

§ 6.504

40 CFR Ch. I (7-1-07 Edition)

(a) *Consultation.* The Step 1 grantee or the potential Step 3 or Step 2+3 applicant is encouraged to consult with the State and EPA early in project formulation or the facilities planning stage to determine whether a project is eligible for a categorical exclusion from the remaining substantive environmental review requirements of this part (§ 6.505), to determine alternatives to the proposed project for evaluation, to identify potential environmental issues and opportunities for public recreation and open space, and to determine the potential need for partitioning the environmental review process and/or the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

(b) *Determining categorical exclusion eligibility.* At the request of a potential Step 3 or Step 2+3 grant applicant, or a Step 1 facilities planning grantee, the responsible official will determine if a project is eligible for a categorical exclusion in accordance with § 6.505. A Step 1 facilities planning grantee awarded a Step 1 grant on or before December 29, 1981 may request a categorical exclusion at any time during Step 1 facilities planning. A potential Step 3 or Step 2+3 grant applicant may request a categorical exclusion at any time before the submission of a Step 3 or Step 2+3 grant application.

(c) *Documenting environmental information.* If the project is determined to be ineligible for a categorical exclusion, or if no request for a categorical exclusion is made, the potential Step 3 or Step 2+3 applicant or the Step 1 grantee subsequently prepares an Environmental Information Document (EID) (§ 6.506) for the project.

(d) *Preparing environmental assessments.* Except as provided in § 6.506(c)(4) and following a review of the EID by EPA or by a State with delegated authority, EPA prepares an environmental assessment (§ 6.506), or a State with delegated authority (§ 6.514) prepares a preliminary environmental assessment. EPA reviews and finalizes any preliminary assessments. EPA subsequently:

- (1) Prepares and issues a Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) (§ 6.508); or
- (2) Prepares and issues a Notice of Intent to prepare an original or supple-

mental EIS (§ 6.510) and Record of Decision (ROD) (§ 6.511).

(e) *Monitoring.* The construction and post-construction operation and maintenance of the facilities are monitored (§ 6.512) to ensure implementation of mitigation measures (§ 6.511) identified in the FNSI or ROD.

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§ 6.504 Consultation during the facilities planning process.

(a) *General.* Consistent with 40 CFR 1501.2 and 35.2030(c), the responsible official shall initiate the environmental review process early to identify environmental effects, avoid delays, and resolve conflicts. The environmental review process should be integrated throughout the facilities planning process. Two processes for consultation are described in this section to meet this objective. The first addresses projects awarded Step 1 grant assistance on or before December 29, 1981. The second applies to projects not receiving grant assistance for facilities planning on or before December 29, 1981 and, therefore, subject to the regulations implementing the Municipal Wastewater Treatment Construction Grant Amendments of 1981 (40 CFR part 35, subpart I).

(b) *Projects receiving Step 1 grant assistance on or before December 29, 1981.*

(1) During facilities planning, the grantee shall evaluate project alternatives and the existence of environmentally important resource areas including those identified in § 6.108 and § 6.509 of this subpart, and potential for open space and recreation opportunities in the facilities planning area. This evaluation is intended to be brief and concise and should draw on existing information from EPA, State agencies, regional planning agencies, areawide water quality management agencies, and the Step 1 grantee. The Step 1 grantee should submit this information to EPA or a delegated State at the earliest possible time during facilities planning to allow EPA to determine if the action is eligible for a categorical exclusion. The evaluation and any additional analysis deemed necessary by the responsible official may be used by EPA to determine whether

the action is eligible for a categorical exclusion from the substantive environmental review requirements of this part. If a categorical exclusion is granted, the grantee will not be required to prepare a formal EID nor will the responsible official be required to prepare an environmental assessment under NEPA. If an action is not granted a categorical exclusion, this evaluation may be used to determine the scope of the EID required of the grantee. This information can also be used to make an early determination of the need for partitioning the environmental review or for an EIS. Whenever possible, the Step 1 grantee should discuss this initial evaluation with both the delegated State and EPA.

(2) A review of environmental information developed by the grantee should be conducted by the responsible official whenever meetings are held to assess the progress of facilities plan development. These meetings should be held after completion of the majority of the EID document and before a preferred alternative is selected. Since any required EIS must be completed before the approval of a facilities plan, a decision whether to prepare an EIS is encouraged early during the facilities planning process. These meetings may assist in this early determination. EPA should inform interested parties of the following:

- (i) The preliminary nature of the Agency's position on preparing an EIS;
- (ii) The relationship between the facilities planning and environmental review processes;
- (iii) The desirability of public input; and
- (iv) A contact person for further information.

(c) *Projects not receiving grant assistance for Step 1 facilities planning on or before December 29, 1981.* Potential Step 3 or Step 2+3 grant applicants should, in accordance with § 35.2030(c), consult with EPA and the State early in the facilities planning process to determine the appropriateness of a categorical exclusion, the scope of an EID, or the appropriateness of the early preparation of an environmental assessment or an EIS. The consultation would be most useful during the evaluation of project alternatives prior to the selection of a

preferred alternative to assist in resolving any identified environmental problems.

§ 6.505 Categorical exclusions.

(a) *General.* At the request of an existing Step 1 facilities planning grantee or of a potential Step 3 or Step 2+3 grant applicant, the responsible official, as provided for in §§ 6.107(b), 6.400(f) and 6.504(a), shall determine from existing information and document whether an action is consistent with the categories eligible for exclusion from NEPA review identified in § 6.107(d) or § 6.505(b) and not inconsistent with the criteria in § 6.107(e) or § 6.505(c).

(b) *Specialized categories of actions eligible for exclusion.* For this subpart, eligible actions consist of any of the categories in § 6.107(d), or:

(1) Actions for which the facilities planning is consistent with the category listed in § 6.107(d)(1) which do not affect the degree of treatment or capacity of the existing facility including, but not limited to, infiltration and inflow corrections, grant-eligible replacement of existing mechanical equipment or structures, and the construction of small structures on existing sites;

(2) Actions in sewered communities of less than 10,000 persons which are for minor upgrading and minor expansion of existing treatment works. This category does not include actions that directly or indirectly involve the extension of new collection systems funded with Federal or other sources of funds;

(3) Actions in unsewered communities of less than 10,000 persons where on-site technologies are proposed; or

(4) Other actions are developed in accordance with § 6.107(f).

(c) *Specialized Criteria for not granting a categorical exclusion.* (1) The full environmental review procedures of this part must be followed if undertaking an action consistent with the categories described in paragraph (b) of this section meets any of the criteria listed in § 6.107(e) or when:

(i) The facilities to be provided will (A) create a new, or (B) relocate an existing, discharge to surface or ground waters;