

Natural State Environmental Program: Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality Announces Voluntary Stewardship Program



Walter Wright, Jr.
wwright@mwlaw.com
(501) 688.8839

07/02/2019

The Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (“ADEQ”) announced in a July 1st news release the establishment of the Natural State Environmental Program (“NStEP”).

ADEQ describes the program as a “. . . voluntary environmental stewardship program that recognizes and rewards organizations for their commitment to environmental leadership.”

NStEP was created by Arkansas Act 850 from the recently concluded Arkansas General Assembly.

The program provides incentives for organizations that undertake one to three environmental improvement projects. Organizations with a minimum of twenty full-time employees are eligible to participate. Examples of organizations that are eligible include manufacturers, institutions of higher education, municipalities, government agencies, and non-profits.

NStEP has four membership levels:

- Bronze
- Silver
- Gold
- Platinum

If a member organization commits to complete one to three environmental projects (depending on the membership level), ADEQ provides recognition and certain incentives. The recognition is described as the use of the NStEP logo on the website and documents, etc. Regulatory incentives are described as including:

. . . a dedicated ombudsman at ADEQ for regulatory questions, inspection notice for non-complaint-based inspections, given priority for permit modifications to the extent possible under statutory limitations, reduced inspection frequency for routine, non-complaint-based inspections for programs without a frequency specified in statute rule, and inclusion in a meeting with ADEQ executive leadership to discuss agency priorities and initiatives.

Membership criteria and an application, along with additional information, can be found in the press release link found [here](#).