

BIODIVERSITY IN NEPA

(BASED ON CEQ GUIDANCE, 1993)

© ETCl, INC.

INTRODUCTION

The National Environmental Policy Act requires that agencies consider the effects of their actions on all aspects of the environment; as a basis for maintaining all life on earth, biodiversity is a key component to be explored during project and program planning under NEPA.

This protocol tracks the CEQ guidance “Incorporating Biodiversity Considerations into Environmental Impact Analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act,” published in 1993.

Project Name:

Internal or Pre-Scoping:

- Have Biodiversity concepts and methods been built into the proposal and alternatives?
 - “Big Picture” or ecosystem view
 - Protect communities and ecosystems
 - Minimize fragmentation
 - Promote native species
 - Protect rare and ecologically important species
 - Protect unique or sensitive environments
 - Maintain or mimic natural ecosystems processes
 - Maintain or mimic naturally occurring structural diversity
 - Protect genetic diversity
 - Restore ecosystems, communities and species
 - Monitor for biodiversity impacts
- Have the lead and any cooperating agencies identified Biodiversity as an issue for discussion at interagency meetings?

External or Public Scoping:

- Has the public been notified of the Biodiversity aspects of the proposal and alternatives?

- Have comments been solicited on how Biodiversity principles could be better integrated into the proposal and alternatives?

Analysis of Impacts:

- Has the appropriate scale of analysis been determined?
- What concrete (interagency) goals have been established for maintenance or restoration of Biodiversity in the project area?
- What Biodiversity indicators apply to the proposal or the project area?
- What is the status of the information database for the project area?
- What data gaps exist that must be filled during analysis of the proposal or alternatives?
- What methodology will be used to assess cumulative impacts on Biodiversity at the regional scale?
- Have each of the following steps been completed for Biodiversity analysis?
 - Gathering data
 - Establishing baseline conditions
 - Identifying ecological elements at risk
 - Selecting ecological goals and objectives
 - Predicting likely project impacts
 - Establishing the objectives of mitigation

Mitigation:

- Have potential mitigation measures for Biodiversity impacts been identified?
- Has Biodiversity been addressed in the Environmental Consequences section of the EA or EIS?

Monitoring:

- Have specific monitoring questions been formulated?
- Have indicators been selected?
- Have control areas or treatments been identified?
- Has monitoring been designed and carried out according to plan?
- What is the relationship between indicators and Biodiversity goals and objectives?

- What trends can be identified through analysis?
- Has management been informed and have changes, if necessary, been recommended?

Decision Document:

- Has Biodiversity been identified in the decision document (FONSI, decision memo or equivalent, or ROD) for the project?
- Has a plan been developed to carry out any Biodiversity mitigation measures relied on to reach a FONSI after an Environmental Assessment?
- Has a monitoring plan been identified to ensure any Biodiversity mitigation measures committed to in a ROD or other decision document are monitored?
- Has an enforcement plan been identified to ensure any Biodiversity mitigation measures committed to in a ROD or other decision document are enforced?

General Concerns:

1. Has conservation of biodiversity been acknowledged as a national policy and incorporated into the NEPA process?
2. Have opportunities to participate in regional ecosystem plans been encouraged and sought out?
3. Has information been actively sought from sources within and outside government agencies?
4. Have efforts to improve communication, cooperation, and collaboration between and among governmental and non-governmental entities been encouraged and participated in?
5. Have information about and technologies for managing and restoring Biodiversity been improved through agency actions?
6. Has the information base on which Biodiversity analyses and management decisions are based been expanded?