

## **Local Programs NEPA Courses**

### **Notes on variations for WSDOT Projects**

**Introduction:** WSDOT's Local Programs Office (LP) recently created a series of [short videos](#) on YouTube that provide a tutorial of the NEPA process. The target audience is local transportation agencies. However, these videos are useful for all NEPA practitioners.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to describe variations between the direction provided in the LP NEPA training videos and policies and procedures for WSDOT regions and modes.

**Global differences:** For the most part, the processes described in the LP NEPA videos are consistent with WSDOT processes. LP and WSDOT processes have minor departures due to the different users. LP assists local government agencies with transportation delivery while WSDOT regions and modes focus solely on WSDOT projects. Differences include:

- LP Categorical Exclusions (CEs) are documented in [LP's CE form](#). WSDOT CEs are documented in WSDOT's Environmental Classification Summary (ECS) forms.
- LP contacts are different than WSDOT contacts. For WSDOT projects, contact the appropriate [WSDOT subject matter expert](#) (SME). SME contacts are provided below for each module.
- For WSDOT CE level projects, use the green **HELP** button found in each tab of the ECS forms for subject-specific guidance.
- Additional WSDOT CE guidance is available on our website under [Environmental Technical](#).

**Differences within each module:** The following summarizes differences between LP and WSDOT processes. It also includes additional notes that supplement the information provided in each module.

#### Module 1 – Overview

Contact WSDOT's [NEPA/SEPA Program Manager](#) for assistance with NEPA compliance for WSDOT projects.

Guidance for WSDOT Environmental Assessments (EAs) and Environmental Impacts Statements (EISs) is found [here](#). WSDOT EAs and EISs are coordinated through Region Project Engineers with HQ support and quality reviews.

WSDOT CE forms can be signed digitally within TEIS by checking the box in the 'Approval' tab.

Most WSDOT CEs are approved and signed by WSDOT Region Environmental Managers (REMs) through our CE Programmatic Agreement (PCE) with FHWA. FHWA signature is required for 'open ended (d)-list' CEs (actions that are not specifically listed in 23 CFR 771.117 (c) or (d)) and actions for which WSDOT has requested FHWA approval based on unusual circumstances.

WSDOT NEPA re-evaluations are typically signed by the WSDOT Region Environmental Manager. However, not all re-evaluations are signed. Sometimes they are completed through an (unsigned) email to FHWA.

While the proportion of WSDOT and LP CE, EA, and EIS documents is generally the same, EAs and EISs are more common for WSDOT projects than for Local Programs.

## **Module 2 – General Project Information**

Contact WSDOT's [Acquisition Program Manager](#) for assistance with Right of Way Acquisition and Relocation compliance for WSDOT projects.

WSDOT's Right of Way [Manual](#) provides more information for WSDOT projects.

For WSDOT projects, permit and approval questions are found on Tab 3 in ECS. Guidance for USCG determination is in Tab 3 'Help', including contacts for WSDOT bridge and culvert projects. Right of Way questions are found in Tab 1.

ECS does not require documentation of all federal agency(ies) involved.

## **Module 3 – Air Quality and Critical Areas**

Contact WSDOT's [Air Quality and Climate Specialist](#) for assistance with Air Quality compliance for WSDOT projects. This includes assistance with Hot Spot analyses.

Contact WSDOT's [Wetland Program Manager](#) for assistance with Critical Areas compliance for WSDOT projects.

Air Quality questions are found in Tab 4.a of ECS.

See the guidance found in Tab 4.b ECS Help for WSDOT project categories that are not listed in the [Sole Source Aquifer MOU](#) as exempt from review and approval.

WSDOT project impacts to species/habitats (other than ESA-listed species) and streams are asked in Tab 4.b of ECS.

Contact WSDOT's [Fish and Wildlife Program Manager](#) if a WSDOT project needs technical assistance or a permit for Bald and Golden Eagles.

## **Module 4 – Section 106 and Hazardous Materials**

Contact your [Regional Cultural Resources Specialist](#) for assistance with Section 106 for WSDOT projects.

Contact WSDOT's [HazMat and Solid Waste Program Manager](#) for assistance with Hazardous Materials for WSDOT projects.

You can find WSDOT's Section 106 Programmatic Agreement, and other Programmatic Agreement exemptions, in the ECS Tab 2 Help.

Hazardous Materials questions for WSDOT projects are found in Tab 4.c of ECS.

## **Module 5 – Section 4(f) and Section 6(f)**

Contact WSDOT's [NEPA Specialist](#) for assistance with Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) compliance for WSDOT projects.

Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) questions for WSDOT projects are found in Tab 4.e of ECS.

## **Module 6 – Noise, Stormwater, and Environmental Justice**

Contact WSDOT's [Air, Noise, and Energy Program Technical Manager](#) for assistance with noise compliance for WSDOT projects.

Contact WSDOT's [Stormwater Manager](#) for assistance with stormwater compliance for WSDOT projects.

Contact WSDOT's [NEPA Specialist](#) for assistance with environmental justice compliance for WSDOT projects.

Many WSDOT state routes will not qualify for the abbreviated noise analysis processes because they will not meet the speed limit or the low ADT thresholds.

Noise questions for WSDOT projects are found in Tab 4.d of ECS.

Water Quality and Stormwater questions for WSDOT projects are found in Tab 4.g of ECS.

When a WSDOT project cannot meet stormwater requirements, it is typically due to a biological issue (ESA) or a hydraulic issue (non-compliance with WSDOT's Highway Runoff Manual). Document the issue and consult the assigned Hydraulic Engineer. The Hydraulic Engineer must approve any deviation from the Highway Runoff Manual and work with the ESA biologist to ensure that the ESA evaluation considered the deviation.

Contact WSDOT's [Programmatic Permit and Compliance Lead](#) for questions about environmental commitments.

WSDOT project types that are exempt from detailed EJ analysis are listed on our [EJ](#) website. WSDOT documentation requirements currently differ from Local Programs. Follow the process found on WSDOT's website.

### **Module 7 – Endangered Species Act**

WSDOT has Programmatic Agreements for ESA compliance. Contact WSDOT's [Fish and Wildlife Program Manager](#) for questions regarding programmatic use.

The project file should include supporting documentation for ESA and be referenced in ECS for WSDOT projects.

**Module 8 - Programmatic Biological Opinion – not available as of February 2020.**