

## Council on Environmental Quality

## § 1502.1

site-specific action), the tiered document 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. The tiered document shall state where the earlier document is available.

(c) 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.

(2) 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.

### § 1501.12 Incorporation by reference.

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. Agencies may not incorporate material by reference unless it is reasonably available for inspection by potentially interested persons within the time allowed for comment. Agencies shall not incorporate by reference material based on proprietary data that is not available for review and comment.

## PART 1502—ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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SOURCE: 85 FR 43363, July 16, 2020, unless otherwise noted.

### § 1502.1 Purpose of environmental impact statement.

The primary purpose of an environmental impact statement prepared pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of NEPA is to ensure agencies consider the environmental impacts of their actions in decision making. It shall provide full and fair discussion of significant environmental impacts and shall inform decision makers and the public of reasonable alternatives that would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment. Agencies shall focus on significant environmental issues and alternatives and shall reduce paperwork and the accumulation of extraneous background data. Statements shall be concise, clear, and to the point, and shall be supported by evidence that the agency has made the necessary environmental

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analyses. An environmental impact statement is a document that informs Federal agency decision making and the public.

### § 1502.2 Implementation.

(a) Environmental impact statements shall not be encyclopedic.

(b) Environmental impact statements shall discuss impacts in proportion to their significance. There shall be only brief discussion of other than significant issues. As in a 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 analytic, 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.

(d) Environmental impact statements shall state how alternatives considered in it and decisions based on it 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 selection of alternatives before making a final decision (*see also* §1506.1 of this chapter).

(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 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.

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

(a) Agencies shall define the proposal that is the subject of an environmental impact statement based on the statutory authorities for the proposed action. Agencies shall use the criteria for scope (§1501.9(e) of this chapter) to determine which proposal(s) shall be the subject of a particular statement. Agencies shall evaluate in a single 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.

(b) Environmental impact statements may be prepared for programmatic Federal actions, such as the adoption of new agency programs. When agencies prepare such statements, they should be relevant to the program decision and timed to coincide with meaningful points in agency planning and decision making.

(1) When preparing statements on programmatic 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, including actions that have relevant similarities, such as common timing, impacts, alternatives, methods of implementation, 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 on such programs should be available before the program has reached a stage of investment or commitment to implementation likely to determine subsequent development or restrict later alternatives.

(2) Agencies shall as appropriate employ scoping (§1501.9 of this chapter), tiering (§1501.11 of this chapter), and other methods listed in §§1500.4 and 1500.5 of this chapter to relate programmatic and narrow 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.

#### § 1502.5 Timing.

An agency should commence preparation of an environmental impact statement as close as practicable to the time the agency is developing or receives a proposal so that preparation can be completed in time for the final statement to be included in any recommendation or report on the proposal. The statement shall be prepared early enough so that it can serve as an important practical contribution to the decision-making process and will not be used to rationalize or justify decisions already made (§§ 1501.2 of this chapter and 1502.2). For instance:

(a) For projects directly undertaken by Federal agencies, the agency shall prepare the environmental impact statement at the feasibility analysis (go/no-go) stage and may supplement it at a later stage, if necessary.

(b) For applications to the agency requiring an environmental impact statement, the agency shall commence the statement as soon as practicable after receiving the application. Federal agencies should work with potential applicants and applicable State, Tribal, and local agencies and governments prior to receipt of the application.

(c) For adjudication, the final environmental impact statement shall normally precede the final staff recommendation and that portion of the public hearing related to the impact study. In appropriate circumstances, the statement may follow preliminary hearings designed to gather information for use in the statements.

(d) For informal rulemaking, the draft environmental impact statement shall normally accompany the proposed rule.

#### § 1502.6 Interdisciplinary preparation.

Agencies shall prepare environmental impact statements using an interdisciplinary approach that will ensure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts (section 102(2)(A) of

NEPA). The disciplines of the preparers shall be appropriate to the scope and issues identified in the scoping process (§ 1501.9 of this chapter).

#### § 1502.7 Page limits.

The text of final environmental impact statements (paragraphs (a)(4) through (6) of § 1502.10) shall be 150 pages or fewer and, for proposals of unusual scope or complexity, shall be 300 pages or fewer unless a senior agency official of the lead agency approves in writing a statement to exceed 300 pages and establishes a new page limit.

#### § 1502.8 Writing.

Agencies shall write environmental impact statements in plain language and may use appropriate graphics so that decision makers and the public can readily understand such statements. Agencies should employ writers of clear prose or editors to write, review, or edit statements, which shall be based upon the analysis and supporting data from the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts.

#### § 1502.9 Draft, final, and supplemental statements.

(a) *Generally.* Except for proposals for legislation as provided in § 1506.8 of this chapter, agencies shall prepare environmental impact statements in two stages and, where necessary, supplement them, as provided in paragraph (d)(1) of this section.

(b) *Draft environmental impact statements.* Agencies shall prepare draft environmental impact statements in accordance with the scope decided upon in the scoping process (§ 1501.9 of this chapter). The lead agency shall work with the cooperating agencies and shall obtain comments as required in part 1503 of this chapter. To the fullest extent practicable, the draft statement must meet the requirements established for final statements in section 102(2)(C) of NEPA as interpreted in the regulations in this subchapter. If a draft statement is so inadequate as to preclude meaningful analysis, the agency shall prepare and publish a supplemental draft of the appropriate portion. At appropriate points in the draft statement, the agency shall discuss all

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major points of view on the environmental impacts of the alternatives including the proposed action.

(c) *Final environmental impact statements.* Final environmental impact statements shall address comments as required in part 1503 of this chapter. At appropriate points in the final statement, the agency shall discuss any responsible opposing view that was not adequately discussed in the draft statement and shall indicate the agency's response to the issues raised.

(d) *Supplemental environmental impact statements.* Agencies:

(1) Shall prepare supplements to either draft or final environmental impact statements if a major Federal action remains to occur, and:

(i) The agency makes substantial changes to the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns; or

(ii) There are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts.

(2) May also prepare supplements when the agency determines that the purposes of the Act will be furthered by doing so.

(3) Shall prepare, publish, and file a supplement to a statement (exclusive of scoping (§1501.9 of this chapter)) as a draft and final statement, as is appropriate to the stage of the statement involved, unless the Council approves alternative procedures (§1506.12 of this chapter).

(4) May find that changes to the proposed action or new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns are not significant and therefore do not require a supplement. The agency should document the finding consistent with its agency NEPA procedures (§1507.3 of this chapter), or, if necessary, in a finding of no significant impact supported by an environmental assessment.

### § 1502.10 Recommended format.

(a) Agencies shall use a format for environmental impact statements that will encourage good analysis and clear presentation of the alternatives including the proposed action. Agencies should use the following standard format for environmental impact statements unless the agency determines

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that there is a more effective format for communication:

(1) Cover.

(2) Summary.

(3) Table of contents.

(4) Purpose of and need for action.

(5) Alternatives including the proposed action (sections 102(2)(C)(iii) and 102(2)(E) of NEPA).

(6) Affected environment and environmental consequences (especially sections 102(2)(C)(i), (ii), (iv), and (v) of NEPA).

(7) Submitted alternatives, information, and analyses.

(8) List of preparers.

(9) Appendices (if any).

(b) If an agency uses a different format, it shall include paragraphs (a)(1) through (8) of this section, as further described in §§1502.11 through 1502.19, in any appropriate format.

### § 1502.11 Cover.

The cover shall not exceed one page and include:

(a) A list of the responsible agencies, including the lead agency and any cooperating agencies.

(b) The title of the proposed action that is the subject of the statement (and, if appropriate, the titles of related cooperating agency actions), together with the State(s) and county(ies) (or other jurisdiction(s), if applicable) where the action is located.

(c) The name, address, and telephone number of the person at the agency who can supply further information.

(d) A designation of the statement as a draft, final, or draft or final supplement.

(e) A one-paragraph abstract of the statement.

(f) The date by which the agency must receive comments (computed in cooperation with EPA under §1506.11 of this chapter).

(g) For the final environmental impact statement, the estimated total cost to prepare both the draft and final environmental impact statement, including the costs of agency full-time equivalent (FTE) personnel hours, contractor costs, and other direct costs. If practicable and noted where not practicable, agencies also should include

costs incurred by cooperating and participating agencies, applicants, and contractors.

#### § 1502.12 Summary.

Each environmental impact statement shall contain a summary that adequately and accurately summarizes the statement. The summary shall stress the major conclusions, areas of disputed issues raised by agencies and the public, and the issues to be resolved (including the choice among alternatives). The summary normally will not exceed 15 pages.

#### § 1502.13 Purpose and need.

The statement shall briefly specify the underlying purpose and need to which the agency is responding in proposing the alternatives including the proposed action.

[87 FR 23469, Apr. 20, 2022]

#### § 1502.14 Alternatives including the proposed action.

The alternatives section should present the environmental impacts of the proposed action and the alternatives in comparative form based on the information and analysis presented in the sections on the affected environment (§1502.15) and the environmental consequences (§1502.16). In this section, agencies shall:

(a) Evaluate reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, and, for alternatives that the agency eliminated from detailed study, briefly discuss the reasons for their elimination.

(b) Discuss each alternative considered in detail, including the proposed action, so that reviewers may evaluate their comparative merits.

(c) Include the no action alternative.

(d) Identify the agency's preferred alternative or alternatives, if one or more exists, in the draft statement and identify such alternative in the final statement unless another law prohibits the expression of such a preference.

(e) Include appropriate mitigation measures not already included in the proposed action or alternatives.

(f) Limit their consideration to a reasonable number of alternatives.

#### § 1502.15 Affected environment.

The environmental impact statement shall succinctly describe the environment of the area(s) to be affected or created by the alternatives under consideration, including the reasonably foreseeable environmental trends and planned actions in the area(s). The environmental impact statement may combine the description with evaluation of the environmental consequences (§1502.16), and it shall be no longer than is necessary to understand the effects of the alternatives. Data and analyses in a statement shall be commensurate with the importance of the impact, with less important material summarized, consolidated, or simply referenced. Agencies shall avoid useless bulk in statements and shall concentrate effort and attention on important issues. Verbose descriptions of the affected environment are themselves no measure of the adequacy of an environmental impact statement.

#### § 1502.16 Environmental consequences.

(a) The environmental consequences section forms the scientific and analytic basis for the comparisons under §1502.14. It shall consolidate the discussions of those elements required by sections 102(2)(C)(i), (ii), (iv), and (v) of NEPA that are within the scope of the statement and as much of section 102(2)(C)(iii) of NEPA as is necessary to support the comparisons. This section should not duplicate discussions in §1502.14. The discussion shall include:

(1) The environmental impacts of the proposed action and reasonable alternatives to the proposed action and the significance of those impacts. The comparison of the proposed action and reasonable alternatives shall be based on this discussion of the impacts.

(2) Any adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided should the proposal be implemented.

(3) The relationship between short-term uses of man's environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity.

(4) Any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources that would be involved in the proposal should it be implemented.

(5) Possible conflicts between the proposed action and the objectives of

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Federal, regional, State, Tribal, and local land use plans, policies and controls for the area concerned. (§1506.2(d) of this chapter)

(6) Energy requirements and conservation potential of various alternatives and mitigation measures.

(7) Natural or depletable resource requirements and conservation potential of various alternatives and mitigation measures.

(8) Urban quality, historic and cultural resources, and the design of the built environment, including the reuse and conservation potential of various alternatives and mitigation measures.

(9) Means to mitigate adverse environmental impacts (if not fully covered under §1502.14(e)).

(10) Where applicable, economic and technical considerations, including the economic benefits of the proposed action.

(b) Economic or social effects by themselves do not require preparation of an environmental impact statement. However, when the agency determines that economic or social and natural or physical environmental effects are interrelated, the environmental impact statement shall discuss and give appropriate consideration to these effects on the human environment.

### § 1502.17 Summary of submitted alternatives, information, and analyses.

(a) The draft environmental impact statement shall include a summary that identifies all alternatives, information, and analyses submitted by State, Tribal, and local governments and other public commenters during the scoping process for consideration by the lead and cooperating agencies in developing the environmental impact statement.

(1) The agency shall append to the draft environmental impact statement or otherwise publish all comments (or summaries thereof where the response has been exceptionally voluminous) received during the scoping process that identified alternatives, information, and analyses for the agency's consideration.

(2) Consistent with §1503.1(a)(3) of this chapter, the lead agency shall invite comment on the summary identifying all submitted alternatives, infor-

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mation, and analyses in the draft environmental impact statement.

(b) The final environmental impact statement shall include a summary that identifies all alternatives, information, and analyses submitted by State, Tribal, and local governments and other public commenters for consideration by the lead and cooperating agencies in developing the final environmental impact statement.

### § 1502.18 List of preparers.

The environmental impact statement shall list the names, together with their qualifications (expertise, experience, professional disciplines), of the persons who were primarily responsible for preparing the environmental impact statement or significant background papers, including basic components of the statement. Where possible, the environmental impact statement shall identify the persons who are responsible for a particular analysis, including analyses in background papers. Normally the list will not exceed two pages.

### § 1502.19 Appendix.

If an agency prepares an appendix, the agency shall publish it with the environmental impact statement, and it shall consist of:

(a) Material prepared in connection with an environmental impact statement (as distinct from material that is not so prepared and is incorporated by reference (§1501.12 of this chapter)).

(b) Material substantiating any analysis fundamental to the impact statement.

(c) Material relevant to the decision to be made.

(d) For draft environmental impact statements, all comments (or summaries thereof where the response has been exceptionally voluminous) received during the scoping process that identified alternatives, information, and analyses for the agency's consideration.

(e) For final environmental impact statements, the comment summaries and responses consistent with §1503.4 of this chapter.

**§ 1502.20 Publication of the environmental impact statement.**

Agencies shall publish the entire draft and final environmental impact statements and unchanged statements as provided in § 1503.4(c) of this chapter. The agency shall transmit the entire statement electronically (or in paper copy, if so requested due to economic or other hardship) to:

(a) Any Federal agency that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved and any appropriate Federal, State, Tribal, or local agency authorized to develop and enforce environmental standards.

(b) The applicant, if any.

(c) Any person, organization, or agency requesting the entire environmental impact statement.

(d) In the case of a final environmental impact statement, any person, organization, or agency that submitted substantive comments on the draft.

**§ 1502.21 Incomplete or unavailable information.**

(a) When an agency is evaluating reasonably foreseeable significant adverse effects on the human environment in an environmental impact statement, and there is incomplete or unavailable information, the agency shall make clear that such information is lacking.

(b) If the incomplete but available information relevant to reasonably foreseeable significant adverse impacts is essential to a reasoned choice among alternatives, and the overall costs of obtaining it are not unreasonable, the agency shall include the information in the environmental impact statement.

(c) If the information relevant to reasonably foreseeable significant adverse impacts cannot be obtained because the overall costs of obtaining it are unreasonable or the means to obtain it are not known, the agency shall include within the environmental impact statement:

(1) A statement that such information is incomplete or unavailable;

(2) A statement of the relevance of the incomplete or unavailable information to evaluating reasonably foreseeable significant adverse impacts on the human environment;

(3) A summary of existing credible scientific evidence that is relevant to evaluating the reasonably foreseeable significant adverse impacts on the human environment; and

(4) The agency's evaluation of such impacts based upon theoretical approaches or research methods generally accepted in the scientific community.

(d) For the purposes of this section, "reasonably foreseeable" includes impacts that have catastrophic consequences, even if their probability of occurrence is low, provided that the analysis of the impacts is supported by credible scientific evidence, is not based on pure conjecture, and is within the rule of reason.

**§ 1502.22 Cost-benefit analysis.**

If the agency is considering a cost-benefit analysis for the proposed action relevant to the choice among alternatives with different environmental effects, the agency shall incorporate the cost-benefit analysis by reference or append it to the statement as an aid in evaluating the environmental consequences. In such cases, to assess the adequacy of compliance with section 102(2)(B) of NEPA (ensuring appropriate consideration of unquantified environmental amenities and values in decision making, along with economic and technical considerations), the statement shall discuss the relationship between that analysis and any analyses of unquantified environmental impacts, values, and amenities. For purposes of complying with the Act, agencies need not display the weighing of the merits and drawbacks of the various alternatives in a monetary cost-benefit analysis and should not do so when there are important qualitative considerations. However, an environmental impact statement should at least indicate those considerations, including factors not related to environmental quality, that are likely to be relevant and important to a decision.

**§ 1502.23 Methodology and scientific accuracy.**

Agencies shall ensure the professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussions and analyses in environmental documents.

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Agencies shall make use of reliable existing data and resources. Agencies may make use of any reliable data sources, such as remotely gathered information or statistical models. They shall identify any methodologies used and shall make explicit reference to the scientific and other sources relied upon for conclusions in the statement. Agencies may place discussion of methodology in an appendix. Agencies are not required to undertake new scientific and technical research to inform their analyses. Nothing in this section is intended to prohibit agencies from compliance with the requirements of other statutes pertaining to scientific and technical research.

### § 1502.24 Environmental review and consultation requirements.

(a) To the fullest extent possible, agencies shall prepare draft environmental impact statements concurrent and integrated with environmental impact analyses and related surveys and studies required by all other Federal environmental review laws and Executive orders applicable to the proposed action, including the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661 *et seq.*), the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (54 U.S.C. 300101 *et seq.*), and the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

(b) The draft environmental impact statement shall list all Federal permits, licenses, and other authorizations that must be obtained in implementing the proposal. If it is uncertain whether a Federal permit, license, or other authorization is necessary, the draft environmental impact statement shall so indicate.

## PART 1503—COMMENTING ON ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS

Sec.

1503.1 Inviting comments and requesting information and analyses.

1503.2 Duty to comment.

1503.3 Specificity of comments and information.

1503.4 Response to comments.

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amended by E.O. 11991, 42 FR 26967, 3 CFR, 1977 Comp., p. 123; E.O. 13807, 82 FR 40463, 3 CFR, 2017, Comp., p. 369.

SOURCE: 85 FR 43367, July 16, 2020, unless otherwise noted.

### § 1503.1 Inviting comments and requesting information and analyses.

(a) After preparing a draft environmental impact statement and before preparing a final environmental impact statement the agency shall:

(1) Obtain the comments of any Federal agency that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved or is authorized to develop and enforce environmental standards.

(2) Request the comments of:

(i) Appropriate State, Tribal, and local agencies that are authorized to develop and enforce environmental standards;

(ii) State, Tribal, or local governments that may be affected by the proposed action;

(iii) Any agency that has requested it receive statements on actions of the kind proposed;

(iv) The applicant, if any; and

(v) The public, affirmatively soliciting comments in a manner designed to inform those persons or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the proposed action.

(3) Invite comment specifically on the submitted alternatives, information, and analyses and the summary thereof (§ 1502.17 of this chapter).

(b) An agency may request comments on a final environmental impact statement before the final decision and set a deadline for providing such comments. Other agencies or persons may make comments consistent with the time periods under § 1506.11 of this chapter.

(c) An agency shall provide for electronic submission of public comments, with reasonable measures to ensure the comment process is accessible to affected persons.

### § 1503.2 Duty to comment.

Cooperating agencies and agencies that are authorized to develop and enforce environmental standards shall comment on statements within their jurisdiction, expertise, or authority within the time period specified for