

Environmental Reviews for Outreach Cooperative Agreements and Grants



Overview

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) must conduct environmental reviews for all actions, including activities accomplished through cooperative agreements and grants. The review process considers the environmental effects of proposed projects that is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), and other laws.

Environmental Reviews for Outreach Cooperative Agreements and Grants

Cooperative agreements and grants may impact larger geographic landscapes than most FSA actions so a phased approach to environmental compliance is often needed. The first phase of environmental review involves FSA performing a programmatic environmental review to analyze the potential impacts of implementing the program. In some cases, this may necessitate the development of a programmatic environment assessment (PEA). The PEA is a concise document evaluating potential effects of the funding opportunity and defines the site-specific environmental review process.

Site-specific environmental reviews determine if adverse impacts to the environment are anticipated and provides requirements to avoid, minimize, or mitigate environmental impacts prior to implementing activities. The site-specific review is a less detailed document demonstrating the action can either be categorically excluded from requiring further analysis, or fits within the scope of the PEA, or will require elevated environmental review due to potential impacts on known protected resources.

Site-Specific Environmental Reviews:

Protect Natural and Cultural Resources

The site-specific environmental review addresses natural and cultural resources under Federal protection, including but not limited to:

- ◆ Threatened and Endangered Species
- ◆ Migratory Birds
- ◆ Cultural and Historic Resources
- ◆ Wetlands and Floodplains
- ◆ Air and Water Quality

Require Involvement from Consulting Parties

Environmental laws such as the Endangered Species Act and National Historic Preservation Act require consultation for activities taken with Federal funding. These requirements often involve providing the project information and a corresponding site map to state, Tribal, and Federal agencies. While the consultation process varies based on the applicable law, it typically takes at least 30 days to complete the consultation process. This timeline is an important consideration for activities that require site-specific environmental reviews.

Take Additional Time to Complete

Many factors influence the time it will take to complete the site-specific environmental review – the complexity of the project, effects on protected resources, and level of engagement needed from consulting parties. Understanding consultation or permitting requirements early in the process helps reduce potential delays.

For More Information

For more information on FSA programs, eligibility and related information, visit fsa.usda.gov. To locate your local FSA office, visit: farmers.gov/service-locator.

This fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only; other restrictions or requirements may apply. Consult your local FSA office for details.



Roles and Responsibilities of the Site-Specific Environmental Review Process

Process	FSA	Partner	Producer
	Responsibility		
Identify agreement activities requiring a site-specific environmental review.	X		
Identify specific proposed activities that meet site-specific environmental review criteria once location information is known.		X	
Provide a detailed description of the activity.		X	X
Develop site-specific environmental review documentation.	X		
Perform required consultations with regulatory agencies for potentially impacted protected resources (i.e., Tribes, State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).	X		
Obtain all necessary permits (i.e., stormwater permit, floodplain development permit, right of way access, etc.)		X	X
Finalize and approve site-specific environmental review.	X		
Provide written notification of approval and permission to proceed.	X		
Implement proposed activity once the site-specific environmental review is complete and written approval is received from FSA.		X	X

Tips for Success

- ◆ Do not begin any activities (i.e., site prep, grading, or material delivery) associated with an action or project that needs a site-specific analysis prior to FSA providing the cooperator with written notification that the environmental review has been completed. Beginning work prior to completing the environmental review may result in violation of the terms and conditions of the agreement and require funds to be returned.
- ◆ Provide as much detailed information as possible. In many cases this includes site plans, maps of the proposed activities, engineering designs, permits, etc. These additional details can eliminate unnecessary hurdles resulting from a change in scope later in the environmental review process.
- ◆ Identify when similar activities will be performed within the localized geographic area to streamline the environmental review process.

How to Get Started

The FSA Grants Management Specialist responsible for the agreement will provide details regarding the activities that will require additional environmental review.