

H-1790-1 -NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT HANDBOOK

CHAPTER IV- PREPARING ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

A. General. An environmental assessment (EA) must be prepared for proposed actions that (1) are not exempt from NEPA, (2) have not been categorically excluded, (3) have not been covered in an existing RMP/EIS or other environmental analysis, and (4) do not normally or obviously require an EIS. An EA may be prepared for any action at any time to assist in planning and decisionmaking (40 CFR 1501.3). The EA serves several purposes as follows:

1. The EA provides sufficient evidence and analysis of impacts on the quality of the human environment to support a determination of no significant impacts or a determination to prepare an EIS.

2. The EA serves as a vehicle for an interdisciplinary review of proposed actions and thus promotes consideration of all affected resources, even though impacts are not significant.

3. The EA provides a mechanism for identifying and developing appropriate mitigation measures.

4. The EA aids compliance with NEPA. The EA and the related FONSI are made available to the public and serve as documentation of NEPA compliance.

5. In cases when an EIS is necessary, the EA facilitates the preparation of the EIS, i.e., the results of the assessment are used in scoping (see Chapter V).

B. Environmental Assessment Procedures. The EA process includes: (1) determining the scope of the assessment; (2) conducting the assessment and preparing the EA; (3) determining if any impacts are significant; (4) notifying the public; and (5) reaching and recording the decision. The process is basically the same for all EA's whether the proposed action is initiated internally (within the BLM or externally (outside the BLM), or combined with any other document. Additional procedural guidance for the preparation of land use plan amendments using the EA process is set forth in MS 1617.42. Program-specific guidance must also be consulted to ensure efficient consideration of all relevant factors in the preparation of land use plan amendment EA's, project EA's, or activity plan EA's.

The EA process need not be time-consuming nor complicated. The level of assessment should be commensurate with the anticipated impacts and the degree of public concern.

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1. Determining the Scope of the Assessment. Careful planning minimizes the amount of time and energy expended on an HA. Internal coordination is always necessary when determining the scope of the assessment. Coordination may be expanded to involve external entities such as other government agencies, individual&, and interest or user groups. The cost and time needed to prepare an EA depends to a great extent upon the scope of the assessment (see 43 CFR 2808.3-1, 2883.1-1 and BLM MS 1323). Consider the following in determining the scope of the assessment:

a. Is the proposal complete and fully described? Have program-specific requirements for information, if any, been satisfied?

b. Does the proposed action conform with the existing RMP (or management framework plan) for the area? If not, does the proposed action warrant further consideration through a plan amendment or can the proposed action be modified to conform with the existing plan? For externally initiated proposed actions, the applicant must agree to any changes in writing, e.g., as a modification to the application.

c. What is the need for the proposed action?

d. Can or should any modifications be made in the proposed action, e.g., changes in design features. or management practices, to avoid or minimize environmental harm? For externally proposed actions, the applicant must agree to the modification in writing.

e. Are there opportunities to use information or analysis from existing environmental analyses by tiering or incorporating by reference?

f. Can the proposal be aggregated with other similar proposals, i.e., similar in nature, timing, or geographic location, and assessed in an EA without causing schedule problems?

g. Can the EA be combined with other non-NEPA documents to concurrently fulfill requirements and reduce paperwork? What other statutory, regulatory, or programmatic requirements are applicable to the proposal? (Consult program-specific guidance.)

h. What issues and concerns need to be addressed? What resources are present and likely to be affected?

NOTE : Determining issues and concerns usually involves informal contact with user groups and other interested government agencies or organizations as well as BLM staff specialists. Careful consideration of what issues or concerns do or do not need to be addressed is essential in determining the scope of the assessment.

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i. What criteria should be used to assess whether or not impacts are significant (see 40 CFR 1508.27)?

j. Are there any unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (see Section 102 (2)(e) of NEPA)? If so, what alternatives should be considered? Are there reasonable alternatives for satisfying the need for the proposed action? Will such alternatives have meaningful differences in environmental effects? Should they be considered?

k. What public notice and level of public involvement is appropriate or required by CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1501.4 and 1506.6) and by program-specific regulations or standards?

l. What information is needed to assess the proposed action? Is the information already available or must it be obtained?

m. What interdisciplinary involvement is necessary (team makeup)?

2. Conducting the Assessment and Preparing the EA. The environmental impacts-of the proposed action and alternatives, if any, must be assessed and documented in an EA. Agencies with legal jurisdiction or special expertise, applicants, and the public should be involved, to the extent practical, in the preparation of the EA (40 CFR 1501.4(b)). Consult program-specific guidance for other requirements for public involvement in conducting the assessment and preparing the EA. General procedural guidance for conducting the assessment and preparing the EA is provided below:

a. Define the Proposed Action and Alternatives. The proposed action and alternatives, if any, must be defined in sufficient detail to analyze impacts. Design features and management practices should be clearly identified for the proposed action and each alternative, including those features or practices intended to avoid or minimize environmental harm.

Alternatives to the proposed action must be considered and assessed whenever there are unresolved conflicts involving alternative uses of available resources. Public controversy or concern about a proposed action does not necessarily mean that alternatives must be analyzed. For example, concerns about land use may be addressed in an RMP/EIS in which several alternative uses of resources are analyzed. In subsequent activity planning, an EA tiered to the RMP/EIS may be prepared to examine site-specific impacts. Although there may continue to be public controversy and concern regarding alternative land uses, it is not necessary to reevaluate previously analyzed alternatives if the concerns were adequately addressed in the EIS prepared for the land use plan. If, however, there is controversy or concern regarding site-specific resource uses which were not addressed in the RMP/EIS, it would be necessary to examine alternatives.

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If the no-action alternative is being analyzed, it must also be defined to the same level of detail as the proposed action. For EA's on internally initiated proposed actions, the no-action alternative is generally the continuation of current management practices and trends. For EA's on externally initiated proposed actions, the no-action alternative generally means that the proposed activity will not take place.

b. Identify the Affected Environment. Identify the current condition and trend of elements in the human environment which will be affected by the proposed action or alternatives. All elements of the environment should be reviewed to determine if they will be affected. If so, or if otherwise required by program-specific guidance, these elements must be addressed in the EA. A checklist of critical elements of the environment which are subject to requirements specified in statute, regulation, or executive order is shown in Appendix 5. Critical elements must be considered in all EA's.

c. Assess the Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives. Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on the affected environment should be analyzed for the proposed action and each alternative, if any, to the extent necessary to determine if impacts are significant. The analysis of impacts should be based on the premise that all standard operating procedures and other standard Bureauwide requirements will be followed in implementing the proposed action or alternatives unless changes in such practices are specifically being addressed in the analysis. Design features or management practices which are intended to avoid or minimize environmental harm and which have been incorporated into the proposed action or alternatives must be treated as an inherent part of the action. The analysis should be based on the best available information and should be objective, i.e., should not reflect subjective value judgements and, if possible, should be quantified.

d. Identify Mitigation Measures. Mitigation measures, if any, should be identified. Mitigation measures are actions developed in response to impacts identified in the analysis which could be taken to avoid or reduce projected impacts.

NOTE : Actions or features which are included in the proposed action or reflect standard operating procedures or Bureauwide requirements are not treated or labeled as mitigation measures.

e. Assess Residual Impacts. This assessment should identify any direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts which will remain after application of the mitigation measures.

f. Prepare EA. (See Paragraph C.1 below for EA content and format guidance.)

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3. Determining Whether Impacts Are Significant. The EA is reviewed internally by the manager responsible for authorizing the action. In reviewing the EA, the manager must determine whether the proposed action will have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Factors to consider in determining significance are set forth in 40 CFR 1508.27. To determine significance, impact predictions may be compared to some parameter or maximum/minimum level of effect beyond which the impacts become significant, i.e., a significance threshold. Law, regulation, prior commitments, professional expertise, the manager's best judgment, and public opinion can affect the setting of significance thresholds.

a. If Significant. If the impacts of the proposed action are determined to be significant, the action cannot be approved unless it is either analyzed in an EIS or modified to avoid significant impacts.

(1) In the event an EIS is determined necessary, do not proceed any further in documenting the EA. A notice of intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS is developed and the information and analysis assembled during the HA process becomes a part of the scoping for the EIS. (See Chapter V for guidance on preparing an EIS.)

NOTE: In a tiered HA, where the significant impacts have already been fully analyzed in an existing EIS, it is not necessary to prepare a new EIS. In such cases, however, this determination must be documented in the FONSI. Only significant impacts which have not been fully analyzed in an existing EIS will trigger the need for a new or supplemental EIS.

(2) Modifications to avoid significant impacts must be incorporated into the proposed action. For externally Initiated proposed actions, the applicant **must** agree to the modification in writing. The analysis which supports a FONSI for the modified action must be documented in an HA. If the "modified" action was already analyzed as an alternative to the proposed action or as part of the mitigation analysis, only minor changes need to be made in the EA to satisfy this requirement.

b. If Not Significant. If the impacts of the proposed action (or proposed action after it is modified) are determined to be insignificant, a FONSI must be prepared. (See Paragraph C.2 below for FONSI content and format guidance.)

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4. Notifying the Public.

a. Determine Need for Public Review of EA and FONSI. The manager responsible for authorizing the action must determine if the EA and FONSI should be made available for public review (usually a 30-day review period) before making a final determination on the action. The primary purpose of a public review is to allow the public an opportunity to comment on the agency's determination that there are no significant impacts associated with the proposed action and, therefore, an EIS is not necessary. A public review of the EA and FONSI is usually only necessary under certain limited circumstances as defined in CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1501.4(e)(2)). Program-specific guidance should also be consulted to determine if the EA and FONSI must be reviewed by the public prior to a decision. The manager must notify the public, including affected State and local governments and Indian tribes, of the review period (40 CFR 1506.6). Generally, notice of the review should be announced in regional and local newspapers or other media. A copy of the EA and FONSI must be provided to individuals and organizations who requested one. Copies should also be provided to individuals and organizations affected by or known to have an interest in the action.

NOTE: An EA should not be labeled as a "draft" when issued for public review.

b. Provide Notice of Availability of EA and FONSI. If a public review is determined unnecessary, the affected and interested public must be notified of the availability of the EA and the FONSI (40 CFR 1501.4(e)(1) and 1506.6). The manager responsible for authorizing the action determines the appropriate means for notifying the public and ensuring availability based on the extent of concern and interest in the action. The manager has a great deal of discretion in determining how to satisfy the notification requirement, however, all individuals or organizations that have requested notification on an individual action must be notified by mail. Managers are also encouraged to maintain a record or register of all EA's and FONSI's completed and make it available for review in the State or District Office public room.

5. Reaching and Recording the Decision. The decision to approve a proposed action resulting in a FONSI may be made after consideration of other factors, as appropriate, and after program-specific requirements have been satisfied. Decisions should be documented in accordance with program-specific requirements, if any. It is recommended, though not required, that the decision record (DR) incorporate the FONSI. (See Paragraph C.3 below for content and format guidance for a combined FONSI and DR.)

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c. Documentation.

1. The Environmental Assessment. An EA is intended to be a concise public document which briefly provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an EIS or a FONSI. The CEQ has advised agencies to keep EA's to no more than approximately 10-15 pages exclusive of appendices (P.R., vol. 46, no. 55, Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning CEQ's NEPA Regulations). To avoid undue length, EA's may incorporate by reference background material to support the analysis. As noted, an EA generally should not exceed 10-15 pages. Although there are specific content requirements which must be satisfied in every EA, there is flexibility in how an EA may be formatted. Minimum CEQ content requirements, other content standards or considerations, and format options are discussed below.

a. CEQ Content Requirements (40 CFR 1508,9(b)). The CEQ regulations state that an EA must contain brief discussions of the need for the proposal, the alternatives considered, the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, and a listing of agencies and persons consulted.

(1) Need for Proposed Action. The EA must briefly identify the need for (or the objective of) the proposed action that is being analyzed. In the case of a plan amendment, the need statement also indicates why the action warrants further consideration through a plan amendment.

(2) Proposed Action and Alternatives Considered. The EA must describe 'the proposed action and alternatives, if any, considered.

(a) The description of the proposed action and alternatives must include all design features and discrete actions which have the potential to affect the environment. Illustrations and maps should be used to help describe the proposed action.

(b) The description of the proposed action and alternatives must comply with program-specific guidance (e.g., H-2801-1, Rights-of-Way Plans of Development).

(c) Design features or management practices that have been incorporated into the proposed action or alternatives to avoid or reduce environmental harm must be clearly described as part of the action or alternative, but should not be characterized as mitigation measures. For non-BLM proposals, such features or practices must be in writing and included in the applicant's proposal to be considered as part of the proposed action. For BLM proposals, every effort should be made to incorporate such features into the proposed action.

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(d) Applicable policy or program requirements and standard or routine procedures which will apply should be described or incorporated by reference. These are program requirements and procedures which are not discretionary and would apply to any proposed action or alternative.

(e) If the alternatives considered in the EA have been described in a previous environmental document, it may be sufficient to incorporate by reference the description from the previous document.

(3) Environmental Impacts. The EA must describe and analyze the environmental impacts of the proposed action and each alternative considered. It must also identify and analyze mitigation measures, if any, which may be taken to avoid or reduce environmental harm.

(a) The analysis of impacts must address direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on all affected resources of the human environment, including critical elements (see Appendix 5).

(b) A negative declaration is recommended for critical elements which are not present and/or not affected, e.g., "The following elements have been analyzed and will not be affected: . . ." Consult program-specific guidance for elements which, if not present or affected, require a negative declaration.

(c) If the impacts of alternatives considered have been fully analyzed in a previous environmental analysis, it may be sufficient to incorporate by reference the analysis from the previous document.

(d) Mitigation measures should be specifically described but should not be formulated as formal stipulations in the EA. Attach stipulations to either the decision record or to the authorizing document. The description of mitigation measures must not include measures that are incorporated into the proposed action or an alternative or that are otherwise standard operating procedures or requirements.

(e) The anticipated effectiveness of mitigation measures and any direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that remain after the application of all mitigation measures, i.e., residual impacts, must be described and analyzed.

(4) Persons or Agencies Consulted. The EA must list persons or agencies contacted or consulted. The brief statement of the purpose and, if applicable, results of contacts and consultations is recommended.

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b. Additional EA Content Guidance. In addition to the minimum CEQ. content requirements, the BLM requires or recommends under certain circumstances that EA's contain additional material as discussed below. Whether the specific content items identified in this section are required, recommended or optional is indicated in parentheses. Consult program-specific guidance to determine if recommended items or other information are required for certain types of actions or under certain circumstances.

(1) Identifying Information.

(a) Title, EA number, and type of project (Required). Consult State Office guidance on the assignment of EA numbers.

(b) Location of proposal (Required). This information is usually included in the description of the proposed action. The general location of the proposed action should also be identified in the EA.

(c) Name and location of preparing office (Required).

(d) Lease, serial, or case file number (Required, where applicable). The EA should identify, for example, the ROW case number, the APD identifier, etc.

(e) Applicant name (Required, if applicable). The applicant's address should also be included.

(f) Date of preparation (Required).

(g) List of Preparers (Recommended). The areas of expertise of the preparers should also be identified if the EA is released for public review.

(2) Information on Related Programs, Plans or Policies.

(a) Conformance With Existing RMP's or MFP's (Required). For activity plans or project proposals, the EA must identify the existing RMP's and/or MFP's associated with the proposal and explicitly state that the proposed action conforms with those plans. In the case of an EA prepared in conjunction with a land use plan amendment, nonconformance of the proposed action with an existing RMP or MFP is a primary reason for considering the plan amendment and should be discussed early in the document.

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(b) Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses (Recommended). Statutory or regulatory provisions which are particularly germane to the assessment should be identified or referenced in the EA. An exhaustive list or discussion of applicable laws or regulations, however, is not appropriate. Only those requirements which are necessary to improve understanding should be included. Other relevant BLM policies and programmatic guidance or environmental analyses which will affect the assessment or to which the EA is tiered (e.g., programmatic/EIS) should also be identified in the EA. The relationship of the proposed action to other agency (non-BLM) policies, plans, or programs should be discussed to the extent these are germane to the proposed action or must be considered in accordance with program-specific guidance. State or local permitting requirements or other authorizing actions necessary for implementing the proposed action should also be identified.

(3) Other Information.

(a) Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail (Optional). The EA may contain a description of other alternatives, if any, that were considered but dismissed after preliminary investigation. If another agency or member of the public recommended an alternative which was considered but not analyzed in detail, it is generally advisable to document the reasons for its dismissal in the EA.

(b) Description of the Affected Environment (Optional). The EA may contain a brief description of the affected environment, including a description of the general setting as well as the resources or values in the human environment which are present or likely to be affected by the proposed action or alternatives. This description is often useful in EA's which are being released for public review in order to give the reader a general overview of the affected environment.

C. EA Format. The manager responsible for preparing the EA determines the appropriate format for the EA within established standards. EA's may range from a short (1-or 2-page) document characterized by only a few headings to a relatively long (10-to 15-page) document characterized by several headings and subheadings. The following guidance on format options should help the manager determine the most appropriate and concise approach. These formats, however, are not mandatory; they are only intended to serve as examples of how the format may vary under-different circumstances.

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(1) Format Option #1 (see Illustration 1) may be used for relatively simple and straightforward EA's. This format may be used when all or most of the following conditions exist:

(a) Only a few elements of the human environment are affected by the proposed action (or alternatives, if any) or impacts are minimal, i.e., can be succinctly described.

(b) Only a few simple and straightforward mitigation measures, if any, are needed to avoid or reduce impacts.

(c) There are no program-specific documentation requirements associated with the action under consideration which would preclude its use.

(2) Format Option #2 (see Illustration 2) may be used for more complex EA's. This format, or variations of this format, may be used when one or more of the following conditions exist:

(a) A large number of elements have been identified as likely to be affected by the proposed action (or alternatives) or impacts are relatively complex.

(b) A large number of mitigation measures have been identified as necessary.

(c) Impacts are potentially controversial.

(3) Optional EA/FONSI/DR Form (see Illustration 3). The Optional EA/FONSI/DR Form generally follows format option #1 above. It may be used for actions requiring the preparation of an EA when all of the following conditions are met:

(a) All of the conditions for using format option #1 are met.

(b) The proposed action does not involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources and, therefore, alternatives do not need to be considered.

(c) The EA is not likely to generate wide public interest and is not being distributed for public review and comment.

(d) The proposed action is located in an area covered by an existing land use plan and conforms with that plan.

(4) Combined EA Format. An EA may be combined with any other planning or decisionmaking document; however, that portion which analyzes the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives must be clearly and separately identified and not spread throughout or interwoven into other sections of the document (40 CFR 1506.4 and 516 DM 3.5). Consult program-specific guidance for additional format requirements when combining the EA with program-specific planning or decisionmaking documents.

2. The Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The FONSI is a document that briefly states the reasons a proposed action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and for which, therefore, an EIS will not be prepared (40 CFR 1508.13).

a. The FONSI must either be attached to the EA or incorporate the EA by reference. Where applicable, the FONSI should note any other environmental documents related to it. The FONSI must be signed and dated by the manager authorized to approve the action.

b. The FONSI may be included in the decision record (DR). Guidance on combined FONSI/DR is discussed in Paragraph C.3 below. Under certain circumstances, however, the FONSI must be initially prepared as a separate document, e.g., when the EA and the FONSI are being issued for public review prior to a decision on the proposed action (40 CFR 1501.4(e)(2).) There are no format requirements for a "stand alone" FONSI.

3. The Decision Record (DR). Decisions are documented in accordance with program-specific requirements. In the absence of detailed program-specific requirements on the content or format of a DR, the following guidance may be used for documenting decisions which are analyzed in an EA. The suggested content of a combined FONSI/DR is discussed below. An example of a combined FONSI/DR is shown in Illustration 4.

a. Identify the selected alternative. Describe as precisely as possible specific features of the decision. Identify mitigation measures which have been selected to be implemented. Stipulations based on committed mitigation measures should be attached to either the decision record or the authorizing document. Although it is permissible to incorporate by reference a description of the alternative being selected and mitigation measures being committed to, there should be no ambiguities regarding the specifics of what is or is not being approved. Identify any limitations on when the decision may be implemented.

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b. Include a FONSI in the decision record indicating that the action has been analyzed in an EA and found to have no significant impacts, thus an EIS is not required. Identify specific reasons for this finding, e.g., any specific design features or management practices which avoid or minimize harm to the affected environment. Reference and attach the EA which supports the FONSI and identify any other related environmental documents or records.

c. Explain why this decision was made. Indicate that the action conforms with the applicable land use plan(s).

d. A compliance and monitoring plan or schedule may be included in the DR which identifies how mitigation measures will be tracked and enforced. If included, however, such activities must be treated as a part of the decision and implemented as specified.

e. A combined FONSI/DR must be signed and dated by the manager authorized to approve the action.

D. Implementation and Monitoring. A decision may not be implemented until the FONSI and DR have been signed and all other program-specific procedural requirements have been met (e.g., expiration of appeals period allowed under 43 CFR Part 4). Implementation must be in accordance with the decision described in the DR and analyzed in the EA, including any mitigation measures selected. Any proposed changes in the action which are not within the scope of the EA are subject to further NEPA review and associated program requirements, if any.

Monitoring of the action or project is required to the extent it is Identified in the DR or as necessary to ensure compliance with the decision. (See Chapter VI for more detailed guidance on monitoring.)

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FORMAT OPTION #1

This format may be used for relatively simple and straightforward EA's. Headings are underlined.

EA TITLE/HEADING

Identify project title and location, EA number, case file number (if any), name of applicant (if applicable), name and location of BLM office preparing the EA, and EA preparation date.

NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION. Describe the need for or objective of the proposed action. Identify the land use plan or plans which cover the area and the results of the conformance review.

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action. Describe the proposed action. Reference attached illustrations or maps as appropriate. Describe bureauwide policy or program requirements, including standard or routine procedures.

Alternatives. Describe each alternative, if any, to the same level of detail as the proposed action.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS. Identify critical elements and, if required by program-specific guidance, other elements which are not present and/or not affected (see Appendix 5 of BLM NEPA Handbook).

Impacts of the Proposed Action. Identify direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on the affected environment for the proposed action given all policy or program requirements and standard or routine procedures which apply.

Impacts of Alternatives. Identify direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on the affected environment for each alternative, if any, to the same level of detail as for the proposed action.

Mitigation Measures and Residual Impacts. Describe measures, if any, which could be applied to mitigate some or all of the impacts identified for the proposed action and each alternative. For the proposed action and each alternative, identify direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on the affected environment which remain after application of mitigation measures.

PERSONS OR AGENCIES CONSULTED. List persons, agencies and organizations consulted in the preparation of the EA.

Attach list of preparers, illustrations, maps, or other material referenced or necessary.

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FORMAT OPTION #2

This format may be used for complex or potentially controversial EA's. Headings are underlined.

COVER LETTER

If the EA is issued for public review, a cover letter may be desirable. It should identify the purpose of the review, the review period, and how public comments will be taken into consideration.

EA COVER SHEET

Identify project title and type, project location, EA number, case file or other identifying number (if any), applicant name and address (if applicable), name and location of BLM office preparing the EA, and the EA preparation date.

BODY OF EA

INTRODUCTION

Need for the Proposed Action. Describe the need for or the objective of the proposed action.

Conformance With Land Use Plan. Identify applicable RMP(s) or MFP(s) and approval date(s). Indicate how the proposed action has been determined to conform with the applicable plan(s). Identify any constraints on actions in the area or other determinations specified in the plan(s) which are relevant to the proposed action.

Relationship To Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans. Indicate, for example, whether the proposed action is consistent with other Federal agency, State, or local plans and programs. Identify pertinent statutes, regulations, or plans which are necessary for understanding the EA. Identify other authorizing actions needed before the proposed action can be implemented, e.g., local permits required.

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action. Describe the proposed action. Include illustrations or maps as appropriate. Identify Bureauwide policy or program requirements, including standard or routine procedures.

Alternatives. Describe each alternative, if any, to the same level of detail as the proposed action.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

General Setting. Describe the general setting. Include a map.

Affected Resources. Describe all resources and values which are affected by the proposed action or alternatives. Identify critical elements and, if required by program-specific guidance, other elements which are not present and/or not affected by the proposed action or alternatives (see Appendix 5 of BLM NEPA Handbook).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Impacts of the Proposed Action. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on the affected environment for the proposed action given all policy or program requirements and standard or routine procedures which apply.

Impacts of Alternatives. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on the affected environment for each alternative, if any, to the same level of detail as for the proposed action.

Mitigation Measures. Describe measures which could be applied to mitigate some or all of the impacts identified for the proposed action and each alternative.

Residual Impacts. For the proposed action and each alternative, identify direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on the affected environment which remain after application of mitigation measures.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Persons and Agencies Consulted. List all persons, agencies, and organizations consulted; purpose and results of such consultation.

Attach list of preparers indicating briefly their areas of expertise, illustrations, maps, and any other materials referenced or necessary for understanding the EA.

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OPTIONAL EA, FONSI and DR FORM

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA Number: _____

BLM Office _____

Lease/Serial/Case File No. _____

Proposed Action Title/Type: _____

Location of Proposed Action: _____

Applicant (if any): _____

Conformance With Applicable Land Use Plan:

This proposed action is subject to the following land use plan:

Name of Plan _____ Date Approved: _____

This plan has been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms with the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

Remarks: _____

Need for Proposed Action:

Description of Proposed Action:

Environmental Impacts:

Critical Element	Affected		Critical Element	Affected	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
Air Quality	___	___	T & E Species	___	___
ACECs	___	___	Wastes, Hazardous/Solid	___	___
Cultural Resources	___	___	Water Quality	___	___
Farmlands, Prime/Unique	___	___	Wetlands/Riparian Zones	___	___
Floodplains	___	___	Wild & Scenic Rivers	___	___
Nat. Amer. Rel. Concerns	___	___	Wilderness	___	___

Description of Impacts:

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Description of Impacts (continued):

Multiple horizontal lines for text entry.

(Use additional pages if necessary)

Description of Mitigation Measures and Residual Impacts:

Multiple horizontal lines for text entry.

Persons/Agencies Consulted:

Preparer(s):

Date:

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/DECISION RECORD.

I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined that the proposed action with the mitigation measures described below will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required. I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the approved land use plan. It is my decision to implement the project with the mitigation measures identified below.

Mitigation Measures/Remarks:

Multiple horizontal lines for text entry.

Authorized Official:

Date:

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Chapter IV - Preparing Environmental Assessments

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING OPTIONAL EA, FONSI, and DR FORM

WHEN TO USE. The optional form may be used for proposed actions which require the preparation of an EA when all of the following conditions are met:

1. The proposed action does not involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources and, therefore, alternatives do not need to be considered.
2. Only a few elements of the human environment are affected by the proposed action or impacts are minimal, i.e., can be succinctly described.
3. Only a few simple and straightforward mitigation measures, if any, are needed to avoid or reduce impacts.
4. There are no program-specific documentation requirements associated with the action under consideration which would preclude its use.
5. The EA is not likely to generate wide public interest and is not being distributed for public review and comment.
6. The proposed action is located in an area covered by a valid land use plan or planning analysis and conforms with that plan.

DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS. (Also see Chapter IV of the BLM NEPA Handbook)

Descriptive information. Identify the BLM office, title or type of proposed action, and location of proposed action. A location map may be attached or a description of the location referenced. Follow State Office instructions for assigning the EA number. The lease/serial/case file number and applicant name are completed if applicable.

Conformance with applicable land use plan. Identify the name of the plan(s), or planning analysis and the date(s) approved. The remarks section may be used for documenting any restrictions or limitations identified in the plan(s) or for referencing any other relevant information contained in the plan(s).

Need for the Proposed Action. Describe the need for or objective of the proposed action, i.e., what the proposed action is intended to accomplish. Use additional pages if necessary.

Description of proposed action. Describe the proposed action including all design features and discrete actions intended to avoid or minimize environmental harm. Use additional pages, if necessary. Attach illustrations or maps as appropriate.

Environmental Impacts. In the checklist provided, indicate whether critical elements (see Appendix 5 of the BLM NEPA Handbook) are or are not be affected by the proposed action. In the space provided for the narrative discussion, identify direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on all elements of the affected environment. In the space provided for the identification of mitigation measures and residual impacts, describe measures, if any, which could be applied to mitigate some or all of the impacts and identify any residual impacts which may remain after mitigation measures have been applied. Use additional pages as necessary to fully assess impacts and identify mitigation measures.

Persons/Agencies Consulted. List persons, agencies and organizations consulted in the preparation of the EA.

Preparer(s). List names of individuals who prepared the EA and the month/year prepared.

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record. The manager responsible for approving the action must sign and date the FONSI and DR. Mitigation measures must be specifically identified in the space provided. Also identify other related environmental documents, if any. Use additional pages if necessary.

Attachments. Stipulations should be attached as well as any other materials or information referenced in the EA or additional pages used.

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Chapter IV - Preparing Environmental Assessments

EXAMPLE OF A COMBINED FONSI/DR

Decision: It is my decision to authorize a permit to drill, #Z-45321, to Falls Oil Company of Wyoming on oil and gas lease Z-11111 located in the Lone Rock Resource Area in Wyoming. The surface protection procedures set forth in the proposed action are included in the application and need not be formulated into stipulations. Mitigation measures identified for the proposed action in the environmental consequences section of the attached environmental assessment have been formulated into stipulations. This decision incorporates by reference the attached stipulations.

Finding of No Significant Impacts: Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, I have determined that impacts are not expected to be significant and an environmental impact statement is not required.

Rationale for Decision: The decision to allow the proposed action does not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation and is in conformance with the Lone Rock RMP, approved on December 13, 1985.

Compliance and Monitoring: The attached compliance and monitoring plan has been developed for this project and is incorporated by reference into this decision.

District/Area Manager

Date

Attachments:

Lone Rock APD # Z-54321 EA
Lone Rock APD # Z-54321 Stipulations
Lone Rock APD # Z-54321 Compliance and Monitoring Plan