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(EO 11990); floodplains (EO 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.

(c) Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102(2)(E)].

(d) Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

(e) Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

(f) Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

(g) Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau.

(h) Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.

(i) Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

(j) Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EO 12898).

(k) Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 13007).

(l) Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and EO 13112).

§ 46.220 How to designate lead agencies.

(a) In most cases, the Responsible Official should designate one Federal agency as the lead with the remaining

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Federal, State, tribal governments, and local agencies assuming the role of cooperating agency. In this manner, the other Federal, State, and local agencies can work to ensure that the NEPA document will meet their needs for adoption and application to their related decision(s).

(b) In some cases, a non-Federal agency (including a tribal government) must comply with State or local requirements that are comparable to the NEPA requirements. In these cases, the Responsible Official may designate the non-Federal agency as a joint lead agency. (See 40 CFR 1501.5 and 1506.2 for a description of the selection of lead agencies, the settlement of lead agency disputes, and the use of joint lead agencies.)

(c) In some cases, the Responsible Official may establish a joint lead relationship among several Federal agencies. If there is a joint lead, then one Federal agency must be identified as the agency responsible for filing the environmental impact statement with EPA.

§ 46.225 How to select cooperating agencies.

(a) An “eligible governmental entity” is:

(1) Any Federal agency that is qualified to participate in the development of an environmental impact statement as provided for in 40 CFR 1501.6 and 1508.5 by virtue of its jurisdiction by law, as defined in 40 CFR 1508.15;

(2) Any Federal agency that is qualified to participate in the development of an environmental impact statement by virtue of its special expertise, as defined in 40 CFR 1508.26; or

(3) Any non-Federal agency (State, tribal, or local) with qualifications similar to those in paragraphs (a)(1) and (a)(2) of this section.

(b) Except as described in paragraph (c) of this section, the Responsible Official for the lead bureau must invite eligible governmental entities to participate as cooperating agencies when the bureau is developing an environmental impact statement.

(c) The Responsible Official for the lead bureau must consider any request by an eligible governmental entity to

participate in a particular environmental impact statement as a cooperating agency. If the Responsible Official for the lead bureau denies a request, or determines it is inappropriate to extend an invitation, he or she must state the reasons in the environmental impact statement. Denial of a request or not extending an invitation for cooperating agency status is not subject to any internal administrative appeals process, nor is it a final agency action subject to review under the Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. 701 *et seq.*

(d) Bureaus should work with cooperating agencies to develop and adopt a memorandum of understanding that includes their respective roles, assignment of issues, schedules, and staff commitments so that the NEPA process remains on track and within the time schedule. Memoranda of understanding must be used in the case of non-Federal agencies and must include a commitment to maintain the confidentiality of documents and deliberations during the period prior to the public release by the bureau of any NEPA document, including drafts.

(e) The procedures of this section may be used for an environmental assessment.

§ 46.230 Role of cooperating agencies in the NEPA process.

In accordance with 40 CFR 1501.6, throughout the development of an environmental document, the lead bureau will collaborate, to the fullest extent possible, with all cooperating agencies concerning those issues relating to their jurisdiction and special expertise. Cooperating agencies may, by agreement with the lead bureau, help to do the following:

- (a) Identify issues to be addressed;
- (b) Arrange for the collection and/or assembly of necessary resource, environmental, social, economic, and institutional data;
- (c) Analyze data;
- (d) Develop alternatives;
- (e) Evaluate alternatives and estimate the effects of implementing each alternative; and
- (f) Carry out any other task necessary for the development of the envi-

ronmental analysis and documentation.

§ 46.235 NEPA scoping process.

(a) Scoping is a process that continues throughout the planning and early stages of preparation of an environmental impact statement. Scoping is required for an environmental impact statement; scoping may be helpful during preparation of an environmental assessment, but is not required (see paragraph 46.305(a) Public involvement in the environmental assessment process). For an environmental impact statement, bureaus must use scoping to engage State, local and tribal governments and the public in the early identification of concerns, potential impacts, relevant effects of past actions and possible alternative actions. Scoping is an opportunity to introduce and explain the interdisciplinary approach and solicit information as to additional disciplines that should be included. Scoping also provides an opportunity to bring agencies and applicants together to lay the groundwork for setting time limits, expediting reviews where possible, integrating other environmental reviews, and identifying any major obstacles that could delay the process. The Responsible Official shall determine whether, in some cases, the invitation requirement in 40 CFR 1501.7(a)(1) may be satisfied by including such an invitation in the notice of intent (NOI).

(b) In scoping meetings, newsletters, or by other communication methods appropriate to scoping, the lead agency must make it clear that the lead agency is ultimately responsible for determining the scope of an environmental impact statement and that suggestions obtained during scoping are only options for the bureau to consider.

§ 46.240 Establishing time limits for the NEPA process.

(a) For each proposed action, on a case-by-case basis, bureaus shall:

- (1) Set time limits from the start to the finish of the NEPA analysis and documentation, consistent with the requirements of 40 CFR 1501.8 and other legal obligations, including statutory and regulatory timeframes;