

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

An Environmental Assessment (EA) is required when 1) the significance of impacts on any resource is unknown, or 2) the proposed action does not meet the criteria for CE and is not included in the list of actions that normally require an EIS, or 3) the proposed action needs several CE categories to fully describe the action, would involve one or more CE criteria exceptions, or would involve unresolved conflicts concerning the use of resources.

(1) EA format: The following basic format for a LWCF EA is recommended. The content of each chapter will vary depending on the type of LWCF proposal under analysis such as new acquisition and development projects, Section 6(f)(3) conversions, etc. The EA must be factual and written in an objective manner and with a neutral tone. The EA should not promote a particular alternative or make a case for the approval of the proposal. The information must be presented without technical jargon and so it can be understood by the interested and affected public, agencies, and decision makers.

Chapter 1 – Purpose, Need, Background.

This chapter describes the purpose of the EA so that the interested and affected public, agencies, and decision makers understand the type and nature of the proposal that needs a federal LWCF decision. This chapter needs to explain the EA will provide a framework for the NPS to evaluate the environmental consequences of the proposed action on the human environment, and must also include any information to help the interested and affected public and decision makers understand the context for the proposed action.

Chapter 2 - Description of Alternatives.

This chapter must provide enough information for the interested and affected public and decision-makers to understand the proposed alternative (federal approval of the LWCF proposal) and the no action alternative. This chapter should lead off with an evaluation of all alternatives considered and the reasons for selecting the proposed alternative and rejecting the other alternatives.

Chapter 3 - Affected Environment.

The affected environment is a detailed description of the current state of resources expected to experience environmental impacts. Using the resource impact information documented on the [environmental screening form \(ESF\)](#) delineate an analysis area boundary for each resource and describe its existing status (location, nature, condition, scope, size, etc.). The existing status of these resources will serve as baseline information upon which impacts will be compared in the next EA chapter.

This includes detailed description of any existing public outdoor recreation resources and opportunities at the affected site(s) including a clear depiction any existing Section 6(f) boundary. This chapter must also describe the park/recreation area's population service area and demographics, including information about minority and low income populations pursuant to Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations.

For more information regarding the LWCF Environmental Assessment, reference the [LWCF Manual](#), Chapter 4-6.

Also, this chapter must include a description of any existing easements, right-of-ways, leases, and any other agreements about use of the Section 6(f)(3) area. If the proposal includes land with a history of contamination, this chapter should describe the contamination and current condition/remediation status.

Chapter 4 - Environmental Impacts.

This chapter analyzes the degree to which the resources described in Chapter 3 will be impacted by the proposal. The analysis should be presented for the interested and affected public, agencies, and decision makers to understand the potential for impacts, both beneficial and adverse, and should include qualitative and quantitative data that considers the context, intensity, duration, and timing of the potential impacts. The presentation of data must be presented objectively, accurately, and factually. Resource impacts within the proposed Section 6(f)(3) boundary must be described including any future easements, right-of-ways, leases and agreements about the use of the Section 6(f)(3) area.

This chapter must also include a detailed discussion of the proposed impacts, both beneficial and adverse, on the provision of public outdoor recreation for the populations served by the proposal including impacts to minority and low income populations pursuant to Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations, and a clear depiction of any Section 6(f) boundary changes, especially for expansion of existing Section 6(f) areas and conversions, including a description of any easements, rights-of-way, leases, and any other agreements about the use of the Section 6(f)(3) area as a result of the proposal. If Chapter 3 includes information that any of the land resources in the proposal has a history of contamination, this chapter must include information on the impacts of the proposal on this land considering its status including the land's suitability to support healthy and safe public outdoor recreation activities in perpetuity.

Chapter 5 - Coordination and Consultation.

This chapter must list persons, organizations and agencies contacted for information and for identifying important issues, developing alternatives, or analyzing impacts. Any scoping or other public involvement efforts should also be detailed. A list of preparers and their qualifications should be included as well.

(2) Opportunity for public review and comment. At a minimum, States are required to ensure the interested and affected public has had an opportunity to review and provide written comments on completed environmental assessments for LWCF proposals. This public comment period shall be no less than 30 days. The notice an EA is available for review shall be published in the local newspapers and community notices, posted on the sponsoring agency's web site, and made broadly known to the public in such a way that the interested and affected public has ample notice of the public comment period. The State/project sponsor is responsible for reviewing the public comments. These comments and the responses that address all substantive comments are to be included in the proposal's submission to NPS.

If the proposal is revised in response to substantive public comments or for any other reason, States should consult with NPS to determine if the public needs another opportunity to review the revised EA.

For more information regarding the LWCF Environmental Assessment, reference the [LWCF Manual](#), Chapter 4-6.