

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 can be identified.

Paragraph (b) describes a very useful method the Trust is proposing to reduce unwanted paperwork and improve overall effectiveness. The environmental assessment of one or more stewardship actions is combined with one or more relevant stewardship registers to create a concise document or set of documents that describe one or more stewardship actions and alternatives that meet the identified purpose and need. The environmental analysis of the proposed stewardship action and alternatives is appended to or integrated with one or more stewardship registers (40 CFR 1506.4).

The following paragraph, (c), describes a very important principle guiding the environmental review of a proposal. The purpose of the appended or 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.

101.53 Finding of No Significant Impact. This section of the proposed 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 and section 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 procedures for public review.

The section concludes with paragraph (e) that is a requirement that the Responsible Official must use the factors of "significantly" as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 for the determination that a proposal will have no significant effect on the human environment.

101.6 Categorical Exclusions. The categories of stewardship actions that may be excluded from the preparation of an environmental document are listed in this section.

101.7 Public Involvement. The procedures for engaging the public in the consideration of a proposed stewardship action are presented in paragraphs (a) through (e) of this section. Paragraph (a) states. Opportunities for the public to provide input and maintain a dialogue with the Trust regarding a proposed stewardship action may be triggered by a combination of notice through appropriate media, public meetings, targeted outreach, agency consultation, scoping, and public review of relevant documents.

Paragraph (b) states that the Trust will identify the appropriate stages during the consideration of a proposed stewardship action and for specific forms of public review and input to the Responsible Official. For stewardship actions involving natural and cultural resources on the Preserve, the Responsible Official will notify the public that the stewardship action is

being proposed, and that a stewardship register is available for review. The Trust will take into account public input received at this stage of the proposal to help determine the appropriate goals, objectives, and performance requirements that will guide further development of the proposed stewardship action.

Paragraph (c) explains that the public's reaction to a proposed stewardship action will be critical in planning for the appropriate level of public involvement throughout the rest of the NEPA process. The public's reaction will also help determine the extent to which the Trust develops alternatives to the proposed action.

Paragraph (d) has the requirement that all proposed stewardship actions involving the lands, resources, and facilities of the Preserve will require authorization by the Board of Trustees at a public meeting, during which public comments will be considered and recorded.

The section concludes with paragraph (e) that states that the Trust will provide a reasonable time period for public review and comment upon the completion of an environmental assessment, unless the Responsible Official determines that:

(1) Emergency circumstances exist requiring immediate implementation of the proposed action; or

(2) Based on public input earlier in the process, the level of public interest does not warrant a comment period.

101.8 Making and Recording an Implementing Decision. This section of the proposed procedures contains three requirements in paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) regarding making and recording an implementing decision for a proposed stewardship action. The section begins with paragraph (a) that states the Responsible Official may make an implementing decision to authorize a stewardship action after completion of 101.5 and compliance with the listed conditions.

Paragraph (b) requires signature of the Responsible Official and date of the implementing decision.

Paragraph (c) has a provision for making minor corrections or adjustments to stewardship actions to improve efficiency, correct minor errors, or otherwise improve performance.

101.9 Monitoring Outcomes and Considering New Information. This section describes the steps necessary to ensure that new information is considered and, if relevant to on-going or planned stewardship actions, appropriately acted upon by the Responsible Official. Paragraph (a) requires that the Responsible Official