



BLM News

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BLM Proposes to Update NEPA Manual

To allow for increased efficiency in implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has published a set of draft revisions to Chapter 11 of the Department of the Interior's Departmental Manual (DM), which guides the agency's implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The proposed revisions to 516 DM – *Managing the NEPA Process* appear in today's *Federal Register*. The Notice opens a 30-day public comment period during which time, persons with an interest may submit comments on the proposed changes.

The framework the BLM uses for implementing NEPA was last updated in May 1992. The Department of the Interior's Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance recently directed the BLM to update its section of the Manual. The proposed revisions are necessary to update the procedures used to determine what level of NEPA compliance is appropriate for various types of actions taken in managing public lands. Periodically updating the agency's DM allows for increased efficiency in managing the NEPA process.

Comments on the proposed revisions should be mailed to: Content Analysis Team, BLM Categorical Exclusions, Post Office Box 22777, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84122-0777, or Fax (801) 517-1014 or E-Mail to BLMCX@fs.fed.us. Comments must be postmarked no later than the close of the comment period on February 24, 2006 in order to be considered. Following the close of the public comment period, the BLM will analyze comments received and may modify a proposed change based on these comments. A Notice signaling final action to adopt proposed changes, including any modifications resulting from public comment, will be published in the *Federal Register* in the spring of 2006.

Included in the document package are updates to incorporate the revised Departmental National Environmental Policy Act procedures. New topics of particular interest include general requirements for Consultation and Coordination, Public Involvement and consensus based decision making, and Adaptive Management (Section 11.4). There is a new subpart that requires proposals to be in conformance with existing Land Use Plans (Section 11.5). Section 11.6, Use of Existing Documentation, is a new subpart that incorporates current guidance for use of previous NEPA analysis. New BLM proposed Categorical Exclusions can be found in Section 11.9 [B(6)-(8), C(6)-(9), D(10)-(12), H(1), I(1)].

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