

ODESSA SUBAREA SPECIAL STUDY

Columbia Basin Project

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

September 2008

The National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was enacted into law on January 1, 1969. It requires Federal agencies to evaluate and consider environmental factors during decisionmaking and to seek input to these evaluations from state and local agencies, Tribal Governments, organizations, and the public. Agencies also must consider and evaluate a range of alternatives that meet the purpose and need of the proposed action.

When a Federal action is determined likely to significantly affect the quality of the human environment, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is prepared. The EIS provides decision-makers with important information on the types of issues and concerns identified by the public, the expected environmental consequences of all alternatives, and potential mitigation measures.

Washington State Environmental Policy Act

SEPA is the acronym for the State Environmental Policy Act. Enacted in 1971, it provides the framework for agencies to consider the environmental consequences of a proposal before taking action. It also gives agencies the ability to condition or deny a proposal due to identified likely significant adverse impacts. The Act is implemented through the SEPA Rules, Chapter 197-11, of the Washington Administrative Code.

Environmental review is required for any proposal which involves a government "action," as defined in the SEPA Rules and is not categorically exempt. Project actions involve an agency decision on a specific project, such as a construction project or timber harvest. Nonproject actions involve decisions on policies, plans, or programs, such as the adoption of a comprehensive plan or development regulations, or a 6-year road plan.

NEPA and SEPA Compliance for This Project

The requirements of NEPA and SEPA are very similar. Both require that a range of reasonable alternatives be considered to meet the purpose and need of the project. The Washington Department of Ecology will be a joint lead with Reclamation on the development of the EIS, which will comply with both NEPA and SEPA regulations.



Terms Commonly Associated with an EIS

- ❖ **Federal Action** - This is what triggers the requirement for NEPA compliance. It can be an action that the Federal agency will take, or a decision that must be made, that may significantly impact the human environment.
- ❖ **Scoping** - The process by which input from the public, agencies, and organizations is sought to help define the alternatives, issues, and impacts that should be addressed in the EIS.
- ❖ **Purpose and Need** - The statement of purpose and need identifies the underlying reasons why an action is needed.
- ❖ **Proposed Action** - This is the action initially identified to meet the identified purpose and need for action.
- ❖ **Alternatives** - These are reasonable actions that meet the same identified purpose and need as the proposed action.
- ❖ **Federal Preferred Alternative** - This is the alternative that the Federal agency proposes to implement. If one has been identified, it will be described in the Draft EIS. A Preferred Alternative must be identified in the Final EIS.
- ❖ **No Action Alternative** - This is considered to be the most likely future without implementation of the proposed action or other alternative.
- ❖ **Record of Decision** - This document summarizes the alternatives considered in the EIS and identifies the agency's decision along with the basis for that decision. This is a requirement of NEPA, but not SEPA.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Study Website: http://www.usbr.gov/pn.programs/ucao_misc/odessa/index.html

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