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## **South Dakota Department of Agriculture / Department of Environment and Natural Resources Merger**

### **Frequently Asked Questions December 2020**

On August 27, 2020, Governor Noem announced her plan to merge the Department of Agriculture (SDDA) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) into one department – the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources. On September 8, 2020, DENR Secretary Hunter Roberts became the Interim SDDA Secretary and began the merger process. The purpose of this document is to answer frequently asked questions about the merger.

#### **1. Does the South Dakota Governor have the authority to merge the two departments and have reorganizations like this occurred before?**

Yes. The Governor can reorganize state government to best meet the needs of the state and our citizens, and we have seen many changes like this over the years. In 2019, Governor Noem issued an executive reorganization order transferring the business development programs from the Department of Agriculture to the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED). In 2003, Governor Rounds created the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Revenue and Regulation and abolished the Department of Commerce and Regulation while transferring various duties throughout state government with an executive reorganization order. In 1981, Governor Janklow transferred mining regulatory functions from SDDA to the Department of Water and Natural Resources (now DENR). All these changes, and many others, were made to improve the way our government operates and provides services to South Dakotans.

#### **2. Why merge SDDA and DENR?**

In 2019, when Governor Noem moved the agriculture business development activities from the SDDA to GOED, it shifted the SDDA's mission from agriculture development to one that is largely regulatory in nature. DENR is also a regulatory agency. Combining the two regulatory agencies is an easy way to streamline government. All SDDA and DENR programs and responsibilities remain in place moving forward – the merged

department will continue all existing duties and implement all the programs the two departments had in the past. Agriculture, conservation, and natural resource protection go hand-in-hand, so it makes sense for South Dakota to regulate these industries under one department, the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR).

### **3. What will be DANR's mission and vision?**

#### Mission

*To protect and preserve South Dakota's agriculture, environment, and natural resources through effective regulatory services, natural resource conservation, and financial and technical assistance.*

#### Vision

*A South Dakota with a prosperous economy, diverse agricultural opportunities, clean air, clean water, and healthy families.*

### **4. How will the new department be organized?**

Attached is the proposed DANR organizational chart.

### **5. Will the merger make state government more efficient?**

Yes. The merger creates synergies in state government by combining resources from both agencies. It makes sense for SDDA Conservation staff to work with DENR's Watershed Protection Program. Both programs are providing on-the-ground resources for ag producers to improve our state's environment. Also, by merging portions of the Division of Agriculture Services (SDDA) and Environmental Services (DENR), we can create efficiencies and streamline the regulatory process. Combining inspectors and spill response from these divisions makes DANR more responsive to environmental emergencies and complaints while also reducing redundancies between the two agencies.

### **6. Will the merger save money?**

Yes. The merger will save taxpayer dollars through efficiencies. By reducing duplication of services, we can eliminate five full-time employee positions - four vacant and one cabinet secretary. Finally, as we cross-train inspectors and field staff, we can minimize redundancy and travel costs.

### **7. Will the merger affect any other state agencies?**

Yes. Working through this merger has led to another opportunity to better utilize our state's resources by transferring the SDDA Wildland Fire Division to the Department of Public Safety (DPS). DPS, as a first responder agency, is better situated to support

Wildland Fire and take advantage of its unique emergency response capabilities outside of the regular fire season.

## **8. Will the merger be good for South Dakota?**

Yes. The merger is good for South Dakota, our families, and our future and puts us in the best position to protect and preserve South Dakota's agriculture, environment, and natural resources for today and tomorrow.

## **9. Who do I contact if I have questions?**

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South Dakota Department of Agriculture  
and Natural Resources



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