

Council on Environmental Quality

§ 1508.1

4247, 3 CFR, 1966–1970, Comp., p. 902, as amended by E.O. 11991, 42 FR 26967, 3 CFR, 1977 Comp., p. 123.

SOURCE: 85 FR 43374, July 16, 2020, unless otherwise noted.

§ 1508.1 Definitions.

The following definitions apply to the regulations in this subchapter. Federal agencies shall use these terms uniformly throughout the Federal Government.

(a) *Act* or *NEPA* means the National Environmental Policy Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321, *et seq.*).

(b) *Affecting* means will or may have an effect on.

(c) *Authorization* means any license, permit, approval, finding, determination, or other administrative decision issued by an agency that is required or authorized under Federal law in order to implement a proposed action.

(d) *Categorical exclusion* means a category of actions that the agency has determined, in its agency NEPA procedures (§1507.3 of this chapter), normally do not have a significant effect on the human environment.

(e) *Cooperating agency* means any Federal agency (and a State, Tribal, or local agency with agreement of the lead agency) other than a lead agency that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposal (or a reasonable alternative) for legislation or other major Federal action that may significantly affect the quality of the human environment.

(f) *Council* means the Council on Environmental Quality established by title II of the Act.

(g) *Effects* or *impacts* means changes to the human environment from the proposed action or alternatives that are reasonably foreseeable and include the following:

(1) Direct effects, which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.

(2) Indirect effects, which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate,

and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems.

(3) Cumulative effects, which are effects on the environment that result from the incremental effects of the action when added to the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

(4) Effects include ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative. Effects may also include those resulting from actions which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects, even if on balance the agency believes that the effects will be beneficial.

(h) *Environmental assessment* means a concise public document prepared by a Federal agency to aid an agency's compliance with the Act and support its determination of whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact, as provided in §1501.6 of this chapter.

(i) *Environmental document* means an environmental assessment, environmental impact statement, finding of no significant impact, or notice of intent.

(j) *Environmental impact statement* means a detailed written statement as required by section 102(2)(C) of NEPA.

(k) *Federal agency* means all agencies of the Federal Government. It does not mean the Congress, the Judiciary, or the President, including the performance of staff functions for the President in his Executive Office. For the purposes of the regulations in this subchapter, Federal agency also includes States, units of general local government, and Tribal governments assuming NEPA responsibilities from a Federal agency pursuant to statute.

(l) *Finding of no significant impact* means a document by a Federal agency briefly presenting the reasons why an action, not otherwise categorically excluded (§1501.4 of this chapter), will not

have a significant effect on the human environment and for which an environmental impact statement therefore will not be prepared.

(m) *Human environment* means comprehensively the natural and physical environment and the relationship of present and future generations of Americans with that environment. (See also the definition of “effects” in paragraph (g) of this section.)

(n) *Jurisdiction by law* means agency authority to approve, veto, or finance all or part of the proposal.

(o) *Lead agency* means the agency or agencies, in the case of joint lead agencies, preparing or having taken primary responsibility for preparing the environmental impact statement.

(p) *Legislation* means a bill or legislative proposal to Congress developed by a Federal agency, but does not include requests for appropriations or legislation recommended by the President.

(q) *Major Federal action* or *action* means an activity or decision subject to Federal control and responsibility subject to the following:

(1) Major Federal action does not include the following activities or decisions:

(i) Extraterritorial activities or decisions, which means agency activities or decisions with effects located entirely outside of the jurisdiction of the United States;

(ii) Activities or decisions that are non-discretionary and made in accordance with the agency’s statutory authority;

(iii) Activities or decisions that do not result in final agency action under the Administrative Procedure Act or other statute that also includes a finality requirement;

(iv) Judicial or administrative civil or criminal enforcement actions;

(v) Funding assistance solely in the form of general revenue sharing funds with no Federal agency control over the subsequent use of such funds;

(vi) Non-Federal projects with minimal Federal funding or minimal Federal involvement where the agency does not exercise sufficient control and responsibility over the outcome of the project; and

(vii) Loans, loan guarantees, or other forms of financial assistance where the

Federal agency does not exercise sufficient control and responsibility over the effects of such assistance (for example, action does not include farm ownership and operating loan guarantees by the Farm Service Agency pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 1925 and 1941 through 1949 and business loan guarantees by the Small Business Administration pursuant to 15 U.S.C. 636(a), 636(m), and 695 through 697g).

(2) Major Federal actions may include new and continuing activities, including projects and programs entirely or partly financed, assisted, conducted, regulated, or approved by Federal agencies; new or revised agency rules, regulations, plans, policies, or procedures; and legislative proposals (§ 1506.8 of this chapter).

(3) Major Federal actions tend to fall within one of the following categories:

(i) Adoption of official policy, such as rules, regulations, and interpretations adopted under the Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. 551 *et seq.* or other statutes; implementation of treaties and international conventions or agreements, including those implemented pursuant to statute or regulation; formal documents establishing an agency’s policies which will result in or substantially alter agency programs.

(ii) Adoption of formal plans, such as official documents prepared or approved by Federal agencies, which prescribe alternative uses of Federal resources, upon which future agency actions will be based.

(iii) Adoption of programs, such as a group of concerted actions to implement a specific policy or plan; systematic and connected agency decisions allocating agency resources to implement a specific statutory program or executive directive.

(iv) Approval of specific projects, such as construction or management activities located in a defined geographic area. Projects include actions approved by permit or other regulatory decision as well as Federal and federally assisted activities.

(r) *Matter* includes for purposes of part 1504 of this chapter:

(1) With respect to the Environmental Protection Agency, any proposed legislation, project, action or regulation as those terms are used in

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section 309(a) of the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7609).

(2) With respect to all other agencies, any proposed major Federal action to which section 102(2)(C) of NEPA applies.

(s) *Mitigation* means measures that avoid, minimize, or compensate for effects caused by a proposed action or alternatives as described in an environmental document or record of decision and that have a nexus to those effects. While NEPA requires consideration of mitigation, it does not mandate the form or adoption of any mitigation. Mitigation includes:

(1) Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action.

(2) Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation.

(3) Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment.

(4) Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action.

(5) Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

(t) *NEPA process* means all measures necessary for compliance with the requirements of section 2 and title I of NEPA.

(u) *Notice of intent* means a public notice that an agency will prepare and consider an environmental impact statement.

(v) *Page* means 500 words and does not include explanatory maps, diagrams, graphs, tables, and other means of graphically displaying quantitative or geospatial information.

(w) *Participating agency* means a Federal, State, Tribal, or local agency participating in an environmental review or authorization of an action.

(x) *Proposal* means a proposed action at a stage when an agency has a goal, is actively preparing to make a decision on one or more alternative means of accomplishing that goal, and can meaningfully evaluate its effects. A proposal may exist in fact as well as by agency declaration that one exists.

(y) *Publish* and *publication* mean methods found by the agency to effi-

ciently and effectively make environmental documents and information available for review by interested persons, including electronic publication, and adopted by agency NEPA procedures pursuant to §1507.3 of this chapter.

(z) *Reasonable alternatives* means a reasonable range of alternatives that are technically and economically feasible, and meet the purpose and need for the proposed action.

(aa) *Reasonably foreseeable* means sufficiently likely to occur such that a person of ordinary prudence would take it into account in reaching a decision.

(bb) *Referring agency* means the Federal agency that has referred any matter to the Council after a determination that the matter is unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality.

(cc) *Scope* consists of the range of actions, alternatives, and impacts to be considered in an environmental impact statement. The scope of an individual statement may depend on its relationships to other statements (§1501.11 of this chapter).

(dd) *Senior agency official* means an official of assistant secretary rank or higher (or equivalent) that is designated for overall agency NEPA compliance, including resolving implementation issues.

(ee) *Special expertise* means statutory responsibility, agency mission, or related program experience.

(ff) *Tiering* refers to the coverage of general matters in broader environmental impact statements or environmental assessments (such as national program or policy statements) with subsequent narrower statements or environmental analyses (such as regional or basin-wide program statements or ultimately site-specific statements) incorporating by reference the general discussions and concentrating solely on the issues specific to the statement subsequently prepared.

[85 FR 43378, July 16, 2020, as amended at 87 FR 23469, Apr. 20, 2022]

§ 1508.2 [Reserved]