

9. Environmental Review Procedures for State-Funded Projects

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9.1. Introduction

The environmental review process for state-funded projects is used to:

- Identify a preferred alternative
- Identify permits and clearances necessary for construction

During the environmental review, the engineering manager will prepare a “preferred alternative memorandum” (see 9.3) once there is sufficient project information. The anticipated environmental effects of the preferred alternative and the permits and clearance necessary for its construction are documented in a state project environmental checklist (see 9.4).

Public and agency coordination may be necessary to assist in determining what permits and clearance may be required (i.e. State Historic Preservation Office [SHPO], Alaska Department of Fish and Game [ADF&G], Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation [ADEC], and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers).

9.2. Public and Agency Coordination

The engineering manager and regional environmental coordinator determine the level of public and resource agency coordination as soon as possible after initiating the project. The coordinator and engineering manager must work closely to disseminate adequate project information in order to solicit informed comments.

The public and agency coordination process will help the engineering manager recommend a preferred alternative.

9.2.1 Public Coordination

When public coordination is deemed appropriate, the environmental staff will usually place a legal notice in a local or regional newspaper. The notice should state *what we’re doing, why we’re doing it, when*

we’re doing it, and how we’ll do it.

A legal notice is just one option for soliciting public comments. The engineering manager and environmental coordinator should determine the most cost-effective way to solicit comments based on the project location and potential for controversy.

The design manager and regional environmental coordinator should determine whether a public meeting should be held for the project. Generally, a meeting is held for urban projects. A meeting should explain to the public the anticipated effects, such as right-of-way acquisition, detours, road closures, and short-term effects on access to businesses.

Use of a local planning commission approval process to obtain public comments can be a cost-effective and efficient method to involve the public.

9.2.2 Agency Coordination

The regional environmental coordinator should determine the appropriate level of agency coordination. Coordinate projects with any agency that must approve the project prior to construction (e.g. SHPO, Corps, ADEC, or ADF&G).

9.3. Preferred Alternative Memorandum

When a project has multiple location alternatives or multiple solutions, the regional preconstruction engineer and regional director must approve a preferred alternative, which is documented in the environmental checklist.

The engineering manager recommends a preferred alternative to the regional director and regional preconstruction engineer once there is sufficient project information to prepare a “preferred alternative memorandum,” which recommends a preferred alternative and requests concurrence from the preconstruction engineer and regional director.

The level of detail in the memorandum will vary depending on the project and the significance of the issues identified during early development. Technical documentation should be attached to the memorandum as appropriate.

9.4. Environmental Checklist

An environmental checklist is completed for each

project and documents the permits and clearance necessary for the project. For projects that require a Corps of Engineers Section 404/10 permit, the checklist provides documentation to assist the Corps in preparation of their permit decision document.

The checklist is shown in Appendix F with detailed instructions and will usually be attached to permit applications.

9.4.1 Approval Process

The regional environmental coordinator approves the checklist based on the recommendation of the environmental analyst who prepared it and a review by the project engineering manager. The environmental analyst and engineering manager should both sign the checklist before submitting it to the coordinator for approval.