



NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT REVIEW PROCESS



PSIC Grant Program NEPA Overview

This brochure is intended to assist Public Safety Interoperable Communications Grant Program (PSIC) grant recipients in understanding their Federal environmental compliance requirements. Grantees may use this information to familiarize themselves with the steps necessary to complete their environmental review.

All programs that receive Federal funds must demonstrate compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in order to proceed with implementation. The Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) prepared a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) to evaluate potential impacts to the natural and human environment associated with PSIC-funded projects. The program funds a wide variety of projects designed to improve interoperable communications among public safety agencies. The PEA evaluated potential environmental impacts based on five major project types associated with improving interoperable communications, which are summarized below.

In addition to the PEA, NTIA issued a final Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in April 2009 identifying the types of projects that were likely to not have significant impact to the human or natural environment. Each State or Territory project must now undergo a PSIC NEPA review to determine if the project is in compliance with the FONSI. NTIA will require additional environmental analyses, such as environmental assessments (EA), for any PSIC-funded project that is not cleared for compliance under the FONSI.*

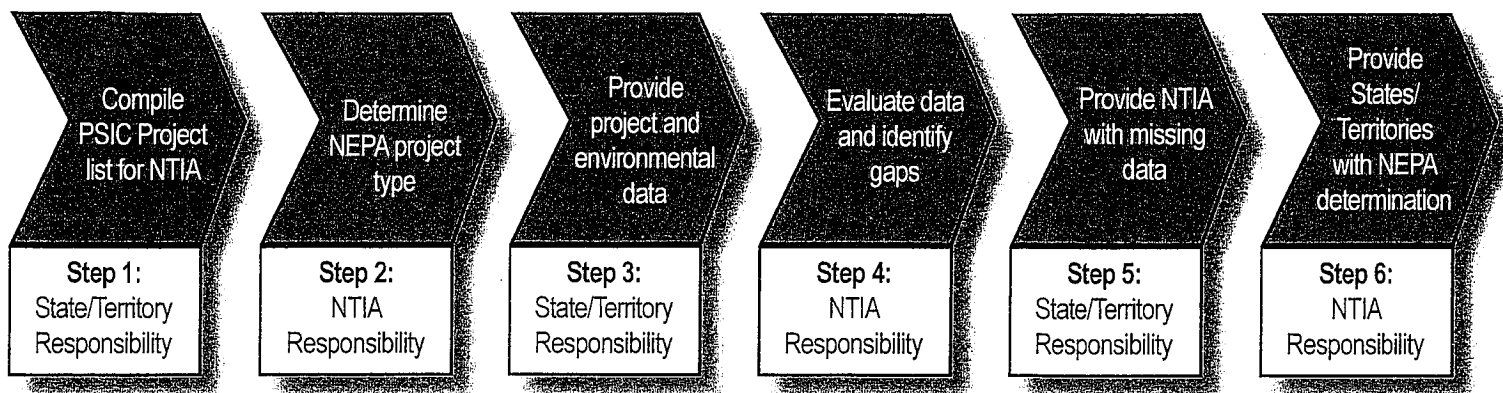
Below are the five NEPA project types:

NEPA PROJECT TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Transmission and Receiving Sites	Transmission and Receiving Site projects include upgrades of existing or new construction and installation of communications towers, equipment shelters, generators and backup power systems, repeaters, gateways, voice over internet protocol, microwave backhubs, fiber optic cable, antennae, and access roads to sites. This may also include equipment and activities that are associated with channel assignments and shared and mutual aid channels. Coordinating antennae interference reviews is also part of this activity.
Operations and Response Centers	Operation and Response Center projects include construction, remodeling, or retrofitting of existing fixed-structure dispatch centers and first-responder facilities to take advantage of new communications infrastructure and increased responder capacity.
Mobile/Portable Equipment	Mobile / Portable Equipment projects include the acquisition, storage, and deployment of subscriber units and similar equipment, including mobile and handheld radios and satellite phones, radio caches, and battery packs.
Mobile Infrastructure	Mobile Infrastructure projects include acquisition, storage, and deployment of non-fixed infrastructure equipment and incident command equipment associated with transmitting and receiving communications including mobile command vehicles and trailers, cell-on-wheels, cell-on-light-truck, and site-on-wheels equipment, portable towers and antennae, mobile gateways, mobile data terminals, and very small aperture terminals.
Planning, Training, and Exercises	Planning, Training, and Exercises cover single- and multi-event activities, including both classroom- and field-based training and exercises, to prepare first responders and support personnel to use interoperable communications equipment in a coordinated and efficient manner.

The PSIC NEPA Process includes a comprehensive review of each Investment and all associated projects. The PSIC NEPA team will work with the State Administrative Agency (SAA), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Grant Programs Directorate (GPD) Program Analysts (PA), and subgrantees to develop a comprehensive PSIC project list for each State and Territory. The projects will be reviewed by NTIA and assigned to the appropriate NEPA project type. The State or Territory will need to provide detailed project and environmental descriptions for each project identified in the list. These descriptions will be analyzed to determine NEPA compliance needs. NTIA will issue one of three NEPA determinations for each project once all project information has been reviewed: in compliance, not in compliance, or request for more information.

* The Final PEA and FONSI are available at <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/psic/>

PSIC NEPA Review Process



Possible NEPA Determination Outcomes

Each project will be thoroughly reviewed to determine NEPA compliance with the PSIC PEA and FONSI. Based on this NEPA review, NTIA will issue a PSIC NEPA determination for each project. The possible NEPA determination outcomes are:

- **In Compliance**—Grantees will receive an NTIA compliance letter and may proceed with their project
- **Not in Compliance**—Grantees must work with NTIA to evaluate environmental impacts of the project at a site-specific level
- **Request for More Information**—Grantees must provide additional information to NTIA in order to make a NEPA determination

PSIC Project and Environmental Information

All PSIC projects need to be evaluated for compliance with environmental, cultural, and historic preservation requirements. To expedite the NEPA review process, NTIA is providing support to grantees and subgrantees to help prepare documentation in advance. Organizing these materials in advance will ensure that each project's information addresses the "PSIC Project and Environmental Information" listed below. This information can be found in local master plans, previous NEPA or environmental documentation, or correspondence with other resource agencies. The "Regulatory Need" column explains the purpose for the information. NTIA will use the project information, in conjunction with independent research, to make its PSIC NEPA determinations.

All PSIC projects need to be evaluated for compliance with NEPA.

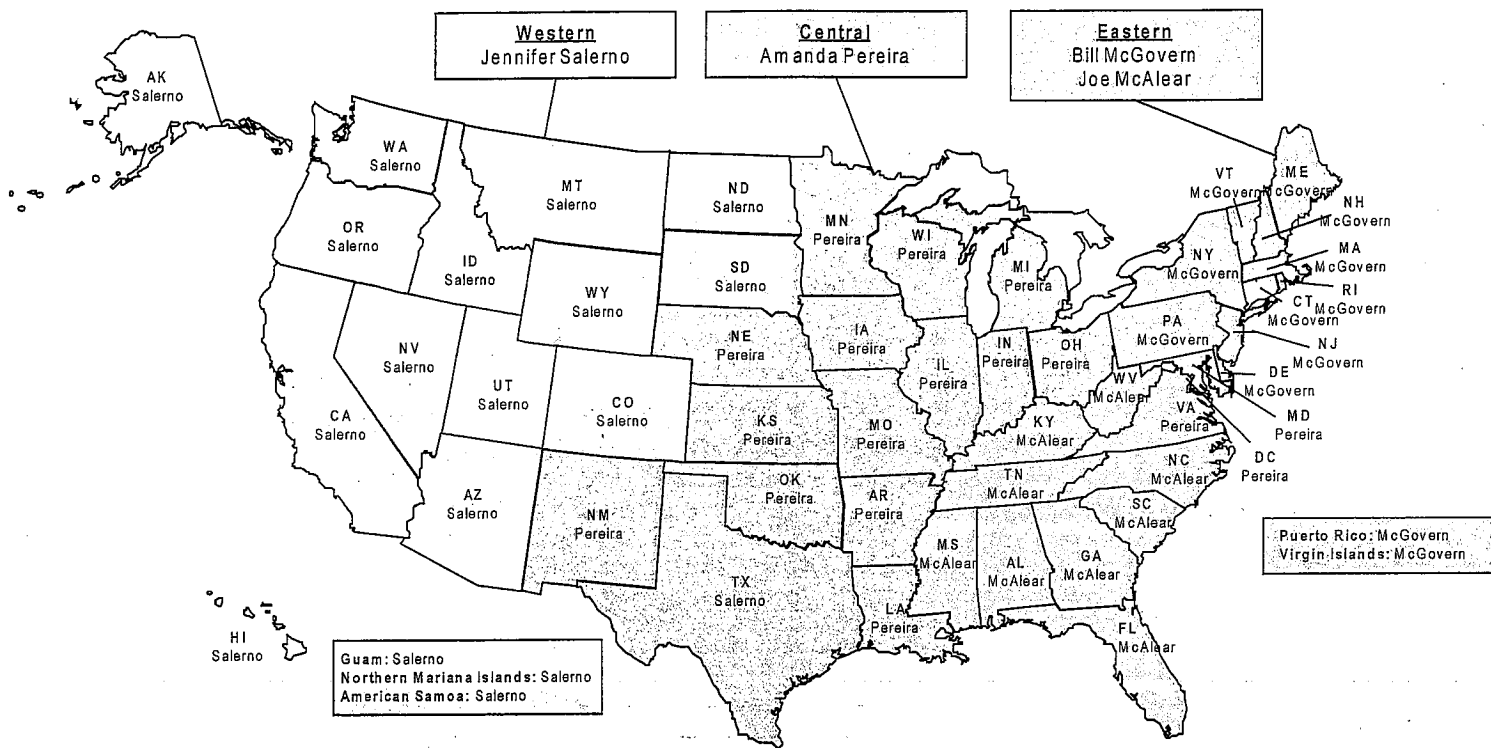
States and Territories are encouraged to work with PSIC NEPA support staff to ensure that NEPA compliance is attained.

PSIC Project and Environmental Information

PSIC PROJECT INFORMATION	REGULATORY NEED
Basic Project Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of project • Name of grant and grantee • Grant award number • Overall purpose and scope of the project • Property owners • Estimated cost Amount of PSIC funds allocated 	<p>Presents general descriptive information about the purpose and need for the project, and the responsible party (e.g., action proponent/grant applicant).</p> <p>This information determines who can be contacted for questions or additional information.</p>
Project location data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address (include county) • Cross Streets • Latitude/Longitude Coordinates • Elevation • Parcel Number • FAA/FCC numbers (for towers) 	<p>Data used to determine jurisdiction of administering agencies and corresponding laws and regulations over the proposed project (e.g., whether U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service must be consulted for an action in, near, or potentially affecting wetlands, waterways, or water bodies, as defined by the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act).</p>

PSIC PROJECT INFORMATION	REGULATORY NEED
<p>Visual documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site/structure photographs • Plans/drawings that define the size and precise location of project • U.S. Geological Survey topographic quad map • Flood, wetlands, or land-use maps • Aerial photographs • Location/maps of manmade structures (e.g., roadways, residences, above/below ground utilities) 	<p>Needed to verify project location data and identify impacts or relationships to nearby properties or environments (e.g., assess whether the Farmland Protection Policy Act applies and the need for Farmland Conversion Form AD-1006).</p>
<p>Project description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dimensions/acreage/square footage of structure and/or land affected, with height and structural support information for all communication towers • Extent and depth of ground disturbance for new construction and structure modification, including trenching for utility lines, installation of fencing and light posts, tower footings and pads, etc. 	<p>Needed to determine project coordination, permit requirements, and approvals (e.g., for zoning variance).</p>
<p>Building structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year that the affected building/structure was built (if applicable) 	<p>Used to determine compliance with National Historic Preservation Act, and related laws and regulations.</p>
<p>Special elements of the project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment used for staging areas, access roads, easements, etc. • Extent of structural modification 	<p>Used to determine and assess construction-related impacts and mitigation (e.g., blasting during seasonally present protected species).</p>
<p>Information about features, resources, and potential adverse impacts at or near the site, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water bodies (e.g., rivers, lakes, streams, wetlands) • Floodplains • Historic and cultural resources (e.g., historic districts, buildings, landscapes, bridges, piers, dams, archaeological sites) • Migratory birds • Threatened and endangered species and/or critical habitats – (Federal and State) • Vegetation, including general types of plants, trees, or lack thereof • Geologic features • Tribal, cultural, and religious sites • Special areas (e.g., forests, wildlife refuges, reserves) 	<p>Used to determine compliance with the following Federal regulations, as well as corresponding State and locals laws and regulations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean Air Act • Clean Water Act – Section 404 (Wetlands) Clean Water Act – Sections 313, 401, and 402 (Water Quality) • Coastal Zone Management Act • Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) • Coastal Barrier Resources Act • Endangered Species Act • Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) • Executive Order 11990 (Wetland Protection) • Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice) • Farmland Protection Policy Act • Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act • National Environmental Policy Act • National Historic Preservation Act • Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) • Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
<p>Other documentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any recent or relevant studies, reports, or surveys prepared for other agencies or purposes that provide information on environmental resources or historic properties in the project area. 	<p>Consulted to determine precedents set by similar projects and actions.</p>

PSIC NEPA Support Team Contacts



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*For Additional PSIC NEPA Information, please visit <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/psic/>
 For PSIC Grant Program NEPA related questions, e-mail psic@dhs.gov.*