

Environmental Committee Report for October 2007

By Bob Borneman, Chair

The Environmental Committee has been busy behind the scenes working with the legislature and TDEC to review proposed revisions to the drip irrigation and decentralized wastewater treatment rules and to get the feel and offer suggestions to the House Conservation Committee during their committee meeting in Nashville this fall.

Saya Qualls (TDEC) requested that the ACEC Environmental Committee meet to hear the proposed modifications to the existing decentralized treatment and irrigation disposal rules that they had developed. By presenting to the ACEC committee, TDEC could receive direct feedback from the engineers and persons that would deal with the proposed changes first. Some limited but well thought out comments were developed and submitted for consideration. This forum is being encouraged by ACEC to allow our membership to have a more direct input into new and proposed modifications to the State's environmental rules. ACEC members are typically the ones who have to interpret and apply the rules. Therefore involvement of our members can offer early and rapid response as to potential issues that will develop as a result of changes. This can give TDEC valuable information from a statewide perspective that may not otherwise be available. We hope this is the start of a continuing program by TDEC.

The State House Conservation and Environment Committee met in a rare mid-session meeting to receive public comment on several proposed bills that will be on the committee's agenda for consideration in the next session. The list of proposed bills that impact the environment seems to grow each year. ACEC was prepared to be a resource to the Committee and other to offer comment if requested. The fact that ACEC was represented at the meeting was noted and welcomed by several of the Committee members. We were engaged in conversation during breaks and following the two-day meeting to expand our interaction with elected officials. There were no votes or even straw polls taken, but the questions and dialog of the majority of the Committee members were pro environment, but not at the expense of our state agriculture and business development activities. Following several impassioned presentations by groups pointing to specific environmental issues of concern the Committee's dialog was generally that TDEC needed to resolve the majority of the issues with enforcement of existing rules and regulations and not new legislative actions.

Several notifications of public hearings have been issued lately by TDEC, mostly addressing local issues. If any one would like copies of the notifications, please let the Environmental Committee know, so we can forward to you.