California EPA’s Permit Streamlining Act Explained

A consolidated permitting process exists at CalEPA that allows a permit applicant to request one agency to coordinate all of their state environmental permits, including permits issued by regional water boards and air pollution control districts. (Public Resources Code, § 71020 et seq.) A consolidated permit process helps facilitate permitting decisions by providing a single point of contact for multiple permits, identifying needed permits and information earlier in the permitting process, and reducing the need to provide duplicate information to different agencies. However, the consolidated permitting process does not authorize CalEPA to require local permitting authorities to participate in this process.

Applicants interested in utilizing the consolidated permitting process can request a pre-meeting to discuss the proposed project and applicable permits. If the applicant decides to use the consolidated permitting process, the applicant can request that CalEPA designate a consolidated permit agency to administer the processing and issuance of a consolidated permit. The Secretary of CalEPA reviews the information and must designate a consolidated permit agency within 30 days of receiving a complete request.

Within five days, the consolidated permit agency must notify the applicant of the designation and schedule a meeting to occur within 15 days of the designation for representatives of all participating permitting agencies to meet with the applicant. The consolidated permit agency gives each participating agency and the applicant the information needed to complete each permit, and the parties agree to a plan, including timelines for each participating agency to process the permit. Agencies establish timelines for determining the completeness of the application, reviewing the applications, processing each permit, and for consolidating the issued permits.

Following the meeting, applications are submitted to the permitting agencies, and each agency has 30 days to determine if the application is complete. The agreed upon plan guides the participating agencies’ processing of the application and review of information. The agencies can request additional information to clarify or supplement the information the applicant originally provided within 30 days of receiving the application. The consolidated permit agency is responsible for ensuring participating agencies perform the work needed to process the permits within the agreed-upon timelines. The consolidated permit agency must compile permits and provide them to the applicant within 30 days after the last participating agency issues its permit.