

§ 1515.1

40 CFR Ch. V (7-1-10 Edition)

AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

1515.10 What information is available, and how can it be obtained?

COSTS

1515.15 What fees may be charged, and how should they be paid?

AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 552, as amended by Pub. L. 93-502.

SOURCE: 42 FR 65158, Dec. 30, 1977, unless otherwise noted.

PURPOSE

§ 1515.1 What are these procedures?

The Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552, commonly known as FOIA) is a law which creates a procedure for any person to request official documents and other records from United States Government agencies. The law requires every Federal agency to make available to the public the material requested, unless the material falls under one of the limited exceptions stated in section 552(b)(5) of the Act, and the agency has good reason to refuse the request. These procedures explain how the Council on Environmental Quality—one of several offices in the Executive Office of the President—will carry out the Freedom of Information Act. They are written from the standpoint of a member of the public requesting material from the Council.

ORGANIZATION OF CEQ

§ 1515.2 What is the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)?

(a) The Council on Environmental Quality (“CEQ” or “the Council”) was created by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 through 4347). The Council’s authority is derived from that Act, the Environmental Quality Improvement Act of 1970, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4371–4374), Reorganization Plan No. 1 of 1977 (July 15, 1977), and Executive Order 11514, Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality, March 5, 1970, as amended by Executive Order 11991, May 24, 1977.

(b) The Council’s primary responsibilities include the following:

(1) To review and evaluate the programs and activities of the Federal Government to determine how they are

contributing to the attainment of the national environmental policy;

(2) To assist Federal agencies and departments in appraising the effectiveness of their existing and proposed facilities, programs, policies, and activities affecting environmental quality;

(3) To develop and recommend to the President policies to improve environmental quality to meet the conservation, social, economic, health, and other requirements and goals of the Nation;

(4) To advise and assist the President in achieving international cooperation for dealing with environmental problems;

(5) To assist in coordinating among Federal agencies and departments those programs which affect, protect, and improve environmental quality, including Federal compliance with the environmental impact statement process, and to seek resolution of significant environmental issues;

(6) To foster research relating to environmental quality and the impacts of new or changing technologies; and

(7) To analyze long and short term environmental problems and trends and assist in preparing an annual Environmental Quality Report to the President and the Congress.

(c) The Council maintains a “Quarterly Index” which lists its current policies and procedures, as required by section 552(a)(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. This index is updated and published in the FEDERAL REGISTER quarterly, starting in 1976. The Quarterly Index—and the specific items listed in the index—are available on request from the Freedom of Information Officer. You may also inspect or copy any of these materials at the Council’s office during the hours stated below in § 1515.3(f).

§ 1515.3 How is CEQ organized?

(a) The Council is made up of three members appointed by the President and subject to approval by the Senate. One member is designated as chairman by the President. All three serve in a full-time capacity.

(b) The National Environmental Policy Act and the Environmental Quality Improvement Act give the Council the authority to hire any officers and staff

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that may be necessary to carry out responsibilities and functions specified in these two Acts. Also, the use of consultants and experts is permitted.

(c) In addition to the three members, the Council has program and legal staff.

(d) The Council has no field or regional offices.

(e) The Council has a public affairs office which is responsible for providing information to the general public, the Congress, and the press. If you are interested in general information about the Council or have questions about the Council's recent activities or policy positions, you should call this office at (202) 633-7005 or write to the "Public Affairs Office" of the Council at the address given in the next paragraph.

NOTE: The CEQ public affairs office can respond fully and promptly to most questions you may have; the Council suggests that the Freedom of Information Act procedures be used when you are seeking a specific document and have had difficulty obtaining it.

(f) The Council is located at 722 Jackson Place NW., Washington, DC 20006. Office hours are 9-5:30, Monday through Friday, except legal holidays. If you wish to meet with any of the staff, please write or phone ahead for an appointment. The main number is 202-633-7027.

PROCEDURES FOR REQUESTING RECORDS

§ 1515.5 How to make a Freedom of Information Act request.

(a) The Chairman has appointed a Freedom of Information Officer who will be responsible for overseeing the Council's administration of the Freedom of Information Act and for receiving, routing, and overseeing the processing of all Freedom of Information requests. The Chairman has also appointed an Appeals Officer who is responsible for processing any appeals.

(b) *Requesting information from the Council.* (1) When you make a Freedom of Information Act request to the Council, the Freedom of Information Officer shall decide how to respond to—or "make an initial determination on"—your request within 10 working days from the date the Officer receives the request. The Freedom of Information Officer will then provide you with

written notification of the determination.

(2) You can make a Freedom of Information Act request by writing a letter which states that you are making a Freedom of Information Act request. Address your letter to:

Freedom of Information Officer, Council on Environmental Quality, Executive Office of the President, 722 Jackson Place NW., Washington, DC 20006.

(3) In your request you should identify the desired record or reasonably describe it. The request should be as specific as possible so that the item can be readily found. You should not make blanket requests, such as requests for "the entire file of" or "all materials relating to" a specified subject.

(4) The Council will make a reasonable effort to assist you in defining the request to eliminate extraneous and unwanted materials and to keep search and copying fees to a minimum. If you have budgetary constraints and anticipate that your request might be costly you may wish to indicate the maximum fee you are prepared to pay for acquiring the information. (See § 1515.15(c) also.)

(5) The 10 day period for making a determination on a request will begin when the records requested are specified or reasonably identifiable.

(6) Despite its name, the Freedom of Information Act does not require a government agency to create or research information that you would like or that you may think the agency should have. The Act only requires that existing records be made available to the public.

(c) *Council's response to a request.* (1) Upon receipt of any request under the Act, the Freedom of Information Officer shall direct the request to the appropriate staff member at the Council, who will review the request and advise the Freedom of Information Officer as soon as possible.

(2) If it is appropriate to grant the request, the staff member will immediately collect the requested materials in order to accompany, wherever possible, the Freedom of Information Officer's letter notifying you of the decision.