

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE REORGANIZATION
OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Final Report to the Legislative Council
and the First Session of the Sixty-eighth General Assembly

State of Iowa
1979

F I N A L R E P O R T

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE REORGANIZATION
OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

December, 1978

The House Subcommittee on the Reorganization of the Department of Environmental Quality of the Committee on State Government was created to study the provisions of Senate File 2216, as amended and passed by the Senate, which relates to the reorganization and consolidation of certain state natural resource agencies. Senate File 2216 passed the Senate during the 1978 Session, but it was not acted upon by the House of Representatives.

The following legislators served as members of the House Subcommittee:

Representative William B. Griffee, Chairperson
Representative Donald D. Avenson
Representative James I. Middleswart
Representative Nancy J. Shimanek
Representative Delwyn Stromer

The Subcommittee held three meetings during the 1978 interim. At its first meeting on September 18, the Subcommittee organized by selecting Representative Griffee as permanent Chairperson and adopting rules of procedure, and established the scope and study priorities for the succeeding meetings. After a brief review of the basic provisions of Senate File 2216, the Subcommittee concluded that the primary areas of disagreement appeared to center on the proposed consolidation of the Iowa Natural Resources Council and the Department of Soil Conservation. The Subcommittee agreed to give first priority to the study of these provisions and invite testimony from the Iowa Natural Resources Council, the State Soil Conservation Committee, and the directors of these two state agencies at its second meeting.

At its second meeting on November 14, the Subcommittee received testimony from representatives of the Iowa Natural Resources Council, the State Soil Conservation Committee, the Iowa State Association of Soil District Commissioners, the Iowa Manufacturers Association and the Department of Environmental Quality. Dr. Merwin Dougal, Chairperson of the Iowa Natural Resources Council, and Mr. Walter Hagen, Chairperson of the State Soil Conservation Committee, stated that they do not believe that the proposed consolidation of the Iowa Natural Resources Council and the Department of Soil Conservation would improve the effectiveness of the programs administered by them. To the contrary, Dr. Dougal and Mr. Hagen expressed concern that the

proposed reorganization would be disruptive and detrimental to the effectiveness of current programs and the completion of new programs such as planning for the regulation of non-point source pollution which has been recently assigned to the Department of Soil Conservation. Mr. Charles T. McLaughlin, President of the Iowa State Association of Soil District Commissioners, expressed concern that the proposed consolidation may tend to reduce emphasis on soil conservation programs. Concerning the consolidation of the commissions within the Department of Environmental Quality, Mr. Mel Gauss and Mr. Charles Pelton, representing the Iowa Manufacturers Association, recommended against the consolidation because the complexity of pollution control laws would make it very difficult for a single commission to be knowledgeable of the complex issues and technical information necessary to resolve pollution control problems. They stated that the existing commissions are doing an effective job for business and the general public. Mr. Joseph Obr, representing the Department of Environmental Quality, stated the Executive Committee of the Department recommends consolidation as a recognition that an environmental problem is often not isolated as an air pollution problem, a water pollution problem or a solid waste disposal problem.

At its final meeting on December 7, the Subcommittee reviewed the testimony presented at the preceding meeting and concluded that Senate File 2216 would not accomplish the desired goals of improving the effectiveness of natural resources programs and eliminating duplicative procedures and programs. Representative Middleswart stated that there appeared to be little reason to consolidate the functions of the Iowa Natural Resources Council and the Department of Soil Conservation without considering the State Conservation Commission. He added that additional study is needed if the creation of a single natural resource agency, such as a Department of Natural Resources is contemplated. Representative Avenson concluded that even though problems do exist regarding the protection of rivers and streams and the administration of water laws, the provisions of Senate File 2216 do not appear to provide a solution. He added that the consolidation of boards and commissions may solve some problems, but the additional duties and responsibilities may require full-time commissioners which does not appear feasible at this time. Representative Shimanek stated that the restructuring of natural resource programs should be a long-range goal for the state, but reorganization at this time would undoubtedly be detrimental to completion of the comprehensive water plans, land preservation plans and non-point source pollution control plans which are being developed.

RECOMMENDATION

The Subcommittee reports to the House Committee on State Government that the Subcommittee has considered

Senate File 2216, as amended and passed by the Senate, and recommends that the bill "do not pass" and, further, the Subcommittee has no other recommendation relating to the reorganization or consolidation of state natural resource agencies.

CONCLUSION

The recommendation of the Subcommittee on the Reorganization of the Department of Environmental Quality was adopted at its December 7 meeting by a vote of three ayes and no nays. Representative Griffiee and Representative Stromer were absent.

Copies of the minutes and written testimony presented to the Subcommittee are filed with the Legislative Service Bureau.