



2026 scorecard

Streamlining Minnesota's environmental permitting

Tracking progress on efforts to reduce timelines, address backlogs and improve transparency in Minnesota's environmental permitting and review programs.

The Minnesota Chamber Foundation's 2024 report, *Streamlining Minnesota's environmental permitting process: Essential for economic growth*, examined the efficiency and transparency of Minnesota's environmental permitting system by outlining and then comparing timelines and processes to other states, and providing recommendations for streamlining and improvements.

Since that report's initial release, permitting activity has experienced areas of improvement, but continues to experience challenges.

Improvements ↑

- ✔ Timelines to issue priority Tier 2 air permits saw notable improvements, declining to a median of 268 days, down from 348 in 2024. While still above the target of 150 days, this shows movement in the right direction.
- ✔ The share of priority Tier 2 air permits meeting the agency's 150-day goal rose to 13%, up from 3% in 2024, with a majority (24 of 38) issued within one year.
- ✔ Backlogs of air and water permits saw modest but meaningful improvements in 2025, building on similar gains from the previous year.
- ✔ Several steps were taken to improve efficiency and transparency in the permitting process over the past year, including: the introduction of a new interagency permitting liaison role, continued improvements to the Business First Stop program and a new executive order in February 2026 directing the MPCA to explore ways to allow limited construction prior to a full operating permit being issued.

Continued challenges ↓

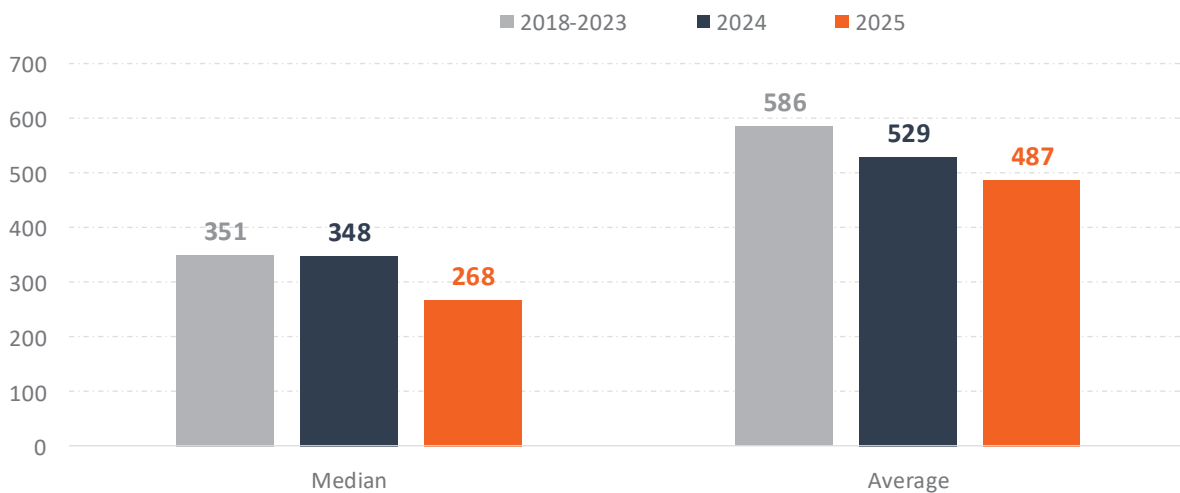
- ⌋ Despite improvements, just 5 of 38 priority Tier 2 air permits were issued within the agency's 150-day goal, demonstrating continued room for improvement.
- ⌋ Fourteen priority Tier 2 air permits took longer than a year to issue, with seven taking longer than two years. This is more than the number of permits issued within the 150-day target.
- ⌋ As of February 2026, there were still 382 air permits awaiting assignment or in process. While this is an improvement from the same time last year, it represents a substantial backlog of active permits awaiting action or old permit applications that are no longer needed and could be removed from the system.
- ⌋ 2024 permitting reform legislation authorized agencies to offer a coordinated permitting schedule upon request from the applicant. To-date, there are little reports of use, suggesting a need for more proactive education to applicants about their options to receive a coordinated schedule or further changes to make a coordinated schedule useful.
- ⌋ Despite recent efforts to gather more information on environmental review projects, public data on review timelines remains limited.



268 median number of days to issue priority Tier 2 air permits
5 of 38 priority Tier 2 air permits issued within 150-day goal
24 of 38 priority Tier 2 air permits issued within 1 year
2 priority individual industrial NPDES water permit modification requests received; both were issued in the same fiscal year, averaging **167** days to issue.
382 air permits awaiting assignment or in process, with a median number of **1,284** days awaiting assignment or in process

The timeline to issue a priority Tier 2 air permit in 2025 was notably lower than in previous years, falling to a median of 268 days

Number of days to issue priority Tier 2 air permits



Air permit status:
 permit applications that have been received but not yet issued
 (as of February 2026)

382 total air permit applications in process or awaiting assignment

- **265** applications still awaiting assignment
- **117** applications in process

1,284 median number of days since applications were received by the MPCA

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