

Department of Veterans Affairs

§ 26.9

(b) The major decision points for VA actions, by which time the necessary environmental documents must be completed, are as follows:

(1) *Leases*. Prior to execution of lease agreement.

(2) *Grants*. Prior to notification of grant award.

(3) *Policy*. Prior to final approval of a policy which substantially alters agency programs and which affects the human environment.

(4) *Legislative proposals*. Included in any recommendation or report to Congress on a legislative proposal which would affect the environment. The document must be available in time for Congressional hearings and deliberations.

(5) *Major, minor, minor miscellaneous delegated projects, and non-recurring maintenance projects*. Prior to contract award for working drawings or prior to in-house initiation of working drawings. If the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or designee makes a finding of compelling need, working drawings may commence prior to completion of the environmental compliance process. However, this will not preclude completion of environmental compliance prior to construction.

(6) *Land acquisition for development*. Prior to the Secretary's acceptance of custody and accountability (for Federal lands), or acceptance of offer to donate or contract for purchase (for private lands).

(c) Where emergency circumstances make it necessary to take an action with significant environmental impact without observing the provisions of these regulations, VA must act in accordance with CEQ Regulations, 40 CFR 1506.11.

(Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321-4370a)

[51 FR 37182, Oct. 20, 1986, as amended at 54 FR 34987, Aug. 23, 1989]

§ 26.8 Assistance to applicants.

(a) The CEQ Regulations (40 CFR 1501.2(d)) provide for advising of private applicants or other non-Federal groups when VA involvement in a particular action is reasonably foreseeable. Such foreseeable actions involve application to a VA element by private persons, States, and local agencies and pertain

primarily to permits, leases, requests for financial assistance, grants, and related actions involving the use of VA real property.

(b) VA involvement may be reasonably foreseeable when the following actions are initiated by non-Federal groups:

(1) Easements and rights-of-way on VA land;

(2) Petroleum, grazing, and timber leases;

(3) Permits, license, and other use agreements or grants of real property for use by non-VA groups; and,

(4) Application for grants-in-aid for acquisition, construction, expansion or improvement of state veterans' health care facilities or cemeteries.

(c) Public notices or other means used to inform or solicit applicants for permits, leases, or related actions will describe the environmental documents, studies or information foreseeably required for later action by VA elements and will advise of the assistance available to applicants by VA element.

(d) When VA owned land is leased or otherwise provided to non-VA groups, VA element affected will initiate the NEPA process pursuant to these regulations.

(e) When VA grant funds are requested by a State agency, VA element affected will initiate the NEPA process and ensure compliance with VA environmental program. The environmental documents prepared by the grant applicant shall assure full compliance with State and local regulations as well as NEPA before the proposed action is approved.

(Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321-4370a)

§ 26.9 Information on and public participation in VA environmental process.

(a) During the preparation of environmental documents, the responsible VA element shall include the participation of environmental agencies, applicants, State and local governments and the public to the extent practicable and in conformance with CEQ Regulations. Information or status reports on environmental documents shall be provided to interested persons upon request.

(b) Notice of availability or filing requirements vary, depending on the type of environmental documents requested. Specific requirements and procedures are defined for each VA element.

(c) For those actions relating specifically to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Office of Environmental Affairs, or a VA element, information is available by writing to the Director, Office of Environmental Affairs, Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20420.

(Authority: 42 U.S.C. 4321–4370a)

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