



Selecting an Environmental Consultant

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Why do I need a consultant?

If the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has notified you that you are responsible for investigation and cleanup of soil, groundwater or other contaminated media, you need professional assistance to get the work done. Department rules establish qualifications for environmental consultants who perform this kind of work.

Site investigations and cleanup procedures can be complex and costly. A qualified environmental consultant can clean up your property in accordance with state and federal regulations, and help maintain or increase the value of your land. A good consultant will also understand your business needs, negotiate your cleanup schedule with DNR Remediation and Redevelopment Program (RR) staff and give you regular updates in understandable language.

A competent, experienced consultant can:

- save time, money, and complete the project right the first time;
- help establish a cooperative relationship with regulatory agencies; and
- minimize down time for your business.

Further, DNR rules may require that only certain environmental work at a site can be conducted by persons meeting certain qualifications.

How can I find a qualified consultant?

The DNR cannot endorse a specific environmental consultant or firm. However, the agency maintains a list of consultants who have identified themselves as doing environmental work in Wisconsin (please see page 3). Other means of finding or selecting a consultant include calling other businesses you know that have done environmental cleanups, contacting professional associations in which you are a member, or searching the yellow pages under "environmental services" or "environmental engineers."

What should I tell a consultant?

Tell your potential consultant as much as you can about your property, including:

- the site history, including materials and products used;
- materials and wastes that have been stored, recycled or disposed of;
- potential areas of contamination;
- if you are in a state reimbursement program (e.g. PECFA or DERF);
- the source of your water supply; and
- what DNR has asked you to do.



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707
dnr.wi.gov/topic/Brownfields



What should I ask a consultant?

Ask your potential consultant any questions you have, including:

- how many years they have been doing environmental work in Wisconsin;
- how many similar investigations and cleanups they have completed in Wisconsin or elsewhere (cleaning up a leaking petroleum tank can be very different from cleaning up PCBs);
- what administrative rules they expect to follow (if a potential consultant is not familiar with the NR 700 rule series, Wis. Admin. Codes, governing environmental cleanups or NR 140, Wis. Admin. Code, governing groundwater standards, it is an indication that they are not familiar with Wisconsin regulations);
- whether their staff meet the professional qualifications required in chapter NR 712, Wis. Admin. Code (e.g. whether any of their staff are registered as professional engineers or hydrogeologists with the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services);
- what level of insurance they carry for errors, omissions, and liability;
- whether they will help prepare requests for reimbursement if your cleanup is eligible; and
- whether they have references you can check.



Don't hesitate to ask a consultant that you may hire how and why their approach to your environmental cleanup would differ from other consultants you have talked with.

What questions should I ask when checking a consultant's references?

When checking the references of a consultant you may hire, you may want to ask the following questions:

- Was your project similar to mine in size and type of contamination?
- Did the consultant stay on schedule, or provide reasonable explanations for delays?
- Did the consultant keep you informed of the project's status, new developments and options for cleanup?
- If problems arose, were they resolved to your satisfaction?
- Did the consultant seem to work effectively with DNR (and local officials if relevant)?
- Were your bills clear and timely?
- Did the consultant advise you in advance of billing about all significant changes to the original cost estimate?

What should I expect for the cost of a cleanup?

Costs for environmental cleanup vary widely based on the type and extent of contamination and the regulatory requirements. Ask your consultant what to expect for your particular situation, and to advise you immediately of any changes.

You may also want to ask these questions:

- Will subcontractors submit competitive bids?
- What hourly rates and overhead apply to professional staff?
- What are the per diem charges for staff doing field work?
- How often will you be billed?
- How will bills be itemized?



Watch for cost estimates that are significantly higher or lower than those received from other consultants. Ask those consultants how they can get the job done more economically, or whether they think proposals from other consultants are incomplete. Also watch for consultants who expect to get the work done much faster than others. There may be good reasons for faster cleanups, but you need to understand those reasons. Sometimes the least disruptive and least costly cleanups, such as natural attenuation of contamination, take the longest.

Also, make sure you understand the terms of a contract before signing, including who will do what, and when. Be sure it includes language that allows you to terminate the contract if you are not satisfied with the consultant's work.

Is there any financial help?

Sometimes. Wisconsin offers certain loans, grants and reimbursement programs for various types of cleanups. Ask your consultant whether you may be eligible for financial aid, and whether they have experience with these programs. Please see *The Financial Resource Guide for Cleanup and Redevelopment* (RR-539) and the associated *August 2012 Update* located at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Brownfields/Financial.html>

What else should I know?

Wisconsin has numerous options to complete an environmental cleanup while enhancing the redevelopment and resale potential of your property. DNR offers liability clarifications and limitations on future environmental liability. Please visit the Remediation and Redevelopment (RR) Program website at dnr.wi.gov/topic/Brownfields for more information.

Where can I get more information about cleanups and redevelopment?

Visit the RR Program web site at dnr.wi.gov/topic/Brownfields. The RR Program has web pages with information on cleanup, financial assistance, liability tools and many other topics.

You may also want to review other RR Program publications. All RR publications may be located on the "Publications" page of our web site. Here are a few that may be of interest:

- *Environmental Services Contractors List* (publication RR-024);
- *Environmental Contamination Basics* (publication RR-674); and
- *Brownfield Basics – Tools for Cleaning Up and Redeveloping Contaminated Properties* (publication RR-663).

For information about your particular cleanup, please contact the person who signed the letter you received from DNR. You may also contact RR Program staff at a DNR regional office listed below.

Northeast Region
920-662-5168

Northern Region
715-623-4190, ext. 3127

South Central Region
608-275-3212

Southeast Region
414-263-8688

West Central Region
715-839-2784



This document may contain some information about certain state statutes and rules but does not necessarily include all of the details found in the statutes/rules. Readers should consult the actual language of the statutes/rules to answer specific questions.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services, and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to Equal Opportunity Office, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240

This publication is available in alternative format upon request. Please call 608-267-3543 for more information.