

Department of State

§ 161.7

(vi) Establish and maintain working relationships with the Council on Environmental Quality, Environmental Protection Agency, and other federal, State and local governmental agencies concerned with environmental matters;

(vii) Represent the Department in working with other government agencies and organizations to formulate, revise and achieve uniform understanding and application of government-wide policies relating to the environment;

(viii) Consolidate and transmit to the appropriate parties Departmental comments on environmental impact statements and other environmental reports prepared by other agencies; and

(ix) Acquire information for and prepare other Departmental reports on environmental assessment matters.

(3) *Office of the Legal Adviser.* The Office of the Legal Adviser is the principal Departmental authority on the legal aspects of environmental matters and the implementation of these regulations and shall advise and assist Departmental Bureaus in these matters.

(4) *Bureau Environmental Coordinators.* Each Departmental bureau and major office shall designate an officer to act as coordinator, adviser and principal point of contact for environmental matters within the bureau. The bureau coordinator will advise and assist the bureau in implementing these regulations and serve as a member of the Departmental Committee of Environmental Coordinators.

(5) *Departmental Committee of Environmental Coordinators.* A Departmental Committee of Environmental Coordinators shall be established to assist in coordinating Departmental implementation of these regulations; in providing advice on major issues, policies and procedures relating to the Department's implementation of environmental analysis requirements; and in ensuring general conformity of Departmental implementation practices. The Committee's responsibility will be to exchange information on the implementation of these regulations, assist bureaus in early identification of Departmental actions which should be analyzed for environmental effects and help to coordinate and provide the appropriate analysis. The Committee will

be chaired by the Office of Environment and Health and will be comprised of bureau and office coordinators designated by the respective bureaus and offices.

(6) *Outside contractors.* Qualified outside contractors may be employed to assist Departmental officers in preparing environmental documents as required under these regulations.

§ 161.7 Categories of actions.

Departmental officers shall review each major Departmental action having a potentially significant effect on the quality of the environment in the United States. The need to prepare formal environmental documents will depend on the scope of the action and the context and intensity of any environmental effects expected if the action is implemented. Departmental actions can generally be grouped into three categories, as follows:

(a) *Actions normally requiring environmental impact statements.* Any Departmental action deemed to have a "significant effect upon the quality of the human environment" of the United States requires the preparation of an environmental impact statement. The criteria to be used in determining significance are set forth in § 1508.27 of the CEQ Regulations. The Department has reviewed representative actions and has found no common pattern which would enable it to specify actions normally requiring environmental impact statements. If developments later enable such designations to be made the Department will publish a description of proposed actions for such designation in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(b) *Actions categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare environmental impact statements.* Categorical exclusion, as defined in § 1508.4 of the CEQ Regulations, provides for exclusion from environmental review of specified actions which have as a class been found to have no significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Neither an environmental assessment nor an environmental impact statement is ordinarily required for such actions. Departmental actions categorically excluded from the requirements of these regulations include the following:

(1) Routine conduct of Departmental and overseas political and economic functions, including reporting on political and economic developments, trends and activities, communicating to host governments United States Government views, maintaining contact with foreign officials and individuals, and facilitating trade opportunities abroad and U.S. business expansion in foreign markets;

(2) Provision of consular services—visas, passports and citizenship, and special consular services, such as issuing or reviewing passports and visas, taking legal depositions, notarizing absentee ballots and other documents and delivering retirement checks, social security payments and veterans benefits;

(3) Conduct of routine administrative functions, such as budget and finance, personnel and general services. This includes routine administrative procurements (e.g., general supplies, negotiating leases for office space or staff housing, ordering supplies and arranging for customs clearances); financial transactions, including salaries, expenses and grants; routine management, formulation and allocation of the Department's budget at all levels (this does not exempt the preparation of environmental documents for proposals included in the Department's budget when required); and personnel actions (e.g., promotions, hirings, and counseling American and host country employees who work for the Department of State);

(4) Preparing for and participating in conferences, workshops or meetings for information exchange, data collection or research or study activities; and

(5) Document and information exchanges.

Even though an action may be categorically excluded from the need for an environmental impact statement, if information developed during the planning for the actions indicates the possibility that the particular action in question may nonetheless cause significant environmental effects, an environmental assessment shall be prepared to evaluate those effects. Based upon the assessment, a determination will be made whether to prepare an environmental impact statement. The Depart-

ment may designate additional actions for categorical exclusion by publishing a listing of actions proposed for such designation in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(c) *Actions normally requiring environmental assessments.* An environmental assessment shall provide the basis of the determination whether an environmental impact statement is required. A Departmental action shall require the preparation of an environmental assessment if the action is not one known normally to require an environmental impact statement and is not categorically excluded. Departmental actions normally included in this category are actions for which the Department has lead-agency responsibility and which may significantly affect the human environment of the United States, such as those actions involving:

(1) Issuance of permits for construction of international bridges and pipeline (see Executive Order 11423 and the International Bridge Act of 1972 (Pub. L. 92-434, 86 Stat. 23));

(2) Wetlands, floodplains, endangered species and national historical, archeological and recreational sites (see also specific requirements for environmental review and consultation in § 161.11 of these regulations); and

(3) Ocean dumping, control of toxic substances, disposal and storage of wastes and radioactive substances.

(d) *Emergencies and other exceptional circumstances.* Not every Departmental activity will be considered a major Federal action for the purposes of these regulations. Several limited classes of action which might ordinarily be subject to these regulations will not be considered major Federal actions requiring the preparation of an environmental impact statement. Among them are the following:

(1) Actions taken in emergency circumstances and disaster and emergency relief activities as defined in § 1506.11 of the CEQ Regulations (in such circumstances the responsible action officer should consult with the Office of Environment and Health which shall consult with the Council on Environmental Quality about appropriate alternative arrangements);

(2) Mandatory actions required under any treaty or international agreement

to which the United States Government is a party, or required by the decisions of international organizations or authorities in which the United States is a member or participant except when the United States has substantial discretion over implementation of such requirements;

(3) Payment of contributions, either assessed or voluntary, to any international organization of which the United States is a member pursuant to the obligation of a treaty or other international agreement or which is not for the purpose of carrying out a specifically identifiable action which would affect the environment; and

(4) Support for or acquiescence in (by affirmative vote or agreement to consensus) an activity or expenditure of funds by an international organization where the United States has no unilateral right to control such expenditures.

Subpart C—Environmental Review Procedures

§ 161.8 General description of the Department's NEPA process.

In reviewing proposed actions for potential environmental effects in the United States responsible action officers will follow the procedural steps set forth below. These steps are developed in conjunction with the procedural steps required by the CEQ Regulations which are referenced in the following sections.

(a) *Preliminary environmental evaluations.* Early in the process of considering any possible action the responsible action officer shall review the action to determine if it may cause potential significant environmental effects on the environment of the United States. A proposed action shall be reviewed initially to determine into which of the following three basic categories of action it falls:

(1) Actions normally requiring environmental impact statements;

(2) Actions categorically excluded from environmental impact statements; or

(3) Actions normally requiring environmental assessments. If the responsible action officer concludes that the proposed action is a major action potentially having significant effects in

the United States he should, in cooperation with other appropriate Departmental officials, carry out the steps described in these regulations. If during his review of the location of potential environmental effects or following preparation of an environmental assessment it is determined that the action could affect the environment of the global commons or a foreign nation the officer is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Department's procedures for implementing Executive Order No. 12114 on Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions (Foreign Affairs Manual, Volume 2).

(b) *Environmental Assessment.* An environmental assessment is a concise document which analyzes potential environmental effects to determine if an environmental impact statement is required (CEQ Regulations §§ 1501.3 and 1508.9). If the action does not fall into either the category of those actions normally requiring an environmental impact statement or that of actions categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental impact statement, then the responsible action officer, in cooperation with other Departmental officials, shall prepare an environmental assessment to determine whether it is necessary to prepare an environmental impact statement or a "Finding of no significant impact". If the action normally requires an environmental impact statement, there is ordinarily no need for the preparation of an environmental assessment and the environmental impact statement process should be initiated without preparing such an assessment. If the action is categorically excluded, no further environmental review is needed. If an environmental assessment is prepared it may also be used to evaluate whether the proposed action may have effects outside the United States.

(c) *Finding of no significant impact.* If the environmental assessment indicates that the environmental effects of the action in the United States are not significant, then the responsible action officer shall make a "Finding of no significant impact", thereby concluding the NEPA review process (CEQ Regulations §§ 1501.4 and 1508.13).