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CEQ Releases Handbooks on Improving Efficiency of Federal Environmental Reviews

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Consistent with the goals of President Obama's 2012 Executive Order on Improving Performance of Federal Permitting and Review of Infrastructure Projects, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) today released two new handbooks that encourage more efficient environmental reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Together, the guides will promote informed Federal decisions on projects that impact American communities and help agencies improve efficiency, maximize staff resources, and reduce costs.

The handbooks complement the suite of guidance and memoranda to agencies that CEQ has issued to reaffirm the NEPA principles of early coordination and collaboration to promote efficient Federal environmental reviews. By highlighting how to take advantage of existing provisions for integrating NEPA with other planning and environmental reviews, they will help agencies avoid duplicative or inconsistent processes and facilitate quicker, more informed decision-making.

“NEPA encourages collaboration among Federal agencies, stakeholders, and the public to arrive at the best-informed decisions in the fastest timeline,” said Nancy Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. “This partnership between CEQ, California’s Office of Planning and Research, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to help agencies make efficient, informed decisions on projects that grow our economy and protect the health of our communities exemplifies the spirit of NEPA.”

The first handbook, created by CEQ and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (AHP), provides advice to Federal agencies, applicants, project sponsors, and consultants on how to take advantage of existing regulatory provisions to align the NEPA process and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 review process. Federal agencies have independent statutory obligations under NEPA and NHPA. For many projects, agencies can use the procedures and documentation required by NEPA to comply with NHPA Section 106, instead of

undertaking a separate process. The handbook explains how to align NEPA and NHPA Section 106 processes for maximum efficiency and public input, and provides a series of roadmaps for coordination of the two statutes.

In collaboration with the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research, CEQ is also releasing a draft handbook on integrating NEPA and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review processes. The guide provides practitioners with an overview of NEPA and CEQA as well as valuable suggestions for developing a single environmental review process that can meet the requirements of both statutes. It will be available for 45 days of public comment to encourage a comprehensive final product that promotes maximum efficiency.

By integrating NEPA with NHPA Section 106 and CEQA reviews, these handbooks will encourage efficient processes without adding any new requirements or sacrificing the effectiveness and transparency of environmental reviews.

To view the handbooks, please visit:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/nepa/handbooks>

To learn more about the Administration's efforts to modernize implementation of NEPA, [click here](#).

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