



## 5.6 National Environmental Policy Act

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The *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) requires preparation of an environmental impact statement for major federal actions with the potential to significantly affect the quality of the human environment. An environmental assessment is prepared when it is uncertain if a proposed action would require the preparation of an environmental impact statement. A supplement analysis is prepared to consider new information developed since issuance of an environmental impact statement and record of decision. The supplement analysis would determine if the federal action is still bounded by the original environmental impact statement and record of decision or if a supplemental environmental impact statement is required.

Additionally, certain types of actions may fall into typical classes that have already been analyzed by DOE and have been determined to not normally result in a significant environmental impact. These actions are called categorical exclusions, and, if eligibility criteria are met, they are exempt from NEPA environmental assessment or environmental impact statement requirements. Typically, the DOE Richland Operations Office documents more than 20 specific categorical exclusions annually, involving a variety of actions by multiple Hanford Site contractors. In addition, site-wide categorical exclusions are applied to routine, typical actions conducted daily on the Hanford Site. In 2004, there were 20 site-wide categorical exclusions.

NEPA documents for the Hanford Site are prepared and approved in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality *National Environmental Policy Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act* (40 CFR 1500-1508), DOE NEPA implementation procedures (10 CFR 1021), and DOE Order 451.1B Change 1, *National Environmental Policy Act Compliance Program – Change 1*. In accordance

with the Order, DOE documents prepared for CERCLA projects incorporate NEPA values such as analysis of cumulative, offsite, ecological, and socioeconomic impact to the extent practicable in lieu of preparing separate NEPA documentation.

### 5.6.1 Recently Issued Environmental Impact Statements

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The *Final Hanford Site Solid (Radioactive and Hazardous) Waste Program Environmental Impact Statement*, Richland, Washington, was issued in January 2004 (DOE/EIS-0286F). The final statement analyzed alternatives for (1) disposing of immobilized low-activity radioactive waste from Hanford underground waste storage tanks, other low-level waste, and mixed low-level waste; (2) treating mixed low-level waste; and (3) processing and certifying transuranic waste prior to its shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico for disposal. A record of decision was issued on June 30, 2004 (69 FR 39449) stating that DOE will limit the volumes of low-level waste and mixed low-level waste received at Hanford from other sites for disposal to 62,000 cubic meters (81,100 cubic yards) of low-level waste and 20,000 cubic meters (26,200 cubic yards) of mixed low-level waste. Also, effective immediately, DOE will dispose of low-level waste by placing it in lined disposal facilities, a practice already used for mixed low-level waste. In addition, DOE will construct and operate a lined, combined-use disposal facility in Hanford's 200-East Area to dispose of low-level waste and mixed low-level waste and will further limit the receipt of offsite waste until the facility is constructed. Low-level waste and mixed low-level waste requiring treatment will



be treated either at offsite facilities or existing or modified onsite facilities, as appropriate. Storage, processing, and certification of transuranic waste for subsequent shipment to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant will occur at existing and modified onsite facilities.

DOE issued the *Supplement Analysis. Waste Retrieval from the 218-W-4C, 218-E-12B, 218-W-3A, and 218-W-4B Low-Level Burial Grounds, 200 Areas, Richland, Washington* (DOE/EIS-0113-SA4) on March 25, 2004. The supplement analysis provided current information concerning the proposed full retrieval and disposition of retrievably stored and newly generated transuranic waste, mixed low-level waste, suspect mixed low-level waste, and low-level waste in the 218-W-4C, 218-E-12B, 218-W-3A, and 218-W-4B low-level burial grounds in the 200 Areas of the Hanford Site. The supplement analysis updated process knowledge and data since the record of decision based on the *Final Environmental Impact Statement, Disposal of Hanford Defense High-Level, Transuranic and Tank Wastes, Hanford Site, Richland, Washington* (DOE/EIS-0113). The supplement analysis provided the basis for a determination that no additional NEPA review was required to support the action.

US Ecology operates a commercial low-level radioactive waste disposal site near the 200 Areas on land leased from the federal government by the state of Washington. The Washington State Department of Health and Washington State Department of Ecology distributed a draft environmental impact statement for the facility for comment in August 2000. This *Washington State Environmental Policy Act* (RCW 43.21C) impact statement considers the renewal of US Ecology's license to operate the waste site, an increase to the upper limit for disposal of naturally occurring radioactive materials, and an approval of the site stabilization and closure plan.

The *Final Environmental Impact Statement* was issued on June 30, 2004 (DOH 320-031).

A draft comprehensive conservation plan and environmental impact statement for the Hanford Reach National Monument/Saddle Mountain National Wildlife Refuge is being prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to evaluate management alternatives for the monument and national wildlife refuge. As co-manager of the monument, the DOE Richland Operations Office is a cooperating agency. Projected issuance of the draft environmental impact statement is summer 2005.

A draft environmental impact statement is being prepared about retrieval, treatment, and disposal of waste from underground waste storage tanks and closure of 149 single-shell underground waste storage tanks. The Washington State Department of Ecology is a cooperating agency in the preparation of this environmental impact statement. The draft statement is scheduled to be issued for public comment in 2006.

A draft environmental impact statement is being prepared to consider reasonable alternatives for decommissioning the deactivated Fast Flux Test Facility. Initial input from the public was solicited in September 2004. The draft statement is scheduled to be issued for additional public comment in 2006.

## 5.6.2 Recent Environmental Assessments

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No environmental assessments were prepared during 2004.