TSK 400-ab2: Determining What Discipline Reports Are Needed

Effective August 2012

See also: EM Chapter 400 – 470, Discipline Report checklists, PRO 400-a: Preparing an EA, PRO 400-b: Preparing an EIS, PRO 400-ab3: Writing a Discipline Report

Start Task:
The Compliance Strategy and the Project Initiation meetings have been completed.

End Task: List of disciplines that require detailed analysis for the project.

1. **Determine project study area.**
   a) Get project description and list of alternatives to be studied from the ERS/ECS database and results of scoping meetings.
   b) Estimate study area based on potentially affected resources. (See TSK 458-a on the EJ web page and the NEPA/SEPA protocol for evaluating Wildlife Resources on the Fish and Wildlife web page.).
   c) Use professional judgment to adjust study area. Consider geopolitical boundaries, topographic features, neighborhoods, minority and low-income populations (see TSK 458-b in the EJ web page), historic districts, and the type of impacts likely to be created by your project. Be inclusive. Don't divide neighborhoods, parks, lakes, or census blocks.
   d) Look at the study area developed in Step 1c as a whole. Do the boundaries make sense? Are they reasonable and defensible? Adjust them as needed to define the project study area.

2. **Identify key environmental resources within the study area.**
   a) Overlay project study area created in Step 1 on GIS data layers for natural resources, cultural resources and demographic data. Field studies may be needed for some disciplines.
   b) Collect and review comments from Compliance Strategy and Project Initiation meetings. Organize responses by discipline and determine the level of controversy surrounding key issues.
   c) Estimate potential type, extent, and severity of project impacts to key resources identified in Steps 2a and 2b.
   d) Review the Discipline Report Checklists and EMP Chapters 400-470 as needed.

3. **Build the preliminary list of discipline reports to prepare for the project.**

a) Use the information generated in Steps 1 and 2 to build a preliminary list of disciplines that are likely to require detailed analysis

b) When determining whether the analysis for a particular discipline should be documented in a discipline report (instead of in the EIS, EA, DCE or SEPA checklist for the project), consider the following:

- The level of controversy, the severity of the potential affects, and the quantity of documentation required to support the analysis for a particular discipline.
- The complexity of the analysis and the nature of supporting information needed for each discipline.
- Efficiencies that could be gained by writing a discipline report. Efficiencies could include scheduling and analysis, quicker review by agencies that do not typically need to review the entire EIS, EA, DCE or SEPA checklist, or sharing of project specific information between disciplines.
- The time available for analysis and budget for this work.
- Can disciplines be combined or eliminated from the list without undue risk?

4. **Finalize a list of discipline reports.**
   a) Use professional judgment and input by subject matter experts to modify the preliminary list created in Step 2.
   b) This preliminary list can be used in the Agency and Public Scoping meetings to solicit additional information about key subject areas.
   c) Use the information generated to finalize the list of discipline reports to be completed for the project. Add or remove disciplines and adjust the project schedule and budget as appropriate.
   d) Consult with REC and subject matter experts to validate the list. Conduct additional research if needed and revise the list as directed to ensure the level of analysis is appropriate and avoid unreasonable risk.

5. **Get management endorsement of the list of discipline reports**.
   a) Summarize and present the information generated in Steps 1-4 to management.
   b) Get management to approve or revise the list.
   c) Document the decisions and the rationale for those decisions in the project file.
   d) Topics that do not warrant a discipline report may be documented:
      - Directly in the EA/EIS,
      - With a letter to file
      - In the ERC/ECS database.
      - Supporting data for these topics may be added to the appendix of the environmental document or as an addendum to the project file.