

Western Lands Project
(formerly Western Land Exchange Project)
PO Box 95545 Seattle, WA 98145-2545
(206) 325-3503 / fax (206) 325-3515
www.westernlands.org

Horst Greczmiel
Associate Director for NEPA Oversight
Council on Environmental Quality
722 Jackson Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20503

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Subject: Western Lands Project comments on NEPA Citizen's Guide

Dear Horst:

Thank you and the Council for compiling the Citizen's Guide to NEPA, and for this opportunity to comment. The idea for the Guide originated at least in part from ideas generated in the Regional NEPA Roundtables that CEQ convened in 2003-2004. I was honored to be asked to participate in the Western Roundtable, and did so largely as an advocate for public involvement through NEPA. Because our organization works to help people use NEPA effectively and responsibly in the interest of protecting public lands, we are delighted that this guide will be available to citizens.

Overall, I think the Guide does an excellent job of laying out the basics of NEPA in a cogent manner and providing more detail, or pointers to further information, in the appendices. I reviewed an earlier draft and am really impressed with the "pruning" that has been done to eliminate the thickets of acronyms found in the previous version—not an easy task with this subject matter.

I have just a few suggestions for improving the Guide.

(1) The diagram of the NEPA process, Figure 1, is very useful, as are the references to it in the subheadings. However, please note that the subheading "Notice of Intent and Scoping" on page 10 of the PDF version does not have a reference to Figure 1, which should read, "(Numbers 9 and 10 in Figure 1)."

(2) Even though the text nicely defines each term, I found myself going back to Appendix E to read the more "formal" definition of each term as I was reading the text. It might be helpful to make a conspicuous statement at the beginning of the section "Implementing the NEPA Process" that many of the terms discussed are also defined in Appendix E. An alternative would be to include sidebars in each subsection with the corresponding definition from Appendix E accompanying the appropriate discussion (although this might break the flow of the text too much).

(3) In a few cases, examples would be very helpful in fleshing out the terms. An example of a project meriting a Categorical Exclusion would be helpful, as would an example of a Purpose and Need and corresponding Reasonable Alternatives.

(4) In the description of Supplemental EIS, it might also be mentioned that an SEIS may result from a court's decision that an EIS was inadequate.

(5) In Record of Decision, the Guide might also state that, as the final agency action, the ROD is the component of the process that may be the subject of administrative appeal and judicial challenge.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this much-needed guide to NEPA and for the work you and the Council have done to elicit input from the spectrum of NEPA practitioners.

Sincerely,

/s/

Janine Blaeloch
Director