



United States Department of Agriculture

Farm Service Agency

Environmental Reviews

Fact Sheet
June 2021

Before USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) can assist you with a project, we must conduct an environmental compliance review. The review considers the environmental effects of any upcoming projects and is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), and other laws.

Kinds of Projects Requiring Environmental Reviews

Environmental reviews are required for all USDA program eligibility, including disaster assistance projects. Projects requiring an environmental review may include things like constructing or repairing farm and ranch related buildings and infrastructures such as barns, fences, wells, and waste and crop storage facilities. Other projects may involve conservation projects, providing or guaranteeing loans, disaster recovery or even purchasing or expanding operations.



Environmental Reviews: Are Not Optional

NEPA, ESA, NHPA, and others all require Federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of proposed projects before approving Federal program or loan funds.

Protect Natural and Cultural Resources

The environmental review will address natural and cultural resources under federal protection, including:

- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Wetlands and Floodplains
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Coastal Barriers and Coastal Zones
- Air and Water Quality
- Cultural and Historic Resources

Take Varying Times to Complete

Many factors influence the time it will take to complete the review -- the complexity of the project, effects on protected resources, and level of environmental review needed.

Sharing any related permits, plans, or other documents early in the process will expedite the review.

Guidance documents lack the force and effect of law, unless expressly authorized by statute or incorporated into a contract. USDA may not cite, use, or rely on any guidance that is not available through their guidance portal, except to establish historical facts.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS - JUNE 2021

Your Responsibilities

- Check with FSA before starting any projects.
- Do not begin any project before an environmental review has been completed and the project is approved in writing. Doing so may result in loss of loan or program eligibility.
- Attend a preliminary planning meeting if offered.
- Provide USDA with complete and detailed information and documents.
- Submit applications, permits, and plans early.
- Work cooperatively with regulators and other agencies.
- Applicants may be asked to pay for such items as:
 - Universal Commercial Code (UCC) filings
 - Appraisals
 - Cultural Resource Surveys

How to Get Started

Contact your local USDA Service Center early in your planning process and before you start any project that will use Federal program or loan funds. You can find the telephone number and address of your local service center at farmers.gov/service-locator.

Staff at your local service center may schedule a meeting to start the environmental review process. We will want to know about your plans, including what you're asking FSA to support, as well as the parts of the project you and other parties will fund.

For More Information

Visit your local USDA Service Center, which you can find at farmers.gov/service-locator, or see fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/environmental-cultural-resource/.

