

DETERMINING GEOGRAPHIC AND TEMPORAL BOUNDARIES

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INTRODUCTION

A key task in assessing cumulative effects is determining geographic and temporal boundaries for analysis. Successful analysis requires that these boundaries be practical (i.e., the data can be obtained) and meaningful (i.e., the data contribute to useful analysis). As with all Council on Environmental Quality guidance on cumulative effects assessment, “common sense” is the major criterion.

This protocol provides a step-by-step process for determining useful temporal and geographic boundaries for cumulative effects assessment. As with any checklist or protocol, specific circumstances of *your* project must be taken into account. Continue to answer the “why?” or “why not?” questions when completing any portion of the protocol.

Complete Step One for the current project, then as many Step Two’s as needed to make the determination.

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Step One: Describe This Project

Project Start:

Project End:

Resources Affected	Geographic Limits (Map)	Reliable Data Availability (dates)

Step Two: Describe A Cumulative Project

Project Start:

Project End:

Resources Affected	Geographic Limits (Map)	Reliable Data Availability (dates)

Step Two: Describe A Cumulative Project

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Project End:

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Project End:

Resources Affected	Geographic Limits (Map)	Reliable Data Availability (dates)

Step Two: Describe A Cumulative Project

Project Start:

Project End:

Resources Affected	Geographic Limits (Map)	Reliable Data Availability (dates)

Notes

1. Remember that you are no longer looking at the *project* footprint, but at each *resource* footprint. Air quality is likely to have a very large footprint; distribution of an endangered plant may have a very small footprint.
2. Include what you might consider to be ancillary activities such as quarrying material, parking equipment, housing workers, etc., as well as life-cycle activities such as decommissioning or dismantling after the “project” is “over.”
3. Look at impacts *without* mitigation. After all, mitigation is what you will design once the analysis is complete.
4. Occasionally it is possible to use boundaries determined in other plans or documents. Examples include a state or local comprehensive plan, an Environmental Impact Statement being tiered to, or a preliminary study conducted for “this” project. Be sure these documents are based on a careful analysis, however, and that they actually include all the information you will need to conduct your cumulative effects assessment.