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Please respond to
VickiMercer

To: "CEQ's NEPA Task Force" <ceq_nepa@fs.fed.us>
cc:
Subject: Comments on proposal to weaken National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

September 21, 2002

NEPA Task Force
Council on Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 221150
Salt Lake City, Utah 84122

Dear NEPA Task Force,

I am against any changes that would weaken the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), including introducing "flexibility" to exempt fire fighting and fuel reduction, defense, mining, and oil/gas projects.

The Bush Administration proposes to cause grievous harm to the environment by gutting one of the most citizen-friendly involvement laws in existence. NEPA allows a citizen to ask questions, hold officials accountable, and help stop many wasteful taxpayer funded projects. As the owners of the public lands, the public has a right to an honest analysis, assessment, and evaluation of how these assets are affected by proposed projects that often benefit private interests with subsidized public money.

I believe delays that are blamed on NEPA are usually caused by agencies that fail to implement NEPA as required by law, court cases, CEQ regulations, and an agency's NEPA regulations. There might be more lawsuits if citizens could afford to take every federal agency that violates NEPA to court. Naturally, it would certainly be preferable if agencies would always act in a lawful manner. That they do not do so is not the fault of NEPA nor the citizens of this country!

Furthermore, I submit that NEPA's Categorical Exclusion definition (Section 1508.4) should be strengthened to limit the size, impact, and other features of an action so that only truly CE-type actions are covered. Actions that should not be covered in a CE include logging, roading, wetlands destruction, mining, oil/gas

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activities, grazing, and urbanization. CE actions should be limited to activities such as erecting small signs, putting fiber optic cables in existing road right-of-ways, etc.

If the Task Force, CEQ, and President do the bidding of business and industry and gut NEPA, you will cause great harm to the environment and the citizens of this country. Furthermore, I don't know how you would be able to face yourselves in the mirror each morning (much less your children and grandchildren).

Sincerely,

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