

NEPA: Environmental Analysis and Decision-Making

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Objectives

- ◆ Learn why we do NEPA
- ◆ Identify when a proposal triggers NEPA
- ◆ Identify the starting point
- ◆ Frame a proposed action
- ◆ Describe the steps of the NEPA process

What Does NEPA Stand For?

National
Environmental
Policy
Act



Of 1969

NEPA, Why?



- ◆ Analyze actions and alternatives
- ◆ Make informed decisions
- ◆ Analyze proposed action to see if impacts to the environment are significant

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Signed January 1, 1970

- ◆ Section 2, Purpose: "To declare a national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts that will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man..."

NEPA is a public process



- ◆ NEPA applies to federal activities affecting the human and physical environment
- ◆ NEPA procedures ensure that public officials and citizens have access to environmental information before decisions are made.

What Types of Proposals Trigger NEPA?

- ◆ NEPA process must be done for every federal action affecting the human and physical environment unless that activity is allowed under law or by exclusion from environmental analysis through agency procedures and policies
- ◆ Each agency was required by NEPA to develop procedures for environmental documents to supplement the regulations as described in the code of federal regulations

Examples for Trails



- ◆ Trail maintenance (usually categorically excluded by agency)
- ◆ Trail Reconstruction
- ◆ Trail Construction

Determining Whether and When to Initiate the NEPA Process

- ◆ Do not jump into the NEPA process until you have a specific proposal
- ◆ Make an informal analysis of the project before conducting NEPA analysis to identify whether changes in current decisions are needed



The Starting Point

- ◆ It is critical to understand the starting point for environmental analysis
- ◆ The starting point for environmental analysis is the existing condition and any existing laws, regulations, agency policies, agreements, or other rules/direction in place

Mann Gulch Fire 1949

Screening Process

- ◆ Define Proposal/Action
- ◆ Six Critical Screening Questions

Six Screening Questions to Ask Before Beginning NEPA

1. Does proposal conform to existing Land Use Plan?
2. Is proposal an exception from Department or Agency NEPA Requirements?
3. Is proposal listed as normally requiring an EIS?

4. Is existing analysis and documentation sufficient?

5. Is proposal listed as categorically excluded by your agency?

6. Are environmental impacts expected to be significant?

Purpose and Need, Issues, Alternatives

- ◆ Specific proposals for change can be addressed in tightly focused environmental analysis
- ◆ Avoid developing alternatives as broad themes or approaches to managing the land

What would your purpose and need be for this project?



Interdisciplinary Teams



- ◆ NEPA requires an interdisciplinary process
- ◆ Makeup of the interdisciplinary team will depend on specific issues involved

Summary

- ◆ NEPA is a public process
- ◆ Know your starting point (existing condition) and need for change
- ◆ Fully describe the proposed action to give the complete picture
- ◆ Know your Land Use Plan

NEPA Process

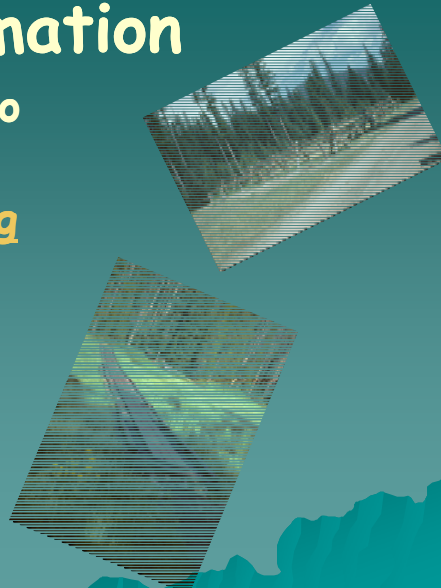
- ◆ Determine the scope of the project
- ◆ Do public scoping
- ◆ Determine if NEPA is required and if yes, what level (EA, EIS, Categorical Exclusion (CE))
- ◆ Prepare NEPA document and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) (for an EA) or Record of Decision (ROD) for an EIS, or a decision record (DR) for a CE

NEPA Process (continued)

- ◆ Follow agency policy for publishing the decision document (who, what, how long)
- ◆ Follow agency policy for appeal period and process
- ◆ Follow agency policy for appeal resolution
- ◆ Implement project

Where to Get More Information

- ◆ <http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/nepanet.htm>
- ◆ <http://www.eh.doe.gov/nepa/>
- ◆ www.ntc.blm.gov



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