

2019 Legislative Report

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The 2019 Legislative Session was a busy one for MDEQ. Our efforts were focused on making changes that will help the agency be more efficient and more responsive to those we serve, including the citizens of the state. To do so, our priorities this session were increased funding for the agency and securing the full match for the State Revolving Loan fund for wastewater treatment infrastructure.

The General Fund appropriation for MDEQ for Fiscal Year 2020 is \$10.8 million (HB 1657) which is an increase of \$794,266 or 7.93 percent from the Fiscal Year 2019 appropriation. Also, the Legislature gave specific direction to MDEQ to use additional funding to fill “critical vacancies for permitting staff.” Like many state agencies, an increase in retirement eligible staff and subsequent turnover has resulted in decades of experience leaving in critical areas including permitting. Increased insurance premiums and contributions to the state retirement system (PERS) are also included in the additional funding so this year's appropriation is a net increase of \$400,000 or about four percent. The Legislature also approved a three percent pay increase for state employees, and MDEQ will be implementing this raise.

In other legislative action, we successfully secured \$7.94 million bonding authority to access \$39.70 million in federal funds for the State Revolving Loan Fund (HB 1568). This is great news for communities in Mississippi waiting to use available funds to upgrade or build wastewater infrastructure. This was the first time since 2011 we have secured the full match.

Finally, four nominations to the Commission on Environmental Quality were confirmed by the State Senate--John Dane, Patrick Johnson, Jamie Martin, and Billy Van Devender.

All in all, I think we had a successful legislative session. I want to thank the Legislative Committee Chairs and the bill sponsors who played critical roles in our getting our bills passed and the legislative staff who worked closely with MDEQ to draft good bills. We again this year benefitted from our Commissioners, private organizations, individuals, and businesses who want MDEQ to succeed, appreciate the work we do, and realize that MDEQ is a good investment. Mississippi benefits from the successful private-public partnerships we have fostered to balance environmental protection and economic development.