows associated with the renewal of Erosion and Sediment (E&S) Control Permit applications for stormwater discharges associated with timber harvesting and road maintenance activities in accordance with the Department's Policy for Implementing the Department of Environmental Protection (Department) Permit Review Process and Permit Decision Guarantee, (Executive Order 2012-11, Document Number 021-2100-001). Permit decisions for new E&S Permit applications will be made within **107 business days** of the date the application is considered to be complete. The 107 business days are the maximum length of time to reach a permit decision. In many cases reviews will be completed in fewer days than the maximum days listed in this SOP. When reviews are completed prior to the 107 business day timeframe or other time frames as established under this SOP, appropriate permit actions should be taken at that time.

### **I. Pre-Application Process**

*There are two types of pre-application meetings, formal and informal. Informal pre-application meetings are for those projects that are in the early planning stages and function as an educational tool for applicants; **these meetings are voluntary**. Formal pre-application meetings are for those projects that are ready to apply for a permit(s) and function as an opportunity to ensure all regulatory requirements are clearly articulated. These meetings may be waived at the discretion of the Department and delegated conservation district.*

#### **IA. Informal Pre-Application Meeting**

1. An applicant for an E&S Permit renewal should contact the Department or delegated conservation district as soon as possible in the conceptual

planning stages of the project and request an informal pre-application meeting. This meeting should include the delegated conservation district and the regional office.

2. If the regional office was contacted by the applicant to schedule an informal pre-application meeting, the regional office will invite the delegated conservation district to attend. If the delegated conservation district was contacted by the applicant to schedule an informal pre-application meeting, the delegated conservation district will invite the regional office to attend.

3. At the informal pre-application meeting, the Department or delegated conservation district staff should identify the type(s) of permits required for the project, an explanation of the permit application process and the interrelationship of the various permits, and provide an explanation of the Permit Review Process and timelines.

4. It is useful, but not mandatory, for the Department or the delegated conservation district staff to remain available to the applicant throughout the development of the project details and technical design to ensure a thorough understanding of the plans by the Department and delegated conservation district staff, assure adherence to applicable regulatory and statutory requirements, and to gain insight into potential regulatory concerns and identify potential solutions.

#### **IB. Formal Pre-Application Meeting**

1. It is recommended that the applicant contact the regional office or delegated conservation district to schedule a formal pre-application meeting. The delegated conservation district or the Department may recommend that a formal pre-application meeting be held. If the formal meeting is held, the meeting attendees may include the applicant, the applicant's consultant, the delegated conservation district, the regional director (if applicable), and representatives of all appropriate Department programs.

2. Department regional office and delegated conservation district staff will follow the Policy for Permit Coordination (Executive Order 2012-11, Document ID 021-2000-301) during the pre-application conference.

3. During the pre-application conference, the Department regional office or delegated conservation district staff should provide an explanation of the number and types of permits required for the project and provide the applicant with the Permit Review Process timeframes.

4. The Department regional office or delegated conservation district staff should complete the pre-application conference checklist (Appendix A in the Policy for Permit Coordination, Document ID 021-2000-301) during the pre-application meeting, and maintain a record of attendance.

5. The applicant's consultant should complete a summary of the meeting which will be Provided to and verified by the conservation district and the Department.

6. The Department regional office will designate a Department application manager for the project.
7. The Department regional director will provide direction to the application manager on the priority of the permit application, as necessary.

## **II. Application Completeness Review**

Note: Please refer to the supplemental SOP for implementing the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) during pre-application meetings and during the review and evaluation of an application for a new E&S Permit for stormwater discharges associated with timber harvesting and road maintenance activities.

The applicant should submit their renewal permit application at least 180 days prior to the date of permit coverage termination. If the applicant is not making any changes to the approved E&S and PCSM plan they do not need to submit the plans and letters with their permit application renewal package. However, if any changes are made to the plans the revised plans must be submitted for review and approval and all required letters must be submitted with the permit application renewal package. When the applicant has submitted a renewal permit application package to either the delegated conservation district or the Department regional office, the conservation district or the Department application manager will conduct the following:

1. If a formal pre-application meeting was not held prior to application package submission, the conservation district and the regional office will meet (this can be done by conference call) within 5 business days of receipt of the application to designate the application manager for the application, determine the priority of the permit application review and establish the permit review process time frame(s), when applicable.
2. Assign the permit application package a renewal permit number.
3. The delegated conservation district and Department staff will process and deposit permit application fees in accordance with the Bureau's PCM that provides clarification on the Department's policy for the Deposit of Fees, Fines, Penalties and Other Revenue (Document OAM-1000-01, November 29, 2012).
4. If the delegated conservation district is processing the permit application, the district will forward the following to the Department Regional Office upon receipt of the application package: A photocopy of the first page of the General Information Form (GIF), a photocopy of the first page of the E&S Permit application and the check for the disturbed acre fee. (if not previously paid by the applicant, see DEP Clarification Memo PCM\_WET\_ESS)12\_001, October 17, 2012.)
5. The delegated conservation district may forward the disturbed acre checks to the regional office as they are received or may bundle them and forward all disturbed acre fee checks at least once a week to the regional office. Conservation districts

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**should not hold** the disturbed acre fee until the application completeness check has been completed.

6. The Department regional office will provide an e-mail confirmation to the delegated conservation district upon receipt of the disturbed acre fee checks.
7. The delegated conservation district will deposit payment of the permit application administrative filling fee for the E&S Permit to the appropriate district Clean Water Fund within 10 business days of the receipt of the application package.  
Delegated conservation districts should not hold the permit application fee until the application completeness review is done.
8. The conservation district or the Department application manager will review the application package within 15 business days of receipt to ensure that it is a complete and technically adequate application package. The completeness checklist submitted with the permit application should be used to complete this review. If the application is complete proceed to Section IIA; if the application is incomplete continue with this section.
9. If the application contains deficiencies that are determined to be minor, the conservation district or the Department application manager will contact the applicant by telephone to explain the deficiency and offer the opportunity to submit the necessary materials informally before the completeness review deadline expires.

A phone log will be kept by each delegated conservation district or Department application manager that details the name of the person contacted, the day and time of the conversation, and notes for all communications regarding the completeness and technical reviews. It is recommended that all logs be retained with the application file.

In the event the delegated conservation district or application manager is unable to contact the applicant by phone or e-mail before the completeness review deadline, the application manager will proceed in accordance with Section IIB.

10. If the applicant submits the requested information and the requested information meets the requirements for a complete application, proceed to Section IIA below.
11. If the applicant originally failed to submit the required application information, or if the submittal contents are not of sufficient soundness, or if the minor deficiencies were not addressed within the completeness review timeframe, proceed in accordance with Section IIB below.

*If application is complete proceed to IIA; if the application is incomplete proceed to IIB.*

**IIA. Application Complete**

1. If the renewal permit application is complete, the delegated conservation district, (or regional office when the conservation district is not delegated), should

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send the completeness notification letter to the permit applicant. The Permit Review Process timeframe of 107 business days will be based upon the date of that letter.

2. The delegated conservation district should submit the following items to the appropriate regional office (if applicable):

Completed entire GIF and E&S Permit application; a copy of the USGS 7.5 minute series quadrangle location map; the weekly permit activity report form; completeness checklist; municipal notification(s) and proof of receipt(s) for county and local government; one copy of the E&S plan; one copy of PCSM/restoration plan; copy of the PHMC Cultural Resources Notice and proof of receipt; and the PNDI search receipt or clearance letter.

The conservation district will retain two copies of the E&S and PCSM/ restoration plans. One copy is a working copy and the other is a clean copy to be used for public review if one is requested.

3. The regional office staff will enter the relevant permit application information into eFACTS using approved procedures and codes.
4. The Department will ensure that a public notice regarding the permit application is submitted to the Pennsylvania Bulletin within 5 business days of the receipt of the weekly permit activity report form.

**IIB. Application Incomplete**

1. In accordance with § 102.6 (c), the delegated conservation district will send the applicant the incompleteness review letter. Only one incompleteness letter will be sent. The applicant has 60 calendar days to provide the necessary information to make the renewal application complete. If the applicant requests in writing to extend the time to respond beyond 60 days, the delegated conservation district or Department application manager will consult with the applicable permitting section chief to either grant or deny the request. The application manager will draft and sign the extension letter. Either action requires the application manager to respond to the applicant's request in writing including a specific due date for the applicant's response and language providing the applicant a notice that failure to address the deficiencies or respond by the due date will result in the application being determined to be incomplete and considered withdrawn.

*If the applicant provides the necessary information to complete the application return to IIA. If the applicant does not submit the necessary information, continue with this section.*

2. If the applicant does not submit the necessary information to make the renewal application complete within the time frame specified including any extensions

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authorized in writing, the renewal permit application will be considered withdrawn. When the delegated conservation district is processing the permit they will notify the Department regional office that the necessary information was not submitted within the established time frames. The program manager will notify the applicant that the renewal permit application is withdrawn by sending the withdrawal of incomplete application letter.

3. If the renewal application is withdrawn, the delegated conservation district or the Department will close the file and take no further actions. The fees associated with the filing of the permit will not be refunded. The Department application manager will enter the appropriate codes into eFACTS.

*After an application is considered withdrawn, the applicant must submit a new renewal application if they wish to proceed with the project.*

*After the renewal application is considered complete, the reviewers should proceed to technical review. In this review, roles may vary for delegated conservation districts based on their level of PCSM delegation (or lack thereof). Where appropriate, actions have been defined as applicable to districts that are PCSM technically delegated, PCSM engineering delegated or not delegated for PCSM.*

### **IIIA. Technical Review – Initial Plan Submittal**

1. Non-PCSM Delegated Conservation District - The delegated conservation district that is not PCSM delegated will conduct a formal technical review of the E & S plan within 47 business days from the date the permit application is considered complete. Appropriate checklists shall be used to guide the technical review. If technical deficiencies exist in the E&S plan, the delegated conservation district will document the technical deficiencies in a letter attached to an e-mail to the Department application manager. This documentation of technical deficiencies will cite the statutory and regulatory obligation(s) that the applicant has failed to meet. The regional office will conduct a simultaneous review of the PCSM/restoration plan. Appropriate checklists shall be used to guide the technical review. Any technical deficiencies, including those identified by the delegated conservation district in the review of the E&S plan, should be documented in a technical deficiency letter to the applicant/owner and consultant which is prepared by the Department application manager, reviewed by the section chief and reviewed and signed by the regional office program manager. This documentation of technical deficiencies will cite the statutory or regulatory requirement(s) that the applicant has failed to meet. The letter will offer the applicant the opportunity to meet with the regional office and the conservation district to discuss the technical deficiencies. The letter will also include the requirement that revised plans should be submitted within 60 calendar days of the date of the technical deficiency letter. If the applicant requests in

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writing to extend the time to respond beyond 60 days, the delegated conservation district will consult with the applicable permitting section chief to either grant or deny the request. Either action requires the application manager to respond to the applicant's request in writing including a specific due date for the applicant's response and language providing the applicant a notice that failure to address the deficiencies or respond by the due date will result in the application being determined to be incomplete and considered withdrawn.

The revised E&S plan will be submitted to the conservation district and the revised PCSM/restoration plan to the regional office. The Department application manager will enter the appropriate codes into eFACTS at the commencement of the technical review.

2. Technical Review PCSM Delegated Conservation District - If the delegated conservation district is PCSM delegated at the technical review level, the review of the PCSM/restoration plan should be completed within 30 business days of the date the permit application package has been considered complete. This review will be simultaneous with the E&S review, which must be completed in 47 business days. Any technical deficiencies that exist in either the E&S or PCSM plans should be documented in a letter attached to an e-mail to the Department application manager. The regional office will complete its PCSM engineering review in 17 business days after the conservation district has completed its PCSM technical review. Any technical deficiencies, including those identified by the delegated conservation district in the review of the E&S and PCSM/restoration plans, should be documented in a technical deficiency letter to the applicant/owner and consultant which is prepared by the Department application manager, reviewed by the section chief and reviewed and signed by the regional office program manager. This documentation of technical deficiencies will cite the statutory or regulatory requirement(s) that the applicant has failed to meet. The letter will offer the applicant the opportunity to meet with the regional office and the conservation district to discuss the technical deficiencies. The letter will also include the requirement that revised plans should be submitted within 60 calendar days of the date of the technical deficiency letter. If the applicant requests in writing to extend the time to respond beyond 60 days, the delegated conservation district will consult with the applicable permitting section chief to either grant or deny the request. Either action requires the application manager to respond to the applicant's request in writing including a specific due date for the applicant's response and language providing the applicant a notice that failure to address the deficiencies or respond by the due date will result in the application being determined to be incomplete and considered withdrawn.

The revised E&S plans and one copy of the revised PCSM/restoration plan should be resubmitted to the conservation district. The other two copies of the revised

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PCSM/restoration plan would go to the regional office. If technical deficiencies exist, the Department application manager will enter the appropriate subtask into eFACTS.

3. Engineering Review PCSM Delegated Conservation District or Department - If the delegated conservation district is PCSM delegated at the engineering review level, or Department when conducting the lead evaluation of the permit application, the technical review of both the E&S plan and the PCSM/restoration plan will be completed within 47 business days of the date the permit application is considered complete. Any technical deficiencies that exist in the E&S and PCSM/restoration plans should be documented by the delegated conservation district or Department in a letter attached to an e-mail to the regional office. This documentation of technical deficiencies will cite the statutory and regulatory obligation(s) that the applicant has failed to meet. The technical deficiencies should be documented in a technical deficiency letter to the applicant/owner and consultant which is prepared by the Department section chief and reviewed and signed by the program manager. This documentation of technical deficiencies will cite the statutory or regulatory requirement(s) that the application has failed to meet. The letter will offer the applicant/owner and consultant the opportunity to meet with the regional office and the conservation district to discuss the technical deficiencies. The letter will also include the requirement that revised plans should be submitted within 60 calendar days of the date of the technical deficiency letter. If the applicant requests in writing to extend the time to respond beyond 60 days, the delegated conservation district will consult with the applicable permitting section chief to either grant or deny the request. Either action requires the application manager to respond to the applicant's request in writing including a specific due date for the applicant's response and language providing the applicant a notice that failure to address the deficiencies or respond by the due date will result in the application being determined to be incomplete and considered withdrawn.

The revised E&S and PCSM/restoration plans should be submitted to the conservation district. If technical deficiencies exist, the Department application manager will enter the appropriate subtask into eFACTS.

*If there are no deficiencies after technical review, the application manager should proceed to make a renewal permit decision (section IV.).*

*If there are technical deficiencies, continue to technical review – plan resubmittal (Section IIIB). If the applicant does not respond within the 60 calendar day timeframe, continue to technical review, no applicant response (Section IIIC).*

*If the applicant upon receiving the technical deficiency letter requests the elevated review process the Department application Manager will move to elevated review process (section IIID.)*



### **IIIB. Technical Review – Plan Resubmittal**

1. The Department application manager will coordinate the review of the revised plans to ensure that any revisions to the PCSM/restoration plan are also properly revised in the E&S plan or otherwise addressed and vice versa (revisions to E&S plan are correspondingly revised in the PCSM/restoration plans, if necessary). If the delegated conservation district is PCSM delegated, the Department section chief will ensure that the delegated conservation district also receives a copy of the revised PCSM/restoration plan. When revised plans are submitted, the Department application manager will enter the dates for the appropriate subtasks into eFACTS.
  
2. Non-PCSM Delegated Conservation District - The delegated conservation district that is not PCSM delegated will conduct a formal technical review of the resubmitted E & S plan within 22 business days from the date of the resubmittal. Appropriate checklists shall be used to guide the technical review. If technical deficiencies remain in the E&S plan, the delegated conservation district will document the technical deficiencies in a letter attached to an e-mail to the Department application manager. This documentation of technical deficiencies will cite the statutory and regulatory requirement(s) that the application has failed to meet. The regional office will conduct a simultaneous review of the PCSM/restoration plan. Appropriate checklists shall be used to guide the technical review. If after the second technical review any technical deficiencies still exist with either the E&S or PCSM plans the section chief and program manager will meet to review the application. After that meeting the Department may decide to (1) withdraw the application, (2) deny the application, or (3) proceed with the elevated review process.
  
2. Technical Review PCSM Delegated Conservation District - If the delegated conservation district is PCSM delegated at the technical review level, the review of the PCSM/restoration plan should be completed within 15 business days of the date of the resubmittal. This review will be simultaneous with the E&S review, which must be completed in 22 business days. Any technical deficiencies that remain in the both the E&S and PCSM/restoration plans should be documented in a letter attached to an e-mail to the Department application manager. The regional office will complete its PCSM engineering review in 7 business days after the conservation district has completed its PCSM/restoration technical review. If after the second technical review any technical deficiencies still exist with either the E&S or PCSM/restoration plans the section chief and program manager will meet to review the application. After that meeting the Department may decide to (1) withdraw the application, (2) deny the application, or (3) proceed with the elevated review process.
  
3. Engineering Review PCSM Delegated Conservation District or Department - If the delegated conservation district is PCSM delegated at the engineering review level,

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the technical review of both the E&S plan and the PCSM/restoration plan will be completed within 22 business days from the date of the resubmittal. Any technical deficiencies that remain in the both the E&S and PCSM/restoration plans should be documented in a letter attached to an e-mail to the Department application manager. If after the second technical review any technical deficiencies still exist with either the E&S or PCSM/restoration plans the section chief and program manager will meet to review the application. After that meeting the Department may decide to (1) withdraw the application, (2) deny the application, or (3) proceed with the elevated review process.

*If the resubmitted plan is found to be technically adequate proceed to Technical Decision by the Conservation District (section IV).*

*If the resubmitted plan, is an incomplete submission, the application should be considered withdrawn; proceed to section IIIC and follow steps 2 and 3.*

*If the resubmitted plan contains technical deficiencies for any reason, and the application should be considered for renewal permit denial; proceed to section VI.*

*If the resubmitted plan contains technical deficiencies for any reason, the application should go to the elevated review process; proceed to section IIID.*

**IIIC. Technical Review – No Applicant Response**

1. If the applicant does not submit the necessary information to make the renewal application complete within the 60 calendar day timeframe, the permit application will be considered incomplete and will be withdrawn.
2. The delegated conservation district will notify the Department section chief that the necessary information was not submitted within the established time frames. The Department section chief will prepare the withdrawal of technically deficient letter to notify the applicant/owner and consultant that the renewal permit application is withdrawn. This letter will be reviewed and signed by the program manager.
3. If the renewal application is withdrawn, the conservation district and the Department application manager will close the file and take no further actions. The fees associated with the filing of the permit will not be refunded. The Department application manager will enter the appropriate codes into eFACTS.

**IIID. Elevated Review Process**

When an applicant makes a request for an elevated review, or for applications that continue to be technically deficient, and for which the technical deficiencies have not been resolved satisfactorily within the established response timeframe, including any approved extension,

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will be subject to the elevated review process.

1. The delegated conservation district or the Department application manager will notify the program manager at the regional office. The Program Manager will notify the Regional Director of the elevated review, and arrange a time to discuss the details of the application and the noted deficiencies. The Program Manager and the Regional Director may contact the Bureau Director and/or the Deputy Secretary for advice or assistance. In addition, complex projects involving multiple permit applications with multiple deficiencies may require a face-to-face meeting of all staff involved, including the application manager and the appropriate delegated conservation district staff.
2. Staff will agree on a direction for final review of the renewal permit application(s), which may include making a permit decision; having a face-to-face meeting with the applicant and the consultant(s); or having a telephone call with the applicant and the consultant(s) to discuss the remaining technical deficiencies. Department staff will prepare a written summary of the meeting or phone call documenting decisions agreed to at the meeting or during the phone call.
3. If the meeting results in an agreement to resolve the outstanding issues, the regional office will inform the applicant that all remaining technical deficiencies must be corrected and revised plans submitted within 10 business days of the date of the meeting. The Regional Director may provide the applicant with an additional 10 business days to respond. If resolution cannot be reached, the deficiencies must be elevated to the Bureau Director for review. The Bureau Director will provide direction on the permit decision which may be advancing with denial of the permit application.
4. The Department application manager, in coordination with any additional staff, including appropriate conservation district staff, will conduct the necessary technical review of the resubmitted plans. The review will be completed within 5 business days of the date the revised plans were resubmitted. At the conclusion of this review, the renewal permit decision will be made by the Department.
5. If the applicant does not submit revised plans during the elevated review process, the Department will make a renewal permit decision based upon the permit application information available.

*If the decision is made to approve the renewal permit, go to section V.*

*If the decision is made to deny the renewal permit, go to section VI.*

#### **IV. Technical Recommendation by the Conservation District**

1. Non-PCSM Delegated Conservation District or Technical Review PCSM Delegated Conservation District - If the E&S/PCSM plan is found to be technically adequate, the delegated conservation district will forward the following documents

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and information to the Department application manager:

Completed recommendation for permit action letter, completed E&S technical plan review checklist, two sets of the approved stamped E & S plans and narratives (one set will be sent to the applicant by the regional office; the region will retain one set). The district will retain the third set of plans.

2. Engineering Review PCSM Delegated Conservation District or Department - If the conservation district is PCSM delegated at the engineering review level and the PCSM/restoration plan is found to be technically adequate, the conservation district will forward the following documents and information to the regional office:

Completed recommendation for permit action letter, completed E&S technical plan review checklist, two sets of approved and stamped E&S plans, completed PCSM/restoration plan, engineering review checklist, two sets of the approved stamped PCSM/restoration plans and narratives (one set will be sent to the applicant by the regional office; the region will retain one set). The district will retain the third set of plans.

3. Once in receipt of these items from the delegated conservation district, the Department section chief and program manager will review the renewal permit application and make a decision to either approve the permit or deny the permit.

*If the decision is made to approve the renewal permit they should move to section V.*

*If they will be denying the renewal permit they should move to section VI.*

## **V. Renewal Permit Approval**

1. The program manager will prepare the pertinent permit documents including any special conditions; sign the permit; prepare the permit issuance cover letter; and distribute the permit and copies of plans as follows:

To permit applicant (if there is more than one permittee, a copy of each of the following must be sent to each permittee):

Copy of the permit cover letter, copy of permit cover sheet, copy of permit and any special permit conditions, one set of stamped and approved E&S plans, one set of stamped and approved PCSM/restoration plans, copy of the Visual Site Inspection Report form, copy of the Permittee/Co-Permittee form, copy of the Notice of Termination

To the delegated conservation district:

Copy of the permit cover letter, copy of permit cover sheet, copy of permit and any special permit conditions, one set of stamped approved PCSM/restoration plans

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To the plan preparer:

Copy of permit cover letter, copy of permit cover sheet

To the municipality:

Copy of permit cover letter, copy of permit cover sheet

To Central Office:

Copy of the E&S Permit application (may be submitted electronically)

2. As soon as the renewal permit is approved, the Department application manager will assure that the appropriate permit approval information is sent to the Pennsylvania Bulletin for public notice of permit approval.
3. The Department application manager will enter the disposition status and date for the permit authorization into eFACTS.

## **VI. Permit Denial**

Renewal permit applications will be denied if there are continuing technical deficiencies and for which a demonstration cannot be made that all applicable regulatory and statutory requirements have been met. The following process should be followed for permit denials:

1. After consultation with the delegated conservation district the DEP regional Office will send the permit applicant a permit application denial letter which is reviewed by the section chief and signed by the regional office water program manager noting that the renewal permit is denied. All permit fees submitted with the applications that are denied will be forfeited.
2. The Department application manager will enter the appropriate codes into eFACTS.
3. If the applicant of a denied renewal permit application wishes to continue to pursue approval of the project, the applicant must submit a revised renewal permit application following appropriate program requirements and procedures and will be considered a new application.

## **VII. Recordkeeping**

The delegated conservation district will submit the monthly permit tracking form to the DEP central office at the end of every month. These forms may be mailed in or submitted electronically at the same address used for the NOI/application submittals.