



2025

# Nebraska Small Business Compliance Advisory Panel

## Annual Report

Submitted to Governor Jim Pillen  
December 18, 2025

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## Message from the Small Business Compliance Advisory Panel

The Small Business Compliance Advisory Panel (SBCAP) has worked closely with the Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment (DWEE) for over 30 years to support small businesses across the state. This long-standing partnership remains vital, offering meaningful representation for small businesses and fostering collaboration between the panel and the agency. Nebraska's SBCAP continues to stand out nationally, as many states no longer maintain an active panel.

In October 2025, DWEE met with panel members for the annual SBCAP meeting. The panel reviewed major agency updates from the past year, including progress on key initiatives such as the merger of DNR and DEE, the implementation of the Governor's Water Quality and Quantity Task Force, and the current direction of the ONE RED program.

The panel also discussed opportunities for DWEE to further strengthen its interactions with small businesses and expand public engagement. Members emphasized the importance of encouraging participation, improving communication, and maintaining transparent and accessible regulatory processes. These discussions reaffirmed our shared commitment to supporting Nebraskans in meeting environmental responsibilities.

DWEE's dedication to outreach and education was also evident in the review of call, email, and event data from the past year, underscoring the agency's focus on accessible communication and community engagement.

SBCAP remains committed to supporting small and emerging businesses through close cooperation with DWEE. Our work provides a valuable forum for addressing concerns and ensuring that the needs of the small business community are heard. We look forward to another productive year in 2026, strengthening Nebraska's small businesses and advancing environmental stewardship statewide.

Sincerely,



Jim Hellbusch

Small Business Compliance Advisory Panel Chair  
Owner of Duo-Lift Manufacturing-Columbus, NE

## Background

### Small Business Compliance Advisory Panel

The federal Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 required every state to establish both a Small Business Assistance Program and a Small Business Compliance Advisory Panel (SBCAP) to ensure that small businesses had the resources and support needed to comply with air quality regulations. Nebraska expanded this mandate by broadening its small business assistance services beyond air to include all environmental media—land, water, and energy. More than 30 years later, Nebraska’s SBCAP remains an active and engaged body. The panel is composed of seven members: four small business representatives appointed by the Legislature, two public representatives appointed by the Governor, and one Department representative appointed by the Director of DWEE. Together, the SBCAP works to break down communication barriers, build trust, and deliver clear, relevant regulatory information that helps Nebraska businesses and communities understand and meet their environmental responsibilities.

In July of 2025, the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy merged with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources to form the Department of Water, Energy, and Environment (DWEE). This consolidation aligned environmental, water, and energy programs within a single agency, strengthening the state’s ability to provide coordinated compliance assistance and outreach.

### Panel Members

#### *Legislative Appointees*

- Jim Hellbusch - Panel Chair/Owner of Duo-Lift Mfg., Columbus
- Rick Bettger - Owner of Omaha Car Care, Omaha
- Jack Schreiner - Owner of Bruckman Rubber, Hastings

#### *Governor Appointees*

- Sharon Hueftle - Executive Director, South Central Economic Development District

#### *DWEE Appointee*

- Reuel Anderson - Division Administrator, Permitting and Engineering Division (Appointed August 2021)

## Highlights from the SBCAP Annual Meeting

The 2025 annual meeting occurred on October 29<sup>th</sup> at the DWEE office in Lincoln, Nebraska. At the meeting, the SBCAP and DWEE staff showed continued progress on efforts that impact regulated industries.

Jesse Bradley, DWEE director, updated the Panel about the status of new Department of Water, Energy, and Environment which became effective July 1, 2025. Reuel Anderson, panel member and DWEE permitting and Engineering Division Administrator gave a presentation on air permitting, and Steve Goans, DWEE Deputy Director gave updates on DWEE's ONE RED program.

### *Panelist Comments and Suggestions for DWEE*

As part of the Panel's review of the 2024 SBCAP Annual Report and general discussion, members agreed that the report was thorough and required no additional recommendations for the coming year. The Panel reiterated its continued support for DWEE's efforts to assist Nebraska's regulated small business community and emphasized the importance of maintaining clear communication, practical compliance assistance, and accessible resources. In updates on state and federal developments relevant to small businesses, the Panel received brief program overviews and noted the value of ongoing collaboration to ensure that Nebraska businesses remain informed, resilient, and well-supported moving into 2026.

## Environmental Assistance Services

The Small Business and Public Assistance program and associated Small Business Compliance Advisory Panel (SBCAP) were created to comply with the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 to assist businesses in complying with air quality regulations. However, the Department now provides the same compliance assistance services and support to the Water Quality, Land Management, and Energy Programs.

Key activities of this program include developing guidance and outreach materials; responding to outside requests for information; hosting training and informational workshops, webinars, and one-stop meetings to help new businesses determine their permit applicability; expanding partnerships; helping the regulated community understand their obligations under state and federal law; and promoting compliance and permit assistance visits to small businesses and municipalities.

The program provides outreach to new businesses proposing operations in Nebraska within 10 days of a request for information, in addition to the services outlined below.

The following summarizes the primary compliance assistance activities offered by the agency.

- **Compliance Assistance Visit (CAV):** An on-site service offered by DWEE in response to a request by a business or regulated party to receive support for one or multiple environmental program areas to which they are currently subject or considering under proposed operations. Compliance assistance activities (see Individual Site Assistance/Training below) may be provided during an inspection; however, a CAV cannot be requested after an inspection that may result in enforcement until that issue is resolved. A CAV focuses on supporting the efforts of an entity to achieve voluntary compliance; however, it does not absolve it from receiving an enforcement action if egregious violations are found during the visit.
- **Permit Assistance Visit (PAV):** An on-site service (or meeting) offered by DWEE in response to a request by a business or regulated party to receive support under a new, modified, or existing permit to address permit-related questions.
- **Scoping Meeting:** A meeting within or outside of DWEE to introduce a new or proposed business to the staff involved, programs, and agencies. The meeting may include a review of processes or technologies, tools, resources, and strategic partnerships to assist the business in making the appropriate contacts for applicable regulatory requirements or business needs.
- **One-Stop Permit Meeting:** A One-Stop meeting allows for a newly proposed or expanding business and their selected representatives to engage with applicable DWEE permitting programs and other regulatory agencies. The goal of each meeting is to provide the permittee with an opportunity to ask questions and receive direction toward attainment of the necessary permits to achieve environmental regulatory compliance.
- **Individual Site Assistance/Training:** An on-site service offered by DWEE in response to a request or during or after a Compliance Inspection.

## FY 2025 DWEE Assistance Activities Completed

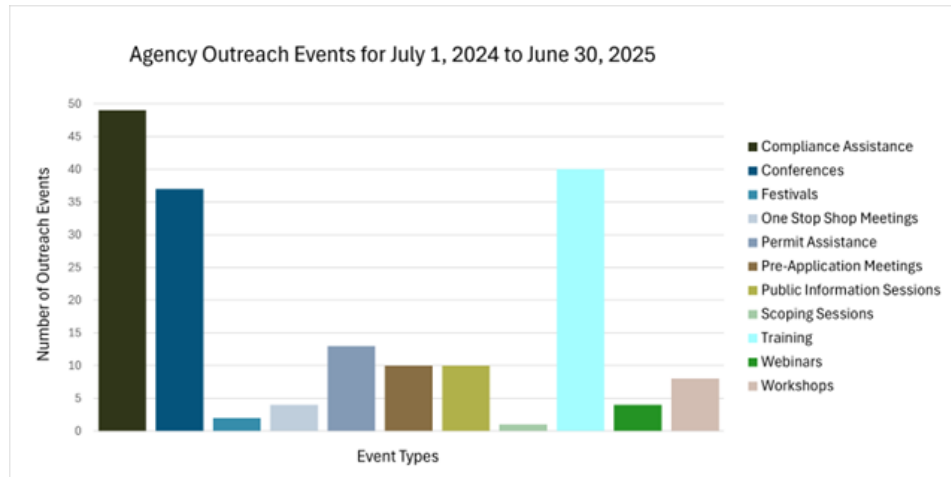


Figure 1. The 178 events were divided into types of events to understand better how DWEE programs provided outreach from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025.

## Engagement, Outreach, and Training

DWEE supplies hundreds of website guidance documents, handouts, and brochures to assist business and industry understand the state’s environmental permitting requirements. In partnership with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED), DWEE developed a business development packet of materials to support DED in its business and industry recruiting efforts. One of the packet materials (Figure 2) includes initial project questions for prospective businesses to use in preparation of a DWEE scoping or one-stop meeting.

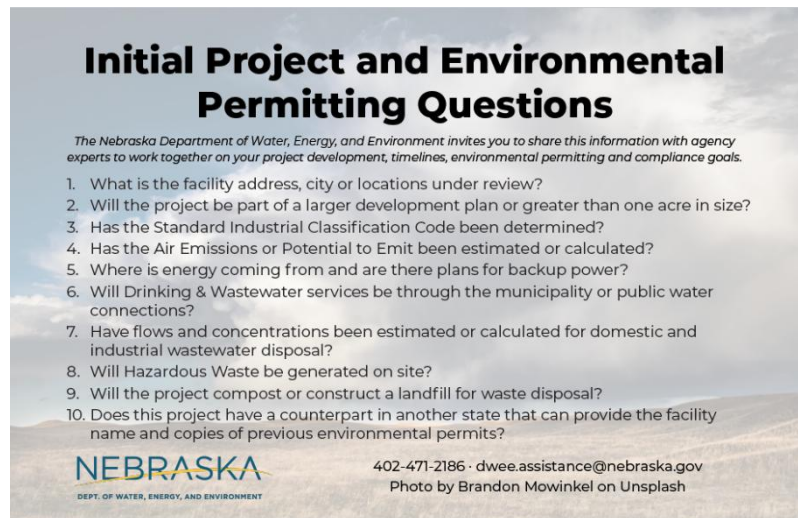


Figure 2 Initial Project and Environmental Permitting Questions for new or expanding business ventures.

### Assistance Visits and Contacts

Staff provide assistance through Compliance Assistance Visits, Permit Assistance Visits, phone and email contacts:

- Conducted 24 in-person Compliance Assistance Visits with permittees or industry (audiences included Public Works and city leadership, facility management,

Environmental Health and Safety personnel, technical and engineering staff, and facility operators)

- Conducted 7 in-person Permit Assistance visits with town and village leadership and staff, operators, and environmental coordinators
- Conducted 222 assistance email and phone conversations
  - 89 compliance assistance emails
  - 22 permit assistance emails
  - 90 compliance assistance phone conversations
  - 21 permit assistance phone conversations

### *Scoping Meetings*

DWEE staff held one scoping meeting with Nemaha and Atchinson Counties - government staff, the public and regulated community

### *One Stop Meetings/Preapplication Meetings*

Meetings were held with 15 entities involved in:

- Regenerative Agriculture
- Landfill Operations
- Renewable Natural Gas
- Road Contractors
- Village, Town, and City staff

### *Speaking Engagements, Presentations and Trainings*

DWEE staff regularly give presentations and trainings to groups in a wide array of fields including:

- Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) Spring Conference – SWIFR Grant presentation
- Nebraska Water Environment Association Conference
- Beef Cattle Symposium
- American Water Works Association Fall Conference – Funding Your Lead Service Line Replacement presentation
- Central States Air Resource Agencies (CenSARA) annual meeting
- Nebraska Association of County Officials (NACO) annual conference
- Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) 2025 Annual Legislative Conference – Presentations from ONE RED program
- Nebraska Well Drillers Conference
- Nebraska Grazing Conference – Panel Discussion

- Nebraska Power Summit
- Nebraska Wind and Solar Conference
- Nebraska Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association (NeFSMA) Annual Conference – Silver Jackets presentation
- Nebraska Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association (NeFSMA) Annual Membership Meeting
- Nebraska Environmental Health Summit – ONE RED Presentation
- Nebraska Rural Water Association (NERWA) Conference
- NWEA Heartland Conference
- Seward County Commissioner Meeting – State Revolving Fund Updates
- Western States Water Council Meeting
- Nebraska State Fair - World's Largest Classroom
- 2025 Power Summit
- EPA Brownfields Grant Check Presentation

#### *Activities Coordinated with Other Agencies*

DWEE staff also regularly coordinate activities with other agencies both in-state and out-of-state including:

- Attended NDEE/NARD district and regional partnership meetings
- Coordinated the annual Power Summit meeting between public utilities and DWEE
- Hosted NDOT/NDEE air annual MOU meeting
- Partnered with US EPA and its contractor on reuse visioning projects in Beatrice, and Blair
- Presented at the Federal Partners Grant Writing Workshop with EPA and KSU TAB program
- Partnered with UNL to provide multiple land application training events
- Hosted multi-agency Cornhusker Girls State Team for high school student leaders

## The Future

As Nebraska continues to attract and retain new talent in the small business sector, it remains important to highlight the value of the Small Business Compliance Advisory Panel and its continued partnership with the DWEE. According to SBA Office of Advocacy data, between March 2023 and March 2024, Nebraska small businesses contributed a net of 12,739 jobs, showing that small businesses continue drive employment in our state. The panel and DWEE remain committed to protecting the environment and public health while

supporting the growth and success of these small businesses. We appreciate your support and recognition of our efforts in 2025 and look forward to continued progress in 2026.

*Please direct any questions regarding this report to:*

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