

MODERNIZING THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was enacted in 1970 and was intended to set the guidelines for how agencies should assess environmental impacts of a particular proposed action prior to making decisions. Today, NEPA assesses nearly every activity on public lands, including grazing. Ranchers most often encounter NEPA during the process to renew federal grazing permits, construction of range improvements, or to determine eligibility for USDA program participation.

OUTDATED PROCESSES PRODUCE BAD RESULTS

Ranchers support decision making that is based on the best available information and know that NEPA plays an important role in evaluating potential impacts from an action, but NEPA has not undergone a substantive update since 1986. Over time, NEPA evolved from a tool to determine *how to assess* projects to a tool that can be exploited as a way to halt or obstruct a variety of projects. Outdated NEPA processes have caused costly delays, prevented the use of good science and technology, and even stymied projects that would have significant environmental benefit. **Environmental analysis should be clear, targeted, timely, and accurate**, and NEPA needs to be updated to meet those goals.

RANCHERS SUPPORT NEPA IMPROVEMENTS

In 2018, the White House Council on Environmental Quality estimated it took the BLM and U.S. Forest Service an average of 4.5 years to complete an Environmental Impact Statement. Some ranchers have waited years for NEPA to be done on a simple completed to renew a grazing permit, install a water feature to benefit livestock and wildlife, or even take steps to prevent fuels building that increase the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Administrative procedures should keep pace with the needs of the communities *and* the needs of the natural resources.



PLC supports the 2020 NEPA guidance issued by the White House Council on Environmental Quality. PLC supports further updates to agency-specific NEPA regulations to promote consistency across the range. NEPA should be used as a tool for good, not as a tool to cause procedural delays and environmental impact.

PLC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Use of the simplest process first: expand agencies' ability to use Categorical Exclusions for grazing permit renewals and decisive actions to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire
- Support for improved information sharing between permittees and agencies
- Consideration of full impacts of a proposed action, including socioeconomic factors weighted equally to other factors assessed
- Full consideration of the cost of failure to manage a resource

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