

National Environmental Policy Act Analysis and Documentation

NEPA documentation

The review of the environmental effects of a proposed management action can occur in any of four ways: categorical exclusion (CX), administrative determination, environmental assessment (EA), or environmental impact statement (EIS).

A CX is used when it is determined that the type of proposed activity does not individually or cumulatively have significant environmental effects and is exempt from requirements to prepare an environmental analysis. CXs are covered specifically by Department of Interior and BLM guidelines.

An administrative determination is a determination by BLM that NEPA documentation previously prepared fully covers a proposed action and no additional analysis is needed. This procedure is used in conjunction with a Documentation of Land Use Plan Conformance and NEPA Adequacy (DNA) form. If an action is fully in conformance with actions specifically described in the RMP and analyzed in a subsequent NEPA document, a plan conformance and NEPA adequacy determination may be made and no additional analysis is needed.

An EA is prepared to assess the effects of actions that are not exempt from NEPA, are not categorically excluded, and are not covered by an existing environmental document. An EA is prepared to determine if a proposed action or alternative will significantly affect the quality of the human environment and therefore, will require the preparation of an EIS.

Major proposals that will significantly affect the environment, and that have not been previously analyzed through an EIS, require that an EIS be prepared.

Coos Bay District Environmental Documentation, Fiscal Year 2000

During FY 2000, the Coos Bay District completed 20 environmental assessments, 21 categorical exclusions, and 15 administrative determinations. No environmental impact statements were prepared. The environmental assessments vary in complexity, detail, and length depending on the project involved.

Protest and Appeals

Almost all Coos Bay District timber sale environmental assessment decision records have been protested and appealed since the expiration of the Recission Act at the end of December 1996. Protest and appeal issues have challenged compliance with the RMP ROD, compliance with NEPA, analysis, assumptions, and conclusions. Protests and appeals have been received from several environmental organizations.

Recurring issues raised in the protest and appeals include: EA is insufficient, an EIS is needed; failure to follow recommendations of watershed analysis; improperly determining riparian reserve widths; not maintaining or restoring degraded watersheds; snags and coarse woody debris retention levels; failure to implement Survey and Manage protocol; unstable soils; clumping of retention trees; should give riparian reserve status; road building; and road closures.

The staff work involved in responding to protests and appeals on the Coos Bay District represents a significant workload.

Coordination and Consultation

The District is involved in a considerable amount of coordination and consultation with other federal agencies, state and local governments, and private organizations. Listed below are examples of the coordination and consultation that routinely occur:

- ESA coordination/consulting/conferencing with both USFWS and NMFS.
- Coordination with several Watershed Associations and Councils to facilitate habitat restoration projects.
- Serving as the lead federal agency in the Natural Resource Damage Assessment Process as a result of the New Carissa Shipwreck.
- Participation and Leadership in the Snowy Plover Working Group composed of federal and state agencies concerned with the long-term viability of the Coastal Population of the Western Snowy Plover.
- Consulting with BIA and local Tribes on issues such as the Coquille Forest and other cultural issues.
- Coordination with Coos County government on the application to construct a natural gas pipeline across public lands.
- Participation in the Southwest Oregon Provincial Interagency Executive Committee and Southwest Oregon Provincial Advisory Committee.
- U.S. Coast Guard, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians of Oregon, and the Coquille Indian Tribe in management of the Cape Blanco Lighthouse.
- Participation in the Coos County Regional Trails Partnership.
- Participation in the Reedsport's Tsalila Festival, and Bay Area Fun Festival Mountain Bike Race.
- The District maintained an active role with the Oregon Coastal Environments Awareness Network (OCEAN), to develop the Coastal Environments Learning Network.

Research and Education

In June, 1996, the BLM published “*A Strategy for Meeting Our Research and Scientific Information Needs*”, a watershed- based strategy. It lays out a strategy for identifying BLM’s priority research needs, addressing all areas of science throughout the agency. It also tells how to acquire research results through partnerships with federal science agencies, the academic and non-government sectors and other sources. Guidelines for transferring research results into use are also provided.

At the state level, BLM has organized a research and monitoring committee which periodically evaluates research recommendations, and which proposes areas needing research to cooperating agencies. Virtually all western Oregon research subjects proposed for research since FY 96 has dealt with NFP topics such as Riparian, Aquatic Conservation Strategy, management of young stands, and habitat issues.

The Cooperative Forest Ecosystem Research (CFER) program is a cooperative between BLM; the Biological Resources Division, U.S. Geologic Service; Oregon State University, the Oregon Department of Forestry. CFER has recently developed a web site (<http://www.fsl.orst.edu/cfer>) which provides current information on ongoing research projects.

Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center (FRESC) is one of 16 science and technology centers in the U.S. Geologic Service. FRESC provides research services for most Department of Interior Bureaus in the western United States. Current information on FRESC projects can be obtained from their web site (<http://fresc.fsl.orst.edu>).