

The EIS process consists of several steps, each with opportunities for you to get involved. BPA follows these six steps for EISs on projects, plans and policies.

### 1. Notice of Intent (NOI) and letters to the public

Initially, BPA publishes a NOI in the Federal Register and sends a letter announcing the project to interested and affected parties. Landowners, tribes and interest groups, as well as federal, state and local agencies and the general public, are invited to participate in the EIS process. The NOI describes the need for action and provides preliminary information on the scope of issues to be addressed in the EIS, including the alternative actions and potential environmental impacts to analyze. The NOI also contains contact information and serves as the start of the formal scoping process under NEPA (see next step).

**Get involved:** The notice of intent and public letter explain how you can participate in the scoping process. These documents provide information about dates and locations of public meetings and how to access the project Web site.

### 2. Scoping

Scoping is an early and open process during which BPA solicits public input by asking questions such as the following:

- What issues should we evaluate?
- What potential environmental impacts should we analyze?
- What alternatives should we consider?

BPA's scoping process lasts at least 30 days for an EIS and includes at least one public meeting.

**Get involved:** Ask to be placed on the project mailing list. Tell BPA what EIS information you would like to receive and how you would like to receive it. For example, you might want a summary of the EIS, an e-mail with a link to the electronic EIS or the full document on CD or in hard copy. Be sure to submit comments – by letter, via Web comment form or at the scoping meeting – that you may have about the scope of the EIS before the close of the scoping period.

### 3. Draft EIS

BPA considers scoping comments and collects environmental data in preparing a draft EIS. The draft EIS compares alternatives and describes their potential environmental impacts. BPA is required to consider the “no action” alternative in its EISs, and to identify ways to avoid or reduce adverse environmental impacts. The draft EIS also identifies the agency's preferred alternative, if known at that time.

**Access information:** BPA's EIS schedules and related project information are available at BPA's Web site: [www.bpa.gov/go/NEPA](http://www.bpa.gov/go/NEPA). Click on “Project Reviews – Active.”

### 4. Comment on a draft EIS

When BPA issues a draft EIS, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes a notice of availability (NOA) for the draft EIS in the Federal Register. This kicks off an official public draft EIS comment period that lasts at least 45 days. In the NOA, BPA also will announce details about public meeting(s) for the draft EIS and how to comment during the comment period.

**Get involved:** If you're on the mailing list for an EIS on a project, you'll receive notice when the draft EIS is available for review. You also can check your local paper and the BPA Web site for information about the dates, times, and location of public meetings and ways to submit comments. Be sure to submit comments before the close of the comment period.

### 5. Final EIS

BPA considers and responds to timely substantive comments on the draft EIS and makes any necessary changes to the EIS text in preparing the final EIS. The final EIS also identifies BPA's preferred alternative, if it was not identified in the draft EIS. When BPA issues the final EIS, the EPA once again publishes a NOA for the final EIS in the Federal Register.

**Access information:** If you previously requested it, the final EIS or summary will be mailed or e-mailed to you. You can also check your local

paper, the BPA Web site or libraries for information about how to access or obtain copies of the final EIS.

### 6. Record of Decision (ROD)

BPA must wait at least 30 days after the NOA for the final EIS is published in the Federal Register before issuing a ROD. The ROD announces and explains BPA's decision and identifies alternatives, specifying the environmentally preferable one. It identifies and discusses decision factors and describes any commitments for mitigating potential environmental impacts.

**Access information:** BPA publishes either the ROD or a NOA of a ROD in the Federal Register, which you can access at: [www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/) or at the BPA Web site [www.bpa.gov/go/NEPA](http://www.bpa.gov/go/NEPA). You may also request a copy from BPA.

### About BPA

The Bonneville Power Administration, part of the U.S. Department of Energy, is a not-for-profit federal electric utility that operates a high-voltage transmission grid comprising more than 15,000 miles of lines and associated substations in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. It also markets more than a third of the electricity consumed in the Pacific Northwest. The power is produced at 31 federal dams owned and operated by the U.S. Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation and one nuclear plant in the Northwest and is sold wholesale to more than 140 Northwest utilities. BPA purchases power from seven wind projects and has more than 2,200 megawatts of wind interconnected to its transmission system.

[www.bpa.gov](http://www.bpa.gov)

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NEPA  
National Environmental Policy Act

A guide to  
being heard  
during the  
NEPA process



Have you ever wondered how environmental issues factor into Bonneville Power Administration decisions that may affect you? For example, how does BPA consider the environment in deciding where to put a transmission line or fish hatchery, or whether to put a new policy in place? Where do environmental considerations fit into the planning of these and other projects, programs and policies? And how can you make sure your opinions and concerns about the environment are heard and considered by decision makers?

The NEPA process is one opportunity for BPA to hear and consider the opinions and concerns of potentially affected communities. BPA believes that the more citizens know about the NEPA decision-making process, the more effectively we can work together to create the best environmental outcomes for our region. Specifically, we want to ensure that the Federal Columbia River Power System is safe, reliable and efficient; that our transmission system reliably integrates and transmits electrical power in the region; and that BPA is engaged in responsible environmental stewardship. In carrying out these responsibilities, we also strive to be responsive to regional communities and look at ways to minimize potential impacts from our actions.

Federal decisions have the potential to affect many aspects of your life, so at BPA we encourage your involvement in our NEPA processes.

## NEPA and how it enhances decision making

The National Environmental Policy Act, enacted in 1969, is a federal law that is applicable to all federal agencies, including BPA. NEPA and its implementing regulations require these agencies to undertake an assessment of the environmental effects of their proposed actions before making decisions and taking action. Most federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Energy (of which BPA is a part), also have enacted their own, agency-specific NEPA implementing regulations.

The NEPA process is intended to promote better agency decisions by ensuring that high-quality environmental information is available to agency officials and the public before the agency decides whether and how to undertake a federal action. While NEPA does not require that an agency achieve particular environmental results, it does require that an agency take a hard look at the potential environmental impacts of a proposed federal action. Under NEPA, BPA works closely with other federal agencies and state, local and tribal governments; public and private organizations; and the public to better understand these potential environmental impacts.

When conducting a NEPA analysis for a particular proposed project, plan, program or policy, BPA considers many different factors in the natural, economic and social environments, such as:

- endangered or sensitive species and their habitats
- cultural resources
- floodplains and wetlands
- noise levels, water quality and air quality
- human health and safety
- social and economic impacts to communities

In addition, where appropriate, measures to mitigate environmental impacts are included in the analysis.

## Participate in the NEPA process

Your role is very important in the NEPA process that occurs during planning. With your input, we can have a better understanding of your opinions and concerns that should be considered throughout the NEPA process by agency decision makers. There are several ways to share your opinions and concerns with us and help shape the alternatives and factors considered in the analysis. To keep up with the latest developments, you can:

- Put your name on a mailing list to receive newsletters, updates and other information from BPA.

- Attend public meetings.
- Provide your input on BPA proposed projects, plans, programs and policies.
- Ask a BPA official to attend a meeting of your community organization, neighborhood association, school or other civic organization to talk about BPA's responsibilities and explain the NEPA process.
- Find out what specific public involvement opportunities are available in your area by checking out the public involvement page on our Web site at [www.bpa.gov](http://www.bpa.gov).

## How BPA documents its decisions under NEPA

The appropriate NEPA documentation for a particular proposed project or action depends largely on the significance – in terms of context and intensity – of the project's potential environmental impacts. Typical NEPA documents include:

An **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** is prepared for federal actions that may have a significant effect on the human environment. The EIS process involves several steps defined by regulation that an agency must follow. See the back of this brochure for more details about the EIS process and how you can participate.

An **Environmental Assessment (EA)** is prepared for federal actions when the significance of environmental impact is not clear. If after preparing an EA, it is determined that the impact is significant, an EIS is then prepared. If not, a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is documented. BPA requests public comments on preliminary EAs and considers those comments before either finalizing the EA and preparing a FONSI, or moving forward with an EIS.

A **Categorical Exclusion (CX)** is prepared for federal actions that do not require an EIS or an EA because they do not have the potential for significant

environmental impacts, either individually or cumulatively. A CX documents that the action fits within one of DOE's defined CX categories and that there are no extraordinary circumstances present.

## For more information

We encourage you to learn more about NEPA, the environmental review process and BPA's current NEPA activities through one of the methods below:

- Visit BPA's Web site: [www.bpa.gov/go/NEPA](http://www.bpa.gov/go/NEPA). Click on "Project Reviews – Active," to view or download project-specific information and BPA NEPA documents.
- Call BPA's toll-free document request line at (800) 622-4520 to request specific documents and other BPA-related information and publications.
- Subscribe to the BPA Journal by calling (800) 622-4519 to receive monthly updates on BPA projects and processes that are under review. View previous editions of the BPA Journal at: [www.bpa.gov/corporate/pubs/Journal](http://www.bpa.gov/corporate/pubs/Journal).
- Visit DOE's NEPA Web site at [www.eh.doe.gov/nepa](http://www.eh.doe.gov/nepa) to find requirements and guidance that BPA, as an agency of DOE, follows for NEPA implementation.
- Visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's NEPA Net Web site at <http://nepa.gov/nepa/nepanet.htm> for government wide NEPA information.
- Browse the Federal Register online [www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/) for notices about federal agency actions.

## How BPA prepares an EIS

Both the draft and final EIS provide a full description of the proposed action and alternatives, the existing environment, and an analysis of the anticipated beneficial and adverse environmental effects of all reasonable alternatives. BPA requests public comments on the scope of each EIS and on the draft EIS. The EIS provides the basis from which a decision is made.