Environmental Programmatic Agreements Streamline Project Delivery

The FHWA Washington Division has worked with WSDOT and Federal and State agency partners to develop programmatic agreements (PAs) to streamline the environmental process for federal-aid projects in Washington. In 2012, 72% of federal-aid projects were exempted from Section 106 review under the Statewide PA between WSDOT, FHWA, and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). Of those projects, 4% (7 projects) were also exempt under the Section 106 PA between WSDOT, FHWA, DAHP, and the US Forest Service (USFS).

In March of 2013, a new PA for Categorical Exclusions (CEs) was signed and put into effect. This new programmatic supersedes the 2009 CE per memorandum of understanding (MOU). The CE per MOU resulted in delegation to WSDOT of 62% of CE decisions. This new PA significantly expands the number of projects that can qualify to be certified by WSDOT so it’s expected the percentage will increase substantially. Preliminary reporting from the first quarter shows that 62% of WSDOT’s Office of Highways & Local Programs (H&LP) CE projects have been certified by WSDOT under the new PA!

For more information contact:

Dan Mathis
Division Administrator
FHWA Washington Division
360-753-9480
daniel.mathis@dot.gov

Yamilée P. Volcy
SW and Eastern Regions Area Engineer
FHWA Washington Division
360-753-9552
yamilee.volcy@dot.gov

STREAMLINING ESA

In December 2012, a programmatic biological opinion (PBO) was signed by both NMFS and WSDOT that ensures adequate documentation and compliance with the intent of the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

This streamlining measure eliminates the need to prepare biological assessments for many of the minor projects that have the same kinds of work items covered by the previously approved maintenance agreement. The PBO reduces the review time from 42 days for informal consultations and 260 days for formal consultations to 30 days in total. It uses a simple form and covers most of the species for many routine projects. Since implementation of this programmatic four projects have been approved, one fast track and two are currently in process. The new PA significantly expands the number of projects that can qualify to be certified by WSDOT so it’s expected the percentage will increase substantially. Preliminary reporting from the first quarter shows that 82% of WSDOT’s Office of Highways & Local Programs (H&LP) CE projects have been certified by WSDOT under the new PA!
Approval of ER Damage Inspection Reports

This chart shows the timeliness of approval for emergency relief (ER) damage inspection reports. Our goal is to approve 90% of these reports within 10 days of receipt.
- For the 1st/2nd quarters of FY 2013 we fell 27% short of our goal.
- For the 3rd/4th quarters of FY 2012 we fell 23% short of our goal.
- For the 1st/2nd quarters of FY 2012 we were within our goal of 90%.
- For the 3rd/4th quarters of FY 2011 we fell 7% short of our goal.
- For the 1st/2nd quarters of FY 2011 we fell 10% short of our goal.
- For the 3rd/4th quarters of FY 2010 we fell 15% short of our goal due to the increase in Recovery Act work load and internal staff turnover.
- For the 1st/2nd quarters of FY 2010 we fell 7% short of our goal due to the increased work load resulting from the Recovery Act. We approved 83% of the damage inspection reports within 10 days of receipt.
- For the 3rd/4th quarters of FY 2009 we fell 16% short of our goal due to the increased work load resulting from the Recovery Act. We approved 74% of the reports.

Approval of Documented Categorical Exclusions

This chart shows the timeliness of approval of documented categorical exclusions (DCEs) semi-annually from FY2007 to FY2012.

As the chart depicts, we are approving the vast majority of DCEs within the first 10 days of receipt.