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**Council on Environmental Quality Issues Final Guidance to Promote Efficient
Environmental Reviews**

WASHINGTON, DC – The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) today released final guidance for Federal agencies on improving the efficiency of their environmental reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The guidance, part of CEQ's broader effort to modernize and reinvigorate Federal agency implementation of NEPA, also supports the goals of President Obama's August 31, 2011 Memorandum on "Speeding Infrastructure Development through More Efficient and Effective Permitting and Environmental Review."

NEPA ensures that the Federal Government makes informed and transparent decisions when it evaluates actions that could have an impact on the environment. NEPA provides a number of techniques for preparing efficient and timely environmental reviews. The guidance highlights and clarifies these opportunities to encourage efficient, thorough environmental reviews and quicker and better informed Federal decisions.

"NEPA ensures the Federal Government makes informed decisions and engages Americans in decisions that will impact their communities and environment," said Nancy Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. "This guidance will help agencies improve the quality and timeliness of their environmental reviews to protect the health of communities and support a strong American economy."

Currently, CEQ's NEPA regulations describe efficiencies that can be applied when preparing Environmental Impact Statements, the most intensive type of NEPA environmental review. The guidance clarifies that these efficiencies can and should be applied to all types of environmental reviews, including Environmental Assessments. For example, the guidance makes it clear that scoping—a technique to identify the relevant review issues and eliminate unnecessary work—can and should be used for all types of environmental reviews.

The guidance outlines the following principles for agencies to follow when performing NEPA environmental reviews:

- NEPA encourages straightforward and concise reviews and documentation;
- NEPA should be integrated into project planning to ensure decisions reflect environmental considerations and avoid delays later in the process rather than be an after-the-fact process that justifies decisions already made;
- NEPA reviews should coordinate and take appropriate advantage of existing documents and studies;
- NEPA reviews should use early and well-defined scoping to focus environmental reviews on appropriate issues and avoid unnecessary work;
- Agencies should develop meaningful and expeditious timelines for environmental reviews; and
- Agencies should target their responses to comments to appropriate issues raised.

The draft guidance was available for 45 days of public comment. CEQ reviewed and incorporated public input before finalizing the guidance.

Other Administration efforts to modernize and reinvigorate Federal agency implementation of NEPA include launching a NEPA pilot program to identify and promote more efficient ways to do effective environmental reviews that can be replicated across the Federal Government, and forming rapid response teams to help expedite the review process for transportation, transmission and renewable energy projects.

The guidance is available at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/nepa/efficiencies-guidance>

[Learn more about the Administration's efforts to modernize and reinvigorate NEPA](#)