

RCW 43.158.120 Clean energy coordinated permitting process—

Requirements—Procedures. (1) A project proponent may submit a written request to the department of ecology pursuant to RCW 43.158.140 and a local government development agreement to support local government actions pursuant to RCW 43.158.130 for participation in a fully coordinated permitting process. To be eligible to participate in the fully coordinated permit process:

(a) The project proponent must:

(i) Enter into a cost-reimbursement agreement pursuant to RCW 43.158.140;

(ii) Provide sufficient information on the project and project site to identify probable significant adverse environmental impacts;

(iii) Provide information on any voluntary mitigation measures; and

(iv) Provide information on engagement actions taken by the proponent with federally recognized Indian tribes, local government, and overburdened communities; and

(b) The department of ecology must determine that the project raises complex coordination, permit processing, or substantive permit review issues.

(2) A project proponent who requests designation as a fully coordinated project must provide the department of ecology with a complete description of the project. The department of ecology may request any information from the project proponent that is necessary to make the designation under this section and may convene a meeting of the likely participating permit agencies.

(3) For a fully coordinated permitting process, the department of ecology must serve as the main point of contact for the project proponent and participating agencies with regard to coordinating the permitting process for the project as a whole. Each participating permit agency must designate a single point of contact for coordinating with the department of ecology. The department of ecology must keep a schedule identifying required procedural steps in the permitting process and highlighting substantive issues as appropriate that must be resolved in order for the project to move forward. In carrying out these responsibilities, the department of ecology must:

(a) Conduct the duties for the coordinated permitting process as described in RCW 43.158.110;

(b) (i) Reach out to tribal or federal jurisdictions responsible for issuing a permit for the project and invite them to participate in the coordinated permitting process or to receive periodic updates of the project;

(ii) Reach out to local jurisdictions responsible for issuing a permit for the project and inform them of their obligations under RCW 43.158.130.

(4) Within 30 days, or longer with agreement of the project proponent, of the date that the department of ecology determines a project is eligible for the fully coordinated permitting process, the department of ecology shall convene a work plan meeting with the project proponent, local government, and the participating permit agencies to develop a coordinated permitting process schedule. The work plan meeting agenda may include any of the following:

(a) Review of the permits that are anticipated for the project;

(b) A review of the permit application forms and other application requirements of the agencies that are participating in the coordinated permitting process;

(c) An estimation of the timelines that will be used by each participating permit agency to make permit decisions, including the estimated time periods required to determine if the permit applications are complete and to review or respond to each application or submittal of new information. In the development of this timeline, full attention must be given to achieving the maximum efficiencies possible through concurrent studies and consolidated applications, hearings, and comment periods; or

(d) An estimation of reasonable costs for the department of ecology, participating agencies, and the county, city, or town in which the project is proposed for environmental review and permitting, based on known information about the project.

(5) Each participating agency and the lead agency under chapter 43.21C RCW must send at least one representative qualified to discuss the applicability and timelines associated with all permits administered by that agency or jurisdiction to the work plan meeting. The department of ecology must notify any relevant federal agency or potentially affected federally recognized Indian tribe of the date of the meeting and invite them to participate in the process.

(6) Any accelerated time period for the consideration of a permit application or for the completion of the environmental review process under chapter 43.21C RCW must be consistent with any statute, rule, or regulation, or adopted state policy, standard, or guideline that requires the participation of other agencies, federally recognized Indian tribes, or interested persons in the application process.

(7) Upon the completion of the work plan meeting under subsection (4) of this section, the department of ecology must finalize the coordinated permitting process schedule, share it in writing with the project proponent, participating state agencies, lead agencies under chapter 43.21C RCW, and cities and counties subject to an agreement specified in RCW 43.158.130, and make the schedule available to the public.

(8) As part of the coordinated permit process, the developer may prepare a community benefit agreement or other similar document to identify how to mitigate potential community impacts or impacts to tribal rights and resources, including cultural resources. The agreement should include benefits in addition to jobs or tax revenues resulting from the project. Approval of any benefit agreement or other legal document stipulating the benefits that the developer agrees to fund or furnish, in exchange for community or tribal government support of the project, must be made by the local government legislative authority of the county, city, or town in which the project is proposed or by the relevant federally recognized Indian tribal government.

(9) If a lead agency under chapter 43.21C RCW, a permit agency, or the project proponent foresees, at any time, that it will be unable to meet the estimated timelines or other obligations under the schedule agreement, it must notify the department of ecology of the reasons for the delay and offer potential solutions or an amended timeline. The department of ecology must notify the participating agencies and the project proponent and, upon agreement of all parties, adjust the schedule or, if necessary, schedule another work plan meeting.

(10) The project proponent may withdraw from the coordinated permitting process by submitting to the department of ecology a written request that the process be terminated. Upon receipt of the request, the department of ecology must notify each participating

agency that a coordinated permitting process is no longer applicable to the project.

(11)(a) Permitting decisions made by state and local jurisdictions under the fully coordinated permitting process in this chapter are considered final, subject to any appeals process available to applicants or other parties. Applicants utilizing the fully coordinated permitting process in this chapter are not eligible for permitting under chapter 80.50 RCW unless a substantial change is made to the proposed project.

(b) Prior to considering an application under chapter 80.50 RCW from a project applicant that has previously used the fully coordinated permitting process under this chapter for the project, the energy facility site evaluation council must determine that the project applicant has made a substantial change to the project, relative to the project as it was proposed under the fully coordinated permitting process. [2023 c 230 § 206.]

Findings—Intent—2023 c 230: See note following RCW 43.394.010.