



BLM's NEPA Register

Public Notification of Plans and Projects Affecting Our Public Lands

What is the NEPA Register?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to analyze and consider the environmental impacts of proposed actions on our public lands. NEPA also requires that relevant information is available to citizens and that federal agencies *encourage and facilitate public involvement in decisions which affect the quality of the human environment to the fullest extent possible*. The BLM maintains an online NEPA Register, which serves as a primary tool for the BLM to notify the public of plans and projects the agency is undertaking on our public lands, distribute information regarding those plans and projects, and solicit public comments as part of the NEPA process.

[The NEPA Register can be accessed online, here!](#)

What is included on the NEPA Register and what does that mean for public participation?

The BLM posts several types of actions on the NEPA Register, with varying levels of environmental analysis and public engagement opportunities. The only action that *requires* the BLM to solicit and consider public comments is preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). However, the BLM frequently provides formal public comment opportunities in preparing Environmental Assessments (EAs). Additionally, the public can provide input to BLM on any action in the NEPA Register, particularly if there are important public lands resources at stake.

The BLM will usually provide specific contact information for a particular action on the NEPA Register, such as a project lead or a resource specialist. Engagement at any phase of the planning process can lead to minor and major changes to a NEPA action, although early in the process is always best.

- **Categorical Exclusions (CX):** NEPA entries that are listed as CX are actions that BLM has concluded do not have significant environmental impact. There are a wide range of actions that the BLM or the Department of the Interior have determined should be subject to CXs, ranging from administrative actions to drilling of new oil and gas wells. In general, a CX should not be applied when there are "[extraordinary circumstances](#)" that make it inappropriate. If the action that is being proposed for a CX merits actual environmental analysis, this is an important and valid comment to submit.
 - [BLM Categorical Exclusions](#)
 - [Department of the Interior Categorical Exclusions](#)
- **Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA):** For actions that are listed as DNA, BLM has concluded that previously prepared NEPA documents adequately describe the environmental consequences of a newly proposed action, and there are no new circumstances or information that warrant new or supplemental analysis. If the action that is being proposed for a DNA merits actual environmental analysis, this is an important and valid comment to submit.



- **Environmental Assessment (EA):** This document evaluates the significance of proposed actions on our public lands, and determines whether the proposed action requires an Environmental Impact Statement. An EA can result in one of two outcomes: the BLM will publish a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and move forward with the proposed action; or the BLM will begin an Environmental Impact Statement to address the proposed action.
 - EAs often only have two alternatives (the proposed action and a “no action” – or not moving forward with the proposed action), although they can have multiple alternatives in order for the agency to identify the best way to achieve management objectives while minimizing adverse effects. You can comment that the BLM should evaluate additional alternatives.
 - EAs happen over a longer time horizon than a CX or DNA.
 - The BLM has the discretion to provide formal public comment periods on EAs, including public scoping and releasing a preliminary EA for public review and comment. Additionally, the BLM is required to publish an EA and unsigned FONSI for a 30-day public review period in certain circumstances, such as when there is scientific or public controversy over the proposal, or there is a reasonable argument for preparing an EIS. ([View the circumstances which apply here.](#))
 - Once an EA is listed on the NEPA Register, do not wait for BLM to release project documents or information. If you are interested in the project, immediately notify the BLM that you would like to be involved in the process and would like any information or draft documents sent to you as soon as they are available.

- **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):** The BLM prepares an EIS for major actions that are expected to have significant impacts on public lands resources. These types of actions include new, revised or amended Resource Management Plans, new transmission lines and other major rights-of-way, and siting large energy projects. The BLM must file notices in the [Federal Register](#) and provide for public comment periods during scoping and with release of the draft and final EIS. The BLM also frequently hosts public meetings in preparing an EIS, and this process can extend over several months or years.

Tips for Effective Comment Writing

- Share personal experiences with public lands resources that may be affected, such as places you enjoy hiking or wildlife viewing.
- Bring in reputable sources such as scientific studies, recent articles and research papers.
- Provide supplementary material such as maps, GPS locations and pictures.
- Ask to be informed of developments and information relating to an action, and ask for any information that might assist you in your involvement.
- Recognize and support good aspects of the BLM’s draft and proposed plans.
- If appropriate, request a meeting or field trip with BLM staff.

Resources

The Wilderness Society’s BLM Action Center is here to help. Contact us at blmactioncenter@twc.org.

The BLM has an online NEPA Web Guide posted at <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/planning/nepa/webguide.html>.

