



PRESS RELEASE

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TCWN releases report on TDEC's enforcement program

Knoxville, TN

Today the Tennessee Clean Water Network (TCWN) releases the first in a series of reports on the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation's (TDEC) water protection programs. The first report focuses on TDEC's enforcement program. Using data from 2008 enforcement actions found on TDEC's website, TCWN found the following.

Of all enforcement actions for violations of water quality:

- 73% were taken against pollution activities associated with development
- 62% of enforcement actions were taken for minor permit violations not associated with a pollution event.
- Only 2% of enforcement actions were against the farming community but not for farming activities. They were for development activities on farm land and an industrial farm operating without a permit.
- 65% of fines were under \$2,000.
- Most enforcement actions occur in or around TDEC field offices.

"We think that it is important for the public to understand how water protection works in the state, or rather, how it doesn't work," says Renée Victoria Hoyos, Executive Director of the Tennessee Clean Water Network. "The public has an expectation that the state is doing its job to protect the quality of our drinking water as well as protecting our beautiful rivers and streams. This report shows that TDEC is not protecting this resource very well."

The 20-page report dispels the myths created by lobbyists for polluting industries at the State Legislature that have some legislators convinced that TDEC over enforces to the point of curbing economic development.

The results of this report, using TDEC's data, show that fines and penalties are not enough to deter future bad behavior. There is no pattern to enforcement. TDEC is not targeting the farming community or the mining community nor does TDEC have a plan for eliminating the two major pollutants in Tennessee: mud and *e.coli*.

Empowering Tennesseans to claim their right to clean water and healthy communities by fostering civic engagement, building coalitions and advancing water policy for a sustainable future.

“With the average fine of \$2,000, we do not believe economic development is being curbed or that polluters think twice before polluting. We think this amount is rolled into the cost of doing business and that our drinking water resources are being degraded.” Says Ms. Hoyos. “Enforcement with stiff fines and penalties is the single most powerful tool at TDEC’s disposal to control pollution. Sadly, when TDEC does not step in, Tennesseans pay to clean up the mess many times over through taxes, repairing damage to their private property, increased drinking water and sewage rates, increased flood insurance, and legal fees if it comes to a lawsuit.”

To read the report and learn more about the Tennessee Clean Water Network, go to <http://www.tcwn.org/node/120>

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