

1997 FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESULTS

All DEP employees were mailed questionnaires by PEER. The questions themselves were designed by DEP employees based upon their experiences.

More than a third (35 percent) of the 3460 employees who received surveys responded. Responses are reported in three categories: all employees, managers and supervisors, and employees from compliance, enforcement, regulatory and permitting units (the core employees of the former Department of Environmental Regulation or DER).

1. "The 1993 merger of two environmental regulatory agencies (DER & DNR) has resulted in greater protections for the environment."

50 percent of employees disagreed with this statement and only 27 percent agreed. 23 percent had no opinion. 52 percent of managers and supervisors disagreed and 31 percent agreed. 54 percent of environmental enforcement and regulatory employees disagreed while only 22 percent agreed.

2. "DEP rigorously enforces compliance with environmental laws and regulations."

44 percent of all employees disagreed with this statement and 37 percent agreed with the balance expressing no opinion. 44 percent of managers and supervisors also disagreed with the statement while 40 percent agreed. 54 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees disagreed with the statement and 39 percent agreed.

3. "'Ecosystem management,' as practiced by the Department, has proven to be an effective tool in helping DEP protect the environment."

42 percent of employees disagreed, 27 percent expressed no opinion and only 31 percent agreed. 46 percent of managers/supervisors disagreed and only 32 percent agreed. 51 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees disagreed and only 21 percent agreed.

4. "DEP management considers the primary 'customers' of the agency to be the regulated community, not environmental resources or the general public."

44 percent of all employees as well as managers agreed with this statement. 32 percent of all employees and 37 percent of managers disagreed. 54 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees agreed with the statement while 31 percent disagreed.

5. "The primary customers of DEP should be environmental resources and the public, not the regulated community."

76 percent of all employees as well as enforcement and regulatory employees agreed with this statement. Only 10 percent of employees and 14 percent of enforcers and regulators disagreed. 75 percent of managers agreed and 13 percent disagreed.

6. "The regulated community excessively influences permitting, policy and enforcement decisions at DEP."

47 percent of employees agreed and only 26 percent disagreed. 49 percent of managers agreed and 31 percent disagreed. 52 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees agreed while 33 percent disagreed.

7. "DEP management will often pressure or order subordinates to adopt a permitting or policy position proposed by a representative of the regulated community."

27 percent of all employees as well as all managers agreed with this statement while 31 percent of employees and 40 percent of managers disagreed. 33 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees agreed and 42 percent disagreed.

8. "Do you know any instance where a member of the regulated community has been allowed to choose which DEP employee will or will not work on their applications, cases or files?"

16 percent of managers and 13 percent of all employees said yes. 82 percent of managers and 85 percent of employees said no. 21 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees and 28 percent of their managers said yes while 78 percent of these employees and 70 percent of their managers said no.

9. "DEP generally pursues small violators more aggressively than major corporate polluters."

33 percent of all employees agreed with this statement; 37 percent expressed no opinion while 30 percent disagreed. 34 percent of managers agreed and 36 percent disagreed. 39 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees agreed and 40 percent disagreed.

10. "The recent layoff of environmental enforcement attorneys has hampered the Department's ability to carry out its mission."

41 percent of all employees agreed and only 16 percent disagreed. 44 percent of managers agreed and 19 percent disagreed. 51 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees agreed and 20 percent disagreed.

11. "In the last three years, have you ever been directed to ignore an environmental rule or regulation."

34 percent of managers and supervisors and 29 percent of all employees reported that they have received illegal orders. 36 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees reported that they have received such orders as did 38 percent of their managers.

12. "Do you know of any instance where DEP management has reassigned or changed the job responsibility of a person for doing their job 'too well' on a controversial project?"

34 percent of managers and 29 percent of employees knew of such instances. 36 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees and 38 percent of their managers also reported such cases.

13. "Do you fear retaliation for advocating aggressive enforcement of environmental rules and regulations?"

28 percent of all employees and 29 percent of managers and supervisors said they fear retaliation. 32 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees and 34 percent of their managers also reported fear of retaliation.

14. "Do you know of any instance where DEP management has circumvented, or attempted to circumvent, public notice provisions for political reasons?"

Only 11 percent of employees and managers and only 12 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees knew of such instances.

15. "Do you know of any instance where the Department has reinterpreted scientific findings in order to support a particular project at the expense of the environment."

18 percent of all employees and 21 percent of managers and regulatory employees knew of such instances.

16. "Hiring and promotion within DEP is based on professional merit, not political patronage."

48 percent of all employees and 41 percent of managers disagreed with this statement. 21 percent of both categories expressed no opinion. 46 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees disagreed with the statement while 34 percent agreed.

17. "DEP's 'total quality leadership' program has improved the quality of leadership in the Department."

61 percent of all employees disagreed and another 25 percent expressed no opinion. Only 14 percent agreed. 60 percent of managers disagreed and only 17 percent agreed. 68 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees disagreed and only 12 percent agreed.

18. "Virginia Wetherell should be removed as DEP Secretary."

37 percent of all employees expressed no opinion; 33 percent said Ms. Wetherell should be removed while only 30 percent said she should be retained. 38 percent of managers said Ms. Wetherell should be removed and 34 percent said she should stay. 42 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees and 44 percent of their managers said Ms. Wetherell should be removed while only 27 percent of these employees and 32 percent of their managers said she should stay.

19. "Upper management in the Secretary's Office is doing a good job in helping the Department carry out its mission."

52 percent of managers and 47 percent of all employees disagreed with this statement while only 21 percent of managers and 26 percent of employees agreed. 56 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees and 60 percent of their managers disagreed with the statement and only 18 percent of the employees and 22 percent of the managers agreed.

20. "Morale within DEP is good."

66 percent of all employees and 63 percent of managers said morale was not good. Only 23 percent of employees and 26 percent of managers said it was good. 71 percent of enforcement and regulatory staff said morale was not good. Only 19 percent said it was good.

21. "DEP-sponsored workshops, like public service training ('Charm School') and ecosystem management training, are a worthwhile expenditure of DEP resources."

54 percent of all employees and 50 percent of managers said no. Only 33 percent of employees and 38 percent of managers said it was worthwhile.

65 percent of enforcement and regulatory employees said it was not worthwhile and only 26 percent said it was.

22. The survey also asked employees to compose an answer to the following question: "In your opinion, what is the biggest problem facing DEP?"

The most frequent answers given by employees was political influence on DEP decisionmaking, followed by lack of enforcement, fear of intimidation, questionable departmental leadership, poor morale, lack of funding and the merger creating DEP from two disparate agencies, DER & DNR.