

### § 1506.3

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.

(b) *Environmental impact statements.*

(1) If the actions covered by the original environmental impact statement and the proposed action are substantially the same, the adopting agency shall republish it as a final statement consistent with §1506.10. If the actions are not substantially the same, the adopting agency shall treat the statement as a draft and republish it, consistent with §1506.10.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (b)(1) of this section, a cooperating agency may adopt in its record of decision without republishing 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.

(c) *Environmental assessments.* If the actions covered by the original environmental assessment and the proposed action are substantially the same, the adopting agency may adopt the environmental assessment in its finding of no significant impact and provide notice consistent with §1501.6 of this chapter.

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

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

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

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

(3) The assessment or 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 (§1501.9(e) of this chapter), and content of environmental documents prepared by the agency or by an applicant or contractor under the supervision of the agency.

(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 the supervision of the agency.

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

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

(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 contractor, such as in the list of preparers for environmental impact statements (§1502.18 of this chapter). It is the intent of this paragraph (b)(3) that acceptable work not be

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redone, but that it be verified by the agency.

(4) Contractors or applicants preparing environmental assessments or environmental impact statements shall submit a disclosure statement to the lead agency that specifies any 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 agency from requesting any person, including the applicant, to submit information to it or to prohibit any person from submitting information to any agency for use in preparing environmental documents.

### § 1506.6 Public involvement.

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.

(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).

(c) 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).

### § 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.