



Categorical Exclusions

Proposed Changes Under NEPA

Quick Facts

Under NEPA, “categorical exclusion” means a category of actions that do not have a significant effect on the human environment and do not require an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement.

In 2003, the Midwest Region of the Service formed a work group of state representatives and Service employees to look for ways to improve or streamline categorical exclusions. The International Association of Fish and Wildlife is also working on revisions to categorical exclusions with a focus on Federal Assistance grant activities.

Work Group Recommendations

- 1) Adopt the clarifications to 1.4 A(4) and 1.4 B(3) as Regional policy.
- 2) Develop a new categorical exclusion for invasive species rapid response actions and implement it from the Washington Office.

Real Property

Categorical Exclusion 1.4A(4) Acquisition of Real Property would be modified to provide for disposal of small land parcels for public purposes, including limited disposal along existing rights of way or for public purposes up to 25 acres.

Habitat Management

Categorical Exclusion 1.4B(3) focuses on habitat management actions and the clarifications would add: vegetation management including small clearcuts in forests; control of nuisance plant species; removal of obsolete buildings and construction of storage facilities; access to water including boat launches, wildlife viewing facilities fishing piers; hunting blinds, etc.

Fish Passage

The Categorical Exclusion 1.4B(3) clarification focuses on removal of barriers to fish passage. With restrictions, the following types of projects may qualify for categorical exclusions: altering culverts and low-water crossings, and construction of boulder ramps and/or stair steps, dam notching, dam removal.

Invasive Aquatic Species

The Categorical Exclusion 1.4B(3) clarification focuses on the control and management of existing invasive aquatic species. With restrictions, the following types of projects may qualify for categorical exclusions: physical measures – manual removal or destruction of



eggs, seeds, juveniles, mature plants or animals; physical barriers to restrain spread of invasives; chemical measures including application of registered biocides; biological measures – introduction of native predators, sterile adults, etc.

Rapid Response

The National Aquatic Invasive Species Act of 2005 would establish a revolving fund (authorized at \$25 million) to assist states in implementing rapid response actions. To be executed rapidly, the Service’s actions will require NEPA compliance before the invasion occurs. The work group proposed a new categorical exclusion to exterminate invasive species (new to the country or a new portion of a watershed) by means of physical and chemical measures, and biological measures for which environmental impacts have been evaluated.

Contact

Jeff Gosse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, MN 55111
Phone: 612-713-5138;
E-mail: jeff_gosse@fws.gov