

WAC 197-11-060 Content of environmental review. (1) Environmental review consists of the range of proposed activities, alternatives, and impacts to be analyzed in an environmental document, in accordance with SEPA's goals and policies. This section specifies the content of environmental review common to all environmental documents required under SEPA.

(2) The content of environmental review:

(a) Depends on each particular proposal, on an agency's existing planning and decision-making processes, and on the time when alternatives and impacts can be most meaningfully evaluated;

(b) For the purpose of deciding whether an EIS is required, is specified in the environmental checklist, in WAC 197-11-330 and 197-11-444;

(c) For an environmental impact statement, is considered its "scope" (WAC 197-11-792 and Part Four of these rules);

(d) For any supplemental environmental review, is specified in Part Six.

(3) **Proposals.**

(a) Agencies shall make certain that the proposal that is the subject of environmental review is properly defined.

(i) Proposals include public projects or proposals by agencies, proposals by applicants, if any, and proposed actions and regulatory decisions of agencies in response to proposals by applicants.

(ii) A proposal by a lead agency or applicant may be put forward as an objective, as several alternative means of accomplishing a goal, or as a particular or preferred course of action.

(iii) Proposals should be described in ways that encourage considering and comparing alternatives. Agencies are encouraged to describe public or nonproject proposals in terms of objectives rather than preferred solutions. A proposal could be described, for example, as "reducing flood damage and achieving better flood control by one or a combination of the following means: Building a new dam; maintenance dredging; use of shoreline and land use controls; purchase of flood-prone areas; or relocation assistance."

(b) Proposals or parts of proposals that are related to each other closely enough to be, in effect, a single course of action shall be evaluated in the same environmental document. (Phased review is allowed under subsection (5).) Proposals or parts of proposals are closely related, and they shall be discussed in the same environmental document, if they:

(i) Cannot or will not proceed unless the other proposals (or parts of proposals) are implemented simultaneously with them; or

(ii) Are interdependent parts of a larger proposal and depend on the larger proposal as their justification or for their implementation.

(c) **(Optional)** Agencies may wish to analyze "similar actions" in a single environmental document.

(i) Proposals are similar if, when viewed with other reasonably foreseeable actions, they have common aspects that provide a basis for evaluating their environmental consequences together, such as common timing, types of impacts, alternatives, or geography. This section does not require agencies or applicants to analyze similar actions in a single environmental document or require applicants to prepare environmental documents on proposals other than their own.

(ii) When preparing environmental documents on similar actions, agencies may find it useful to define the proposals in one of the following ways: (A) Geographically, which may include actions occurring

in the same general location, such as a body of water, region, or metropolitan area; or (B) generically, which may include actions which have relevant similarities, such as common timing, impacts, alternatives, methods of implementation, environmental media, or subject matter.

(4) Impacts.

(a) SEPA's procedural provisions require the consideration of "environmental" impacts (see definition of "environment" in WAC 197-11-740 and of "impacts" in WAC 197-11-752), with attention to impacts that are likely, not merely speculative. (See definition of "probable" in WAC 197-11-782 and 197-11-080 on incomplete or unavailable information.)

(b) In assessing the significance of an impact, a lead agency shall not limit its consideration of a proposal's impacts only to those aspects within its jurisdiction, including local or state boundaries (see WAC 197-11-330(3) also).

(c) Agencies shall carefully consider the range of probable impacts, including short-term and long-term effects. Impacts shall include those that are likely to arise or exist over the lifetime of a proposal or, depending on the particular proposal, longer.

(d) A proposal's effects include direct and indirect impacts caused by a proposal. Impacts include those effects resulting from growth caused by a proposal, as well as the likelihood that the present proposal will serve as a precedent for future actions. For example, adoption of a zoning ordinance will encourage or tend to cause particular types of projects or extension of sewer lines would tend to encourage development in previously unsewered areas.

(e) The range of impacts to be analyzed in an EIS (direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, WAC 197-11-792) may be wider than the impacts for which mitigation measures are required of applicants (WAC 197-11-660). This will depend upon the specific impacts, the extent to which the adverse impacts are attributable to the applicant's proposal, and the capability of applicants or agencies to control the impacts in each situation.

(5) Phased review.

(a) Lead agencies shall determine the appropriate scope and level of detail of environmental review to coincide with meaningful points in their planning and decision-making processes. (See WAC 197-11-055 on timing of environmental review.)

(b) Environmental review may be phased. If used, phased review assists agencies and the public to focus on issues that are ready for decision and exclude from consideration issues already decided or not yet ready. Broader environmental documents may be followed by narrower documents, for example, that incorporate prior general discussion by reference and concentrate solely on the issues specific to that phase of the proposal.

(c) Phased review is appropriate when:

(i) The sequence is from a nonproject document to a document of narrower scope such as a site specific analysis (see, for example, WAC 197-11-443); or

(ii) The sequence is from an environmental document on a specific proposal at an early stage (such as need and site selection) to a subsequent environmental document at a later stage (such as sensitive design impacts).

(d) Phased review is not appropriate when:

(i) The sequence is from a narrow project document to a broad policy document;

(ii) It would merely divide a larger system into exempted fragments or avoid discussion of cumulative impacts; or

(iii) It would segment and avoid present consideration of proposals and their impacts that are required to be evaluated in a single environmental document under WAC 197-11-060 (3)(b) or 197-11-305(1); however, the level of detail and type of environmental review may vary with the nature and timing of proposals and their component parts.

(e) When a lead agency knows it is using phased review, it shall so state in its environmental document.

(f) Agencies shall use the environmental checklist, scoping process, nonproject EISs, incorporation by reference, adoption, and supplemental EISs, and addenda, as appropriate, to avoid duplication and excess paperwork.

(g) Where proposals are related to a large existing or planned network, such as highways, streets, pipelines, or utility lines or systems, the lead agency may analyze in detail the overall network as the present proposal or may select some of the future elements for present detailed consideration. Any phased review shall be logical in relation to the design of the overall system or network, and shall be consistent with this section and WAC 197-11-070.

[Statutory Authority: 1995 c 347 (ESHB 1724) and RCW 43.21C.110. WSR 97-21-030 (Order 95-16), § 197-11-060, filed 10/10/97, effective 11/10/97. Statutory Authority: RCW 43.21C.110. WSR 84-05-020 (Order DE 83-39), § 197-11-060, filed 2/10/84, effective 4/4/84.]