

(2) Identify environmental effects and values in detail, and appraise them in conjunction with economic and technical analyses.

(3) Consider environmental documents at all decision points at which other planning documents are considered. (Plans and decisions are to reflect environmental values. Proposed actions should be assessed as soon as their effects can be meaningfully evaluated, to provide the bases for early decision on whether detailed environmental impact statements must be prepared.)

(4) Study, develop, describe, and evaluate at all decision points, reasonable alternatives to recommended actions which may have a significant effect on the environment.

(b) *Proposal requirements.* When an environmental impact statement has been prepared, it must accompany the proposal through and be used in the decision-making process. Any other proposal must refer to applicable environmental documents (e.g., determination of categorical exclusion; finding of no significant impact; notice of intent to prepare an impact statement), and relevant comments and responses.

(c) *Lead agency arrangements.* If the Postal Service and another Federal agency become involved in a lead agency arrangement for the preparation of an environmental impact statement, the Service will cooperate fully.

[44 FR 63525, Nov. 5, 1979. Redesignated at 63 FR 45719, Aug. 27, 1998]

**§ 775.9 Environmental evaluation process.**

(a) *All actions—(1) Assessment of actions.* An environmental checklist may be used to support a record of environmental consideration as the determination that the proposed action does not require an environmental assessment. An environmental assessment must be prepared for each proposed action except that an assessment need not be made if a determination is made that:

(i) The action is one of a class listed in § 775.6, Categorical Exclusions, and

(ii) The action is not affected by extraordinary circumstances which may cause it to have a significant environmental effect, or

(iii) The action is a type that is not a major federal action with a significant impact upon the environment.

(2) *Findings of no significant impact.* If an environmental assessment indicates that there is no significant impact of a proposed action on the environment, an environmental impact statement is not required. A “finding of no significant impact” (FONSI) is prepared and published in accordance with § 775.13. When the proposed action is approved, it may be accomplished without further environmental consideration. A FONSI document briefly presents the reasons why an action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and states that an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. It must refer to the environmental assessment and any other environmentally pertinent documents related to it. The assessment may be included in the finding if it is short, in which case the discussion in the assessment need not be repeated in the finding. The FONSI may be a mitigated FONSI in which case the required mitigation factors should be listed in the FONSI. The use of a mitigated FONSI is conditioned upon the implementation of the identified mitigation measures in the EA that support the FONSI. Unless the mitigation measures are implemented by the responsible official, the use of an EA in lieu of an EIS is not acceptable.

(3) *Impact statement preparation decision and notices.* If an environmental assessment indicates that a proposed major action would have a significant impact on the environment, a notice of intent to prepare an impact statement is published (see § 775.13) and an environmental impact statement is prepared.

(4) *Role of impact statement in decision making.* An environmental impact statement is used, with other analyses and materials, to decide which alternative should be pursued, or whether a proposed action should be abandoned or other courses of action pursued. See § 775.12 for restrictions on the timing of this decision.

(5) *Record of decision.* For actions requiring environmental impact statements, a concise public record of decision is prepared when a decision, or a

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proposal for legislation, is made. The record, which may be integrated into any other record, or notice, including that required by Postal Service regulations and procedures governing inter-governmental review of Postal Service facility project actions, must:

(i) State what the decision was.

(ii) Identify all alternatives considered in reaching a decision, specifying alternatives considered to be environmentally preferable; identify and discuss all significant factors, including any essential considerations of national policy, which were weighed in making the decision and state how those considerations entered into the decision.

(iii) State whether all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the alternative selected have been or will be adopted, and if not, why not.

(6) *Actions prohibited prior to issuance of record of decision.* Until a record of decision is issued, no action may be taken on a proposal on which an environmental impact statement is made if the action would:

(i) Have an adverse environmental impact, or

(ii) Limit the choice of reasonable alternatives.

(7) *Mitigation measures.* Practicable mitigation measures identified in an environmental assessment must be implemented. Mitigation measures described in an environmental impact statement and accepted in a decision must be implemented. Upon request, the Postal Service informs federal, state, and local agencies and the public of the progress in carrying out adopted mitigation measures.

(b) *Additional requirements for facility actions.* (1) The environmental assessment of any action which involves the construction or acquisition of a new mail processing facility must include reasonable alternatives to the proposed action and not just consideration of contending sites for a facility. This process must be started early in the planning of the action. An environmental assessment report, however, is not required until the contending project sites have been determined. The information contained in the environmental assessment report must be

used, together with other site planning information, in the selection of the final site.

(2) When an environmental assessment indicates that an environmental impact statement may be needed for a proposed facility action, the responsible officer will make the decision whether to prepare an environmental impact statement for presentation to the Capital Investment Committee, and to the Board of Governors if the Board considers the proposal.

(3) If an environmental impact statement is presented to the Committee or the Board, and an analysis indicates that it would be more cost-effective to proceed immediately with continued control of sites, (including advance acquisition, if necessary, and where authorized by postal procedures), environmental impact statement preparation, and project designs, a budgetary request will include authorization of funds to permit:

(i) The preparation of an impact statement encompassing all reasonable alternatives and site alternatives,

(ii) The continued control of specified competing sites (including advance acquisition, if necessary, and where authorized by postal procedures), chosen to preserve environmental or other options, and

(iii) The development of limited designs of facilities for each competing site.

(4) A completed environmental impact statement will be presented to the Capital Investment Committee, and to the Board of Governors if the Board considers the proposal, for use in deciding whether a proposed project should proceed, be restudied, or be abandoned. If the decision is to proceed with a proposed project, the Committee, or the Board if it considers the proposal, decides which alternative site is to be used for project development, and authorizes the project.

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