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ADEQ Director Darwin Testifies at Congressional Hearing About Modernizing Environmental Regulation, Protection

PHOENIX (July 24, 2014) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Director Henry Darwin highlighted the agency’s “tremendous strides” the last two years in improving productivity and efficiency for customers and stakeholders during a House subcommittee hearing in Washington, D.C.

“We have looked to the private sector for lessons about how to improve our processes and use technology to speed customer transactions,” Darwin said.

The Wednesday hearing, held by the Committee on Energy and Commerce’s Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy, was entitled “Modernizing the Business of Environmental Regulation and Protection.”

ADEQ has been in the vanguard nationally of such change among state environmental regulatory agencies. In addition to Darwin, the commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, David Cash, and the director of the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, Teresa Marks, also testified at the hearing.

“What business knows, and what government agencies are starting to learn, is that to be successful, organizations must both streamline processes to improve capacity for value added activity and integrate information technology solutions to accelerate delivery of products and services,” Darwin said. “But these steps must occur in the proper order. First, Lean your systems then integrate e-solutions. Reverse this order and agencies may well lock in existing burdensome bureaucracy.”

Darwin provided the House subcommittee with a narrative of process improvements at ADEQ which have resulted in a 60 percent reduction in the timeline for issuing the most complex permits, a 50 percent reduction in time for returning facilities to compliance, a 70 percent reduction in time to retrieve public records, and doubling the number of state-led underground storage tank cleanups.

Darwin also noted that ADEQ worked with elected leaders to remove the agency from the state’s general fund to a fee-for-service model. A total of 85 percent of ADEQ’s \$133 million budget now comes from fees and other revenue from the regulated community and, “the shakeup actually gave ADEQ both the freedom and imperative to begin making changes that our customers demanded,” Darwin said.

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