

be prepared if the outcome of a proposed stewardship action is known or suspected to create a significant effect on the human environment or if it is otherwise desirable to prepare a statement. If the Responsible Official knows or suspects that implementation of a stewardship action may have a significant impact on the human environment, an environmental impact statement must be prepared.

Paragraph (b) states that an implementing decision for one or more stewardship actions described in an environmental impact statement must be documented in a record of decision. Except for special circumstances outlined in CEQ regulations at 40 CFR 1506.10(d), 1506.11, and 1502.9(c), a record of decision cannot be signed by the Responsible Official until 30 after the final environmental impact statement is made available to the public by the Environmental Protection Agency. The environmental impact statement and record of decision is integrated with one or more appropriate stewardship registers. The term, "integrated with" replaces "appended to" of the proposed procedures to more accurately communicate that a stewardship register is to be a part of the appropriate environmental document.

Paragraph (c) is revised to simplify the examples of when an environmental impact statement is normally prepared. The revised text reads. "An environmental impact statement is normally required for the following implementing decisions:

(1) One or more stewardship actions that may be significant as described in 40 CFR 1508.27. Examples include, but are not limited to, long-term programs or plans for:

- (A) Management of livestock grazing;
- (B) Transportation;
- (C) Management of forests and harvest of forest-related products; and
- (D) Management of public recreation.

(2) Construction and operation of a visitor center with associated public access to the Preserve.

The implementing decisions for long-term plans described in (c)(1) are typically referred to as "planning-related decisions". These implementing decisions typically do not undertake specific actions on the ground, except for those that may modify one or more on-going stewardship actions. However, they are often critical choices in setting the stage, the expectations and bounds, for future stewardship actions and are intended to follow the depiction of federal actions that guide or prescribe alternative uses of federal resources upon which future agency action will be based as described in CEQ regulations at

40 CFR 1508.18(b)(2). Many people regard these planning-related decisions and their potentially significant consequences as paramount factors in the effective stewardship of natural resources. It is appropriate to consider the effects of these decisions before they are implemented.

**101.52 Environmental Assessment.** This section, in paragraphs (a) through (d), describes the format for preparation of an environmental assessment. Paragraph (e) lists the types of implementing decisions that are normally accompanied by environmental assessments prepared to aid their consideration by the Responsible Official and the public.

Paragraph (a) states that an environmental assessment is prepared by the Responsible Official to aid in determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement, to prepare a finding of no significant impact, to otherwise aid compliance with NEPA, or to facilitate preparation of an environmental impact statement when one is necessary. This is an important aspect of NEPA procedures that is often overlooked or not well understood. The environmental assessment is a systematic means to review the consequences of a proposed stewardship action, consider reasonable alternatives to the proposal, and evaluate the overall consequences. Often, through public comment, dialog, and study of the proposal, substantial improvements in the proposal can be identified.

Paragraph (b) describes a very useful method to combine documents to reduce unwanted paperwork and improve overall effectiveness. An environmental assessment is combined with a stewardship register to create a concise document. The environmental analysis of a proposed stewardship action and alternatives is integrated with the applicable stewardship register as a combined document (40 CFR 1506.4).

The following paragraph, (c), describes a very important principle guiding the environmental review of a proposal. The purpose of the integrated information is to study, develop, and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal, which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. The preceding sentence, similar to section 102 (E) of NEPA, is the basis for developing alternative means to meet the identified purpose and need for a proposed stewardship action. It is anticipated that the public will play a vital role in aiding

the Trust in identifying reasonable alternatives to proposals.

Paragraph (d) states that the combined document includes a brief discussion of the purpose and need for the proposal, of alternatives, of the environmental impacts of the proposal and alternatives, and a listing of agencies and persons consulted. It is anticipated that the integration of these four items within the stewardship register will provide a very efficient and effective means to accomplish and record appropriate environmental reviews.

Section 101.52 concludes with paragraph (e) that describes the types of implementing decisions that are normally accompanied by an environmental assessment. A reviewer requested that the term, "incidental ground disturbance" be eliminated or defined in the text of the proposed procedures at (e)(1). The sentence at (e)(1) is replaced by following: "Establishing or substantively revising a program or policy for the permitting of seasonal or short-term backcountry recreation or special use actions which could potentially create minor ground disturbance."

**101.53 Finding of No Significant Impact.** This section of the procedures in paragraphs (a) and (b) describes the preparation and documentation of a finding that, based on the information in an environmental assessment, the Responsible Official determines that the proposed stewardship action will not have a significant impact on the human environment. Paragraph (a) states. "If, based on the information in the combined document (101.52(d)), the Responsible Official determines that the environmental consequences of the proposal will not have a significant effect on the human environment, the finding and reasons for it must be stated in a finding of no significant impact."

Paragraph (b) describes the content of a finding of no significant impact by stating that a finding of no significant impact is combined with the stewardship register and environmental assessment. The paragraph concludes with a statement that if such a finding cannot be made, or it is otherwise desirable, the Responsible Official may cancel, modify, or postpone the proposal while additional information is made available, or issue a notice of intent that an environmental impact statement will be prepared and considered.

Paragraphs (c) and (d) describe the content of a finding of no significant impact and the procedures for public review.

This section concludes with paragraph (e) that is a requirement that