**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:	Jim
Last Name:	Smalls
Organization:	USDA Forest Service
Project Title:	Planning, Appeals, and Litigation System (PALS)
Submitted by:	Federal Agency
Date Received:	June 13, 2011

PART II. SHORT ANSWERS

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

USDA Forest Service

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

The Planning, Appeals, and Litigation System (PALS) is a web based application that tracks all Forest Service NEPA project progress and documentation including; scoping, environmental analysis, decision documentation and documents associated with appeals and litigation.

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

PALS was developed in cooperation with agency field staff, and was implemented specifically to improve efficiency and facilitate compliance with NEPA. PALS is a web-based application that captures key planning information for project decisions subject to NEPA. The Forest Service currently saves an estimated $8 million/year by not having to manually prepare, publish, mail, and filing NEPA documents and by electronically responding to field data calls using PALS.

PALS automate several required reports including: a quarterly publication of agency Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA); standard cooperating agency reports to the Council on Environmental Quality; and publication of administrative appeal decisions to the WWW. The PALS search and report feature has been valuable in reducing the impact of data calls to the field for internal and external inquiries and enables the agency to provide consistent responses. Reduced data calls to the field have saved an estimated $4 million per year.

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

By having easy access to an agency NEPA corporate data base our NEPA practitioners have readily available data and reports to assist them in performing quality analyses in a timely manner. In addition, the PALS data base provides data in a standardized format allowing professionals to share and interpret data in an efficient manner, affording them additional time to perform the rigorous analysis necessary for the decision. By posting information to a public website prior to project initiation and throughout the analysis, the SOPA allows the involvement of the public early and often in the development of all agency NEPA actions and increases the quality and transparency of our decision making.

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

A subset of the PALS data base is the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA). This product identifies key points in each of the agencys NEPA activities including scoping initiation through decision with an estimated implementation date. Features such as web links and Google maps are incorporated into the data available to the public. See attachment for screen shots of web pages and further information.

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?

PALS is a transferrable web based program. This program was developed by a contractor who can modify it to fit each agency's needs.

PART III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

(See attachment on following page.)

CEQ Pilot Program
USDA Forest Service Submission
Planning, Appeals, and Litigation System (PALS)
June 15, 2011

- **Describe the pilot project. What agency or agencies, geographic area, and natural resource management issues will be involved?**

PALS was the first Electronic Management for NEPA (eMNEPA) initiative developed by the US Forest Service. Development of this system occurred in conjunction with the field and is intended to streamline processes required for complying with the quarterly schedule of proposed actions reporting. The original capabilities of PALS were piloted in 2004 and achieved higher than anticipated adoption for field units. PALS has been mandatory for all units since 2005. The PALS initiative:

- Automates consistent quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) publication and reduces SOPA printing and mailing costs (www.fs.fed.us/sopa).

- Integrates Administrative Appeals and Resource Management Litigation tracking.

- Publishes the Appeal Deciding Officer's Decision to the public WWW (www.fs.fed.us/appeals).

- Integrates NEPA decision information with other national database systems such as the Forest Service Activity Tracking System (FACTS) and Timber Information Management (TIM).

- Enhances search and reporting to eliminate data calls and support lessons learned (i.e., GAO data calls, annual CEQ cooperating agency reports, key issues raised by appellants, average elapsed time to reach a decision, and project decision disposition reporting) .

- Uses eMNEPA's document management capabilities to store and publish project related documents to the public WWW.

Key Points:

- o PALS is saving the FS an estimated $8-12M per year in reduced SOPA production, distribution, and mailing costs.
- o PALS will integrate with other eMNEPA initiatives planned for FY11 and beyond (Comment Analysis Response Application, Document Management Distribution).
- o Provides web based access to the public for project tracking.

- **How will the pilot project be implemented?**

    PALS is currently hosted in the Forest Service's Enterprise Data Center (EDC) in the USDA's National Information Technology Center (NITC), and relies on the Forest Service's World Wide Web (WWW) publishing capabilities to deliver reports and documentation to the public.

- **Are you nominating a pilot project that has already been implemented, is currently being implemented, or is proposed for implementation?**

  CARA is currently (6/11) going through the initial stages of pilot.

- **If your pilot project is underway or is proposed for implementation, describe the timeline for implementation: When would the project start? When would it be completed?**

  Project has started and has no termination date.

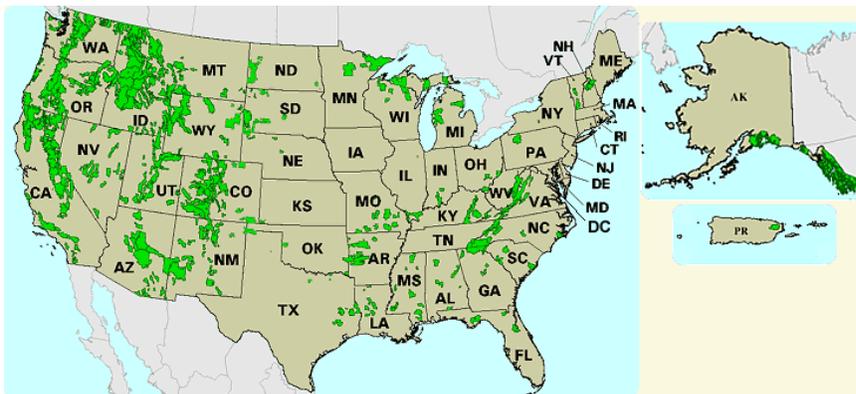- **Describe any major intermediate milestones for implementation.**

  The Content Analysis Response Application (CARA) component of PALS is currently being field tested.

- **Describe the resources that will be needed to implement the pilot project.**
  - Program manager,
  - staff to support the program, such as contracting officer or NEPA specialist
  - Contractor to adjust program to fit other agency's needs.
  -
- **Will the pilot project further an Administration priority?**

  Innovative use of latest technology, open transparent government, reduces government expense, creates jobs for contractors.

Below are screen shots of the SOPA web pages available to the public:

The public can choose a forest from the interactive map:

Once they found the forest and project a snapshot of information is provided including project name, description, location, status, important dates, agency contact information, and links:

Land Management Planning Rule EIS	- Regulations, Directives, Orders	In Progress: DEIS NOA in Federal Register 02/25/2011 Est. FEIS NOA in Federal Register 11/2011	Expected:12/2011	12/2011	Larry Hayden 202-205-1559 lhayden@fs.fed.us
	Description: The Department of Agriculture proposes to promulgate a new planning rule, which will set out the process for development, revision, and amendment of National Forest System land management plans. **Web Link:** http://www.fs.usda.gov/planningrule				
	Location: UNIT - All Districts-level Units. STATE - All States. COUNTY - All Counties. Agency-wide Rule.				