



Environmental Impact Statement Process

What is an environmental impact statement?

An environmental impact statement (EIS) is a detailed study of the potential consequences a federal action (project) might have on people and the environment. It includes identification and analysis of alternative sites that meet the purpose and need of the project, and includes input from experts, agencies, and members of the public. The EIS is a planning tool used by decision-makers to make informed decisions about how to proceed with the project.

Why prepare an EIS?

Federal agencies are required to prepare an EIS for actions that may significantly affect the human or natural environment. This requirement is part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The US Congress passed NEPA in 1969 to ensure that federal agencies consider environmental issues in planning and decision-making. The President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) established guidelines for federal agency implementation of the act.

How is an EIS prepared?

Biologists, engineers, planners and other technical professionals examine existing conditions pertinent to the project, including land use, socioeconomics, noise, air quality, water quality, waste disposal, traffic, vegetation, and wildlife. Data are gathered and analyzed to identify how the proposed action might change current conditions. Issues most likely to be of concern to the public are identified and addressed.

The evaluation of impacts sometimes requires the use of complex methods to determine potential changes (e.g., underwater noise analysis requires computer modeling). Where

findings indicate that there may be significant impacts, methods to minimize those impacts are identified.

What is the process and how is the public involved?

The EIS process includes multiple steps, which are designed to encourage input from the public. Citizens, elected officials, special interest groups, and local, state, and federal agencies are encouraged to provide comments.

Agencies' public involvement programs for EISs should:

- Promote public understanding about the way environmental problems are studied and solved.
- Keep the public informed about the project and the EIS.
- Actively seek opinions and perceptions from concerned citizens.

Formal public involvement begins after a **Notice of Intent** to prepare an EIS (**NOI**) is published in the *Federal Register*. Additionally, a notice may be published in local newspapers. The NOI provides an overview of the proposed project and initiates "scoping."

Scoping is an early and open opportunity for public review of the proposed project. During the 45-day scoping period, public input, both written and oral, is sought on significant issues that the EIS should address.

After scoping, a **Draft EIS (DEIS)** is prepared that considers all scoping comments received. After a **Notice of Availability (NOA)** is issued by the US Environmental Protection Agency, the DEIS is circulated for review and comment to government agencies, interested private citizens, and local organizations, and is available for general review in public libraries and other publicly accessible locations. **Public**

hearings are typically held during this 45-day public review period.

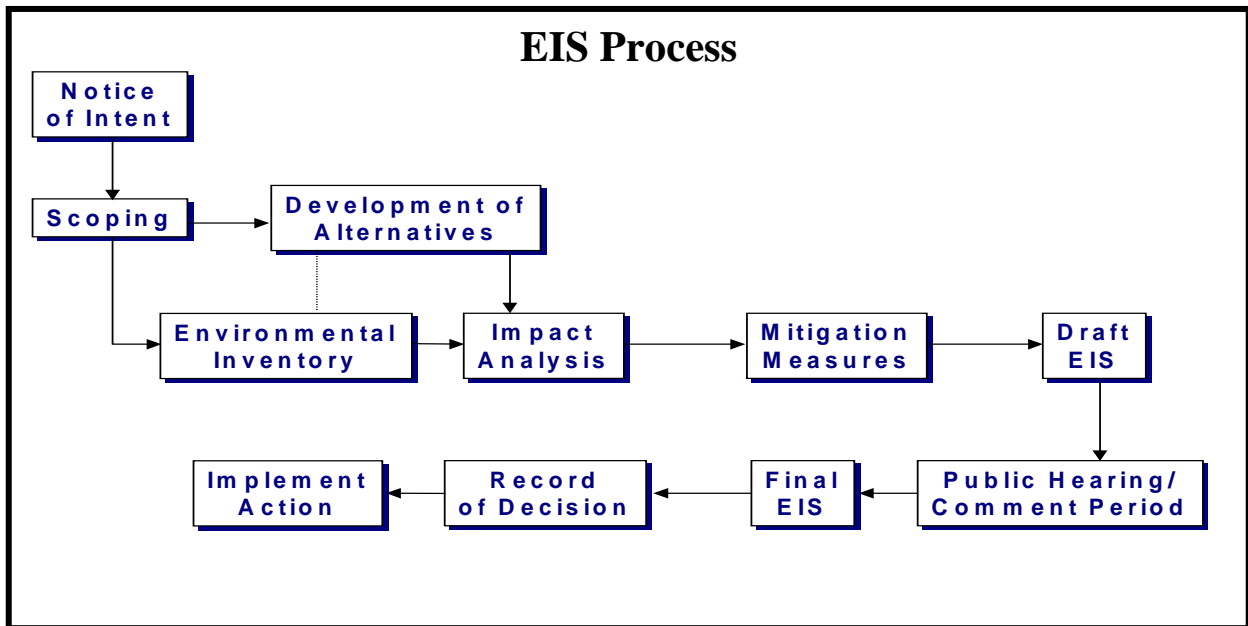
A **Final EIS (FEIS)** is then prepared that incorporates, and formally responds to, all public comment received on the DEIS. This response can take the form of corrections of data inaccuracies, clarifications of and modifications to analytical approaches, inclusion of additional data or analyses, and modification of the proposed action or alternatives. *The preferred alternative for implementation may not be identified in the DEIS, but is always identified in the FEIS.* The FEIS is then circulated for public review for 30 days.

The **record of decision (ROD)** follows the FEIS review period. The ROD documents the final decision, including which alternative

will be implemented and the precautions taken to reduce impacts from the project. The ROD provides a public record of the decision. The proposed action can then be implemented.

What is the difference between an EIS and an OEIS?

An EIS is prepared under NEPA, which applies to federal actions within the United States. An overseas environmental impact statement (OEIS) is prepared under Executive Order (EO) 12114, *Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions*, which directs federal agencies to provide for informed decision making for major federal actions with effects that occur outside the 50 states, territories, and possessions of the US, including actions outside US territorial waters. EO 12114 was signed by President Jimmy Carter on January 4, 1979.



For Further Information:
Naval Facilities Engineering Command Atlantic
ATTENTION: Code EV22LL (USWTR OEIS/EIS PM)
6506 Hampton Boulevard
Norfolk, VA 23508-1278
Fax: (804) 200-5568

<http://projects.earthtech.com/USWTR>