U.S. Coast Guard and Maritime Administration

MARAD-2020-0127

Deepwater Port Applications
The NEPA Process

WHAT IS NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was passed in 1969 and has two major objectives:

1. To ensure that Federal agencies consider the potential environmental effects of proposed programs, projects, and actions before initiating them.
2. To inform the public and to encourage and facilitate public involvement in Federal agency activities that may affect the quality of the human environment.

Guidelines for Federal agencies to implement NEPA were established in regulations by the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) in 40 CFR 1500-1508 and a new rule was issued by the CEQ on July 16, 2020, updating procedural provisions of NEPA. This rule became effective on September 14, 2020. In addition, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) has issued implementing procedures and policy for considering environmental impacts under NEPA and related laws.

Documents prepared under NEPA include a Categorical Exclusion, an Environmental Assessment, and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). When a Proposed Action has the potential for significant impacts, an EIS, the most detailed analysis conducted under NEPA, is prepared.

STEPS IN NEPA PROCESS

NEPA requires Federal agencies to assess the potential environmental impacts of their Proposed Actions. Throughout this process, agencies examine resource impacts, including air and water quality, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, and socioeconomic impacts. The NEPA EIS process includes the following steps:

1. Public Scoping:
   - The public scoping meeting provides opportunities for the public, Federal, state, and local agencies, any affected Tribes, and other interested parties to provide input on the range of actions, alternatives, and impacts to be considered in the EIS.
   - The Blue Marlin Offshore Port (BMOP) Project scoping meetings will take place online via Microsoft TEAMS on Wednesday, December 2, 2020 and Thursday, December 3, 2020.

2. Prepare a Draft EIS:
   - Draft EIS is distributed to interested stakeholders including Federal, state and local agencies, affected Indian tribes, private citizens and organizations and is placed in community libraries in the affected region.
   - Virtual and in-person Open houses and public meetings provide the public an opportunity to make oral comments or submit written comments.

3. Prepare the Final EIS:
   - Final EIS includes copies of all comments and USCG/Maritime Administration responses.
   - The Notice of Availability of the Final EIS will appear in the Federal Register and local newspapers.

U.S. Department of Transportation
Maritime Administration