

Guidance Related to the Summary and Abstract of an EIS



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ABSTRACT



The objective of this guidance is to provide practical and useable information to NEPA professionals who have been tasked with the preparation of an EIS summary, and sequentially, with the preparation of an abstract and ROD. The summary, which normally should not exceed 15 pages, should adequately and accurately summarize the EIS, stress its major conclusions, identify areas of controversy (including issues raised by agencies and the public), and note the issues to be resolved (including the choice among alternatives). Prior to initiation of writing, a topical contents outline for the summary should be prepared based on both general information and available specific recommendations regarding “good practice” topics. The preparation of an initial version should be based on a review of the chapters and sections of the main body of the EIS, as well as the appendices. A “mock-up” version should be assembled and then subjected to editing, the preparation of connector sentences and paragraphs, and possibly, the development of new tables and figures for communicating information. Further, the initial draft of an EIS summary should be subjected to an internal review by the proponent agency. Finally, due to its high readership level, the summary is arguably the most important part of an EIS. From a pragmatic standpoint, a member of the project team, or possibly several members, should be assigned the task of developing an initial version of the summary.



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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Contents	iii
Introduction	1
Requirements for Summary and Abstract	1
Planning and Preparing the Summary	2
Recognize that the Summary will be read by Multiple Readers	2
Utilize Writers from the Project Team.....	3
Develop a Contents Plan for the Summary	3
Practical Recommendations for the Preparation of a Summary	4
Use a Pragmatic Process for Preparing the Summary	5
Utilize the Summary when Preparing a Record of Decision	6
Case Law on EIS Summaries	7
Planning and Preparing the Abstract	7
Summary and Conclusions	8
Selected References	9
Appendix I –Checklists for the Contents of an EIS Summary	10-11



Introduction



The summary of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA) is a vital component of overall National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents. A major reason for this is that the summary may be the only part of the document actually read by NEPA professionals in Federal agencies and members of various stakeholder groups (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 2006). As such, it is very important that the summary appropriately address all key aspects of the EIS (or EA). However, confusion may occur relative to the preparation of a summary because some Federal agencies refer to it as an executive summary. In fact, on occasion both a longer summary and a shorter executive summary may be included in the same EIS.

The objective of this guidance is to provide practical and useable information to NEPA professionals at NOAA, the Regional Fishery Management Councils (hereafter the “FMCs”) and their contractors, who have been tasked with the preparation of an EIS summary, and sequentially, with the preparation of an EIS Abstract. Because of the anticipated large readership of an EIS summary, it is very important that careful planning for the summary be conducted and that creativity be utilized to communicate the included information. The focus of this guidance is on summaries for EISs. However, the recommendations and suggestions could be utilized for the preparation of summaries for EAs.

The summary of an EIS needs to be carefully planned, drafted by one or more persons who have been on the Project Team, and reviewed by a group of agency professionals who can offer both scientific and policy insights. To illustrate, three common problems related to the preparation of a summary are described below, and approaches which could be used to overcome each are highlighted in subsequent sections herein.

- First Problem – The summary is prepared by one or more persons who were not members of the Project Team. When this occurs, the prepared summary may not adequately and accurately summarize the main body of the EIS. In addition, new information and concluding statements may be introduced, with such inclusions not being in consonance with the findings of the study. Further difficulties could occur if the

agendas of such unfamiliar writers do not match the identified purpose and need of the proposed action.

- Second Problem – The summary is prepared at the very end of the EIS preparation process, thus subjecting exhausted preparers to another “last-minute” deadline and not allowing for adequate internal reviews of a draft version.
- Third Problem – The summary is prepared via the “cutting and pasting” of selected paragraphs from the EIS. As a result, the summary may seem to be uneven and lack both consistency and coherence.

This pragmatic guidance document highlights the Council on Environmental Quality’s (CEQ’s) NEPA regulation requirements that a summary and abstract be prepared for EISs. The major section herein addresses various aspects of planning and preparing the summary. The section topics are related to recognizing the audience, utilizing writers from the project team, developing a contents plan based on various recommendations, practical considerations within a pragmatic process, and using the summary when preparing a ROD. A brief section on case law is then included, along with some thoughts related to the preparation of the abstract. Finally, key conclusions from this guidance are presented.

Requirements for Summary and Abstract



The NEPA regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality call for the specific inclusion of an Abstract and summary in EISs. They are listed as follows in the recommended format for an EIS (Council on Environmental Quality, 1999):

- Section 1502.11 – Cover Sheet – a one paragraph Abstract of the EIS shall be included; and
- Section 1502.12 – Summary – Each EIS shall contain a summary which adequately and accurately summarizes the statement. The summary shall stress the major conclusions, areas of controversy (including issues raised by agencies and the public), and the issues to be resolved (including the choice among alternatives). The summary will normally not exceed 15 pages.

(Note: via practice, the summary is typically included after the Cover Sheet, Table of Contents, lists of Tables and Figures, Acknowledgments and Abbreviations, and prior to Chapter 1 -- Introduction).

As noted above, an “adequate” and “accurate” summary is to be prepared. In guidance related to the preparation of a summary, the U.S. Department of Energy (1998) defined the two “a” words as follows:

- To “adequately” summarize the EIS, the summary must contain the key information from each of the component elements of the statement: purpose and need for agency action, the no-action and action alternatives, and the principal environmental issues analyzed and the results. As appropriate for enhancing the reader’s understanding of impacts, brief information from the affected environment element could be included. In effect, the summary is a miniature EIS, but with sections emphasized in proportion to their importance in the EIS – that is, important information is discussed in greater detail.
- To “accurately” summarize the EIS, the summary must not introduce ideas, information, or conclusions that are not otherwise in the EIS.

The CEQ’s NEPA regulations do not require an Abstract or summary for Environmental Assessments (EAs). However, many EAs include both items, and the Sections 1502.11 and 1502.12 requirements from above can be used as the bases for their preparation.

The NEPA regulations of NOAA Fisheries Service (NOAA Administrative Order 216-6) also require the preparation of Abstracts and Summaries for EISs as per the CEQ’s NEPA regulations (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 1999).

Planning and Preparing the Summary



It is assumed that the common writing sequence for a NEPA document (EIS or EA) would be as follows (Canter, 1996): (1) all chapters and appendices for the EIS (EA) would be prepared first; (2) the summary (or Executive summary) would then be prepared (it could be up to 15 pages in length); (3) the Abstract (about one paragraph in length) would also

be prepared and based on the summary; and (4) the ROD would be assembled via usage of appropriate information from the summary, supplemented with other required topical issues as per Section 1505.2 of the CEQ’s NEPA regulations (Council on Environmental Quality, 1999).

This section includes practical topics related to both planning issues and preparational strategies. An important initial topic involves the recognition that the summary will be read by various audiences (readers). The second topic proposes the use of one or more persons from the project team as the initial writers of the summary. Some general information related to the contents of a summary is in the third topic, while the fourth topic encourages familiarity with information sources containing recommended topics and features. The fifth topic contains practical suggestions related to both preparing and reviewing summaries, including the need for a workplace environment which is conducive to these tasks. The final topic addressed is associated with the use of the prepared summary when developing the ROD.

Recognize That the Summary Will Be Read by Multiple Readers



An important principle of technical writing is to anticipate the readers of the prepared document. A key challenge in preparing an EIS (or EA), including its summary, is to organize and communicate the contained information in a manner which is understandable to a wide range of readers (audiences) (Canter, 1996). To illustrate the range, the following categories of audiences could conceivably read the summary of an EIS (or EA):

- Background and experience – non-technical and technical;
- Affiliation – internal and external to proponent agency;
- Discipline – oceanographers, scientists, biologists, sociologists, public policy analysts, attorneys, fishermen, fish dealers, economists, etc.;
- Familiarity – live in affected area or outside of area;

- Connected to proposed action (preferred alternative) – economically dependent or not affected; and
- Employment – governmental or private sector.

It is also important to recognize that the majority of the readers, irrespective of their categorization, are intelligent. However, they are likely to be uninformed about the specific details within the EIS (or EA).

Another perspective is that the readers of an EIS (or EA), including the summary, may have pre-formulated perspectives on the proposed action (preferred alternative). For example, Weiss (1989) suggested three motivated groups of EIS readers: (1) those belonging to a fairly high jurisdiction of government, who are responsible for a series of decisions, often including enforcement, and who are frequently under political pressure to approve or disapprove (in the guise of “neutral” review for compliance); (2) supporters of the preferred alternative, who are hoping that the EIS will not forecast any unavoidable consequences or identify any more attractive alternatives, and who are often impatient to have it approved as quickly as possible; and (3) opponents of the preferred alternative, who are alert to any instance in which its adverse effects are minimized or in which those of the alternatives are exaggerated, and who are typically skeptical of all assumptions, inferences, and secondhand or imputed data.

Utilize Writers from the Project Team



Because the summary must adequately and accurately condense important information from the EIS chapters, it is highly desirable to have an initial draft of the summary prepared by one or two members of the project team. These members could be Federal employees, FMC staff and/or their contractors. However, the critical issue is that they must be thoroughly familiar with the substantive contents of the EIS. This approach would help to alleviate the first problem described above. The team leader could also participate in the preparation, or serve as a final reviewer and editor. If, for whatever reason, an outside person is assigned the responsibility of preparing the summary, then they could be assisted by one or more persons from the Project Team, as well as the team leader. Again, the internal review process for the summary would

be important in achieving an adequate and accurate portrayal of the EIS contents. Following reviews of the initial draft, the summary can be appropriately modified. Finally, the lead person on the project team must exercise quality control and “take professional responsibility” for the summary (U.S. Department of Energy, 1998).

If a “group approach” (from two to several persons) is to be used to plan and prepare the summary, then the following three-step strategy may be useful (Woolston, et al., 1988). First, after appropriate individual thinking, the group should meet, discuss, and subsequently agree upon the summary’s purpose, scope and overall topical outline. Second, one person from the group could prepare the initial draft of the summary. Conversely, several persons from the group could prepare assigned sections, with one person assembling the individual parts into a coherent whole. Finally, the composite draft summary should be periodically reviewed by the group, and adjustments made as appropriate. One to three review rounds should be sufficient to generate a summary for a draft and final EIS.


Develop a Contents Plan for the Summary



Several structures can be used in preparing a summary. In some cases a narrative description of the required contents is used. Such narratives can be supported by charts, diagrams, and illustrations to highlight important findings and conclusions. Another structure involves the use of a narrative description built around a summary table that comparatively lists all of the reasonable alternatives, their related environmental resource impacts, conclusions regarding significance and associated mitigation measures (Bass, Herson and Bogdan, 2001). Referrals can be made to one or more summary tables in the alternatives and/or environmental consequences sections (chapters). These two structures, or variations thereof, should be considered when developing a plan for the preparation of the summary.

In planning for the topical contents of a summary, the use of section headings could also be considered. For example, the summary could be organized by using section headings that parallel the main chapter headings in the EIS (The Shipley Group, Inc., 2003).

The summary should include the conclusions from the EIS. Examples of such conclusions include: (1)



the identification of the preferred alternative and the rationale for its selection; (2) the key findings regarding the environmental consequences of the evaluated alternatives and highlighted information from the affected environment to aid in understanding the consequences; and (3) commitments to the procurement of necessary permits, development and implementation of mitigation and monitoring strategies, how future findings/new information would be used to adapt management, and periodic dissemination of information to interested stakeholders and groups. As a result, the summary should not simply state the topics addressed in the chapters and appendices of the EIS. Rather, the composite results should be highlighted along with the conclusions. A useful approach in preparing the EIS would be to prepare conclusions for incorporation at the end of each of the substantive chapters. Such conclusions could be used, with appropriate editing and bridging, in the summary.

Additional issues which could be included in the summary are:

- A synopsis of the public scoping process and the key inputs which aided in the conduction of the impact study (it is assumed that this information could be condensed from the contents of Chapter 1); and
- The relationship of tiering to the EIS (i.e. has the EIS subjected to summarization been tiered from another EIS or Programmatic EIS, or will the current EIS or PEIS be “tiered from” in subsequent NEPA documents?) Again, it is assumed that such information could be condensed from the contents of Chapter 1.

Consideration of “contents checklists” or “questionnaire checklists” related to EIS summaries can also aid in the development of a contents outline for a specific summary. Appendix I includes three contents checklists which could be used in developing a specific outline. Further, two questionnaire checklists, which are also in Appendix I, could be used to either plan or review a specific summary.

Finally, the summary for an EA could be a finding of no significant impact (FONSI). The FONSI section could be either at the front or back of the EA. More importantly, the FONSI should summarize the anticipated impacts of the alternatives, including the preferred alternative, and indicate whether or not


mitigation would be required to reduce anticipated impacts to non-significant levels. Current agency guidance requires the completion of a 16-question checklist for Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) issues, and a 14-question checklist for non-MSA issues, including NEPA-related topics.

Practical Recommendations for the Preparation of a Summary



Recommendations included in both agency guidance and the publications of technical writers should be reviewed and considered during the planning and preparation of an EIS summary. Two examples each of guidance and publications will be used to illustrate the availability and potential usefulness of such information. For example, the U.S. Department of Energy (1998) has developed several non-binding recommendations regarding the preparation of an EIS summary. They include:

- Brief information should be included on the purpose of NEPA and the purpose of the prepared EIS. This information will help the uninformed reader to understand the NEPA process. Further, a flowchart of the utilized NEPA process may be helpful.
- Important information should be extracted from the body of the EIS and appropriately explained and connected. Merely copying and pasting paragraphs from the EIS will not lead to a coherent and integrated summary.
- The summary should be a “stand-alone” version of the EIS; that is, the average reader should be able to understand the issues and decisions without referring to the main body of the EIS.
- Comparisons of the important impacts of the reasonable alternatives should be emphasized in the summary.
- In preparing the summary, plain language which is understandable by a wide variety of audiences should be used.
- Graphic aids (e.g. maps, tables, graphs,



flowcharts and photographs) should be used to increase the comprehension of the text of the summary. In addition, a reader-friendly layout such as the inclusion of “questions and answers”, text boxes, and color printing, as appropriate, should be adopted.

Suggested rules related to the planning and preparation of a summary for any technical document include (Vidoli, 2006):

- Do not use undefined symbols;
- Do not cite equations or appendices; and
- Do not introduce new material.

Useful suggestions for planning an EIS summary (or any writing) are to (Woolston, et al., 1998):

- Put yourself in your reader’s shoes and think about what you would like to know if you had no prior information (from the EIS);
- Organize the sections in the summary so that the most important information is presented first and in more detail; and
- Consider the inclusion of sections within the summary, with such sections, as appropriate, paralleling the contents of the EIS.

Finally, in a recent series of further recommendations related to EISs, the U.S. Department of Energy (2004) included the following regarding the summary (could be applied to an EIS or EA):

- Ensure that the summary is concise, informative, and easy to read;
- Focus the summary on a comparison of analyzed alternatives. Describe each alternative, identifying the preferred alternative(s) if one or more exists (40 CFR 1502.14(e)). Highlight key differences among alternatives, emphasizing the environmental implications of choosing among them. Include a table of comparison of impacts;
- Emphasize issues and impacts in proportion to their importance;


- Describe areas of controversy (including those raised in comments);
- State the issues to be resolved, including the decision to be made and its relationship to the purpose and need for agency action;
- Prepare the summary to read as a “stand-alone” document. It may be bound with the rest of the EA or EIS, or printed separately; and
- Be consistent with the main body of the EA or EIS. Do not introduce ideas, information, or conclusions in the summary that are not otherwise in the EA or EIS.

- In the summary for a draft EIS, briefly describe the scoping process, summarize major issues raised in scoping comments, and identify major changes made to the scope of the EIS in response to comments. In the summary for a final EIS, briefly describe the public comment process, summarize major issues raised in comments and the proponent agency’s response, and identify major changes from the draft to the final EIS.

Use a Pragmatic Process for Preparing the Summary



Assuming that a topical contents plan for the summary has been prepared, the writer(s) should begin the preparation by reading/reviewing the contents of the EIS to be summarized. This early preparation would aid in the alleviation of the second problem as described above (last minute preparation). To be proactive, the project team could prepare summaries and conclusions related to each EIS chapter as it is being prepared, with this information serving as a starting point for the summary of the EIS. Further, planning for the summary preparation and review as well as allocation of appropriate time and personnel resources, should be incorporated from the beginning of the EIS planning process. A further strategy could be to include the concurrent development of a mock-up of a preliminary summary as individual EIS chapters are completed. Each of these approaches could be used to facilitate the timely preparation of the initial version of the draft or final EIS summary which could then be subject to appropriate internal reviews.



This overall cursory review, as well as related detailed reviews, will aid in the development of a “writing mindset” for the summary. Each reader/reviewer should make notes, as appropriate, related to: (1) key paragraphs, maps, figures and tables which could be moved to the summary; (2) sections which should be condensed and/or rewritten prior to their inclusions in the summary; and (3) connector paragraphs or sentences which need to be written. Creative thinking regarding information communication should be exercised at this point. The use of connectors can aid the alleviation of the third problem described above; namely, cutting and pasting. While cutting and pasting may be a way to get started, attention needs to be given to the use of connecting sentences and paragraphs to improve information flow. In addition, the

Further, the writers of EIS summaries must be creative regarding how to communicate the key information.

Such creativity could lead to re-organizing information and communicating the study results via summary tables, side bar boxes, etc.

moved paragraphs may need to be edited in order to give greater emphasis to study findings and concluding sentences.

In addition, reviews of the coherence of the summary should be conducted. In this case, coherence relates to the following questions – Does the summary stick together? Is there a logical flow of information within the sections of the summary? Are the connections among the various sections adequately described?

Following the assemblage of an initial draft of the summary, the writer(s) should set it aside for a brief period (for example, a day or two up to a week), and then conduct a careful review and editing of the initial draft. A useful checkpoint for this editing could be based on the re-reading of the preparation recommendations as contained in the prior topic, as well as the contents and questionnaire checklists in Appendix I. Again, the coherence of the initial draft should be considered.

The edited initial draft should then be reviewed by internal NEPA staff of the action agency, other members of the project team (including the team leader if he/she has not been involved in the preparation of the initial draft), and contractors assisting in the EIS preparation. Following these internal reviews and appropriate changes in the initial draft, the summary can be added to the draft EIS.

Workplace environments often present barriers to effective writing, particularly when preparing a summary of a multi-hundred page EIS. Examples of such barriers include: (1) background noise levels from external source and intraoffice sounds; (2) periodic interruptions from phone calls and information requests; and (3) the pressure from meeting deadlines associated with multiple projects or activities (Woolston, et al., 1988). Accordingly, writing the summary of an EIS may require working away from the normal office environment for designated blocks of time. Further, if possible, telephonic and email interruptions should be controlled. Similar barriers as noted above also may exist for internal reviewers of draft versions of the summary. As a result, it also may be desirable to conduct such reviews away from the normal office environment.

Utilize the Summary When Preparing a Record of Decision



In addition to serving as the basis for the abstract, information from the summary can also be used in the preparation of the ROD. The content specifications of a ROD are from Section 1505.2 of the CEQ’s NEPA regulations as follows (Council on Environmental Quality, 1999):

- A clear statement describing the decision (which alternative was selected);
- A listing and summary of all alternatives considered in reaching the decision, specifying the environmentally preferable alternative or alternatives;
- If deemed appropriate, a discussion of preferences among alternatives based on relevant factors including economic and technical considerations and agency statutory missions;

- An identification and discussion of all factors that led to the decision and how those considerations entered into the decision;
- A statement as to whether all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the alternative selected have been adopted, and if not, why they were not; and
- For the identified mitigation measures, a summary of the monitoring and enforcement program that will be utilized.

Examination of these six items reveals that, with the exception of the specification of the environmentally preferable alternative, information from the summary should typically facilitate the preparation of the ROD.

Case Law on EIS Summaries



To identify relevant case law related to Summaries (or executive summaries) of EISs, a Lexis-Nexis search was conducted via use of the terms “NEPA, summary, executive summary, and inadequate”. A total of seven District-level decisions along with two Appellate-level decisions were identified and reviewed. Only one District-level case was found to be relevant to this guidance (Charles Francis Davison, et al., 1982). In this case, the District Court for the Southern District of Ohio noted that the Executive summary of the EIS neither adequately summarized and explained the noise levels from planned air cargo operations nor did it fully describe the significance of the anticipated levels. Accordingly, a key principle from this 1982 decision is that the summary (or Executive summary) should appropriately highlight and explain the EIS findings on key issues. This principle is particularly important given the probability of a large readership of EIS Summaries rather than thorough reviews of entire EISs.



Planning and Preparing the Abstract

An abstract of an EIS (or EA) refers to a brief statement of the main ideas or important points of an EIS. Such an abstract could be developed as a “mini-version” of the summary. Day (1995) suggested several rules or thoughts for preparing an abstract of a

technical paper; these rules and thoughts are also applicable for abstracts of EISs:

- The abstract should enable readers to identify the basic content of an EIS quickly and accurately, to determine its relevance to their interests, and thus to decide whether they need to read the summary and the entire EIS.
- The abstract should not exceed 250 words and should be designed to define clearly what is dealt with in the EIS.
- The abstract should be presented as a single paragraph.
- Most or all of the abstract should be written in the past tense, because it refers to work done. However, future activities could be described using the future tense.

The abstract should never give any information or conclusion that is not stated in the EIS and summary. References to the literature must not be cited in the abstract (except in rare instances, such as modification of a previously published EIS).

The abstract should be prepared after the summary because it is analogous to a one-paragraph “mini-executive summary.” It should represent a microcosm of the EIS, beginning with one or two sentences describing the issue(s) addressed and the purpose(s) of the EIS. The analysis used (i.e. scope of the study) should then be summarized in one or two sentences. Emphasis should then be given to the key findings and conclusions of the EIS, and any resulting recommendations, with these topics addressed in four-to-six sentences.



Summary and Conclusions



The objective of this guidance is to provide practical and useable information to NEPA professionals who have been tasked with the preparation of an EIS summary, and sequentially, with the preparation of an abstract and ROD. Because of the anticipated large readership of an EIS summary, it is very important that careful planning for the summary be conducted and that creativity be utilized to communicate the included information. From a pragmatic standpoint, the summary should be drafted by one or more persons who have been on the project team and reviewed by a group of agency professionals who can offer both scientific and policy insights. The summary should adequately and accurately summarize the EIS, stress its major conclusions, identify areas of controversy (including issues raised by agencies and the public), and note the issues to be resolved (including the choice among alternatives). The summary should normally not exceed 15 pages. Further, the summary should be based on the contents and findings within the EIS; accordingly, it should not be prepared until a working draft of the EIS has been completed.

Several practical suggestions can be used as aids to the planning and preparation of an EIS summary. For example, the preparers should recognize that the summary will be read by diverse audiences (readers). In addition, one or more persons from the project team should be assigned as the initial writer(s) of the summary. Prior to initiation of writing, a topical contents outline for the summary should be prepared. The outline should be based on both general information and available specific recommendations related to both required and “good practice” topics to be addressed. Practical suggestions for the actual preparation of an initial version include reviewing the chapters and sections of the main body of the EIS, as well as the appendices. Notes should be made and materials moved to a “mock-up” version. This version should then be subjected to editing, the preparation of connector sentences and paragraphs, and possibly, the development of new tables and figures for communicating information. The initial draft of an EIS summary should be subjected to an internal review by the proponent agency.

Finally, based on this Guidance, the following conclusions can be identified:

- Due to its large readership level, the summary is arguably the most important part of an EIS. Further, there is a robust information base for planning and preparing the summary.
- Ideally, a member of the Project Team, or possibly several members, should be assigned the task of developing an initial version of the summary, with this version being subject to internal reviews and modifications as appropriate.
- An EIS summary should not be assembled solely via “cutting and pasting” from the main body of the EIS. A more effective approach is to “cut and past” a mock-up version, then add connecting information with the goal being to adequately and accurately depict the EIS, its major conclusions, and controversies and issues to be resolved.



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APPENDIX I

Checklists for the Contents of an EIS Summary

Considerations of the specified contents for the summary of an EIS can be an aid in preparing a topical outline for such a summary. This Appendix includes three content checklists that can be used in developing an outline and two questionnaire checklists that can be used to either plan or review a summary. The contents checklists are from a Federal agency (Federal Highway Administration, 1987), related to the California Environmental Quality Act (State of California, 2007), and from a NEPA training company (The Shipley Group, Inc., 2003). The questionnaire checklists are from two other Federal agencies (U.S. Department of Energy, 1997; and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2002).

Contents Checklists

A checklist of the contents of the summary for an EIS, prepared by the Federal Highway Administration for its use and for use by associated state departments of transportation, includes the following (Federal Highway Administration, 1987):

- A brief description of the proposed FHWA action indicating route, termini, type of improvement, number of lanes, length, county, city, state, and other information, as appropriate;
- A description of any major actions proposed by other governmental agencies in the same geographic area as the proposed FHWA action;
- A summary of all reasonable alternatives considered. The draft EIS must identify the preferred alternative or alternatives officially identified by the Highway Agency (40 CFR 1502.14(e)). The final EIS must identify the preferred alternative and should discuss the basis for its selection (23 CFR 771.125(a)(1));
- A summary of major environmental impacts, both beneficial and adverse;
- Any areas of controversy (including issues raised by agencies and the public);

- Any major unresolved issues with other agencies; and
- A list of other Federal actions required for the proposed action (i.e., permit approvals, land transfers, Section 106 agreements, etc.).

The California Environmental Quality Act also calls for the inclusion of a summary in Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) promulgated by CEQA. Section 15123 of Article 9 of Chapter 3 of the California Code of Regulations includes the following specifications (State of California, 2007):

- An EIR shall contain a brief summary of the proposed action and its consequences. The language of the summary should be clear and simple as reasonably practical.
- The summary shall identify: (1) each significant effect with proposed mitigation measures and alternatives that would reduce or avoid that effect; (2) areas of controversy known to the lead Agency, including issues raised by agencies and the public; and (3) issues to be resolved, including the choice among alternatives and whether or how to mitigate the significant effects.
- The summary should normally not exceed 15 pages.

Finally, the Shipley Group, Inc. (2003) has suggested that the summary section include the following information:

- Explain who wants to do what and where and why they want to do it.
- Explain the decision(s) that the responsible official(s) must make.
- Identify the preferred alternative.
- Describe the potential major impacts (environmental consequences) if the preferred alternative were implemented.
- Briefly identify the alternatives that were considered.

- Discuss the areas of controversy. Make sure you accurately summarize the issues that are in the EIS.

Questionnaire Checklists

In an internal review checklist for EISs, the U.S. Department of Energy delineated the following “summary-related questions” for consideration in preparing the summary and prior to the release of either a Draft EIS or Final EIS (U.S. Department of Energy, 1997):

- Does the summary describe:
 - the underlying purpose and need for agency action?
 - the proposed action?
 - each of the alternatives?
 - the preferred alternative, if any?
 - the principal environmental issues analyzed and results?
- Does the summary highlight key differences among the alternatives?
- Does the summary stress:
 - the major conclusions?
 - areas of controversy (including issues raised by agencies and the public)?
 - the issues to be resolved (including the choice among alternatives)?
- Are the discussions in the summary consistent with the EIS text and Appendices?
- Does the summary adequately and accurately summarize the EIS?

As appropriate, the above questions could be answered via “yes”, “no”, “not applicable”, and “related comments.”

Finally, in a review checklist for EISs, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency specified the following questions to be answered and documented by the reviewer of the summary (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2002):

- Does the summary stress:
 - The major conclusions in the EIS?
Yes/no page(s) _____
 - Areas of controversy (including issues raised by agencies and the public)?
Yes/no page(s) _____
 - Issues to be resolved (including the choice among alternatives)?
Yes/no page(s) _____
 - Does the summary (i) adequately and (ii) accurately summarize the statement (i.e., could the summary stand on its own if it were circulated without the rest of the statement)?
Yes/no page(s) _____
 - Is the summary 15 pages or less?
Yes/no page(s) _____



**U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
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