



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

## **Press Release: CEQ Issues Proposed Rule to Modernize its NEPA Regulations**

*First proposal in over 40 years to significantly update the regulations*

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**Washington, D.C.** – Today, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) released a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to update its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations for public comment.

Signed into law in 1970, NEPA requires Federal agencies to assess the environmental impacts of proposed major Federal actions as part of their decision-making. The NEPA process can impact a wide variety of projects affecting Americans' everyday lives from the construction of roads, bridges, highways, and airports to water infrastructure, conventional and renewable energy projects, and land, forest, and fishery management activities. CEQ's NEPA regulations date back to 1978 and have not been comprehensively updated in over 40 years.

Over time, implementation of NEPA has become increasingly complex and time consuming for Federal agencies, project applicants, and Americans seeking permits or approvals from the Federal government. CEQ has found that the average length of an environmental impact statement is over 600 pages, and that the average time for Federal agencies to complete such NEPA reviews is four and a half years.

CEQ's proposed rule would modernize and clarify the CEQ regulations to facilitate more efficient, effective, and timely NEPA reviews by simplifying and clarifying regulatory requirements, incorporating key elements of the One Federal Decision policy, codifying certain case law and CEQ guidance, updating the regulations to reflect current technologies and agency practices, eliminating obsolete provisions, and improving the format and readability of the regulations. The proposed rule seeks to reduce unnecessary paperwork and delays, and to promote better decision-making consistent with NEPA's statutory requirements.

For a fact sheet on the proposed rule, click [here](#).

For the text of the proposed rule, click [here](#).

“CEQ is proposing practical changes to modernize environmental reviews and make the process more predictable and efficient. The proposed rule would ensure Federal agencies consider the significant environmental impacts of proposed projects and activities, while accelerating the process so that timely decisions are made on major infrastructure and other projects affecting Americans' everyday lives. Americans deserve a government that is efficient, effective, and responsive,” **said CEQ Chairman Mary B. Neumayr.**

“Overhauling the NEPA regulations for the first time in a generation is another promise kept by President Trump. Over the past 40 years, NEPA has been used as a tool to slow or completely kill important infrastructure projects across the country. Our Administration continues to uphold environmental standards while streamlining the permitting process and removing frivolous litigation. No American city should be waiting over 30 years for a better highway because NEPA

has their infrastructure project held up in unnecessary paperwork,” **said Acting Office of Management and Budget Director Russ Vought.**

“The purpose of NEPA is noble; its application, however, has gone off the rails. The action by CEQ is the first step in bringing common sense to a process that has needlessly paralyzed decision-making. We can ensure that our views are well-informed and that the public is heard without tying ourselves in knots. CEQ is to be commended for seeking public comment on this initiative,” **said Secretary of the Interior David L. Bernhardt.**

“Common sense reforms in simplifying and streamlining environmental reviews will accelerate the construction of much needed roads, bridges, transit, railroad, and port projects to alleviate congestion and improve the quality of life for communities across the country,” **said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.**

“Today’s action by CEQ is another important step towards fulfilling the Trump Administration’s commitment to streamlining duplicative and costly regulations that impede investment in American infrastructure and stifle economic growth,” **said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler.** “The proposed update to NEPA would further EPA’s progress to provide regulatory certainty and efficiency for states, tribes, and the private sector while protecting human health and the environment.”

“For years, NEPA regulations have been like quicksand to the regulated communities. The more they try to comply, the deeper into the regulatory muck they sink. I look forward to this rule-making as a way to put NEPA regulations on the solid ground of efficiency and predictability,” **said Secretary of Energy Dan Brouillette.**

“While our environment has changed substantially, our NEPA regulations have not been updated in over 40 years. President Trump is continuing to responsibly modernize our regulations to support America’s continued growth and prosperity,” **said Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue.** “Rather than a tool for analyzing the impacts of federal actions, NEPA regulations have become a weapon used by those who seek to keep America’s farmers, producers, and foresters from producing American food and fiber. These modernizations enable the rule to do what it was intended to do.”

“The modernized NEPA process will better allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deliver important infrastructure projects designed to provide flood risk reduction, improve navigation, and restore vital ecosystems. The proposal streamlines and simplifies the NEPA procedures while concurrently adopting successful agency practices developed over the last 50-years,” **said R.D. James, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works.**

“These proposed updates to the regulations are aimed at modernizing the National Environmental Policy Act,” **said retired Navy Rear Adm. Tim Gallaudet, Ph.D., Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Deputy NOAA Administrator.** “The potential changes, such as the enhanced guidance on the roles of lead and cooperating agencies, will improve interagency coordination and facilitate effective reviews in an efficient and timely manner.”

### **Request for Public Comment:**

- CEQ requests public comment on the NPRM. Comments should be submitted on or before March 10, 2020.
- Comments may be submitted via any of the following methods:
  - Go to <https://www.regulations.gov/> and follow the online instructions for submitting comments to Docket ID No. CEQ-2019-0003.
  - By Fax: 202-456-6546
  - By mail:
    - Council on Environmental Quality  
730 Jackson Place NW  
Washington, DC 20503  
Attn: Docket No. CEQ-2019-0003

### **Further Information:**

- Pursuant to [Executive Order 13807](#), in 2018, CEQ issued an [Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) requesting comment on potential updates to its regulations.
- CEQ received over [12,500 comments](#), which have informed CEQ's proposed rule.
- CEQ has conducted an extensive interagency process to develop the proposed rule.
- CEQ will host two public hearings on the proposed rule: in Denver, CO, on February 11, 2020 and in Washington, DC, on February 25, 2020.
  - Additional details concerning the hearings and other public engagement may be found [HERE](#).

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