

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

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Organization:	Environmental Planning Strategies, Inc.
Project Title:	Planning Navigator NEPA Document Format and Process
Submitted by:	Member of the Public
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PART II. SHORT ANSWERS

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

<p>US Fish and Wildlife Service (project lead is Katie Swift) and USDA APHIS Wildlife Services Additional agency TBD</p>
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II. What is the Federal action to which this NEPA pilot project applies?

<p>Preparation of NEPA documents which are concise, analytically-focused on the need, issues, and “use a format which will encourage good analysis and clear presentation of the alternatives” (§1502.10). Two projects will display improved document content and format, including an existing programmatic EIS and another selected agency project.</p> <p>Despite NEPA requiring interdisciplinary planning (102(2)(A)), most NEPA documents are volumes of duplicated, encyclopedic, and inconsistent collections of data and information organized under NEPA topic headings. Readers are expected to conduct the task of finding related data scattered through the document and conducting the interdisciplinary analyses themselves. NEPA documents were never intended to be laborious tomes of encyclopedic data; they are intended to be concise, analytic and focused briefs documenting the results of the analysis for use by agency decisionmakers, staff, and publics (Lee 1997a).</p> <p>Regardless of format, the quality of a NEPA document depends on the quality of the systematic interdisciplinary planning and analyses. Almost 20 years of successfully partnering an Informed Facilitator with an agency NEPA Project Manager by Environmental Planning Strategies, Inc. (EPS) testifies to the effectiveness of Facilitated Planning in establishing an objective, interdisciplinary and cost-effective means to prepare easy-to-read, easy-to-write, and logically formatted NEPA documents (Lee 1997a,b; Lee and Russell 1999 a,b).</p>

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

<p>Facilitated Planning and resulting documents formatted in the logical “Planning Navigator” format that “tell the story” analytically with “one-stop shopping” (incorporating information for decisionmaking and compliance into one document) are proven to reduce costs and time (Lee 1999a). NEPA documents for complex projects and programs prepared by EPS using this method and format, many of which were originally</p>
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mired in “repeat planning” and controversy, avoid litigation, a substantial cost and time savings (see attachment for list of documents). Facilitated Planning managed by the EPS Informed Facilitator brought these projects to completion quickly and cost-effectively, leveraging the expertise of the agency interdisciplinary teams, insisting on inherently governmental roles, and ensuring that planning was focused on well-defined needs, development of effective alternatives/mitigation, and impact evaluation based on clear cause-and-effect analyses.

The NEPA document is initiated early; prepared, reviewed, and corrected concurrently with the progress of the analysis and after every interdisciplinary meeting (rather than unproductively preparing meeting minutes); and participants “tell the stories” in a systematic interdisciplinary manner without wasting time and money preparing technical reports. Additions and corrections are made as planning progresses. The document is easily reformatted and refined to recognize changes in the analyses, new information, and revisions. Questions to team members seek missing information, clarification of statements, and interpretations of policy. The concurrent draft document with questions is returned to team members within one to three weeks while memories are still fresh to ensure momentum and guidance to the next phase of planning. The team contributes to and assists in writing small portions of the NEPA document, while the Informed Facilitator prepares the remainder to ensure analytic consistency, a common style, and an adaptive, analytic, and concise format. Facilitated Planning creates NEPA documents worthy of meaningful agency and public comment and informed decisionmaking. Use of government professionals is cost-and time-effective. Document preparation and facilitation by the Informed Facilitator reduces extra costs for contractors. The robust “one-stop shopping” document incorporates design, compliance, all pertinent analyses, and mitigation. Encyclopedic “fluff” is eliminated.

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

Facilitated Planning, guided by the Informed Facilitator, focuses on two critical components of NEPA’s required interdisciplinary planning: 1) initiating planning with clear analysis of need, measurable effectiveness objectives, and scope of the government decisions, including roles of the various agencies; and 2) initiating the analysis with clearly articulated, focused, and interrelated chains of cause-and-effect relationships. Need, objectives, and scope of decisions drive alternatives that address the need effectively. Focused cause-and-effect relationships drive the refinement of alternatives and integrated mitigation to reduce or eliminate adverse effects. Impacts, including cumulative impacts, derived from the causative actions and resulting impacts are addressed in an informed and prioritized manner. Cause-and-effect relationships provide the process of developing mitigation by changing actions that contribute substantially to the potential effects. All alternatives and mitigation are therefore not only effective in meeting the need, but provide laser-focus on effective and environmentally-protective alternatives and mitigation. Each measure is cost-effective and provides for practical monitoring and a sound basis for prioritized funding. The initial development of cause-and-effect relationships also identifies necessary data collection and determinations of whether or not consultation with agencies and persons with special expertise, additional publications, or collection of focused field

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data are needed. By focusing data collection and information compilation on only those needed for the analysis, substantial time and money is saved.

People care about the environment. NEPA is about better decisions and people working together in positive and effective ways to provide for and improve our quality of life through environmental protection. Facilitated Planning provides the means for effective, meaningful, efficient, and rewarding ways for people to work together (Lee 1997a). The document as “Planning Navigator” with “one-stop shopping” ensures that pertinent analyses and considerations are incorporated, the analysis is adapted and refined throughout the process, alternatives are effective in meeting the need and practical and appropriate mitigation are directly tied to interdisciplinary cause-and-effect relationships. Agency professionals are committed to the decisions, and the ROD/FONSI becomes a committed contract for implementation.

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

For almost 20 years, adaptive and flexible Facilitated Planning as practiced by EPS improves the quality of planning and analyses, including cumulative impacts. In addition, focused planning, impact analyses, alternative and mitigation development, affirmation of the need for action, and accurate cause-and-effect relationships produce truly informed decisionmaking and avoidance of conflict, controversy, and litigation. Resulting documents are highly analytical, concise, educational, easy to read, prepare, and adapt, and logical. The process with concurrent documentation enables agencies to make good projects better and reject ineffective or unacceptably high-impact projects. Facilitated Planning using “Planning Navigator” documentation is proven effective for project and programmatic planning for construction and non-construction projects, programs, and plans (see attachment). By ensuring quality planning and analysis within inherently governmental responsibilities, facilitating and considering meaningful comments, and preparing highly readable and logical analytic NEPA documents, no project using Facilitated Planning as practiced by EPS has been litigated. Resulting NEPA documents are fully compliant with the CEQ regulations, including the clear presentation of alternatives and cumulative analyses in a concise, analytic format. The process and resulting documents, as prepared concurrently with planning and analysis progress, uses the process of “telling the story” (Lee and Russell 1999a), which provides a forum for people to communicate in an atmosphere in which they are valued for their contributions. The rewards of contributing meaningfully are obvious from the amount and quality of information and analyses that are exchanged in and documented from a single meeting, in the evolving NEPA document. The process, and therefore the document, focuses on the analysis of the underlying need, the objectives, and scope of agency decisions and roles (initiating planning), and the analysis on the interrelated chains of cause-and-effect relationships (initiating the analysis) that provide the basis for effective and protective alternatives, practical mitigations and monitoring, and quality impact analyses. The NEPA document incorporates all necessary technical, design, environmental, social, economic, and compliance interdisciplinary analyses in a format that is concise, logical, analytic, and easy for decisionmakers and the

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public to understand.

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?

Yes. Facilitated Planning including concurrent NEPA documentation as practiced by EPS has already been implemented by many agencies and has proven effective and capable of being replicated by agency professional staff and managers. EPS and Judith Lee, President, conducts highly interactive, tailored, and nationally-recognized workshops for many agencies, including the EPA, FHWA/state DOTs, all branches of the DOD, NMFS, USAF, USACE, FWS, USDA RD, and others. Workshops teach government and contractor managers and professionals how to implement Facilitated Planning for NEPA compliance and Clean Water Act Section 404, how to review NEPA and other environmental review documents analytically, how to conduct cumulative impacts analysis using cause-and-effect relationships, and how to use Facilitated Planning as applied to NEPA to manage, reduce, and eliminate controversy and conflict (in other words, as an alternative dispute resolution process that actually addresses the underlying causes of “presenting” conflicts). Through experience with the workshops, facilitated projects, and analytic NEPA document reviews using Facilitated Planning, agencies and contractors have reanalyzed, rewritten, and reformatted NEPA documents to be more analytic, readable, logical, and concise.

The power of the systematic interdisciplinary approach inherent to Facilitated Planning results in effective and repeatable use of the skills and expertise of agency managers and professionals, identification of specific additional expertise needed from contractors, the determination of information and data required for completing development and analysis of the cause-and-effect relationships, ensuring that inherently governmental responsibility is retained and practiced, and creates positive communication, relationships, and trust for future NEPA efforts. The resulting NEPA documents are analytic, not encyclopedic, logical, concise, and easy to write, review, and understand based on plain language and clear analytic format, and focus on cause-and-effect relationships. Inherently governmental responsibility as it applies to NEPA is discussed in Lee and Russell 1999b. The differences between Facilitated Planning and typical NEPA strategies are outlined in the attachment to this submittal.

PART III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

(See attachment on following page.)

Environmental Planning Strategies, Inc. Planning Navigator NEPA Document Format and Process

Project Description

The Programmatic EIS for the proposed use of the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach, including rodenticides for control and eradication of invasive rodents and mongooses in Hawaii, is currently in the early internal scoping stage (prior to issuing a Notice of Intent). With the identification of the lead and cooperating agencies (US Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA APHIS Wildlife Services, and Hawaii Department of Lands and Natural Resources currently in discussion as joint lead per NEPA and Hawaii environmental review law 343), the scope of decisions and the proposed alternatives and issues are clarifying. Other federal agencies have been involved as potential NEPA cooperating agencies and State agencies are also potential participating agencies per HRS 343. The PEIS is based on other FWS NEPA documents prepared for projects in Hawaii and a program in Alaska. Some planning has occurred. The Hawaii PEIS will use the format with rationale as described in the attachment to this submittal, and is currently using the Facilitated Planning Approach (Lee and Russell 1999b) with a four-person contracted team (Informed Facilitator EPS, a technical expert in rodent control and eradication, an economist, and a local public involvement, outreach, and strategy specialist). The agencies and contracted team have been working together for internal scoping and public outreach for a period of time. As the proposed use of rodenticides for protection of native Hawaiian listed species is potentially controversial and inherently complex, the PEIS must not only document complicating analyses in plain language and a concise logical format, it must also jointly comply with NEPA and the Hawaii environmental review and other cultural and environmental laws; educate; inform; provide a management plan as the basis for planning subsequent projects; and communicate complicated impact analyses on human health, Native Hawaiian cultural practices, and the Native Hawaiian environment. This joint NEPA/HRS 343 document must “talk story” in the Native Hawaiian tradition.

This proposal will engage the application of the Facilitated Planning Approach using “telling the story,” and a “Planning Navigator” NEPA document prepared concurrently to the progress of the analysis with the adapted format as “one stop shopping” to another project or program selected by a federal agency. The selected project will demonstrate the application of this proven and practical approach to interdisciplinary planning and environmental review.

This Facilitated planning and documentation approach is consistent with 40 CFR 1500.1(b,c), 1500.2, 1502.1, 1501.2, 1502.10, 1502.15 (1502.10-18 inclusive), 1500.2, 1500.5, §1501.7(a)(2-3), §1500.1(b), §1500.2(b), §1500.4(c), §1501.1(d), §1501.2(b), §1502.1, §1502.2(b), §1502.15, among others, and the CEQ guidance dated 9/8/05 on format for environmental assessments.

Cited and Attached References

Lee, J.L. 1997a. NEPA is a Powerful Collaborative Planning Process. *Federal Facilities Environmental Journal*. Spring p. 85-99.

Lee, J.L. 1997b. The Power of Purpose and Need in Quality Planning: Three Case Studies. *Federal Facilities Environmental Journal* Autumn 1997:77-92.

Lee, J.L. and R.S. Russell. 1999a. Tools for Powerful Planning: Using the Facilitated Planning Approach. *Environmental Regulation and Permitting*. Autumn, p. 13-27

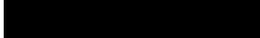
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