

Nomination Received by Council on Environmental Quality, Executive Office of the President
For the CEQ NEPA Pilot Project Program
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/nepa/nepa-pilot-project-nominations>

PART I. NOMINATOR

First Name:	Tom
Last Name:	Flanagan
Organization:	National Park Service
Project Title:	The National Park Service Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) system
Submitted by:	Federal Agency
Date Received:	06/07/2011

PART II. SHORT ANSWERS

I. What Federal agency or agencies will be involved in this pilot project?

National Park Service (NPS)

II. What is the Federal action to which this NEPA pilot project applies?

This project, the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) system, is applicable to any NPS action. PEPC is a web-based system used for NPS NEPA planning, project tracking, and public involvement. PEPC can be used to facilitate any level of NEPA analysis, including categorical exclusions, environmental assessments, and environmental impact statements.

III. How will this pilot project reduce the costs and time needed to complete the NEPA process?

This project reduces the costs and time needed to complete the NEPA process by 1) providing NEPA project management efficiencies, 2) facilitating internal development and online review of NEPA documents, 3) centralizing documents related to a project or activity, 4) providing web-based public access to NEPA documents, and 5) enabling web-based public comment on NEPA documents.

IV. How will this pilot project ensure rigorous environmental protection?

This project ensures that environmental concerns related to a proposed action are identified and addressed by 1) enabling interdisciplinary teams of NPS resource specialists to efficiently identify and evaluate resource impacts during the internal development of NEPA documents and 2) providing the public with easy access to NEPA documents and the ability to comment through the web. PEPC also promotes environmental protection by supporting the NPS's core mission of preserving park resources and values and enhances public awareness of NPS resource protection efforts.

V. How will this pilot project improve the quality and transparency of agency decisionmaking?

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This project improves the quality of NPS decision making by facilitating efficient and wide-reaching internal and external participation in the NEPA process. PEPC improves transparency by making all NPS environmental assessments and environmental impact statements, along with related materials such as project newsletters and decision documents, available for public review and comment through the web. Information on categorical exclusions may also be provided through PEPC. PEPC provides links to social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter, allowing for effective information-sharing about NPS projects.

VI. Will this pilot project develop best practices that can be replicated by other agencies or applied to other Federal actions or programs? Please describe?

Although developed specifically for the NPS, this project could serve as a model for any agency seeking to improve the management of its NEPA process and promote public participation and transparency through use of the web. The application code is owned and maintained by the NPS and could easily be adopted by other agencies. Other agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Delaware River Basin Commission have used PEPC in the past to collect public comments on specific NEPA documents.

PART III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

(See attachment on following page.)

Council on Environmental Quality NEPA Pilot Program Nomination

Project Title: The National Park Service Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) system

Narrative Project Description

The National Park Service (NPS) Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) system is a web-based application used in NPS NEPA planning, project tracking, and public involvement. PEPC employs information technology to promote public engagement in the NEPA process and facilitate cost-effective and timely development of NEPA analyses and documentation. PEPC can be used to facilitate any level of NEPA analysis, including categorical exclusions, environmental assessments, and environmental impact statements.

Launched by the NPS in 2005, PEPC is composed of both public and internal websites. Through the public PEPC website (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov>), members of the public can easily access and comment on NPS NEPA documents. The internal PEPC website (<https://pepc.nps.gov>) facilitates the internal management of the NEPA process and development of NEPA documents.

PEPC is a central and invaluable tool for public engagement during NPS NEPA planning and compliance. The public website is a single location that the public can visit to learn about NPS plans and projects and review associated NEPA documents. PEPC also provides an easy means for members of the public to electronically submit comments on NPS NEPA documents. Since PEPC's inception, the NPS has made over 5,000 NEPA documents available for review and comment through the public website. Members of the public have submitted nearly 500,000 correspondences on those documents through PEPC.

PEPC improves the NPS's ability to develop NEPA analyses and conduct decision making processes in a timely, cost-effective manner. The internal website allows NPS staff to track project progress and enables efficient collaboration among interdisciplinary NPS resource specialists working from a range of geographic locations. PEPC has vastly improved the NPS's ability to collect, analyze, and respond to large volumes of public comments on its NEPA documents. It also improves overall project management efficiency within the NPS by integrating several key NPS project and financial management applications, reducing the need to enter identical data multiple times into multiple systems. Since PEPC's inception, the NPS has used PEPC to facilitate NEPA planning and compliance for over 26,000 actions and has built an active internal user community of over 6,500 individuals.

In 2006, PEPC won the National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP) National Environmental Excellence Award in the Best Available Environmental Technology category. Since that time, the NPS has continued to improve the system to incorporate the latest trends in information technology. For example, the public website now provides links to social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter, allowing for improved information-sharing about NPS projects. In addition, the

NPS recently updated PEPC to allow the public to explore NEPA documents by geographic location through use of web-based mapping technology.

Although designed specifically for the NPS, PEPC could serve as a model for any agency seeking to improve the management of its NEPA process and promote public participation and transparency through use of the web. The application code is owned and maintained by the NPS and could easily be adopted by other agencies.