

What is NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is the nation's basic environmental law that applies to almost all actions taken by -- or approved by -- federal agencies (i.e. the United States Army). A Declaration of National Environmental Policy requires the federal government to use all practicable means to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony. Its principle is that federal agencies should "look before they leap." Thus, NEPA requires that before federal agencies take a major action, they must disclose the environmental impacts of their proposed action and evaluate alternatives that would have fewer environmental costs. NEPA requirements apply to all agencies of the federal government, to include the Department of Defense.

How does the NEPA Process unfold?

The NEPA process consists of an evaluation of the environmental effects of a federal undertaking including its alternatives. There are three levels of analysis depending on whether or not an undertaking could significantly affect the environment. These three levels include categorical exclusion determination; preparation of an environmental assessment/finding of no significant impact (EA/FONSI); and preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS).

A major land acquisition of sufficient scope to meet Fort Carson's requirements would require completion of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

An EIS is a more detailed evaluation of the proposed action and alternatives. The public, other federal agencies, and outside parties may provide input into the preparation of an EIS and then comment on the draft EIS when it is completed. After a final EIS is prepared and at the time of its decision, the U.S. Army will prepare a public record of its decision addressing how the findings of the EIS, including consideration of alternatives, were incorporated into the its decision-making process. (Figure 1)

What is the public's role in the NEPA process?

The public has an important role in the NEPA process, particularly during scoping, in providing input on what issues should be addressed in an EIS and in commenting on the findings in the U.S. Army's NEPA documents. The public can participate in the NEPA process by attending NEPA-related hearings or public meetings and by submitting comments directly to the U.S. Army. The U.S. Army must take into consideration all comments received from the public and other parties on NEPA documents during the comment period.

When can the public be involved with the NEPA process?

The public, other federal agencies and outside parties may provide input into the preparation of an EIS and then comment on the draft EIS when it is completed. The public can be involved once the U.S. Army initiates the NEPA process.

What stage is the U.S. Army in regards to PCMS expansion?

The U.S. Army has not started the NEPA process. The U.S. Army will issue a Notice of Intent to begin the process.

NEPA PROCESS FLOWCHART

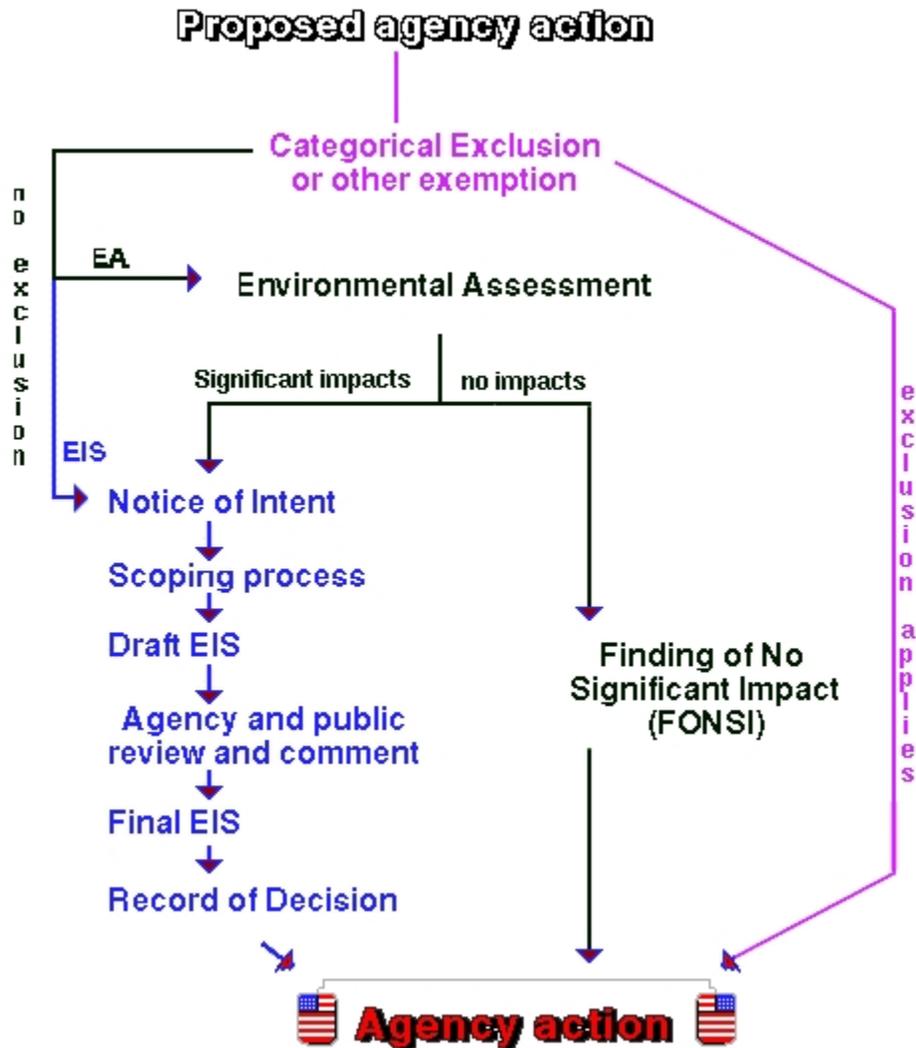


Figure 1

More information on the NEPA can be found at the following links.

<http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/nepanet.htm>

<http://www.epa.gov/compliance/basics/nepa.html>

<http://www.nepa.gov/nepa/regs/nepa/nepaeqia.htm>