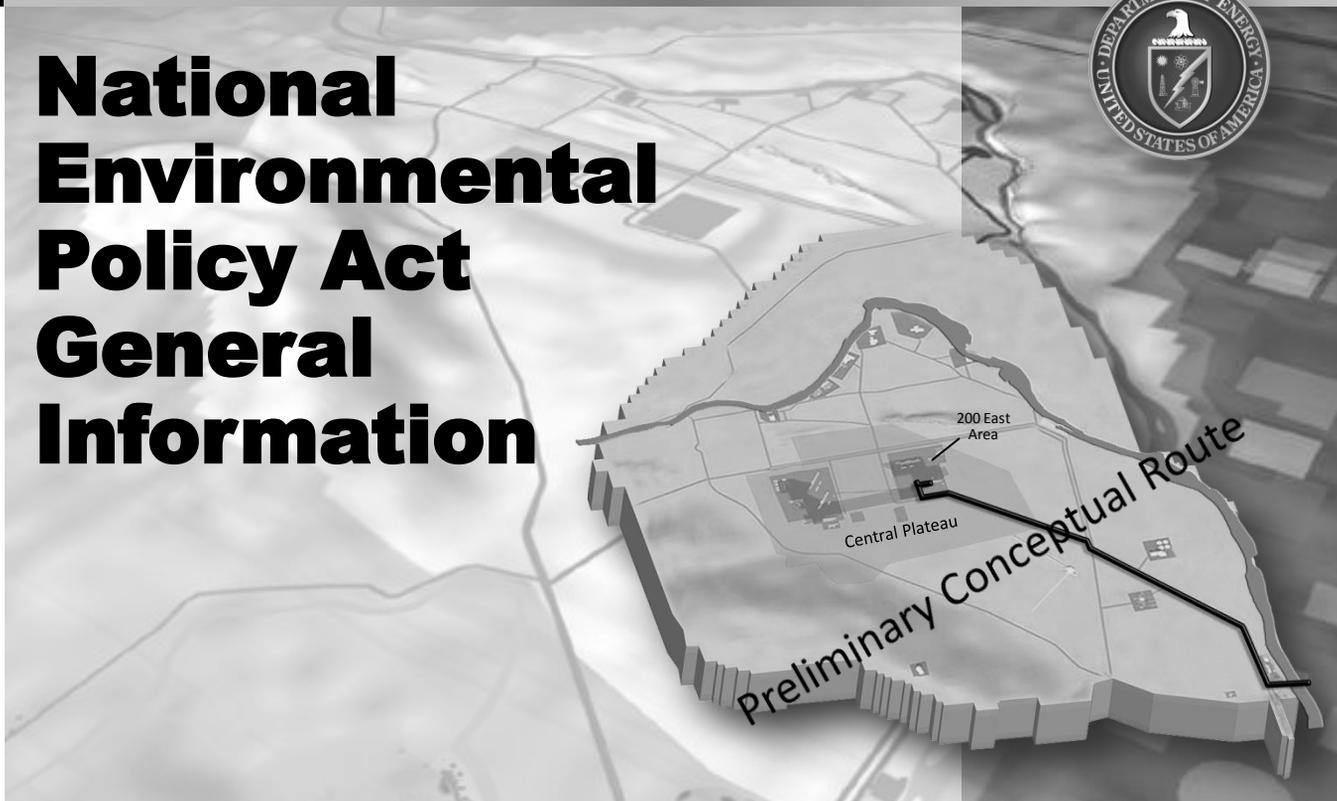


# National Environmental Policy Act General Information



The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 was enacted by Congress to ensure that federal agencies consider the potential environmental impacts of their proposed actions and alternatives before deciding on a course of action. NEPA requires the preparation of an **environmental impact statement (EIS)** for major federal actions that may significantly affect the quality of the environment. Under NEPA, the term "environment" encompasses both the physical environment (e.g., air, water, geography, geology) and the human environment (e.g., health and safety, jobs, housing, schools, transportation, cultural resources).

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) established NEPA requirements for all federal agencies, including procedures for preparing EISs (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508). Individual agencies, including the DOE, have established their own implementing regulations to meet or exceed these requirements (10 CFR Part 1021). These requirements and related information are available on the DOE NEPA website at <http://energy.gov/nepa/guidance-requirements>. The major steps in the NEPA process for preparing an EIS are: issuing a **Notice of Intent** to begin the EIS process; gathering input on the scope of the EIS from federal agencies, state and local governments, Native American tribes, the public, and other stakeholders; preparing the **draft EIS**; receiving public comments on the draft EIS and responding to those comments in a **final EIS**; and issuing a Record of Decision. The Record of Decision explains the agency's decision, which is based on the EIS and other related information (such as policy, technical factors, and costs).

## NOTICE OF INTENT AND SCOPING PROCESS

The Department of Energy (DOE) published a **Notice of Intent (NOI)** in the Federal Register on January 23, 2012, to inform the public that an EIS will be prepared and to formally announce the beginning of the **scoping process**. The NOI describes the proposed action and alternatives DOE is considering; provides information on issues and potential impacts that will be analyzed in the EIS; and invites comments, questions, and suggestions (both written and oral) on the scope of the EIS. These scoping comments aid DOE in determining the alternatives, issues, and environmental impacts to be analyzed in the EIS.

## DRAFT EIS

A **draft EIS** describes, analyzes, and compares the potential environmental impacts of reasonable alternatives that could accomplish the purpose and need to which the agency is responding. In addition, the environmental impacts associated with the alternative of continuing with ongoing activities (the No Action Alternative) is also analyzed. A draft EIS also provides information on the methodologies and assumptions used for the analyses. If one or more preferred alternative(s) exist at this stage of the NEPA process, they will be identified in the draft EIS.

**NGP EIS (DOE/EIS-0467) Public Scoping Meeting, February 9, 2012**

## **PUBLIC COMMENT ON A DRAFT EIS**

Once the draft EIS is distributed, a minimum of 45 days is provided for federal agencies, state and local governments, Native American tribes, the public, and other stakeholders to comment on the draft. The public comment period begins when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes a Notice of Availability for the draft EIS in the *Federal Register*. At least one public hearing is held to solicit public comment on a draft EIS. Other methods to submit comments on the draft SEIS will include U.S. mail, e-mail, and fax. All comments received will be considered in the preparation of the final EIS.

## **FINAL EIS**

Following the public comment period for the draft EIS, a **final EIS** is prepared and distributed. A final EIS reflects consideration of all comments received on the draft EIS, contains the Department's responses to those comments, and reflects updated and revised analyses of potential environmental impacts. In addition, a final EIS will identify the agency's preferred alternative(s), if it had not been identified previously. EPA will publish a Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register* when a final EIS is issued.

## **RECORD OF DECISION**

Once the final EIS is distributed, DOE waits a minimum of 30 days before issuing a **Record of Decision (ROD)**, which will be published in the *Federal Register*. The ROD notifies the public of the decision(s) made on the proposed action and the reasons for the decision(s). In addition to potential environmental impacts, the ROD may include consideration of other decision factors such as technical feasibility, DOE statutory mission and national objectives, and cost. The NEPA process does not dictate that an agency select the most environmentally beneficial alternative. The purpose of the NEPA process is to ensure that accurate environmental studies are performed; that there is public involvement; and that public officials, like those at DOE, make decisions based on an understanding of environmental consequences.

### ***Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Public Scoping Period***

The DOE is asking for public comment on the proposed scope of the Natural Gas Pipeline EIS, including the alternatives and environmental issues to be evaluated. To facilitate dialogue between DOE and the public and provide an opportunity for individuals to provide written or oral statements, DOE is holding this public scoping meeting and will accept comments during the scoping period through February 22. DOE will consider any comments received after that date to the extent practicable.

### ***Please submit comments in writing to:***

**Douglas H. Chapin**

NEPA Document Manager

U.S. Department of Energy

Richland Operations Office

P.O. Box 550, MSIN A5-11

Richland, Washington 99352

**or by email: [naturalgaseis@rl.gov](mailto:naturalgaseis@rl.gov)**

The Notice of Intent and information about the 30-day public scoping period can be found at <http://www.hanford.gov/page.cfm/EnvironmentalImpactStatements>