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Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations
Chapter V—Council on Environmental Quality
Subchapter A—National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Regulations

PART 1500—PURPOSE AND POLICY

Sec.

1500.1 Purpose ~~and policy~~.

1500.2 ~~[Reserved]~~ Policy.

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1500.6 Agency authority.

Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321–4347; 42 U.S.C. 4371–4375; 42 U.S.C. 7609; and E.O. 11514, 35 FR 4247, 3 CFR, 1966–1970, Comp., p. 902, as amended by E.O. 11991, 42 FR 26967, 3 CFR, 1977 Comp., p. 123; ~~and E.O. 13807, 82 FR 40463, 3 CFR, 2017, Comp., p. 369.~~

§ 1500.1 Purpose ~~and policy~~.

(a) The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is ~~a procedural statute intended to ensure Federal agencies consider the environmental impacts~~ the basic national charter for protection of their actions in the environment ~~decision-making process. It establishes policy, sets goals (section 101), and provides direction (section 102) for carrying out the policy.~~

(1) Section 101(a) of NEPA establishes the national environmental policy of the Federal Government to use all practicable means and measures to foster and promote the general welfare, create and maintain conditions under which ~~man~~ people and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations ~~of Americans~~. Section 101(b) of NEPA establishes the continuing responsibility of the Federal Government to use all practicable means, consistent with other essential considerations of national policy, to help each generation serve as a trustee of the environment for succeeding generations; assure for all people safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings; attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences; preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice; achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

(2) Section 102(2) of NEPA establishes ~~the~~ procedural requirements to carry out the policy ~~and responsibilities established~~ stated in section 101 of NEPA and contains “action-forcing” procedural provisions to ensure Federal agencies implement the letter and spirit of the Act. The purpose of the regulations in this subchapter is to set forth what Federal agencies must and

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~~should do to comply with the procedures and achieve the goals of the Act. The President, the Federal agencies, and the courts share responsibility for enforcing the Act so as to achieve the policy goals of section 101. In particular, it requires Federal agencies to provide a detailed statement on proposals for major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. The purpose and function of NEPA is satisfied if Federal agencies have considered relevant environmental information, and the public has been informed regarding the decision-making process. NEPA does not mandate particular results or substantive outcomes. NEPA's purpose is not to generate paperwork or litigation, but to provide for informed decision making and foster excellent action.~~

~~(b) The regulations in this subchapter implement section 102(2) of NEPA. They provide direction to Federal agencies to determine what actions are subject to NEPA's procedural requirements and the level of NEPA review where applicable. The regulations in this subchapter are also intended to Federal agency NEPA procedures must ensure that agencies identify, consider, and disclose to the public relevant environmental information is identified and considered early in the process before decisions are made and before actions are taken in order to ensure informed decision making by Federal agencies. The information should be of high quality, science-based, and accessible. Accurate scientific analysis, expert agency comments, and public scrutiny are essential to implementing NEPA. Most important, environmental documents must concentrate on the issues that are truly relevant to the action in question, rather than amassing needless detail. The regulations in this subchapter are also are intended to ensure that Federal agencies conduct environmental reviews in a coordinated, consistent, predictable, and timely manner, and to reduce unnecessary burdens and delays. Finally, the regulations in this subchapter promote concurrent environmental reviews to ensure timely and efficient decision making.~~

~~(c) Ultimately, of course, it is not better documents but better decisions that count. NEPA's purpose is not to generate paperwork—even excellent paperwork—or litigation, but to provide for informed decision making and foster excellent action. The NEPA process is intended to help public officials make decisions that are based on an understanding of environmental consequences, and take actions that protect, restore, and enhance the environment. The regulations in this subchapter provide the direction to achieve this purpose.~~

§ 1500.2 ~~{Reserved}~~ Policy.

Federal agencies shall to the fullest extent possible:

(a) Interpret and administer the policies, regulations, and public laws of the United States in accordance with the policies set forth in the Act and in these regulations.

(b) Implement procedures to make the NEPA process more useful to decision makers and the public; to reduce paperwork and the accumulation of extraneous background data; and to emphasize important environmental issues and alternatives. Environmental documents shall be concise, clear, and supported by evidence that agencies have conducted the necessary environmental analyses.

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(c) Integrate the requirements of NEPA with other planning and environmental review procedures required by law or by agency practice so that all such procedures run concurrently rather than consecutively.

(d) Encourage and facilitate public engagement in decisions that affect the quality of the human environment, including meaningful engagement with communities with environmental justice concerns, which often include communities of color, low-income communities, indigenous communities, and Tribal communities.

(e) Use the NEPA process to identify and assess the reasonable alternatives to proposed actions that will avoid or minimize adverse effects of these actions upon the quality of the human environment, such as alternatives that will reduce climate change-related effects or address adverse health and environmental effects that disproportionately affect communities with environmental justice concerns.

(f) Use all practicable means, consistent with the requirements of the Act and other essential considerations of national policy, to restore and enhance the quality of the human environment and avoid or minimize any possible adverse effects of their actions upon the quality of the human environment.

§ 1500.3 NEPA compliance.

(a) *Mandate.* This subchapter is applicable to and binding on all Federal agencies for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (Pub. L. 91–190, 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) (NEPA or the Act), ~~except where compliance would be inconsistent with other statutory requirements.~~ The regulations in this subchapter are issued pursuant to NEPA; the Environmental Quality Improvement Act of 1970, as amended (Pub. L. 91–224, 42 U.S.C. 4371 *et seq.*); ~~section 309 of the Clean Air Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 7609); and~~ Executive Order 11514, Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality (March 5, 1970), as amended by Executive Order 11991, Relating to the Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality (May 24, 1977); ~~and Executive Order 13807, Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure Projects (August 15, 2017).~~ The regulations in this subchapter apply to the whole of section 102(2) of NEPA. The provisions of the Act and the regulations in this subchapter must be read together as a whole to comply with the ~~law~~Act.

~~(b) Exhaustion.~~

~~(1) To ensure informed decision making and reduce delays, agencies shall include a request for comments on potential alternatives and impacts, and identification of any relevant information, studies, or analyses of any kind concerning impacts affecting the quality of the human environment in the notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (§ 1501.9(d)(7) of this chapter).~~

~~(2) The draft and final environmental impact statements shall include a summary of all alternatives, information, and analyses submitted by State, Tribal, and local governments and~~

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other public commenters for consideration by the lead and cooperating agencies in developing the draft and final environmental impact statements (§ 1502.17 of this chapter).

~~(3) For consideration by the lead and cooperating agencies, State, Tribal, and local governments and other public commenters must submit comments within the comment periods provided, and comments shall be as specific as possible (§§ 1503.1 and 1503.3 of this chapter). Comments or objections of any kind not submitted, including those based on submitted alternatives, information, and analyses, shall be forfeited as unexhausted.~~

~~(4) Informed by the submitted alternatives, information, and analyses, including the summary in the final environmental impact statement (§ 1502.17 of this chapter) and the agency's response to comments in the final environmental impact statement (§ 1503.4 of this chapter), together with any other material in the record that he or she determines relevant, the decision maker shall certify in the record of decision that the agency considered all of the alternatives, information, and analyses, and objections submitted by States, Tribal, and local governments and other public commenters for consideration by the lead and cooperating agencies in developing the environmental impact statement (§ 1505.2(b) of this chapter).~~

~~(be) *Review of NEPA compliance.* It is the Council's intention that judicial review of agency compliance with the regulations in this subchapter not occur before an agency has issued the record of decision or taken other final agency action except with respect to claims brought by project sponsors related to deadlines under section 107(g)(3) of NEPA. It is also the Council's intention that minor, non-substantive errors that have no effect on agency decision making shall be considered harmless and shall not invalidate an agency action. ~~It is the Council's intention that any allegation of noncompliance with NEPA and the regulations in this subchapter should be resolved as expeditiously as possible. Consistent with their organic statutes, and as part of implementing the exhaustion provisions in paragraph (b) of this section, agencies may structure their procedures to include an appropriate bond or other security requirement.~~~~

~~(d) *Remedies.* Harm from the failure to comply with NEPA can be remedied by compliance with NEPA's procedural requirements as interpreted in the regulations in this subchapter. It is the Council's intention that the regulations in this subchapter create no presumption that violation of NEPA is a basis for injunctive relief or for a finding of irreparable harm. The regulations in this subchapter do not create a cause of action or right of action for violation of NEPA, which contains no such cause of action or right of action. It is the Council's intention that any actions to review, enjoin, stay, vacate, or otherwise alter an agency decision on the basis of an alleged NEPA violation be raised as soon as practicable after final agency action to avoid or minimize any costs to agencies, applicants, or any affected third parties. It is also the Council's intention that minor, non-substantive errors that have no effect on agency decision making shall be considered harmless and shall not invalidate an agency action.~~

~~(ce) *Severability.* The sections of this subchapter are separate and severable from one another. If any section or portion therein is stayed or determined to be invalid, or the applicability of any section to any person or entity is held invalid, it is the Council's intention~~

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that the validity of the remainder of those parts shall not be affected, with the remaining sections to continue in effect.

§ 1500.4 Concise and informative environmental documents ~~Reducing paperwork.~~

Agencies shall prepare analytical, concise, and informative environmental documents ~~reduce excessive paperwork~~ by:

~~(a) Using categorical exclusions to define categories of actions that normally do not have a significant effect on the human environment and therefore do not require preparation of an environmental impact statement (§ 1501.4 of this chapter).~~

~~(b) Using a finding of no significant impact when an action not otherwise excluded will not have a significant effect on the human environment and therefore does not require preparation of an environmental impact statement (§ 1501.6 of this chapter).~~

~~(ae) Reducing the length of environmental documents by means such as m~~Meeting appropriate page limits (§§ 1501.5~~(gf)~~ and 1502.7 of this subchapter).

~~(d) Preparing analytic and concise environmental impact statements (§ 1502.2 of this chapter).~~

~~(be)~~ Discussing only briefly issues other than significant-important ones (*e.g.*, § 1502.2(b) of this subchapter).

~~(cf)~~ Writing environmental impact statements documents in plain language (*e.g.*, § 1502.8 of this subchapter).

~~(dg)~~ Following a clear format for environmental impact statements (§ 1502.10 of this subchapter).

~~(eh)~~ Emphasizing the portions of the environmental document impact statement that are most useful to decision makers and the public (*e.g.*, §§ 1502.14, ~~and 1502.15, and 1502.16~~ of this subchapter) and reducing emphasis on background material (*e.g.*, § 1502.1 of this subchapter).

~~(fi)~~ Using the scoping process, ~~not only~~ to identify significant-important environmental issues deserving of study, ~~but also and to~~ deemphasize insignificant-unimportant issues, narrowing the scope of the environmental impact statement process (or, where an agency elects to do so, the environmental assessment process) accordingly (§§ 1501.9 ~~and 1502.4~~ of this subchapter).

~~(gj)~~ Summarizing the environmental impact statement (§ 1502.12 of this subchapter).

~~(hk)~~ Using programmatic, ~~policy, or plan~~ environmental impact statements documents and tiering from statements documents of broad scope to those of narrower scope, to eliminate repetitive discussions of the same issues (§§ 1501.11 ~~and 1502.4~~ of this subchapter).

~~(il)~~ Incorporating by reference (§ 1501.12 of this subchapter).

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(~~jm~~) Integrating NEPA requirements with other environmental review and consultation requirements (§ 1502.24 of this subchapter).

(~~kn~~) Requiring that comments ~~to~~ be as specific as possible (§ 1503.3 of this subchapter).

(~~le~~) Attaching and publishing only changes to the draft environmental impact statement, rather than rewriting and publishing the entire statement when changes are minor (§ 1503.4(c) of this subchapter).

(~~mp~~) Eliminating duplication with State, Tribal, and local procedures, by providing for joint preparation of environmental documents where practicable (§ 1506.2 of this subchapter), and with other Federal procedures, by providing that an agency may adopt appropriate environmental documents prepared by another Federal agency (§ 1506.3 of this subchapter).

(~~nq~~) Combining environmental documents with other documents (§ 1506.4 of this subchapter).

§ 1500.5 Efficient process~~Reducing delay~~.

Agencies shall ~~reduce delay~~improve efficiency of their NEPA processes by:

(a) Using categorical exclusions to define categories of actions that normally do not have a significant effect on the human environment (§ 1501.4 of this ~~chapter~~subchapter) and therefore do not require preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

(b) Using a finding of no significant impact when an action not otherwise excluded will not have a significant effect on the human environment (§ 1501.6 of this ~~chapter~~subchapter) and therefore does not require preparation of an environmental impact statement.

(c) Integrating the NEPA process into early planning (§ 1501.2 of this ~~chapter~~subchapter).

(d) Engaging in interagency cooperation before or ~~as~~during the preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement ~~is prepared~~, rather than ~~awaiting submission of~~waiting to submit comments on a completed document (§§ 1501.7 and 1501.8 of this ~~chapter~~subchapter).

(e) Ensuring the swift and fair resolution of lead agency disputes (§ 1501.7 of this ~~chapter~~subchapter).

(f) Using the scoping process for ~~an~~ early identification of ~~what are and what are not~~ the ~~real~~important issues that require detailed analysis (~~§ 1501.9~~§ 1502.4 of this ~~chapter~~subchapter).

(g) Meeting appropriate ~~time limits~~deadlines for the environmental assessment and environmental impact statement processes (§ 1501.10 of this ~~chapter~~subchapter).

(h) Preparing environmental ~~impact statements~~documents early in the process (§ 1502.5 and § 1501.5(d) of this subchapter).

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(i) Integrating NEPA requirements with other environmental review and consultation requirements (§ 1502.24 of this subchapter).

(j) Eliminating duplication with State, Tribal, and local procedures by providing for joint preparation of environmental documents where practicable (§ 1506.2 of this subchapter) and with other Federal procedures by providing that agencies may jointly prepare or adopt appropriate environmental documents prepared by another agency (§ 1506.3 of this subchapter).

(k) Combining environmental documents with other documents (§ 1506.4 of this subchapter).

(l) Using accelerated procedures for proposals for legislation (§ 1506.8 of this subchapter).

§ 1500.6 Agency authority.

Each agency shall interpret the provisions of the Act as a supplement to its existing authority and as a mandate to view policies and missions in the light of the Act's national environmental objectives, to the extent consistent with its existing authority. Agencies shall review their policies, procedures, and regulations accordingly and revise them as necessary to ensure full compliance with the purposes and provisions of the Act as interpreted by and the regulations in this subchapter. The phrase "to the fullest extent possible" in section 102 of NEPA means that each agency of the Federal Government shall comply with that section, ~~consistent with § 1501.1 of this chapter. Nothing contained in the regulations in this subchapter is intended or should be construed to limit an agency's other authorities or legal responsibilities unless an agency activity, decision, or action is exempted from NEPA by law or compliance with NEPA is impossible.~~

PART 1501—NEPA AND AGENCY PLANNING

Sec.

1501.1 ~~Purpose~~ NEPA thresholds.

1501.2 Apply NEPA early in the process.

1501.3 Determine the appropriate level of NEPA review.

1501.4 Categorical exclusions.

1501.5 Environmental assessments.

1501.6 Findings of no significant impact.

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1501.8 Cooperating agencies.

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1501.10 Deadlines and schedule for the NEPA process ~~Time limits.~~

1501.11 Programmatic environmental documents and ~~T~~ tiering.

1501.12 Incorporation by reference into environmental documents.

Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321–4347; 42 U.S.C. 4371–4375; 42 U.S.C. 7609; and E.O. 11514, 35 FR 4247, 3 CFR, 1966–1970, Comp., p. 902, as amended by E.O. 11991, 42 FR 26967, 3 CFR, 1977 Comp., p. 123; ~~and E.O. 13807, 82 FR 40463, 3 CFR, 2017, Comp., p. 369.~~

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§ 1501.1 Purpose ~~NEPA thresholds.~~

The purposes of this part include:

(a) Integrating the NEPA process into agency planning at an early stage to facilitate appropriate consideration of NEPA's policies, promote an efficient process, and reduce delay.

(b) Providing for early engagement in the environmental review process with other agencies, State, Tribal, and local governments, and affected or interested persons, entities, and communities before a decision is made.

(c) Providing for the swift and fair resolution of interagency disputes.

(d) Identifying at an early stage the important environmental issues deserving of study, and deemphasizing unimportant issues, narrowing the scope of the environmental review and enhancing efficiency accordingly.

(e) Promoting accountability by establishing appropriate deadlines and requiring schedules.

~~(a) In assessing whether NEPA applies or is otherwise fulfilled, Federal agencies should determine:~~

~~(1) Whether the proposed activity or decision is expressly exempt from NEPA under another statute;~~

~~(2) Whether compliance with NEPA would clearly and fundamentally conflict with the requirements of another statute;~~

(3) Whether compliance with NEPA would be inconsistent with Congressional intent expressed in another statute;

~~(4) Whether the proposed activity or decision is a major Federal action;~~

~~(5) Whether the proposed activity or decision, in whole or in part, is a non-discretionary action for which the agency lacks authority to consider environmental effects as part of its decision-making process; and~~

(6) Whether the proposed action is an action for which another statute's requirements serve the function of agency compliance with the Act.

(b) Federal agencies may make determinations under this section in their agency NEPA procedures (§ 1507.3(d) of this chapter) or on an individual basis, as appropriate.

(1) Federal agencies may seek the Council's assistance in making an individual determination under this section.

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~~(2) An agency shall consult with other Federal agencies concerning their concurrence in statutory determinations made under this section where more than one Federal agency administers the statute.~~

§ 1501.2 Apply NEPA early in the process.

(a) Agencies should integrate the NEPA process with other planning and authorization processes at the earliest reasonable time to ensure that agencies consider environmental impacts in their planning and decisions, to avoid delays later in the process, and to head off potential conflicts.

(b) Each agency shall:

(1) Comply with the mandate of section 102(2)(A) of NEPA to utilize a systematic, interdisciplinary approach, which will ensure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts in planning and in decision making ~~which~~that may have an impact on ~~the human's~~ environment, as specified by § 1507.2(a) of this ~~sub~~chapter.

(2) Identify environmental effects and values in adequate detail so the decision maker can appropriately consider such effects and values alongside economic and technical analyses. Whenever practicable, agencies shall review and publish environmental documents and appropriate analyses at the same time as other planning documents.

(3) Study, develop, and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal that involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources, as provided by section 102(2)(~~EH~~) of NEPA.

(4) Provide for actions subject to NEPA that are planned by ~~private~~ applicants or other non-Federal entities before Federal involvement so that:

(i) Policies or designated staff are available to advise potential applicants of studies or other information foreseeably required for later Federal action.

(ii) The Federal agency consults early with appropriate State, Tribal, and local governments and with interested ~~private persons~~individuals and organizations when their involvement is reasonably foreseeable.

(iii) The Federal agency commences its NEPA process at the earliest reasonable time (§§ 1501.5(d) and 1502.5(b) of this ~~sub~~chapter).

§ 1501.3 Determine the appropriate level of NEPA review.

(a) Applicability. As a threshold determination, an agency shall assess whether NEPA applies to the proposed activity or decision. In assessing whether NEPA applies or is otherwise fulfilled, Federal agencies should determine:

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(1) Whether the proposed activity or decision is expressly exempted from NEPA under another statute by law;

(2) Whether compliance with NEPA would clearly and fundamentally conflict with the requirements of another statute provision of law;

(3) Whether statutory provisions applicable to the agency's proposed activity or decision make compliance with NEPA impossible; and

(4) Whether the proposed activity or decision is a major Federal action, including whether:

(i) The proposed activity or decision is a final agency action within the meaning of such term in chapter 5 of title 5, United States Code (§ 1508.1(u)(2)(viii)); or

(ii) ~~Whether the proposed activity or decision, in whole or in part, is a non-discretionary action for~~ ~~with respect to which the such agency lacks~~ ~~does not have~~ ~~authority to take~~ ~~consider~~ ~~environmental factors effects~~ ~~into consideration in determining whether to take the proposed action~~ ~~(§ 1508.1(u)(2)(vi)) as part of its decision-making process.~~

(b) ~~Determination of s~~ *Scope of action and analysis.* If the agency determines that NEPA applies, the agency shall consider the scope of the proposed action and its potential effects to inform the agency's determination of the appropriate level of NEPA review. ~~The Agencyies~~ shall evaluate, in a single review, ~~environmental impact statement proposals or parts of proposals that are related to each other closely enough to be, in effect, a single course of action. As part of the scoping process, the lead agency shall determine the scope and the significant issues to be analyzed in depth in the environmental impact statement. To determine the scope of environmental impact statements,~~ ~~The agency also~~ ~~agencies shall consider:~~ ~~(1) Actions (other than unconnected single actions) that may be~~ ~~whether there are~~ ~~connected actions, which means that they are closely related~~ ~~Federal activities or decisions that~~ ~~and therefore should be considered~~ ~~discussed in the same impact statement. Actions are connected if they~~ ~~NEPA review that:~~

(1) ~~Automatically trigger other actions that may require environmental impact statements~~ ~~NEPA review;~~

(2) ~~Cannot or will not proceed unless other actions are taken previously or simultaneously;~~ ~~or~~

(3) ~~Are interdependent parts of a larger action and depend on the larger action for their justification.~~

(2) ~~Alternatives, which include the no action alternative; other reasonable courses of action; and mitigation measures (not in the proposed action).~~

(3) ~~Impacts.~~

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(c) Levels of NEPA review. In assessing the appropriate level of NEPA review, agencies may make use of any reliable data source and are not required to undertake new scientific or technical research unless it is essential to a reasoned choice among alternatives, and the overall costs and timeframe of obtaining it are not unreasonable. ~~Federal a~~Agencies should determine whether the proposed action:

(1) Normally does not have significant effects and is categorically excluded (§ 1501.4);

(2) Is not likely to have significant effects or the significance of the effects is unknown and is therefore appropriate for an environmental assessment (§ 1501.5); or

(3) Is likely to have significant effects and is therefore appropriate for an environmental impact statement (part 1502 of this subchapter).

~~(d)~~ (db) Significance determination—context and intensity. In considering whether the effects of the proposed action are significant, agencies shall ~~analyze~~examine both the ~~potentially affected environment~~context of an action and ~~degree~~the intensity of the effects. ~~Agencies should consider connected actions consistent with § 1501.9(e)(1).~~

(1) ~~Agencies shall analyze the significance of an action in several contexts. In considering the potentially affected environment, a~~Agencies should consider the characteristics of the relevant geographic area, such as proximity to unique or sensitive resources or vulnerable communities. Depending on the scope of the action, agencies should consider the potential global, national, regional, and local contexts as well as the duration, including ~~(i) Both short- and long-term effects.~~, ~~as appropriate to the specific action, the affected area (national, regional, or local) and its resources, such as listed species and designated critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend only upon the effects in the local area.~~

(2) Agencies shall analyze the intensity of effects considering the following factors, as applicable and in relationship to one another~~In considering the degree of the effects, agencies should consider the following, as appropriate to the specific action:~~

~~(i) Both short- and long-term effects.~~

~~(ii) Effects may be Both beneficial and adverse effects. However, only actions with significant adverse effects require an environmental impact statement. A significant adverse effect may exist even if the agency considers that on balance the effects of the action will be beneficial. Agencies should consider the duration of effects; for instance, a proposed action may have short-term adverse effects but long-term beneficial effects.~~

~~(iii) The degree to which the proposed action may adversely affect~~Effects on public health and safety.

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(iii) The degree to which the proposed action may adversely affect unique characteristics of the geographic area such as historic or cultural resources, park lands, Tribal sacred sites, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

(iv) ~~Effects that~~ Whether the action ~~would~~ may violate relevant Federal, State, Tribal, or local laws or other requirements or be inconsistent with Federal, State, Tribal, or local policies designed for the protection of the environment.

(v) The degree to which the potential effects on the human environment are highly uncertain.

(vi) The degree to which the action may relate to other actions with adverse environmental effects, including actions that are individually insignificant but significant in the aggregate. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary that is not temporary in fact or by segmenting it into small component parts.

(vii) The degree to which the action may adversely affect resources listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

(viii) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat, including habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

(ix) The degree to which the action may have disproportionate and adverse effects on communities with environmental justice concerns.

(x) The degree to which the action may adversely affect rights of Tribal Nations that have been reserved through treaties, statutes, or Executive Orders.

§ 1501.4 Categorical exclusions.

(a) For efficiency, ~~agencies shall identify in their agency NEPA procedures (and consistent with § 1507.3~~(ce)(82)(ii) of this subchapter, ~~agencies shall establish categorical exclusions for categories of actions that normally do not have a significant effect on the human environment, individually or in the aggregate, and therefore do not require preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement unless extraordinary circumstances exist that make application of the categorical exclusion inappropriate, consistent with paragraph (b) of this section. Agencies may establish categorical exclusions individually or jointly with other agencies.~~

(b) If an agency determines that a categorical exclusion identified in its agency NEPA procedures covers a proposed action, the agency shall evaluate the action for extraordinary circumstances in which a normally excluded action may have a significant effect.

(1) If an extraordinary circumstance ~~is present~~exists, the agency nevertheless may ~~categorically exclude~~apply the proposed action categorical exclusion if the agency ~~conducts an analysis and~~ determines that ~~there are circumstances that lessen the impacts or other conditions~~

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~~sufficient~~the proposed action does not in fact have the potential to avoid result in significant effects notwithstanding the extraordinary circumstance or the agency modifies the action to address the extraordinary circumstance. In such cases, the agency shall document such determination and should publish it on the agency's website or otherwise make it publicly available.

(2) If the agency cannot categorically exclude the proposed action, the agency shall prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement, as appropriate.

(c) In addition to the process for establishing categorical exclusions under § 1507.3(c)(8) of this subchapter, agencies may establish categorical exclusions through a land use plan, a decision document supported by a programmatic environmental impact statement or programmatic environmental assessment, or other equivalent planning or programmatic decision, so long as the agency:

(1) Provides the Council an opportunity to review and comment prior to public comment;

(2) Provides notification and an opportunity for public comment;

(3) Substantiates its determination that the category of actions normally does not have significant effects, individually or in the aggregate;

(4) Identifies extraordinary circumstances;

(5) Establishes a process for determining that a categorical exclusion applies to a specific action or actions in the absence of extraordinary circumstances, or, where extraordinary circumstances are present, determining the agency may apply the categorical exclusion consistent with (b)(1) of this section; and

(6) Publishes a list of all categorical exclusions established through these mechanisms on its websites.

(d) Categorical exclusions established consistent with paragraph (c) of this section or § 1507.3(c)(8) may:

(1) Cover specific geographic areas or areas that share common characteristics, e.g., habitat type;

(2) Have a limited duration;

(3) Include mitigation measures that, in the absence of extraordinary circumstances, will ensure that any environmental effects are not significant, so long as a process is established for monitoring and enforcing any required mitigation measures, including through the suspension or revocation of the relevant agency action; or

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(4) Provide criteria that would cause the categorical exclusion to expire because the agency's determination that the category of action does not have significant effects, individually or in the aggregate, is no longer applicable, including, as appropriate, because:

(i) The number of individual actions covered by the categorical exclusion exceeds a specific threshold;

(ii) Individual actions covered by the categorical exclusion are too close to one another in proximity or time; or

(iii) Environmental conditions or information upon which the agency's determination was based have changed.

(e) An agency may apply a categorical exclusion listed in another agency's NEPA procedures to a proposed action or a category of proposed actions consistent with this paragraph. The agency shall:

(1) Identify the categorical exclusion listed in another agency's NEPA procedures that covers its proposed action or a category of proposed actions;

(2) Consult with the agency that established the categorical exclusion to ensure that the proposed application of the categorical exclusion is appropriate;

(3) Evaluate the proposed action or category of proposed actions for extraordinary circumstances, consistent with paragraph (b) of this section;

(4) Provide public notice of the categorical exclusion that the agency plans to use for the proposed action or category of proposed actions; and

(5) Publish the documentation of the application of the categorical exclusion.

§ 1501.5 Environmental assessments.

(a) An agency shall prepare an environmental assessment for a proposed action that is not likely to have significant effects or when the significance of the effects is unknown unless the agency finds that a categorical exclusion (§ 1501.4) is applicable or has decided to prepare an environmental impact statement.

(b) An agency may prepare an environmental assessment on any action ~~in order~~ to assist agency planning and decision making.

(c) An environmental assessment shall:

(1) Briefly provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact; ~~and~~

(2) Briefly discuss the:

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(i) Purpose and need for the proposed agency action;

(ii) Aalternatives as required by section 102(2)(~~EH~~) of NEPA; and

(iii) ~~the e~~Environmental effectsimpacts of the proposed action and alternatives; ~~and~~

~~(3) include a l~~Listing of the Federal agencies; State, Tribal, and local governments and agencies; or persons consulted; and

(4) Provide a unique identification number for tracking purposes, which the agency shall reference on all associated environmental review documents prepared for the proposed action.

(d) For applications to the agency requiring an environmental assessment, the agency shall commence the environmental assessment as soon as practicable after receiving the application.

(e) If an agency publishes a draft environmental assessment, the agency shall invite public comment and consider those comments in preparing the final environmental assessment.

(f) Agencies shall involve the public, State, Tribal, and local governments, relevant agencies, and any applicants, to the extent practicable in preparing environmental assessments (see § 1501.9).

~~(g#) The text of an environmental assessment shall be no more thannot exceed 75 pages, not including any citations or appendices, unless a senior agency official approves in writing an assessment to exceed 75 pages and establishes a new page limit.~~

~~(g) Agencies may apply the following provisions to environmental assessments:~~

~~(1) Section 1502.21 of this chapter— Incomplete or unavailable information;~~

~~(2) Section 1502.23 of this chapter— Methodology and scientific accuracy; and~~

~~(3) Section 1502.24 of this chapter— Environmental review and consultation requirements.~~

(h) Agencies may supplement environmental assessments if a major Federal action remains to occur, and the agency determines supplementation is appropriate. Agencies may reevaluate an environmental assessment or otherwise document a finding that changes to the proposed action or new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns are not substantial, or the underlying assumptions of the analysis remain valid.

(i) Agencies generally should apply the provisions of §§ 1502.21 and 1502.23 to environmental assessments.

(j) As appropriate to improve efficiency and effectiveness of environmental assessments, agencies may apply the other provisions of part 1502 and 1503 of this subchapter including §§ 1502.4, 1502.22, 1502.24, and 1503.4, to environmental assessments.

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§ 1501.6 Findings of no significant impact.

(a) An agency shall prepare a finding of no significant impact if the agency determines, based on the environmental assessment, not to prepare an environmental impact statement because the proposed action will not have significant effects, or a mitigated finding of no significant impact because the proposed action will not have significant effects due to mitigation.

(1) The agency shall make the finding of no significant impact available to the affected public as specified in § ~~1501.9(d)(2)~~1506.6(b) of this subchapter.

(2) In the following circumstances, the agency shall make the finding of no significant impact available for public review for 30 days before the agency makes its final determination whether to prepare an environmental impact statement and before the action may begin:

(i) The proposed action is or is closely similar to one that normally requires the preparation of an environmental impact statement under the procedures adopted by the agency pursuant to § 1507.3 of this subchapter; or

(ii) The nature of the proposed action is one without precedent.

(b) The finding of no significant impact shall include the environmental assessment or incorporate it by reference and shall note any other environmental documents related to it (§ ~~1501.9~~1502.4(d)(3)). If the environmental assessment is included, the finding need not repeat any of the discussion in the assessment but may incorporate it by reference.

(c) The finding of no significant impact shall state the authority for any mitigation that the agency has adopted and any applicable monitoring or enforcement provisions. If the agency finds no significant ~~impacts~~effects based on mitigation, the mitigated finding of no significant impact shall state any~~the~~ enforceable mitigation requirements or commitments that will be undertaken ~~to avoid significant impacts and the authority to enforce them, such as permit conditions, agreements, or other measures. In addition, the agency shall prepare a monitoring and compliance plan for any mitigation the agency relies on as a component of the proposed action consistent with § 1505.3(c) of this subchapter.~~

§ 1501.7 Lead ~~agencies~~agency.

(a) A lead agency shall supervise the preparation of an environmental impact statement or ~~a complex~~ environmental assessment if more than one Federal agency either:

(1) Proposes or is involved in the same action; or

(2) Is involved in a group of actions directly related to each other because of their functional interdependence or geographical proximity.

(b) Federal, State, Tribal, or local agencies, ~~including at least one Federal agency,~~ may ~~act~~serve as a joint lead ~~agencies~~agency to prepare an environmental impact statement or

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environmental assessment (§ 1506.2 of this subchapter). A joint lead agency shall jointly fulfill the role of a lead agency.

(c) If an action falls within the provisions of paragraph (a) of this section, the potential lead participating Federal agencies shall determine, by letter or memorandum, which agency/agencies will be ~~the lead~~ agency or joint lead agencies, and the lead agency shall determine which agencies will be cooperating agencies. The agencies shall resolve the lead agency question so as not to cause delay. If there is disagreement among the agencies, the following factors (which are listed in order of descending importance) shall determine lead agency designation:

- (1) Magnitude of agency's involvement;~~;~~
- (2) Project approval or disapproval authority;~~;~~
- (3) Expertise concerning the action's environmental effects;~~;~~
- (4) Duration of agency's involvement;~~;~~ and
- (5) Sequence of agency's involvement.

(d) Any Federal ~~agency, or any,~~ State, Tribal, or local agency or ~~private person/individual~~ substantially affected by the absence of a lead agency designation, may make a written request to the senior agency officials of the potential lead agencies that a lead agency be designated. An agency that receives a request under this paragraph shall transmit such request to each participating Federal agency and to the Council.

(e) If Federal agencies are unable to agree on which agency will be the lead agency or if the procedure described in paragraph (c) of this section has not resulted in a lead agency designation within 45 days of the written request to the senior agency officials, any of the agencies or ~~persons/individuals~~ concerned may file a request with the Council asking it to determine which Federal agency shall be the lead agency. A The Council shall transmit a copy of the request ~~shall be transmitted~~ to each potential lead agency. The request shall consist of:

- (1) A precise description of the nature and extent of the proposed action; and
- (2) A detailed statement of why each potential lead agency should or should not be the lead agency under the criteria specified in paragraph (c) of this section.

(f) Any potential lead agency may file a response ~~within~~ no later than 20 days after a request is filed with the Council. As soon as possible, but not later than 2040 days after receiving the request and all responses to it, the Council shall ~~determine/designate~~ which Federal agency will be the lead agency and which other Federal agencies will be cooperating agencies.

(g) To the extent practicable, if a proposal will require action by more than one Federal agency and the lead agency determines that it requires preparation of an environmental impact statement, the lead and cooperating agencies shall evaluate the proposal in a single

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environmental impact statement and shall issue, except where inappropriate or inefficient, a joint record of decision. To the extent practicable, if a proposal will require action by more than one Federal agency and the lead agency determines that it requires preparation of an environmental assessment, the lead and cooperating agencies ~~should~~shall evaluate the proposal in a single environmental assessment and, ~~where appropriate,~~ issue a joint finding of no significant impact or jointly determine to prepare an environmental impact statement.

(h) With respect to cooperating agencies, the lead agency shall:

(1) Request the participation of each cooperating agency in the NEPA process at the earliest practicable time.;

(2) Consider any analysis or proposal created by a cooperating agency and, to the maximum extent practicable, use the environmental analysis and proposals of information provided by cooperating agencies; ~~with jurisdiction by law or special expertise, to the maximum extent practicable.~~

(3) Meet with a cooperating agency at the latter's request.;

(4) Determine the purpose and need, and alternatives in consultation with any cooperating agency.

~~(i) The lead agency shall develop a schedule, setting milestones for all environmental reviews and authorizations required for implementation of the action, in consultation with any applicant and all joint lead, cooperating, and participating agencies, as soon as practicable.~~

~~(j) If the lead agency anticipates that a milestone will be missed, it shall notify appropriate officials at the responsible agencies. As soon as practicable, the responsible agencies shall elevate the issue to the appropriate officials of the responsible agencies for timely resolution.~~

§ 1501.8 Cooperating agencies.

(a) The purpose of this section is to emphasize agency cooperation early in the NEPA process. Upon request of the lead agency, any Federal agency with jurisdiction by law shall be a cooperating agency. In addition, upon request of the lead agency, any other Federal agency with special expertise with respect to any environmental issue may be a cooperating agency. A State, Tribal, or local agency of similar qualifications may become a cooperating agency by agreement with the lead agency. Relevant special expertise may include Indigenous Knowledge. An agency may request that the lead agency designate it a cooperating agency, and a Federal agency may appeal a denial of its request to the Council, in accordance with § 1501.7(e).

(b) Each cooperating agency shall:

(1) Participate in the NEPA process at the earliest practicable time.

(2) Participate in the scoping process (described in § ~~1501.9~~1502.4).

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(3) On request of the lead agency, assume responsibility for developing information and preparing environmental analyses, including portions of the environmental impact statement or environmental assessment concerning which the cooperating agency has special expertise.

(4) On request of the lead agency, make available staff support to enhance the lead agency's interdisciplinary capability.

(5) Normally use its own funds. To the extent available funds permit, the lead agency shall fund those major activities or analyses it requests from cooperating agencies. Potential lead agencies shall include such funding requirements in their budget requests.

(6) Consult with the lead agency in developing the schedule (§ 1501. ~~107(i)~~), meet the schedule, and elevate, as soon as practicable, to the senior agency official of the lead agency any issues relating to purpose and need, alternatives, or other issues that may affect any agencies' ability to meet the schedule.

(7) Meet the lead agency's schedule for providing comments ~~and limit its comments to those matters for which it has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental issue consistent with § 1503.2 of this chapter.~~

(8) To the maximum extent practicable, jointly issue environmental documents with the lead agency.

(c) In response to a lead agency's request for assistance in preparing the environmental documents (described in paragraph (b)(3), (4), or (5) of this section), a cooperating agency may reply that other program commitments preclude any involvement or the degree of involvement requested in the action that is the subject of the environmental impact statement or environmental assessment. The cooperating agency shall submit a copy of this reply to the Council and the senior agency official of the lead agency.

§ 1501.9 Public and governmental engagement ~~Scoping~~.

(a) Purpose. Agencies conduct public engagement to inform the public of an agency's proposed action, allow for meaningful engagement during the NEPA process, and ensure decision makers are informed by the views of the public. Agencies conduct governmental engagement to identify the potentially affected Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments, invite them to serve as cooperating agencies, as appropriate, and ensure that participating agencies have opportunities to engage in the environmental review process, as appropriate.

(b) Responsibility. Agencies shall determine the appropriate methods of public and governmental engagement. For environmental impact statements, in addition to the requirements of this section, agencies also shall comply with the requirements for scoping set forth in § 1502.4 of this subchapter.

(c) Outreach. The lead agency should:

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(1) Invite the participation of likely affected Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies and governments, as early as practicable, including, as appropriate, as cooperating agencies under § 1501.8 of this subchapter;

(2) Conduct early engagement with likely affected or interested members of the public (including those who might not be in accord with the action), unless there is a limited exception under § 1507.3(d)(3) of this subchapter; and

(3) Consider what methods of outreach and notification are necessary and appropriate based on the likely affected entities; the scope, scale, and complexity of the proposed action and alternatives; the degree of public interest; and other relevant factors. When selecting appropriate methods for providing public notification, agencies shall consider the ability of affected persons and agencies to access electronic media and the primary language of affected persons.

(d) Notification. Agencies shall:

(1) Publish notification of proposed actions they are analyzing through an environmental impact statement.

(2) Provide public notification of NEPA-related hearings, public meetings, and other opportunities for public involvement engagement, and, as appropriate, the availability of environmental documents so as to inform those persons and agencies who may be interested or affected by their proposed actions.

(i) In all cases, the agency shall notify those who have requested notification on an individual action.

(ii) In the case of an action with effects of national concern, notice shall include publication in the *Federal Register*. An agency also may notify organizations that entities and persons who have requested regular notification notice.

(iii) In the case of an action with effects primarily of local concern, the notification may include distribution to or through:

(A) Notice to State, Tribal, and local governments and agencies that may be interested or affected by the proposed action.

(ii) Notice to interested or affected State, Tribal, and local governments.

(B) Following the affected State or Tribe's public notification procedures for comparable actions.

(C) Publication in local newspapers having (in papers of general circulation rather than legal papers).

(D) Notice through other local media.

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(Evi) Notice to pPotentially interested community organizations including small business associations.

(Fvii) Publication in newsletters that may be expected to reach potentially interested persons.

(Gviii) Direct mailing to owners and occupants of nearby or affected property.

(Hix) Posting of notificationee on and off site in the area where the action is to be located.

(Ix) Notice through eElectronic media (e.g., a project or agency website, dashboard, email, or social media). Agencies should establish email notification lists or similar methods for the public to easily request electronic notifications for a proposed action.

(3f) Make environmental impact statements, the comments received, and any underlying documents available to the public pursuant to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, as amended (5 U.S.C. 552).

(ee) Public meetings and hearings. Agencies may Hhold or sponsor public hearings, public meetings, or other opportunities for public engagementinvolvement whenever appropriate or in accordance with statutory or regulatory requirements or applicable to the agency NEPA procedures. Agencies may conduct public hearings and public meetings by means of electronic communication except where another format is required by law. When determining the format for a public hearing or public meeting, agencies should consider the needs of affected communities. When accepting comments for selecting appropriate methods for public involvement, agencies shall consider the ability of affected entities to access electronic or virtual public hearings or meetings, agencies shall allow the public to submit comments electronically, by regular mail, or by other appropriate methodsmedia.

(fa) Agency procedures. Agencies shall Mmake diligent efforts to involveengage the public in preparing and implementing their NEPA procedures (§ 1507.3 of this subchapter).

(a) Generally. Agencies shall use an early and open process to determine the scope of issues for analysis in an environmental impact statement, including identifying the significant issues and eliminating from further study non-significant issues. Scoping may begin as soon as practicable after the proposal for action is sufficiently developed for agency consideration. Scoping may include appropriate pre-application procedures or work conducted prior to publication of the notice of intent.

(b) Invite cooperating and participating agencies. As part of the scoping process, the lead agency shall invite the participation of likely affected Federal, State, Tribal, and local agencies and governments, the proponent of the action, and other likely affected or interested persons (including those who might not be in accord with the action), unless there is a limited exception under § 1507.3(f)(1) of this chapter.

(c) Scoping outreach. As part of the scoping process the lead agency may hold a scoping meeting or meetings, publish scoping information, or use other means to communicate with

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~~those persons or agencies who may be interested or affected, which the agency may integrate with any other early planning meeting. Such a scoping meeting will often be appropriate when the impacts of a particular action are confined to specific sites.~~

~~(d) *Notice of intent.* As soon as practicable after determining that a proposal is sufficiently developed to allow for meaningful public comment and requires an environmental impact statement, the lead agency shall publish a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement in the *Federal Register*, except as provided in § 1507.3(f)(3) of this chapter. An agency also may publish notice in accordance with § 1506.6 of this chapter. The notice shall include, as appropriate:~~

~~(1) The purpose and need for the proposed action;~~

~~(2) A preliminary description of the proposed action and alternatives the environmental impact statement will consider;~~

~~(3) A brief summary of expected impacts;~~

~~(4) Anticipated permits and other authorizations;~~

~~(5) A schedule for the decision-making process;~~

~~(6) A description of the public scoping process, including any scoping meeting(s);~~

~~(7) A request for identification of potential alternatives, information, and analyses relevant to the proposed action (*see* § 1502.17 of this chapter); and~~

~~(8) Contact information for a person within the agency who can answer questions about the proposed action and the environmental impact statement.~~

~~(e) *Determination of scope.* As part of the scoping process, the lead agency shall determine the scope and the significant issues to be analyzed in depth in the environmental impact statement. To determine the scope of environmental impact statements, agencies shall consider:~~

~~(1) Actions (other than unconnected single actions) that may be connected actions, which means that they are closely related and therefore should be discussed in the same impact statement. Actions are connected if they:~~

~~(i) Automatically trigger other actions that may require environmental impact statements;~~

~~(ii) Cannot or will not proceed unless other actions are taken previously or simultaneously; or~~

~~(iii) Are interdependent parts of a larger action and depend on the larger action for their justification.~~

~~(2) Alternatives, which include the no action alternative; other reasonable courses of action; and mitigation measures (not in the proposed action).~~

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~~(3) Impacts.~~

~~(f) Additional scoping responsibilities. As part of the scoping process, the lead agency shall:~~

~~(1) Identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues that are not significant or have been covered by prior environmental review(s) (§ 1506.3 of this chapter), narrowing the discussion of these issues in the statement to a brief presentation of why they will not have a significant effect on the human environment or providing a reference to their coverage elsewhere.~~

~~(2) Allocate assignments for preparation of the environmental impact statement among the lead and cooperating agencies, with the lead agency retaining responsibility for the statement.~~

~~(3) Indicate any public environmental assessments and other environmental impact statements that are being or will be prepared and are related to but are not part of the scope of the impact statement under consideration.~~

~~(4) Identify other environmental review, authorization, and consultation requirements so the lead and cooperating agencies may prepare other required analyses and studies concurrently and integrated with the environmental impact statement, as provided in § 1502.24 of this chapter.~~

~~(5) Indicate the relationship between the timing of the preparation of environmental analyses and the agencies' tentative planning and decision-making schedule.~~

~~(g) Revisions. An agency shall revise the determinations made under paragraphs (b), (c), (e), and (f) of this section if substantial changes are made later in the proposed action, or if significant new circumstances or information arise which bear on the proposal or its impacts.~~

§ 1501.10 Deadlines and schedule for the NEPA process ~~Time limits.~~

(a) To ensure that agencies conduct sound NEPA reviews as efficiently and expeditiously as practicable, Federal agencies shall ~~ould~~ set deadlines and schedules ~~time limits~~ appropriate to individual actions or types of actions ~~(consistent with this section and the time intervals required by § 1506.104 of this subchapter).~~ Where applicable, the lead agency shall establish the schedule and make any necessary updates to the schedule in consultation with and seek the concurrence of joint lead, cooperating, and participating agencies, and in consultation with project sponsors or applicants.

(b) To ensure timely decision making, agencies shall complete:

(1) Environmental assessments within 1 year unless, ~~a senior agency official of the lead agency~~ extends the deadline ~~approves a longer period~~ in writing and in consultation with any applicant or project sponsor, and establishes a new deadline that provides only so much additional time as is necessary to complete the environmental assessment. ~~time limit. One year is measured from the date of agency decision to prepare an environmental assessment to the publication of an environmental assessment or a finding of no significant impact.~~

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(2) Environmental impact statements within 2 years unless, ~~a senior agency official of the lead agency extends the deadline approves a longer period in writing and in consultation with any applicant or project sponsor,~~ and establishes a new ~~time limit~~ deadline that provides only so much additional time as is necessary to complete the environmental impact statement. ~~Two years is measured from the date of the issuance of the notice of intent to the date a record of decision is signed.~~

(3) The deadlines in paragraphs (b)(1) and (b)(2) of this section are measured from the sooner of, as applicable:

(i) the date on which the agency determines that NEPA requires an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment for the proposed action;

(ii) the date on which the agency notifies an applicant that the application to establish a right-of-way for the proposed action is complete; and

(iii) the date on which the agency issues a notice of intent for the proposed action.

(4) The lead agency shall annually submit the report to Congress on missed deadlines for environmental assessments and environmental impact statements required by section 107(h) of NEPA.

(c) To facilitate predictability, the lead agency shall develop a schedule for completion of environmental impact statements and environmental assessments as well as any authorizations required to carry out the action. The lead agency shall setting milestones for all environmental reviews, permits, and authorizations required for implementation of the action, in consultation with any project sponsor or applicant and in consultation with and seek the concurrence of all joint lead, cooperating, and participating agencies, as soon as practicable. Schedules may vary depending on the type of action and in consideration of other factors in paragraph (d). The lead agency should develop a schedule that is based on its expertise reviewing similar types of actions under NEPA. (j) If the lead agency or any participating agency anticipates that a milestone, including those for a review, permit, or authorization, will not be completed be missed, it shall notify the agency appropriate officials at the responsible agencies for the milestone or issuance of the review, permit, or authorization and the lead agency, as applicable, and request that they take appropriate measures to comply with the schedule. As soon as practicable, the lead and any other agency responsible agencies affected by a potentially missed milestone shall elevate any unresolved disputes contributing to the missed milestone the issue to the appropriate officials of the agencies responsible agencies for the missed milestone, to ensure timely resolution within the deadlines for the individual action.

(de) The senior lead agency official may consider the following factors in determining the schedule and deadlines time limits:

(1) Potential for environmental harm.

(2) Size of the proposed action.

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- (3) State of the art of analytic techniques.
- (4) Degree of public need for the proposed action, including the consequences of delay.
- (5) Number of persons and agencies affected.
- (6) Availability of relevant information.

(7) Degree to which a substantial dispute exists as to the size, location, nature, or consequences of the proposed action and its effects.

~~(8) Other~~ Time limits imposed on the agency by law, regulations, or Executive order.

~~(e)~~ The schedule for environmental impact statements shall senior agency official may set overall time limits or limits for each constituent part of the NEPA process, which may include the following milestones:

~~(1) The publication of the notice of intent; Decision on whether to prepare an environmental impact statement (if not already decided).~~

~~(2) Determination of the scope of the environmental impact statement.~~

~~(23) Preparation of~~ The issuance of the draft environmental impact statement.

~~(34) Review of any~~ The public comments period on the draft environmental impact statement, consistent with § 1506.10 of this subchapter; from the public and agencies.

~~(45) Preparation~~ The issuance of the final environmental impact statement; ~~and~~

(5) The issuance of the record of decision.

~~(6) Review of any comments on the final environmental impact statement.~~

~~(7) Decision on the action based in part on the environmental impact statement.~~

(f) The schedule for environmental assessments shall include the following milestones:

(1) Decision to prepare an environmental assessment;

(2) Issuance of the draft environmental assessment, where applicable;

(3) The public comment period on the draft environmental assessment, consistent with § 1501.5 of this subchapter, where applicable; and

(4) Issuance of the final environmental assessment and decision on whether to issue a finding of no significant impact or issue a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

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(ge) ~~The~~An agency may designate a person (such as the project manager or a person in the agency's office with NEPA responsibilities) to expedite the NEPA process.

~~(f) State, Tribal, or local agencies or members of the public may request a Federal agency to set time limits.~~

~~(h) For environmental impact statements, agencies shall make schedules for completing the NEPA process publicly available, such as on their website or another publicly accessible platform. If agencies make subsequent changes to the schedule, agencies shall publish revisions to the schedule and explain the basis for substantial changes.~~

§ 1501.11 Programmatic environmental documents and Tiering.

~~(a) Programmatic environmental document. Agencies may prepare programmatic environmental documents, which may be either environmental impact statements or environmental assessments, to evaluate the environmental effects of policies, programs, plans, or groups of related activities. When agencies prepare such statements documents, they should be relevant to the agency program decisions and timed to coincide with meaningful points in agency planning and decision making. Agencies may use programmatic environmental documents to conduct a broad or holistic evaluation of effects or policy alternatives; evaluate widely applicable measures; or avoid duplicative analysis for individual actions by first considering relevant issues at a broad or programmatic level.~~

~~(1) When preparing statements on programmatic environmental documents actions (including proposals by more than one agency), agencies may find it useful to evaluate the proposal(s) in one of the following ways:~~

~~(i) Geographically, including actions occurring in the same general location, such as body of water, region, or metropolitan area.~~

~~(ii) Generically Thematically or by sector, including actions that have relevant similarities, such as common timing, impacts, alternatives, methods of implementation, technology, media, or subject matter.~~

~~(iii) By stage of technological development, including Federal or federally assisted research, development, or demonstration programs for new technologies that, if applied, could significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Statements Documents on such programs should be available completed before the program has reached a stage of investment or commitment to implementation likely to determine subsequent development or restrict later alternatives.~~

~~(2) Agency actions that may be appropriate for programmatic documents include:~~

~~(i) Programs, policies, or plans, including land use or resource management plans;~~

~~(ii) Regulations;~~

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(iii) National or regional actions;

(iv) Actions that have multiple stages or phases, and are part of an overall plan or program;
or

(v) A group of projects or related types of projects.

~~(3) Agencies shall, as appropriate, employ scoping (§ 1502.49 of this subchapter), tiering (§ 1501.11 of this chapter (paragraph (b) of this section), and other methods listed in §§ 1500.4 and 1500.5 of this subchapter, to describe the relationship between the programmatic document and related programmatic and narrow individual actions and to avoid duplication and delay. Agencies may tier their environmental analyses to defer detailed analysis of environmental impacts of specific program elements until such program elements are ripe for final agency action.~~

(ba) Tiering. Where an existing environmental impact statement, environmental assessment, or programmatic environmental document is relevant to a later proposed action, agencies may employ tiering. Tiering allows subsequent tiered environmental analysis to avoid duplication and focus on issues, effects, or alternatives not fully addressed in a programmatic document, environmental impact statement, or environmental assessment prepared at an earlier phase or stage. Agencies generally should tier their environmental impact statements and environmental assessments when it would eliminate repetitive discussions of the same issues, focus on the actual issues ripe for decision, and exclude from consideration issues already decided or not yet ripe at each level of environmental review. Tiering may also be appropriate for different stages of actions.

(1b) When an agency has prepared a programmatic environmental review or other an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment for a program or policy and then prepares a subsequent statement or assessment on an action included within the entire program or policy (such as a project- or site-specific action), the tiered document shall discuss the relationship between the tiered document and the previous review, and needs only to summarize and incorporate by reference the issues discussed in the broader document. The tiered document shall concentrate on the issues specific to the subsequent action, analyzing site-, phase-, or stage-specific conditions and reasonably foreseeable effects. The agency shall provide for public engagement opportunities consistent with the type of environmental document prepared and appropriate for the location, phase, or stage. The tiered document shall state where the earlier document is publicly available.

(2e) Tiering is appropriate when the sequence from an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment is:

(1) From a programmatic, plan, or policy environmental impact statement or environmental assessment to a program, plan, or policy statement or assessment of lesser or narrower scope or to a site-specific statement or assessment.

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(ii) From an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment on a specific action at an early stage (such as need and site selection) to a supplement (which is preferred) or a subsequent statement or assessment at a later stage (such as environmental mitigation). Tiering in such cases is appropriate when it helps the ~~lead~~ agency to focus on the issues that are ripe for decision and exclude from consideration issues already decided or not yet ripe.

(c) When an agency prepares a programmatic environmental document for which judicial review was available, the agency may rely on the analysis included in the programmatic environmental document in a subsequent environmental document for related actions as follows:

(1) Within 5 years and without additional review of the analysis in the programmatic environmental document, unless there are substantial new circumstances or information about the significance of adverse effects that bear on the analysis; or

(2) After 5 years, so long as the agency reevaluates the analysis in the programmatic environmental document and any underlying assumption to ensure reliance on the analysis remains valid. The agency shall briefly document its reevaluation and explain why the analysis remains valid considering any new and substantial information or circumstances.

§ 1501.12 Incorporation by reference into environmental documents.

Agencies shall incorporate material, such as planning studies, analyses, or other relevant information, into environmental documents by reference when the effect will be to cut down on bulk without impeding agency and public review of the action. Agencies shall cite the incorporated material in the document, ~~and~~ briefly describe its content, and briefly explain the relevance of the incorporated material to the environmental document. Agencies ~~shall~~may not incorporate material by reference unless it is reasonably available for inspection, such as on a publicly accessible website, by potentially interested persons within the time allowed for comment. Agencies should provide digital references, such as hyperlinks, to the incorporated material or otherwise indicate how the public can access the material for inspection. Agencies shall not incorporate by reference material based on proprietary data that is not available for review and comment.

PART 1502—ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Sec.

1502.1 Purpose of environmental impact statement.

1502.2 Implementation.

1502.3 Statutory requirements for environmental impact statements.

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- 1502.19 Appendix.
- 1502.20 Publication of the environmental impact statement.
- 1502.21 Incomplete or unavailable information.
- 1502.22 Cost-benefit analysis.
- 1502.23 Methodology and scientific accuracy.
- 1502.24 Environmental review and consultation requirements.

Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321–4347; 42 U.S.C. 4371–4375; 42 U.S.C. 7609; and E.O. 11514, 35 FR 4247, 3 CFR, 1966–1970, Comp., p. 902, as amended by E.O. 11991, 42 FR 26967, 3 CFR, 1977 Comp., p. 123.

§ 1502.1 Purpose of environmental impact statement.

(a) The primary purpose of an environmental impact statement prepared pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of NEPA is to serve as an action-forcing device by ~~ensuring~~ agencies consider the environmental ~~effects~~impacts of their actions in decision making so that the policies and goals defined in the Act are infused into the ongoing programs and actions of the Federal Government.

(b) Environmental impact statements~~It~~ shall provide full and fair discussion of significant ~~environmental impact~~effects and shall inform decision makers and the public of reasonable alternatives that would avoid or minimize adverse ~~impacts~~effects or enhance the quality of the human environment. Agencies shall focus on ~~significant~~important environmental issues and reasonable alternatives and shall reduce paperwork and the accumulation of extraneous background data.

(c) Environmental impact ~~S~~statements shall be concise, clear, and to the point, and shall be supported by evidence that the agency has made the necessary environmental analyses. An environmental impact statement is more than a disclosure~~a document that informs Federal agency decision making and the public.~~ Federal agencies shall use environmental impact statements in conjunction with other relevant material to plan actions and make decisions.

§ 1502.2 Implementation.

To achieve the purposes set forth in § 1502.1 agencies shall prepare environmental impact statements in the following manner:

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(a) Environmental impact statements shall not be encyclopedic.

(b) Environmental impact statements shall discuss ~~impacts~~effects in proportion to their significance. There shall be only brief discussion of other than ~~significant~~important issues. As in an environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact, there should be only enough discussion to show why more study is not warranted.

(c) Environmental impact statements shall be analytical, concise, and no longer than necessary to comply with NEPA and with the regulations in this subchapter. Length should be proportional to potential environmental effects and ~~project size~~the scope and complexity of the action.

(d) Environmental impact statements shall state how alternatives considered in ~~it~~them and decisions based on ~~it~~them will or will not achieve the requirements of sections 101 and 102(1) of NEPA, ~~as interpreted in~~ the regulations in this subchapter, and other environmental laws and policies.

(e) The range of alternatives discussed in environmental impact statements shall encompass those to be considered by the decision maker.

(f) Agencies shall not commit resources prejudicing the selection of alternatives before making a ~~final~~ decision (*see also* § 1506.1 of this subchapter).

(g) Environmental impact statements shall serve as the means of assessing the environmental impact of proposed agency actions, rather than justifying decisions already made.

§ 1502.3 Statutory requirements for environmental impact statements.

As required by section 102(2)(C) of NEPA, environmental impact statements are to be included in every Federal agency recommendation or report on proposals for legislation and other major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment.

~~§ 1502.4 Scoping Major Federal actions requiring the preparation of environmental impact statements.~~

(a) Generally. Agencies shall use an early and open process, ~~consistent with § 1501.9 of this subchapter,~~ to determine the scope of issues for analysis in an environmental impact statement, including identifying the ~~significant~~important issues and eliminating from further study ~~non-significant~~unimportant issues. Scoping may begin as soon as practicable after the proposal for action is sufficiently developed for agency consideration. Scoping may include appropriate pre-application procedures or work conducted prior to publication of the notice of intent (*see* §§ 1501.3 and 1501.9 of this subchapter).

(b) Scoping outreach. When preparing an environmental impact statement, agencies shall facilitate notification to persons and agencies who may be interested or affected by an agency's proposed action, consistent with § 1501.9 of this subchapter. As part of the scoping process the

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~~analyses, and objections submitted by State, Tribal, and local governments and public commenters for consideration by the lead and cooperating agencies in developing the environmental impact statement. Agency environmental impact statements certified in accordance with this section are entitled to a presumption that the agency has considered the submitted alternatives, information, and analyses, including the summary thereof, in the final environmental impact statement (§ 1502.17(b)).~~

§ 1505.3 Implementing the decision.

~~(a)~~ Agencies may provide for monitoring to assure that their decisions are carried out and should do so in important cases. Mitigation (§ 1505.2(~~a~~)(~~3c~~)) and other conditions established in the environmental impact statement or during its review and committed as part of the decision shall be implemented by the lead agency or other appropriate consenting agency. The lead agency shall:

~~(a1)~~ Include appropriate conditions in grants, permits, or other approvals; ~~and~~:

~~(b2)~~ Condition funding of actions on mitigation.

~~(b) The lead or cooperating agency should, where relevant and appropriate, incorporate mitigation measures that address or ameliorate significant adverse human health and environmental effects of proposed Federal actions that disproportionately and adversely affect communities with environmental justice concerns.~~

~~(c) Upon request, inform cooperating or participating agencies on progress in carrying out mitigation measures that they have proposed and were adopted by making the decision. The lead or cooperating agency shall prepare a monitoring and compliance plan when the environmental assessment or environmental impact statement relies on mitigation as a component of the proposed action to analyze the reasonably foreseeable environmental effects, including to determine the significance of those effects, and the agency incorporates the mitigation into a record of decision, finding of no significant impact, or separate document, consistent with the following:~~

~~(1) Contents. The agency should tailor the plan to the complexity of the mitigation committed to and include:~~

~~(i) A basic description of the mitigation measure or measures;~~

~~(ii) The parties responsible for monitoring and implementing the mitigation;~~

~~(iii) If appropriate, how monitoring information will be made publicly available;~~

~~(iv) The anticipated timeframe for implementing and completing mitigation;~~

~~(v) The standards for determining compliance with the mitigation and the consequences of non-compliance; and~~

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(vi) How the mitigation will be funded.

(2) No ongoing Federal action. An agency does not need to supplement its environmental impact statement or environmental assessment or revise its record of decision or finding of no significant impact or separate decision document based solely on new information developed through the monitoring and compliance plan.

~~(d) Upon request, publish the results of relevant monitoring.~~

PART 1506—OTHER REQUIREMENTS OF NEPA

Sec.

1506.1 Limitations on actions during NEPA process.

1506.2 Elimination of duplication with State, Tribal, and local procedures.

1506.3 Adoption.

1506.4 Combining documents.

1506.5 Agency responsibility for environmental documents.

1506.6 ~~Public involvement.~~ [Reserved]

1506.7 Further guidance.

1506.8 Proposals for legislation.

1506.9 ~~Proposals for regulations.~~

~~1506.10~~ Filing requirements.

1506.~~11~~10 Timing of agency action.

1506.~~12~~11 Emergencies.

1506.12 Innovative approaches to NEPA reviews.

1506.13 Effective date.

Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321–4347; 42 U.S.C. 4371–4375; 42 U.S.C. 7609; and E.O. 11514, 35 FR 4247, 3 CFR, 1966–1970, Comp., p. 902, as amended by E.O. 11991, 42 FR 26967, 3 CFR, 1977 Comp., p. 123; ~~and E.O. 13807, 82 FR 40463, 3 CFR, 2017, Comp., p. 369.~~

§ 1506.1 Limitations on actions during NEPA process.

(a) Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section, until an agency issues a finding of no significant impact, as provided in § 1501.6 of this subchapter, or record of decision, as provided in § 1505.2 of this subchapter, no action concerning the proposal may be taken that would:

(1) Have an adverse environmental ~~impac~~effect; or

(2) Limit the choice of reasonable alternatives.

(b) If ~~any~~an agency is considering an application from a non-Federal entity and is aware that the applicant is about to take an action within the agency's jurisdiction that would meet either of the criteria in paragraph (a) of this section, then the agency shall promptly notify the applicant that the agency will take appropriate action to ensure that the objectives and procedures of NEPA

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are achieved. This section does not preclude development by applicants of plans or designs or performance of other activities necessary to support an application for Federal, State, Tribal, or local permits or assistance. An agency considering a proposed action for Federal funding may authorize such activities, including, but not limited to, acquisition of interests in land (e.g., fee simple, rights-of-way, and conservation easements), purchase of long lead-time equipment, and purchase options made by applicants, if the agency determines that such activities would not limit the choice of reasonable alternatives and notifies the applicant that the agency retains discretion to select any reasonable alternative or the no action alternative regardless of any potential prior activity taken by the applicant prior to the conclusion of the NEPA process.

(c) While work on a ~~required~~ programmatic environmental review is in progress and the action is not covered by an existing programmatic review, agencies shall not undertake in the interim any major Federal action covered by the program that may significantly affect the quality of the human environment unless such action:

- (1) Is justified independently of the program;
- (2) Is itself accompanied by an adequate environmental review; and

(3) Will not prejudice the ultimate decision on the program. Interim action prejudices the ultimate decision on the program when it tends to determine subsequent development or limit alternatives.

§ 1506.2 Elimination of duplication with State, Tribal, and local procedures.

(a) Federal agencies are authorized to cooperate with State, Tribal, and local agencies that are responsible for preparing environmental documents, including those prepared pursuant to section 102(2)(~~GD~~) of NEPA.

(b) To the fullest extent practicable unless specifically prohibited by law, agencies shall cooperate with State, Tribal, and local agencies to reduce duplication between NEPA and State, Tribal, and local requirements, including through use of studies, analysis, and decisions developed by State, Tribal, or local agencies. Except for cases covered by paragraph (a) of this section, such cooperation shall include, to the fullest extent practicable:

- (1) Joint planning processes.
- (2) Joint environmental research and studies.
- (3) Joint public hearings (except where otherwise provided by statute).
- (4) Joint environmental assessments.

(c) To the fullest extent practicable unless specifically prohibited by law, agencies shall cooperate with State, Tribal, and local agencies to reduce duplication between NEPA and comparable State, Tribal, and local requirements. Such cooperation shall include, to the fullest

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extent practicable, joint environmental impact statements. In such cases, one or more Federal agencies and one or more State, Tribal, or local agencies shall be joint lead agencies. Where State or Tribal laws or local ordinances have environmental impact statement or similar requirements in addition to but not in conflict with those in NEPA, Federal agencies may cooperate in fulfilling these requirements, as well as those of Federal laws, so that one document will comply with all applicable laws.

(d) To better integrate environmental impact statements into State, Tribal, or local planning processes, environmental impact statements shall discuss any inconsistency of a proposed action with any approved State, Tribal, or local plan or law (whether or not federally sanctioned). Where an inconsistency exists, the statement should describe the extent to which the agency would reconcile its proposed action with the plan or law. While the statement should discuss any inconsistencies, NEPA does not require reconciliation.

§ 1506.3 Adoption.

(a) *Generally.* An agency may adopt a ~~Federal~~ draft or final environmental impact statement, environmental assessment, or portion thereof, or categorical exclusion determination ~~provided that the statement, assessment, portion thereof, or determination meets the standards for an adequate statement, assessment, or determination under the regulations in this subchapter, consistent with this section.~~

(b) *Environmental impact statements.* ~~An agency may adopt a draft or final environmental impact statement, or portion thereof, provided that the adopting agency conducts an independent review of the statement and concludes that it meets the standards for an adequate statement, pursuant to the regulations in this subchapter and the adopting agency's NEPA procedures.~~

(1) If the actions covered by the original environmental impact statement and the proposed action are substantially the same, the adopting agency shall republish and file it as a final statement consistent with § 1506.40.9 of this subchapter. If the actions are not substantially the same ~~or the adopting agency determines that the statement requires supplementation~~, the adopting agency shall treat the statement as a draft, supplement or reevaluate it as necessary, and republish and file it, consistent with § 1506.40.9 of this subchapter.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (b)(1) of this section, if a cooperating agency does not issue a record of decision jointly or concurrently consistent with § 1505.2 of this subchapter, a cooperating agency may adopt in its issue a record of decision ~~without republishing~~ adopting the environmental impact statement of a lead agency ~~when, after an independent review of the statement, the cooperating agency concludes that its comments and suggestions have been satisfied without republication.~~

(c) *Environmental assessments.* An agency may adopt an environmental assessment, or portion thereof, if the actions covered by the original environmental assessment and the proposed action are substantially the same, and the assessment meets the standards for an adequate environmental assessment under the regulations in this subchapter and the adopting agency's NEPA procedures. If the actions are not substantially the same or the adopting agency

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determines that the environmental assessment requires supplementation, the adopting agency may adopt the environmental assessment, and supplement or reevaluate it as necessary, in its finding of no significant impact and provide notice consistent with § 1501.6 of this subchapter.

(d) *Categorical exclusions* determinations. An agency may adopt another agency's determination that a categorical exclusion applies to a particular proposed action if the action covered by ~~the original categorical exclusion~~that determination and the adopting agency's proposed action are substantially the same.

(1) The adopting agency shall document ~~the~~its adoption, including the determination that its proposed action is substantially the same as the action covered by the original categorical exclusion determination and that there are no extraordinary circumstances present that require the preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

(2) The adopting agency shall publish its adoption determination on an agency website or otherwise make it publicly available.

(e) *Identification of certain circumstances*. The adopting agency shall specify if one of the following circumstances is present:

(1) The agency is adopting an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement that is not final within the agency that prepared it.

(2) The action assessed in the environmental assessment or environmental impact statement is the subject of a referral under part 1504 of this subchapter.

(3) The environmental assessment or environmental impact statement's adequacy is the subject of a judicial action that is not final.

§ 1506.4 Combining documents.

Agencies should combine, to the fullest extent practicable, any environmental document with any other agency document to reduce duplication and paperwork.

§ 1506.5 Agency responsibility for environmental documents.

(a) ~~Responsibility~~. The agency is responsible for the accuracy, scope (§ 1501.~~39~~be) of this subchapter), and content of environmental documents and shall ensure they are prepared with professional and scientific integrity, using reliable data and resources, regardless of whether they are prepared by the agency or by an applicant or a contractor under the supervision of the agency or by the applicant or project sponsor under procedures the agency adopts pursuant to section 107(f) of NEPA and § 1507.3(c)(1) of this subchapter. The agency shall exercise its independent judgment and briefly document its determination that an environmental document meets the standards under NEPA, the regulations in this subchapter, and the agency's NEPA procedures.

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(b) ~~Information.~~ An agency may require an applicant to submit environmental information for possible use by the agency in preparing an environmental document. An agency also may ~~direct an applicant or~~ authorize a contractor to prepare an environmental ~~document under assessment or environmental impact statement under~~ the supervision of the agency; ~~and may authorize a contractor to draft a finding of no significant impact or record of decision, but the agency is responsible for its accuracy, scope, and contents.~~

(1) The agency should assist the applicant by outlining the types of information required ~~or,~~ for the preparation of environmental documents; ~~The agency~~ shall provide guidance to the ~~applicant or~~ contractor and participate in ~~their and supervise the document's~~ preparation.

(2) The agency shall independently evaluate the information submitted ~~or and~~ the environmental document and shall be responsible for ~~its their~~ accuracy, scope, and contents, ~~and document its evaluation in the environmental document.~~

(3) The agency shall include in the environmental document the names and qualifications of the persons preparing environmental documents, and conducting the independent evaluation of any information submitted or environmental documents prepared by ~~an applicant or a~~ contractor, such as in the list of preparers for environmental impact statements (§ 1502.18 of this ~~sub~~chapter). It is the intent of this paragraph (b)(3) that acceptable work not be redone, but that it be verified by the agency.

(4) ~~Contractors-The lead agency or applicants preparing environmental assessments or environmental impact statements~~ cooperating agency, where appropriate, shall ~~submit~~prepare a disclosure statement ~~to for~~ the ~~lead agency contractor's execution specifying~~ that ~~specifies any the contractor has no~~ financial or other interest in the outcome of the action. Such statement need not include privileged or confidential trade secrets or other confidential business information.

(5) Nothing in this section is intended to prohibit ~~any an~~ agency from requesting any person, including the applicant, to submit information to it or to prohibit any person from submitting information to ~~any an~~ agency for use in preparing environmental documents.

§ 1506.6 Public involvement. [Reserved]

~~Agencies shall:~~

~~(a) Make diligent efforts to involve the public in preparing and implementing their NEPA procedures (§ 1507.3 of this chapter).~~

~~(b) Provide public notice of NEPA-related hearings, public meetings, and other opportunities for public involvement, and the availability of environmental documents so as to inform those persons and agencies who may be interested or affected by their proposed actions. When selecting appropriate methods for providing public notice, agencies shall consider the ability of affected persons and agencies to access electronic media.~~

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~~(1) In all cases, the agency shall notify those who have requested notice on an individual action.~~

~~(2) In the case of an action with effects of national concern, notice shall include publication in the *Federal Register*. An agency may notify organizations that have requested regular notice.~~

~~(3) In the case of an action with effects primarily of local concern, the notice may include:~~

~~(i) Notice to State, Tribal, and local agencies that may be interested or affected by the proposed action.~~

~~(ii) Notice to interested or affected State, Tribal, and local governments.~~

~~(iii) Following the affected State or Tribe's public notice procedures for comparable actions.~~

~~(iv) Publication in local newspapers (in papers of general circulation rather than legal papers).~~

~~(v) Notice through other local media.~~

~~(vi) Notice to potentially interested community organizations including small business associations.~~

~~(vii) Publication in newsletters that may be expected to reach potentially interested persons.~~

~~(viii) Direct mailing to owners and occupants of nearby or affected property.~~

~~(ix) Posting of notice on and off site in the area where the action is to be located.~~

~~(x) Notice through electronic media (e.g., a project or agency website, email, or social media).~~

~~(e) Hold or sponsor public hearings, public meetings, or other opportunities for public involvement whenever appropriate or in accordance with statutory requirements applicable to the agency. Agencies may conduct public hearings and public meetings by means of electronic communication except where another format is required by law. When selecting appropriate methods for public involvement, agencies shall consider the ability of affected entities to access electronic media.~~

(d) Solicit appropriate information from the public.

~~(e) Explain in its procedures where interested persons can get information or status reports on environmental impact statements and other elements of the NEPA process.~~

(f) Make environmental impact statements, the comments received, and any underlying documents available to the public pursuant to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, as amended (5 U.S.C. 552).

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§ 1506.7 Further guidance.

(a) The Council may provide further guidance concerning NEPA and its procedures ~~consistent with Executive Order 13807, Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure Projects (August 5, 2017), Executive Order 13891, Promoting the Rule of Law Through Improved Agency Guidance Documents (October 9, 2019), and any other applicable Executive orders.~~

(b) To the extent that Council guidance issued prior to ~~September 14, 2020~~[EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE FINAL RULE] is in conflict with this subchapter, the provisions of this subchapter apply.

§ 1506.8 Proposals for legislation.

(a) When developing legislation, agencies shall integrate the NEPA process for proposals for legislation significantly affecting the quality of the human environment with the legislative process of the Congress. Technical drafting assistance does not by itself constitute a legislative proposal. Only the agency that has primary responsibility for the subject matter involved will prepare a legislative environmental impact statement.

(b) A legislative environmental impact statement is the detailed statement required by law to be included in an agency's recommendation or report on a legislative proposal to Congress. A legislative environmental impact statement shall be considered part of the formal transmittal of a legislative proposal to Congress; however, it may be transmitted to Congress up to 30 days later ~~in order~~ to allow time for completion of an accurate statement that can serve as the basis for public and Congressional debate. The statement must be available in time for Congressional hearings and deliberations.

(c) Preparation of a legislative environmental impact statement shall conform to the requirements of the regulations in this subchapter, except as follows:

(1) There need not be a scoping process.

(2) Agencies shall prepare the legislative statement in the same manner as a draft environmental impact statement and need not prepare a final statement unless any of the following conditions exist. In such cases, the agency shall prepare and publish the statements consistent with §§ 1503.1 of this subchapter and 1506.11:

(i) A Congressional committee with jurisdiction over the proposal has a rule requiring both draft and final environmental impact statements.

(ii) The proposal results from a study process required by statute (such as those required by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1271 *et seq.*)).

(iii) Legislative approval is sought for Federal or federally assisted construction or other projects that the agency recommends be located at specific geographic locations. For proposals

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requiring an environmental impact statement for the acquisition of space by the General Services Administration, a draft statement shall accompany the Prospectus or the 11(b) Report of Building Project Surveys to the Congress, and a final statement shall be completed before site acquisition.

(iv) The agency decides to prepare draft and final statements.

(d) Comments on the legislative statement shall be given to the lead agency, which shall forward them along with its own responses to the Congressional committees with jurisdiction.

§ 1506.9 ~~Proposals for regulations.~~

~~Where the proposed action is the promulgation of a rule or regulation, procedures and documentation pursuant to other statutory or Executive order requirements may satisfy one or more requirements of this subchapter. When a procedure or document satisfies one or more requirements of this subchapter, the agency may substitute it for the corresponding requirements in this subchapter and need not carry out duplicative procedures or documentation. Agencies shall identify which corresponding requirements in this subchapter are satisfied and consult with the Council to confirm such determinations.~~

§ 1506.10 Filing requirements.

(a) Agencies shall file environmental impact statements together with comments and responses with the Environmental Protection Agency ~~(EPA)~~,² Office of Federal Activities, consistent with ~~EPA's~~ the Environmental Protection Agency's procedures.

(b) Agencies shall file statements with the ~~EPA~~ Environmental Protection Agency no earlier than they are also transmitted to participating agencies and made available to the public. ~~EPA~~ The Environmental Protection Agency may issue guidelines to agencies to implement its responsibilities under this section and § 1506.~~4~~10.

(c) Agencies shall notify the Environmental Protection Agency when they adopt an environmental impact statement consistent with § 1506.3(b).

§ 1506.10 Timing of agency action.

(a) The Environmental Protection Agency shall publish a notice in the *Federal Register* each week of the environmental impact statements filed since its prior notice. The minimum time periods set forth in this section are calculated from the date of publication of this notice.

(b) Unless otherwise provided by law, including statutory provisions for combining a final environmental impact statement and record of decision, Federal agencies ~~may~~ shall not make or issue a record of decision under § 1505.2 of this subchapter for the proposed action until the later of the following dates:

(1) 90 days after publication of the notice described in paragraph (a) of this section for a draft environmental impact statement.

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(2) 30 days after publication of the notice described in paragraph (a) of this section for a final environmental impact statement.

(c) An agency may make an exception to the rule on timing set forth in paragraph (b) of this section for a proposed action in the following circumstances:

(1) Some agencies have ~~a~~ formally established administrative review~~appeal~~ processes (e.g., appeals, objections, protests), which may be initiated prior to or after filing and publication of the final environmental impact statement with the Environmental Protection Agency that allows other agencies or the public to ~~take appeals on~~ raise issues about a decision and make their views known. In such cases where a real opportunity exists to alter the decision, the agency may make and record the decision at the same time it publishes the environmental impact statement. This means that the period for administrative review~~appeal~~ of the decision and the 30-day period set forth in paragraph (b)(2) of this section may run concurrently. In such cases, the environmental impact statement shall explain the timing and the public's right of ~~appeal~~administrative review and provide notification consistent with § 1506.10~~9~~; or

(2) An agency engaged in rulemaking under the Administrative Procedure Act or other statute for the purpose of protecting the public health or safety may waive the time period in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, publish a decision on the final rule simultaneously with publication of the notice of the availability of the final environmental impact statement, and provide notification consistent with § 1506.10, as described in paragraph (a) of this section.

(d) If an agency files the final environmental impact statement within 90 days of the filing of the draft environmental impact statement with the Environmental Protection Agency, the ~~decision-making period minimum 30-day~~ and ~~the 90-day periods~~ may run concurrently. However, subject to paragraph (e) of this section, agencies shall allow at least 45 days for comments on draft statements.

(e) The lead agency may extend the minimum periods in paragraph (b) of this section and provide notification consistent with § 1506.10. Upon a showing by the lead agency of compelling reasons of national policy, the Environmental Protection Agency may reduce the minimum periods and, upon a showing by any other Federal agency of compelling reasons of national policy, also may extend the minimum periods, but only after consultation with the lead agency. The lead agency may modify the minimum periods when necessary to comply with other specific statutory requirements: (§ 1507.3(~~df~~)(42) of this subchapter). Failure to file timely comments shall not be a sufficient reason for extending a period. If the lead agency does not concur with the extension of time, ~~EPA~~the Environmental Protection Agency may not extend it for more than 30 days. When the Environmental Protection Agency reduces or extends any period ~~of time~~ it shall notify the Council.

§ 1506.11~~2~~ Emergencies.

Where emergency circumstances make it necessary to take an action with significant environmental impact~~effects~~ without observing the provisions of the regulations in this subchapter, the Federal agency taking the action should consult with the Council about

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alternative arrangements for compliance with section 102(2)(C) of NEPA. Agencies and the Council will limit such arrangements to actions necessary to control the immediate impacts of the emergency. ~~Other actions remain subject to NEPA review~~Alternative arrangements do not waive the requirement to comply with the statute, but establish an alternative means for NEPA compliance.

§ 1506.12 Innovative approaches to NEPA reviews.

(a) The Council may authorize an innovative approach to NEPA compliance that allows an agency to comply with the Act following procedures modified from the requirements of the regulations in this subchapter, to facilitate sound and efficient environmental review for actions to address extreme environmental challenges consistent with section 101 of NEPA. Examples of extreme environmental challenges may relate to sea level rise, increased wildfire risk, or bolstering the resilience of infrastructure to increased disaster risk due to climate change; water scarcity; degraded water or air quality; disproportionate and adverse effects on communities with environmental justice concerns; imminent or reasonably foreseeable loss of historic, cultural, or Tribal resources; species loss; and impaired ecosystem health.

(b) The Council may approve an innovative approach if it is consistent with this section and such approval does not waive the requirement to comply with the statute, but establishes an alternative means for NEPA compliance.

(c) An agency request for an innovative approach shall:

(1) Identify each provision of this subchapter from which the agency seeks a modification and how the innovative approach the agency proposes to ensure compliance with NEPA;

(2) Explain the extreme environmental challenge the approach would address, why the alternative means are needed to address the challenge, and how the alternative means would facilitate the sound and efficient environmental review; and

(3) Consult with any potential cooperating agencies and include a summary of their comments.

(d) The Council shall evaluate the agency's request within 60 days to determine if it meets the requirements in this section. The Council may:

(1) Approve the request for modification;

(2) Approve the request for modification with revisions; or

(3) Deny the request for modification.

(e) The Council shall publish on its website any request for modification that it has approved, approved with revisions, or denied.

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§ 1506.13 Effective date.

The regulations in this subchapter apply to any NEPA process begun after ~~September 14, 2020~~[EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE FINAL RULE]. An agency may apply the regulations in this subchapter to ongoing activities and environmental documents begun before ~~September 14, 2020~~[EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE FINAL RULE].

PART 1507—AGENCY COMPLIANCE

Sec.

1507.1 Compliance.

1507.2 Agency capability to comply.

1507.3 Agency NEPA procedures.

1507.4 Agency NEPA program information.

Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321–4347; 42 U.S.C. 4371–4375; 42 U.S.C. 7609; and E.O. 11514, 35 FR 4247, 3 CFR, 1966–1970, Comp., p. 902, as amended by E.O. 11991, 42 FR 26967, 3 CFR, 1977 Comp., p. 123.

§ 1507.1 Compliance.

All agencies of the Federal Government shall comply with the regulations in this subchapter. It is the intent of these regulations to allow each agency flexibility in adapting its implementing procedures authorized by § 1507.3 to the requirements of other applicable laws.

§ 1507.2 Agency capability to comply.

Each agency shall be capable (in terms of personnel and other resources) of complying with the requirements of NEPA and the regulations in this subchapter. Such compliance may include use of the resources of other agencies, applicants, and other participants in the NEPA process, but the agency using the resources shall itself have sufficient capability to evaluate what others do for it and account for the contributions of others. Agencies shall:

(a) ~~Fulfill the requirements of section 102(2)(A) of NEPA to utilize a systematic, interdisciplinary approach that will ensure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts in planning and in decision making that may have an impact on the human environment.~~ Agencies shall designate a senior agency official to be responsible for overall review of agency NEPA compliance, including resolving implementation issues, and a Chief Public Engagement Officer to be responsible for facilitating community engagement across the agency and, where appropriate, the provision of technical assistance to communities.

(b) ~~Fulfill the requirements of section 102(2)(A) of NEPA to utilize a systematic, interdisciplinary approach that will ensure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts in planning and in decision making that may have an impact on the human environment.~~

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(~~cb~~) Identify methods and procedures required by section 102(2)(B) of NEPA to ensure that presently unquantified environmental amenities and values may be given appropriate consideration.

(~~de~~) Prepare adequate environmental impact statements pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of NEPA and cooperate on the development of statements in the areas where the agency has jurisdiction by law or special expertise or is authorized to develop and enforce environmental standards.

(e) Ensure environmental documents are prepared with professional integrity, including scientific integrity, consistent with section 102(2)(D) of NEPA.

(f) Make use of reliable data and resources in carrying out their responsibilities under NEPA, consistent with section 102(2)(E) of NEPA.

(g) Study, develop, and describe technically and economically feasible alternatives, consistent with section 102(2)(F) of NEPA.

(~~hd~~) Study, develop, and describe alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal that involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources, consistent with section 102(2)(~~HE~~) of NEPA.

(~~ie~~) Comply with the requirements of section 102(2)(~~KH~~) of NEPA that the agency initiate and utilize ecological information in the planning and development of resource-oriented projects.

(~~if~~) Fulfill the requirements of sections 102(2)(~~IF~~), 102(2)(~~JG~~), and 102(2)(~~LI~~), of NEPA, and Executive Order 11514, Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality, section 2, as amended by Executive Order 11991, Relating to Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality, and Executive Order 13807, Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting for Infrastructure Projects.

§ 1507.3 Agency NEPA procedures.

(a) The Council has determined that the categorical exclusions contained in agency NEPA procedures as of ~~September 14, 2020~~ [EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE FINAL RULE] are consistent with this subchapter.

(b) No more than ~~1236~~ months after ~~September 14, 2020~~ [EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE FINAL RULE], or 9 months after the establishment of an agency, whichever comes later, each agency shall develop or revise, as necessary, proposed procedures to implement the regulations in this subchapter. Agencies shall adopt, as necessary, agency NEPA procedures to improve agency facilitate efficient decision making, and ensure that agencies make decisions in accordance with the policies and requirements of the Act. Act's procedural requirements. When the agency is a department, it may be efficient for major subunits (with the consent of the department) to adopt their own procedures.

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(1) Each agency shall consult with the Council while developing or revising its proposed procedures and before publishing them in the *Federal Register* for comment. Agencies with similar programs should consult with each other and the Council to coordinate their procedures, especially for programs requesting similar information from applicants.

(2) Agencies shall provide an opportunity for public review and review by the Council for conformity with the Act and the regulations in this subchapter before ~~adopting~~ issuing their final procedures. The Council shall complete its review within 30 days of the receipt of the proposed final procedures. Once in effect, ~~the agency~~ agencies shall publish ~~their~~ its NEPA procedures and ensure that they are readily available to the public. Agencies shall continue to review their policies and procedures, in consultation with the Council, to revise them as necessary to ensure full compliance with the purposes and provisions of the Act.

(3) The issuance or update of agency procedures is not subject to NEPA review under this subchapter.

~~(c) Agencies shall adopt, as necessary, agency NEPA procedures to improve agency efficiency and ensure that agencies make decisions in accordance with the Act's procedural requirements. Such Agency procedures shall include:~~

(1) ~~Designating~~ the major decision points for the agency's principal programs and actions subject to NEPA, likely to have a significant effect on the human environment and assuring ensuring that the NEPA process begins at the earliest reasonable time, consistent with § 1501.2 of this subchapter, and aligns with the corresponding decision points;

(2) ~~Requiring~~ that relevant environmental documents, comments, and responses be part of the record in formal rulemaking ~~and/or~~ adjudicatory proceedings;

(3) Integrate the environmental review into the decision-making process by Rrequiring that relevant environmental documents, comments, and responses accompany the proposal through existing agency review processes so that decision makers use them ~~statement~~ in making decisions;

(4) ~~Requiring~~ that the alternatives considered by the decision maker are encompassed by the range of alternatives discussed in the relevant environmental documents and that the decision maker consider the alternatives described in the environmental documents. If another decision document accompanies the relevant environmental documents to the decision maker, agencies are encouraged to make available to the public before the decision is made any part of that document that relates to the comparison of alternatives;

(5) ~~Requiring~~ the combination of environmental documents with other agency documents to facilitate sound and efficient decision making and avoid duplication, where consistent with applicable statutory requirements; ~~Agencies may designate and rely on one or more procedures or documents under other statutes or Executive orders as satisfying some or all of the requirements in this subchapter, and substitute such procedures and documentation to reduce duplication. When an agency substitutes one or more procedures or documents for the~~

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requirements in this subchapter, the agency shall identify the respective requirements that are satisfied.

~~(6)~~ Include ~~those procedures required by §§ 1501.2(b)(4) (assistance to applicants); and 1506.6(e) of this chapter (status information).~~

~~(7)~~ Include ~~specific criteria for and identification of those typical classes of action that normally;~~

~~(i) Which normally do not~~ Require environmental impact statements; ~~and~~

~~(ii) Which normally do not~~ Require environmental assessments but not necessarily environmental impact statements;

~~(8)~~ Establish categorical exclusions and identify extraordinary circumstances. When establishing new or revising existing categorical exclusions, agencies shall: Which normally do not require either an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment and do not have a significant effect on the human environment (categorical exclusions (§ 1501.4 of this chapter)). Any procedures under this section shall provide for extraordinary circumstances in which a normally excluded action may have a significant environmental effect. Agency NEPA procedures shall

~~(i) Identify when documentation of a determination that a categorical exclusion determination applies to a proposed action is required;~~

~~(ii) Substantiate the proposed new or revised categorical exclusion with sufficient information to conclude that the category of actions does not have a significant effect, individually or in the aggregate, on the human environment and provide this substantiation in a written record that is made publicly available as part of the notice and comment process (§ 1507.3(b)(1) and (2)); and~~

~~(iii) Describe how the agency will consider extraordinary circumstances in determining whether additional analysis in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement is required;~~

~~(9) Include a process for reviewing the agency's categorical exclusions at least every 10 years;~~

~~(10)~~ Include a process ~~Procedures~~ for introducing a supplement to an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement into its formal administrative record, if such a record exists;

~~(11)~~ Explain in its procedures where interested persons can get information or status reports on environmental impact statements, environmental assessments, and other elements of the NEPA process; and;

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(12) Where applicable, include procedures to allow a project sponsor to prepare environmental assessments and environmental impact statements under the agency's supervision consistent with § 1506.5 of this subchapter.

(d) ~~(f) Agency procedures also may:~~

~~(1) Agency procedures should identify those activities or decisions that are not subject to NEPA, including:~~

~~(1) Activities or decisions expressly exempt from NEPA under another statute;~~

~~(2) Include processes for consideration of emergency actions that would not result in significant effects Activities or decisions where compliance with NEPA would clearly and fundamentally conflict with the requirements of another statute;~~

~~(3) (1) Include specific criteria for providing limited exceptions to the provisions of the regulations in this subchapter for classified proposals. These are proposed actions that are specifically authorized under criteria established by an Executive order or statute to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy and are in fact properly classified pursuant to such Executive order or statute. Agencies may safeguard and restrict from public dissemination environmental assessments and environmental impact statements that address classified proposals in accordance with agencies' own regulations applicable to classified information. Agencies should organize these documents so that classified portions are included as annexes, so that the agencies can make the unclassified portions available to the public. Activities or decisions where compliance with NEPA would be inconsistent with Congressional intent expressed in another statute; and~~

~~(4) (2) Provide for periods of time other than those presented in § 1506.10+ of this subchapter when necessary to comply with other specific statutory requirements, including requirements of lead or cooperating agencies. Activities or decisions that are non-major Federal actions;~~

~~(5) Activities or decisions that are non-discretionary actions, in whole or in part, for which the agency lacks authority to consider environmental effects as part of its decision-making process; and~~

~~(6) Actions where the agency has determined that another statute's requirements serve the function of agency compliance with the Act.~~

~~(e) Agency procedures shall comply with the regulations in this subchapter except where compliance would be inconsistent with statutory requirements and shall include:~~

~~(1) Those procedures required by §§ 1501.2(b)(4) (assistance to applicants) and 1506.6(e) of this chapter (status information).~~

~~(2) Specific criteria for and identification of those typical classes of action:~~

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~~(i) Which normally do require environmental impact statements.~~

~~(ii) Which normally do not require either an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment and do not have a significant effect on the human environment (categorical exclusions (§ 1501.4 of this chapter)). Any procedures under this section shall provide for extraordinary circumstances in which a normally excluded action may have a significant environmental effect. Agency NEPA procedures shall identify when documentation of a categorical exclusion determination is required.~~

~~(iii) Which normally require environmental assessments but not necessarily environmental impact statements.~~

~~(3) Procedures for introducing a supplement to an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement into its formal administrative record, if such a record exists.~~

~~(f) Agency procedures may:~~

~~(1) Include specific criteria for providing limited exceptions to the provisions of the regulations in this subchapter for classified proposals. These are proposed actions that are specifically authorized under criteria established by an Executive order or statute to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy and are in fact properly classified pursuant to such Executive order or statute. Agencies may safeguard and restrict from public dissemination environmental assessments and environmental impact statements that address classified proposals in accordance with agencies' own regulations applicable to classified information. Agencies should organize these documents so that classified portions are included as annexes, so that the agencies can make the unclassified portions available to the public.~~

~~(2) Provide for periods of time other than those presented in § 1506.11 of this chapter when necessary to comply with other specific statutory requirements, including requirements of lead or cooperating agencies.~~

~~(3) Provide that, where there is a lengthy period between the agency's decision to prepare an environmental impact statement and the time of actual preparation, the agency may publish the notice of intent required by § 1501.9(d) of this chapter at a reasonable time in advance of preparation of the draft statement. Agency procedures shall provide for publication of supplemental notices to inform the public of a pause in its preparation of an environmental impact statement and for any agency decision to withdraw its notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.~~

~~(4) Adopt procedures to combine its environmental assessment process with its scoping process.~~

~~(5) Establish a process that allows the agency to use a categorical exclusion listed in another agency's NEPA procedures after consulting with that agency to ensure the use of the categorical exclusion is appropriate. The process should ensure documentation of the consultation and~~

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~~identify to the public those categorical exclusions the agency may use for its proposed actions. Then, the agency may apply the categorical exclusion to its proposed actions.~~

§ 1507.4 Agency NEPA program information.

(a) To allow agencies and the public to efficiently and effectively access information about NEPA reviews, agencies shall provide for agency websites or other ~~means~~information technology tools to make available ~~environmental~~ documents, relevant notices, and other relevant information for use by agencies, applicants, and interested persons. ~~Such~~The website or other such means of publication ~~may~~shall include the agency's NEPA procedures, including those of subunits, and a list of environmental assessments and environmental impact statements that are in development and complete. As appropriate, agencies also should include:

(1) Agency planning and ~~environmental~~other documents that guide agency management and provide for public involvement in agency planning processes;

(2) ~~A directory of pending and final~~Eenvironmental documents;

(3) Agency policy documents, orders, terminology, and explanatory materials regarding agency decision-making processes;

(4) Agency planning program information, plans, and planning tools; and

(5) A database searchable by geographic information, document status, document type, and project type.

(b) Agencies shall provide for efficient and effective interagency coordination of their environmental program websites, ~~including and other information technology tools, such as~~ use of shared databases or application programming interfaces, in their implementation of NEPA and related authorities.

PART 1508—DEFINITIONS

Sec.

1508.1 Definitions.

1508.2 [Reserved]

Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321–4347; 42 U.S.C. 4371–4375; 42 U.S.C. 7609; and E.O. 11514, 35 FR 4247, 3 CFR, 1966–1970, Comp., p. 902, as amended by E.O. 11991, 42 FR 26967, 3 CFR, 1977 Comp., p. 123.

§ 1508.1 Definitions.

The following definitions apply to the regulations in this subchapter. Federal agencies shall use these terms uniformly throughout the Federal Government.

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(a) *Act* or *NEPA* means the National Environmental Policy Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321, *et seq.*).

(b) *Affecting* means will or may have an effect on.

(c) *Authorization* means any license, permit, approval, finding, determination, or other administrative decision issued by an agency that is required or authorized under Federal law in order to implement a proposed action.

(d) *Categorical exclusion* means a category of actions that ~~the~~an agency has determined, in its agency NEPA procedures (§ 1507.3 of this subchapter) or pursuant to § 1501.4(c) of this subchapter, normally does not have a significant effect on the human environment.

(e) *Cooperating agency* means any Federal, ~~agency (and a~~ State, Tribal, or local agency with ~~agreement of the lead agency) other than a lead agency that has~~ jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposal that has been designated by the lead agency (or a reasonable alternative) for legislation or other major Federal action that may significantly affect the quality of the human environment.

(f) *Council* means the Council on Environmental Quality established by title II of the Act.

(g) *Effects* or *impacts* means changes to the human environment from the proposed action or alternatives that are reasonably foreseeable and include the following:

(1) Direct effects, which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.

(2) Indirect effects, which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth-inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems.

(3) Cumulative effects, which are effects on the environment that result from the incremental effects of the action when added to the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can result from actions with individually minor but collectively significant actionseffects taking place over a period of time.

(4) Effects include ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, ~~whether direct, indirect, or cumulative such as disproportionate and adverse effects on communities with environmental justice concerns, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative.~~ Effects also include climate change-related effects, including the contribution of a proposed action and its alternatives to climate change, and the reasonably foreseeable effects of climate change on the proposed action and its alternatives. Effects may also include those

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resulting from actions which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects, even if on balance the agency believes that the effects will be beneficial.

(h) *Environmental assessment* means a concise public document ~~prepared by, for which~~ a Federal agency ~~to aid is responsible, for an agency's compliance with action that is not likely to have a significant effect or for which the Act and significance of the effects is unknown~~ (§ 1501.5 of this subchapter), that is used to support ~~its~~an agency's determination of whether to prepare an environmental impact statement (part 1502 of this subchapter) or a finding of no significant impact, ~~as provided in~~ (§ 1501.6 of this subchapter).

(i) *Environmental document* means an environmental assessment, environmental impact statement, documented categorical exclusion determination, finding of no significant impact, record of decision, or notice of intent.

(j) *Environmental impact statement* means a detailed written statement ~~as that is~~ required by section 102(2)(C) of NEPA.

(k) Environmental justice means the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in agency decision making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment so that people:

(1) Are fully protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects (including risks) and hazards, including those related to climate change, the cumulative impacts of environmental and other burdens, and the legacy of racism or other structural or systemic barriers; and

(2) Have equitable access to a healthy, sustainable, and resilient environment in which to live, play, work, learn, grow, worship, and engage in cultural and subsistence practices.

(l) Environmentally preferable alternative means the alternative or alternatives that will best promote the national environmental policy as expressed in section 101 of NEPA.

(m) Extraordinary circumstances are factors or circumstances that indicate a normally categorically excluded action may have a significant environmental effect. Examples of extraordinary circumstances include potential substantial effects on sensitive environmental resources, potential disproportionate and adverse effects on communities with environmental justice concerns, potential substantial effects associated with climate change, and potential adverse effects on historic properties or cultural resources.

(nk) *Federal agency* means all agencies of the Federal Government. It does not mean the Congress, the Judiciary, or the President, including the performance of staff functions for the President in his Executive Office. For the purposes of the regulations in this subchapter, Federal agency also includes States, units of general local government, and Tribal governments assuming NEPA responsibilities from a Federal agency pursuant to statute.

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(ol) *Finding of no significant impact* means a document by a Federal agency briefly presenting the agency's determination that and reasons why an action, not otherwise categorically excluded (§ 1501.4 of this subchapter), will not have a significant effect on the human environment and for which an environmental impact statement therefore will not be prepared.

(pm) *Human environment or environment* means comprehensively the natural and physical environment and the relationship of present and future generations ~~of Americans~~ with that environment. (See also the definition of “effects” in paragraph (g) of this section.)

(q) *Joint lead agency* means a Federal, State, Tribal, or local agency designated pursuant to § 1501.7(c) that shares the responsibilities of the lead agency for preparing the environmental impact statement or environmental assessment.

(rn) *Jurisdiction by law* means agency authority to approve, veto, or finance all or part of the proposal.

(se) *Lead agency* means the Federal agency or agencies, in that proposes the case of joint lead agencies, agency action or is designated pursuant to § 1501.7(c) for preparing or having ~~taken~~ primary responsibility for preparing the environmental impact statement or environmental assessment.

(tp) *Legislation* means a bill or legislative proposal to Congress developed by a Federal agency, but does not include requests for appropriations or legislation recommended by the President.

(uq) *Major Federal action or action* means an activity or decision action that the agency carrying out such action determines is subject to substantial Federal control and responsibility ~~subject to the following:~~

~~(1) Major Federal action does not include the following activities or decisions:~~

~~(i) Extraterritorial activities or decisions, which means agency activities or decisions with effects located entirely outside of the jurisdiction of the United States;~~

~~(ii) Activities or decisions that are non-discretionary and made in accordance with the agency's statutory authority;~~

~~(iii) Activities or decisions that do not result in final agency action under the Administrative Procedure Act or other statute that also includes a finality requirement;~~

~~(iv) Judicial or administrative civil or criminal enforcement actions;~~

~~(v) Funding assistance solely in the form of general revenue sharing funds with no Federal agency control over the subsequent use of such funds;~~

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~~(vi) Non-Federal projects with minimal Federal funding or minimal Federal involvement where the agency does not exercise sufficient control and responsibility over the outcome of the project; and~~

~~(vii) Loans, loan guarantees, or other forms of financial assistance where the Federal agency does not exercise sufficient control and responsibility over the effects of such assistance (for example, action does not include farm ownership and operating loan guarantees by the Farm Service Agency pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 1925 and 1941 through 1949 and business loan guarantees by the Small Business Administration pursuant to 15 U.S.C. 636(a), 636(m), and 695 through 697g).~~

~~(2) Major Federal actions may include new and continuing activities, including projects and programs entirely or partly financed, assisted, conducted, regulated, or approved by Federal agencies; new or revised agency rules, regulations, plans, policies, or procedures; and legislative proposals (§ 1506.8 of this chapter).~~

(13) Major Federal actions ~~tend to fall within one of the following categories~~generally include:

(i2) Granting authorizations, including permits, licenses, rights-of-way, or other authorizations. Major Federal actions may include new and continuing activities, including projects and programs entirely or partly financed, assisted, conducted, regulated, or approved by Federal agencies; new or revised agency rules, regulations, plans, policies, or procedures; and legislative proposals (§ 1506.8 of this chapter).

(ii) Adoption of official policy, such as rules, regulations, and interpretations adopted under the Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. 551 *et seq.*, or other statutes; implementation of treaties and international conventions or agreements, including those implemented pursuant to statute or regulation; formal documents establishing an agency's policies ~~that which~~ will result in or substantially alter agency programs.

(iii) Adoption of formal plans, such as official documents prepared or approved by Federal agencies, which prescribe alternative uses of Federal resources, upon which future agency actions will be based.

~~(iiiiv)~~ Adoption of programs, such as a group of concerted actions to implement a specific policy or plan; systematic and ~~connected~~related agency decisions allocating agency resources to implement a specific statutory program or executive directive.

~~(iv) Approval of~~Carrying out specific projects, such as construction or management activities ~~located in a defined geographic area. Projects include actions approved by permit or other regulatory decision as well as Federal and federally assisted activities.~~

(vi) Providing financial assistance, including through grants, cooperative agreements, loans, loan guarantees, or other forms of financial assistance, where the agency has the authority to deny in whole or in part the assistance due environmental effects, impose conditions on the

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receipt of the financial assistance to address environmental effects, or otherwise has sufficient control and responsibility over the subsequent use of the financial assistance or the effects of the activity for which the agency is providing the financial assistance.

(21) Major Federal actions does not include the following activities or decisions:

(i) Non-Federal actions:

(A) With no or minimal Federal funding; or

(B) With no or minimal Federal involvement where the Federal agency cannot control the outcome of the project;

(ii) Funding assistance solely in the form of general revenue sharing funds that do not provide Federal agency compliance or enforcement responsibility over the subsequent use of such funds;

(iii) Loans, loan guarantees, or other forms of financial assistance where a Federal agency does not exercise sufficient control and responsibility over the subsequent use of such financial assistance or the effects of the action;

(iv) Business loan guarantees provided by the Small Business Administration pursuant to section 7(a) or (b) and of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(a) and (b)), or title V of the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 (15 U.S.C. 695 through 697g);

(iv) Judicial or administrative civil or criminal enforcement actions;

(vi) Extraterritorial activities or decisions, which means agency activities or decisions with effects located entirely outside of the jurisdiction of the United States;

(vii) Activities or decisions that are non-discretionary and made in accordance with the agency's statutory authority;

(viii) Activities or decisions that ~~do~~ are not result in a final agency action under within the meaning of such term under the Administrative Procedure Act or other statute that also includes a finality requirement; and

(ix) Activities or decisions for projects approved by a Tribal Nation that occur on or involve land held in trust or restricted status by the United States for the benefit of that Tribal Nation or by the Tribal Nation when such activities or decisions involve no Federal funding or other Federal involvement.

(v) Funding assistance solely in the form of general revenue sharing funds with no Federal agency control over the subsequent use of such funds;

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(vi) Non-Federal projects with minimal Federal funding or minimal Federal involvement where the agency does not exercise sufficient control and responsibility over the outcome of the project; and

(vii) Loans, loan guarantees, or other forms of financial assistance where the Federal agency does not exercise sufficient control and responsibility over the effects of such assistance (for example, action does not include farm ownership and operating loan guarantees by the Farm Service Agency pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 1925 and 1941 through 1949 and business loan guarantees by the Small Business Administration pursuant to 15 U.S.C. 636(a), 636(m), and 695 through 697g).

(v~~f~~) *Matter* includes for purposes of part 1504 of this subchapter:

(1) With respect to the Environmental Protection Agency, any proposed legislation, project, action, or regulation as those terms are used in section 309(a) of the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7609).

(2) With respect to all other agencies, any proposed major Federal action to which section 102(2)(C) of NEPA applies.

(w~~s~~) *Mitigation* means measures that avoid, minimize, or compensate for effects caused by a proposed action or alternatives as described in an environmental document or record of decision and that have a nexusconnection to those effects. ~~While NEPA requires consideration of mitigation, it does not mandate the form or adoption of any mitigation.~~ Mitigation includes, in general order of priority:

(1) Avoiding the ~~impacteffect~~ altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action.

(2) Minimizing ~~impacteffects~~ by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation.

(3) Rectifying the ~~impacteffect~~ by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment.

(4) Reducing or eliminating the ~~impacteffect~~ over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action.

(5) Compensating for the ~~impacteffect~~ by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

(x~~t~~) *NEPA process* means all measures necessary for compliance with the requirements of section 2 and title I of NEPA.

(y~~n~~) *Notice of intent* means a public notice that an agency will prepare and consider an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment, as applicable.

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(zv) *Page* means 500 words and does not include citations, explanatory maps, diagrams, graphs, tables, and other means of graphically displaying quantitative or geospatial information.

(aaw) *Participating agency* means a Federal, State, Tribal, or local agency participating in an environmental review or authorization of an action.

(bb) *Participating Federal agency* means a Federal agency participating in an environmental review or authorization of an action.

(cc) *Programmatic environmental document* means an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment analyzing all or some of the environmental effects of a policy, program, plan, or group of related actions.

(ddx) *Proposal* means a proposed action at a stage when an agency has a goal, is actively preparing to make a decision on one or more alternative means of accomplishing that goal, and can meaningfully evaluate its effects. A proposal may exist in fact as well as by agency declaration that one exists.

(eey) *Publish* and *publication* mean methods found by the agency to efficiently and effectively make environmental documents and information available for review by interested persons, including electronic publication, and adopted by agency NEPA procedures pursuant to § 1507.3 of this subchapter.

(ffz) *Reasonable alternatives* means a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, and meet the purpose and need for the proposed action.

(ggaa) *Reasonably foreseeable* means sufficiently likely to occur such that a person of ordinary prudence would take it into account in reaching a decision.

(hhbb) *Referring agency* means the Federal agency that has referred any matter to the Council after a determination that the matter is unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality.

(iiee) *Scope* consists of the range and breadth of actions, alternatives, and impac~~t~~effects to be considered in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment. ~~The scope of an individual statement may depend on its relationships to other statements (§ 1501.11 of this chapter).~~

(jjdd) *Senior agency official* means an official of assistant secretary rank or higher (or equivalent) that is designated for overall agency NEPA compliance, including resolving implementation issues.

(kk) *Significant effects* means adverse effects that an agency has identified as significant based on the criteria in § 1501.3(d) of this subchapter.

Original/black text = Current regulations

Redline = proposed rule (green text reflects moved language; red reflects new language; strikethrough means deleted language)

(~~lee~~) *Special expertise* means statutory responsibility, agency mission, or related program experience.

(~~mmff~~) *Tiering* refers to the process described in § 1501.11 of this subchapter~~coverage of general matters in broader environmental impact statements or environmental assessments (such as national program or policy statements) with subsequent narrower statements or environmental analyses (such as regional or basin-wide program statements or ultimately site-specific statements) incorporating by reference the general discussions and concentrating solely on the issues specific to the statement subsequently prepared.~~

§ 1508.2 [Reserved]

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