



July 2009

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Donna Kemp Spangler, Editor

DEQ's New Webmaster at Home with Scientists

To understand the evolution of Frank Stehno as the Department of Environmental Quality's new webmaster is to dig into his past. A college-educated paleontologist, anthropologist, and geologist, Stehno left academia for poetry, then poetry for geology, eventually geology for technical writing.



"At this point in my life, I'll be 59 in August. As a webmaster it encompasses the different things I've done over the years," he said, which includes the last 11 ½ years as a technical writer for the Department of Technical Services (DTS).

Born and raised in Omaha, Neb., Stehno attended the University of Nebraska-Omaha to become a scientist. In 1979, he moved to Arizona to study poetry. An odd transition, perhaps, but the way Stehno puts it, "I always loved creative writing."

Even with the success of 80 poems published in literary magazines, it was his geology background that landed him a good paying job during the 1980 gold rush.

"I needed a job so I worked in exploration geology for five years," he said.

In 1991 the mining company turned to Stehno to write a massive feasibility report on a \$130 million project to place a tunnel boring machine in the mine.

"This is a big massive 150-foot long, 12-foot high rotator that grinds away at the rock like a big worm," Stehno describes.

He discovered he had a knack for technical writing and desktop publishing. “I trained myself, took some classes at community colleges, but mostly I had an aptitude for this from the start.”

When his wife, Anne, was transferred to Salt Lake City, Stehno took a job as a technical writer for a trucking company, designing brochures and writing promotional materials.

Then in 1997 he went to work for DTS as a technical writer, working at the state Capitol or telecommuting from his home in Sandy. His wife, Anne, works for the Department of Administrative Service’s Division of Fleet Operations. And, he has a 32-year-old son who works as a computer programmer in Dallas, Texas.

Stehno began his job as webmaster at DEQ in May, replacing Brandon Smart who moved his family to Kauai.

Stehno feels at home here.

“In this job, it brings together the graphic design, the desk-top publishing, the writing and the interest in the sciences.”

Stehno isn’t done learning. When he’s not working, he can be found photographing rock art in Utah’s backcountry. “I guess I’m kinda like an amateur archaeologist.”

And he still writes. He has written three novels, dozens of short stories and personal essays, and recently a short story published in the Rockhurst Review.

Gov Picks Utah Native to Run DEQ

On May 19, Governor Jon Huntsman appointed Amanda Smith as the executive director of the Utah Department of Environmental Quality where she serves as the “acting” executive director until her Senate confirmation hearing in August.

Smith replaces Bill Sinclair, who has been the acting executive director since Rick Sprott retired from the position in December. Sinclair has resumed his deputy director position.

“I am excited to be here at the Department of Environmental Quality,” Smith said. “Having worked with DEQ over the past many years, I can say that it is a very well run organization with top notch people who are dedicated to their work and to the state of Utah. I am lucky to have the opportunity to work with and learn from all of you.”



A Utah native, Smith attended the University of Utah before receiving a law degree from Gonzaga University School of Law. She practiced law for a short time before becoming Executive Director of the Homeless Children’s Foundation, an organization that provides care for homeless pre-school age children and training for homeless parents.

For 11 years Smith served as the government relations director for The Nature Conservancy, where she worked with federal agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service and the Environmental Protection Agency on conservation planning and private land conservation strategies. Additionally, she worked closely with the state Legislature and the Utah Congressional delegation on federal and state legislation.

Over the past two years, she served as the Legislative Affairs Director for Governor Huntsman.

Her appointment has been met with much praise.

"I am delighted and confident she will continue to improve our legacy of cleaner air, land and water," said Sinclair.

On a personal note, Smith is married to Evan Dillon and has two children, Miles, 12 and Madeline, 4. She and her family enjoy outdoor activities.

Immigration Law will Impact Many DEQ Divisions

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Utah's new immigration law, SB81, takes effect July 1, amid questions and concerns that it will impact many state agencies, including the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

"This bill has been fairly controversial," said Fred Nelson of the Utah Attorney General's Office, addressing the issue during a quarterly DEQ Web cast on June 29. "There may be a lawsuit filed as soon as this week that could result in a stay. But we are acting under the assumption that DEQ needs to go-ahead and implement the process."

SB81 requires individuals at least 18 years of age who apply for a "public benefit" to verify lawful presence in the United States. That means an additional layer of paperwork is required for individuals who are applying for certifications, permits or registrations from DEQ and individual grants or loans. (The form is available on the DEQ innerweb at:

http://eqinnerweb.eq.ex.state.ut.us/docs/062909_Citizenship_Certification_DEQ.pdf)

"The law applies only to individuals, not businesses or other non-profit corporations," Nelson noted.

In a review of the law, Nelson identified the following areas within DEQ that would be affected:

- Certifications: drinking water backflow operators and systems; wastewater treatment system operators and underground wastewater disposal system operators; underground storage tank persons and illegal drug cleanup persons; x-ray facilities qualified experts and mammography imaging medical physicists and asbestos and lead paint persons.
- Any permits or registrations from DEQ.
- Grants or loans that are given to individuals, not businesses, which could be for upgrades, replacements and closing underground storage tanks; non-point source water quality projects; and drinking water projects using federal funds.

The law also impacts contracts. Beginning July 1, DEQ may not enter into a contract for procurement of goods or services that is awarded through a request for proposals process and includes a sole source contract unless the contractor participates in a verification system for work eligibility status for new employees.

“If DEQ does a contract through State Purchasing, that agency will handle the citizenship contractor verification requirements,” Nelson said.

For modifications to existing permits, the individual would need to fill out a certification form before the permit can be issued. However, if an individual is renewing a license and already has provided the documentation, the applicant does not need to fill out another one as there is an existing one on file.

Any licenses or certifications made prior to July 1 would not be impacted. The law applies only to new applications filed after the July 1 deadline.

“It’s going to be a developing process,” Nelson said. “I suspect there will be a lot of refinements to the process, such as developing an application on-line.”

For questions, contact Fred Nelson at fnelson@utah.gov or (801) 366-0290.

Majority of DEQ Employees Like Four-day Workweeks

Sixty-eight percent of Department of Environmental (DEQ) employees polled would like to keep the four-day workweek set to reach its one-year anniversary mark in August.

An employee leadership group presented a survey to DEQ directors on June 22 that showed the majority of DEQ employees appear to be adjusting to the workweek schedule of 10-hour days, four days a week, Governor Jon Huntsman piloted a year ago. The “Working 4 Utah” initiative is under review by the Governor’s Office to evaluate improved efficiencies, energy savings, and air quality improvements by having most state buildings closed on Fridays.

In summary, the study concluded an average 20 percent reduction in energy consumption by having two of the DEQ buildings closed on Fridays, a reduction in the tons of pollutants being released into the atmosphere due to fewer commuting miles. At the same time, surveys showed customer service is being maintained and the majority of employees – 68 percent – support it.

“We wanted to assess the impacts of the “Working 4 Utah” initiative with respect to the environment and energy and how it affects DEQ customers and employees,” said Matt Sullivan, scientist with the Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste. Under the leadership of Radiation Control Director Dane Finerfrock, Sullivan and other representatives from each Division analyzed data between August 2008 and February 2009, and surveyed employees, customers and managers, to come up with its findings and recommendations.

But not everyone is happy with the four-day workweek schedule.

The Divisions of Air Quality and Water Quality were among the DEQ employees most dissatisfied with the workweek schedule, citing various reasons including increased stress at work and home because of having to care for a young family and limited flexibility when it comes to taking time off.

“We need to address the negatives,” said John Mackey, Water Quality engineer. The group, for instance, surveyed nearly 4,000 people through DEQ ListServes to gauge how the four day workweek affected customers. Of the 16 percent who responded, 85 percent felt customer service remains good and DEQ is able to fulfill its mission of protecting the environment.

“In specific comments, some customers indicated it was great to be able to reach DEQ staff after 5 p.m. but we also heard that it’s frustrating not reaching anyone on Fridays,” Mackey said.

The leadership group recommended DEQ continue to find ways to reduce energy use, maintain customer service and increase employee flexibility.

The DEQ survey was consistent with the Department of Human Resources Management’s survey recently presented to the state Legislature.

“This is superb,” said Human Resources Director Conroy Whipple. “It’s very consistent with the results we received.”

The Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget will present additional findings to lawmakers in October. Meanwhile, Lt. Gov. Gary Herbert, who is set to take over when Gov. Huntsman is confirmed as ambassador to China, will also look into the “Working 4 Utah” initiatives’ effectiveness.

For more information on the survey, contact any of the following members on the Leadership Development Team:

- Dave Allison, Division of Environmental Response and Remediation
- Tim Andrus, Division of Air Quality
- Mario Bettolo, Division of Radiation Control
- Joseph Katz, Division of Environmental Response and Remediation
- John Mackey, Division of Water Quality
- Rich Peterson, Division of Drinking Water
- Matt Sullivan, Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste

Rio Tinto CEO Says Environment at Heart of Biz

Andrew Harding, president and CEO of Kennecott Utah Copper, said being good stewards of the environment, and doing so in a transparent way, is part of the copper company’s way of doing business when it mines for metals.

“When you have been in the mining business for a long time and decide not to be transparent, at some point you will be found out,” Harding said in May when he spoke to Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) employees as part of a DEQ speakers’ forum.

That hasn’t always been the case with Kennecott, Harding admitted.

Kennecott should have been more forthright with the community in sharing details of the possibility that portions of a huge mine-tailings pond could be compromised in a major earthquake, Harding said.

“But Kennecott at the time chose not to tell the town of Magna, which caused a lot of problems,” he said.

The stability of the tailings ponds in an earthquake was the subject of a Salt Lake Tribune special report last year that Harding addressed in his speech to DEQ.

Overall, Kennecott’s philosophy is to balance society’s need for metals with an environmentally responsible approach to mining, Harding said.

“We try to balance making money with the impact on the environment and community,” he said.

Kennecott, a member of London-based Rio Tinto’s worldwide mining group, owns much of the active and former mining properties around the Oquirrh Mountains, including the world famous Bingham Canyon Mine, a major contributor to Utah’s economy since 1863.

“Kennecott is committed to successful mining operations while protecting and caring for the environment and preventing environmental problems for future generations,” Harding said.

The company has been praised for its consent agreement between Kennecott, DEQ and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In 1995, Kennecott agreed to accelerate cleanup efforts on portions of its property that EPA proposed on the Superfund National Priorities List. In September 2008, EPA formally removed a south end portion from its Superfund list, satisfied with the company’s \$400 million 14-year-long cleanup work.

At the time, Kennecott’s proposal was groundbreaking, according to managers with the Division of Environmental Response and Remediation (DERR) who worked with Kennecott on the cleanup. It is unusual for a company to approach EPA with a proposal to avert a Superfund listing by cooperatively working out a cleanup agreement, DERR project managers said.

The company also has an agreement with EPA, DEQ and the Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District to clean up contaminated groundwater. Under the agreement, Kennecott is treating enough sulfate-contaminated groundwater to provide drinking water to 3,500 homes for the next 40 years. This agreement fulfills a 1995 settlement with the state of Utah regarding a Natural Resources Damages claim that was formalized last year the efforts Kennecott has been doing for over 10 years.

Kennecott, a Clean Utah member, is always looking at ways to improve efficiency and the environment, Harding explained.

For instance, the company recently implemented an “idle management” project that fitted small electronic devices in 200 fleet vehicles. The 6 to 8 month trial period resulted in a reduction of 15,000 pounds of smog-forming nitrogen oxides and 435 tons of carbon dioxide, the primary ingredient in greenhouse gas emissions – enough to keep 94 vehicles off the road each year.

“We have joined the Climate Registry and are involved in the US Climate Action partnership because we think climate change is a reality,” Harding said.

The idle management project has been expanded to include its entire fleet, Harding added.

The project drew strong kudos from Air Quality Director Cheryl Heying.

“This is the kind of data that shows these types of programs succeed,” she said. “This is very impressive.”