

Responses to EPAC Survey Questions Regarding EPD

Is EPD effective and efficient?

The limited EPD staff cover the entire County which is extremely large. My experience with staff reviews is that they are prompt to conduct development reviews as well as respond to public questions or requests for site visits to discuss an environmental issue. EPD in no way hinders development or limitations to agricultural operations. Development must be reviewed by the County as it is in our best interest make sure a project does not jeopardize water quality or quality of life for adjacent residents. I think simply looking at the beauty of our County speaks for itself in supporting the fact that EPD is effective.

Do any of its services duplicate services provided by other agencies?

While EPD does regulate such things as wetlands which are also regulated by the SJRWMD and USACE, EPD provides an invaluable service of reviewing proposed projects in the context of the County's unique natural resources and how a project may affect them in the short term and long term (wildlife corridors). More importantly, these rules/regulations were APPROVED by the people of this County and the Commissioners that they appointed.

Does EPD act appropriately in carrying out Commission policies in the enforcement of environmental and land development regulations and in other areas?

Based on my conversations with applicants and members of the community EPD appropriately enforces existing regulations. Additionally, they are the eyes and ears of our County responsible for ensuring that our natural resources are not impacted from illegal or unpermitted activities. Many people think that the public residents and the private sector will do the right thing and don't need environmental regulatory oversight, it only hampers development or infringes on private landowner rights. Well, as we have learned from so many cases, the public and private sector do not always do the right thing and often only take 'cost' into account when they conduct an illegal or unpermitted activity that could negatively affect our water and natural resources. For example, illegal dumping, unpermitted clearing or filling, can easily lead to groundwater contamination or flooding to downstream residents if these activities are not overseen by EPD. Thus, EPD's enforcement section is critical to protecting our natural resources and enforcing existing regulations APPROVED by County residents.

Should EPD's roles be changing given diminished budgets in other agencies (e.g. water management districts)?

In this economy as the WMD's budgets are being gutted, there is less oversight and support from these agencies. Thus, it is actually more important for EPD to continue its important mission of protecting this County's water and land resources. The EPD budget is approximately 1% of the County budget and thus, disbanding this department would provide little to no decrease in taxes to the average tax payer.

What should EPD's future priorities be?

Water supply and more oversight on the agricultural community should be EPD's future priorities. While locally produced agriculture is a very important commodity for our community, it cannot come at the detriment to our water quality and quantity. Additionally, more emphasis on infilling should be emphasized rather than new sprawling subdivisions.