

NEPA Handbook Frequently Asked Questions

Q What is the Reclamation NEPA Handbook?

A Reclamation's NEPA Handbook is a resource document to assist practitioners in implementing the National Environmental Policy Act. The handbook covers information on NEPA and other related environmental requirements, such as the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act; activities within Reclamation that could trigger NEPA; the types of NEPA documentation, including categorical exclusions (CE), environmental assessments (EA), findings of no significant impact (FONSI), environmental impact statements (EIS), and records of decision (ROD); filing EISs with the Environmental Protection Agency and *Federal Register* Notices; and public involvement requirements and recommendations.

Q Will the public be invited to comment on the NEPA Handbook?

A No, Reclamation is releasing this NEPA Handbook as a final document. We are not soliciting comments because the NEPA Handbook does not establish or modify any law, regulation or policy. It is intended as an internal guidance for Reclamation's NEPA practitioners. It is a resource on how to comply with NEPA and other applicable environmental laws, regulations and policies. The laws, regulations and policies cited in the handbook have undergone public processes to invite and consider comments.

Q What if new laws, regulations or policies are made or there are changes to those existing now?

A We recognize that our legal and regulatory framework evolves over time. For instance, NEPA was written at a time when our current technological and social networking capabilities were not envisioned. Recent EPA guidance on filing EISs has emphasized use of electronic formats and making documents available via agency websites. In turn, this handbook emphasizes current trends in technology and information sharing to improve our NEPA processes. We intend to update the NEPA Handbook as needed to respond to these changes.

Q What if there are errors or omissions in the NEPA Handbook?

A If you see an error or omission, we would appreciate your help identifying them for future updates. Just send an email to the contact identified in www.usbr.gov/NEPA.

Q Can I use the NEPA Handbook to prepare my own EIS for a project we plan to carry out with Reclamation?

A The NEPA Handbook can be a great source of information for those outside of Reclamation. The federal agency has the authority to make its own decisions and as such, the responsibility to carry out NEPA process. If your future project involves reclamation, you should contact us through one of our regional offices or our Denver office to get information. Contact information is available at www.usbr.gov/NEPA.

Q Your last NEPA Handbook is more than a decade old. Why did it take so long to re-issue the NEPA Handbook?

A We began a revision of the NEPA Handbook in the early 2000s. Around the same time, the Department of the Interior began the process to propose Departmental NEPA Regulations. The final rule was published in the Federal Register on Oct. 15, 2008 (73 FR 61292). Reclamation suspended its efforts to revise the NEPA Handbook during the Departmental process and resumed shortly after the new rule was made effective.