

Details of Scoring the Master Matrix

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION | WWW.IOWADNR.GOV

Construction Permits

The Master Matrix

The master matrix is a process that the county can choose to participate in, which should result in a proposed confinement feeding operation adhering to higher standards than required by law. A confinement feeding operation required to use the master matrix will likely have increased separation distances to objects and a more conservative manure management plan (MMP). The master matrix is a tool for the county Board of Supervisors to provide input into a proposed confinement feeding operation.

Every year all counties in Iowa have the opportunity to enroll in the master matrix by adopting a Construction Evaluation Resolution. All counties are notified in December to enroll for the following calendar year. Counties that enroll have the responsibility to evaluate the completed master matrix by each construction permit applicant during that year.

Not all permit applications require a master matrix:

- If the county did not enroll for that year, then no master matrix is required.
- If an existing confinement facility is expanding, and the original construction on the site was before April 1, 2002, and the proposed total animal unit capacity after expansion is 1,667 AU or less, then no master matrix is required.

The master matrix consists of 44 criteria which further describe the potential site for the proposed confinement facility. The applicant may qualify for any or all criteria and be awarded points for each criterion. An applicant chooses which criteria they would like to claim points on. An applicant must score an overall minimum point total of 440 points as well as one-fourth of the available point total in three subcategories (Air, Water and Community).

If a construction permit application containing a master matrix is received by the county and the instruction notice is received from the DNR, then the county is required to review and score the master matrix items where points were claimed by the applicant. Some of the criteria require documentation or proof that points can be claimed by the applicant. It is the duty of the county to examine the documentation while scoring the master matrix. The county Board of Supervisors may select a representative of the county (zoning official, sanitarian, county engineer or supervisor, etc.) to review and score the master matrix. The county may elect to review and score the master matrix as a group. Scoring the master matrix will require time and effort.

The county may elect to review the master matrix using the documentation (e.g. maps) submitted by the applicant or the county may choose to use computer mapping programs to verify distances claimed by the applicant or measure and confirm any distances at the site survey. The local DNR field office will notify the county representative prior to conducting the site survey. This usually occurs within 30 days of the DNR receiving the application. During the site visit, DNR staff will verify the separation distances required by state law for all construction permit applications.

The county designee may accompany the local DNR field office during the site survey to verify additional matrix separation distances claimed by the applicant.

It is the county's obligation to verify the additional distances claimed by applicant in the matrix and verify objects such as a business or residence. Some master matrix items may require the county to search websites for information while other items may simply require the county to review documentation provided by the applicant and either agree or disagree on the content.

It is the county's obligation to score the matrix in a professional manner. The scoring must be objective. Evaluate and score all matrix items where the applicant claimed points. Award appropriate points for each matrix item where the applicant claimed



The DNR field office does a site inspection prior to approving or denying a construction permit application. Counties with a master matrix can accompany DNR staff on the inspection. Find more about construction permits and the master matrix on the DNR website: www.iowadnr.gov/afo/.



points. Conversely, deny or reduce points only when you have a reason, e.g., distance error, lack of sufficient documentation such as a design, operation and maintenance plan. The county should not award or deny points arbitrarily. The county cannot award points for items the applicant did not score.

Find a blank copy of the master matrix on the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/.

Counties may print this copy, fill out the county’s scores, submit it to the DNR. The county should also submit its recommendation, proof of publication and any documentation on specific master matrix items that are denied or challenged.

County Approval

If the county agrees with the master matrix scoring as submitted by the applicant or scores the matrix with a passing score, the county must still submit to the DNR a recommendation to approve or disapprove the construction permit application.

The DNR shall preliminarily approve the construction permit application provided the application and siting of the building(s) comply with the requirements of Chapter 567 IAC 65 and Iowa Code Chapter 455B. If the construction application does not meet the requirements of Chapter 567 IAC 65 and Iowa Code Chapter 455B, regardless of the outcome of the master matrix, the DNR shall preliminarily disapprove the permit application.

Failing Score on Matrix

If the county’s scoring results in a failing score of the master matrix then the county must still submit to the DNR a recommendation to approve or disapprove the construction permit application.

The DNR shall preliminarily disapprove the application if the construction application does not meet the requirements of state law (Chapter 567 Iowa Administrative Code 65 and Iowa Code Chapter 455B, regardless of the county’s scoring of the master matrix. If the application meets the requirements of state law, the DNR will conduct an independent evaluation of the master matrix points claimed by the applicant. If the DNR’s evaluation shows an acceptable score, the DNR shall preliminarily approve the application. If the DNR’s evaluation indicated the score is unacceptable, the DNR shall preliminarily disapprove the application.

Appeals

Both the applicant and county may contest a preliminary decision to approve or disapprove the construction permit application by demanding a hearing with the state Environmental Protection Commission. The preliminary permit and preliminary denial letter will contain specific instructions for appeal.

Final Decision

A preliminary approval or disapproval becomes final after 14 days if no appeal is submitted.

Important Links	Iowa DNR Field Offices
DNR Animal Feeding Operations www.iowadnr.gov/afo/ Iowa State Association of Counties www.iowacounties.org/member-resources/legal-resources/master-matrix/ Questions: Ask for an engineer at the Spencer or Mason City DNR field office, or email Kristi Harshbarter at kharsbarter@iowacounties.org .	Northeast Manchester 563-927-2640 North central Mason City 641-424-4073 Northwest Spencer 712-262-4177 Southwest Atlantic 712-243-1934 South central Des Moines 515-725-0268 Southeast Washington 319-653-2135

