

INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

PROJECT TITLE: Minnesota Foundational Environmental Laws Oral History Project

NARRATOR NAME: Gregg Downing

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 2/18/2017

INTERVIEWER NAME: Stephanie Hemphill

DATE and LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Mr. Downing's home in St. Paul

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW (hrs): 1:10

Oversaw environmental review at EQB. Changes in role of EQB, which didn't significantly increase use of EISs over EAWs. Value of petition process in giving citizens a sense they are doing something about issues they're concerned about, although citizen involvement is very time-consuming and expensive. Sustainable development initiative under Gov. Carlson; GEISs on copper-nickel mining, timber harvesting and feedlots. Challenge of determining how far to go, how many questions to ask, in environmental review. Minnesota has more thorough process than nearly all other states. New York had early court cases that resulted in more EISs than in Minnesota. "Circling the wagons" at EQB when commissioners back each other rather than challenging colleagues' decisions. EQB staff avoided going to legislature for changes, as results were unpredictable. "Doomsday clause" where EQB can overturn a permit, and "no-build" alternative are practically never used.