



THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

BACKGROUND. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 was enacted to address concerns about environmental quality. NEPA establishes a national policy for attaining “**harmony between people and nature,**” for promoting efforts to eliminate damage to the environment, and for better understanding of ecological systems and natural resources. **NEPA’s main objectives are as follows:**

- Ensure that Federal agencies evaluate the potential environmental impacts of proposed programs, projects, and actions before decisions are made to implement them;
- Inform the public of Federal agency proposed activities that have the potential to significantly affect environmental quality; and
- Encourage and facilitate public involvement in the decision-making processes.

WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT? The purpose of an Environmental Assessment (EA) is to determine the significance of the environmental effects and to look at alternative means to achieve the agency’s objectives. The EA process concludes with either a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or a determination to proceed to preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT. Opportunities to participate in the NEPA process include submitting comments on the Draft EA and attending public information sessions on the Draft EA. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has made documents publically available and is currently conducting public information sessions.

AGENCY COORDINATION. NEPA mandates that local, state, and Federal agencies within the affected project area be given the opportunity to comment on proposed actions. CBP has met with Federal, state, and local agencies, invited agencies to review and comment on the Draft EA, and will continue to work with these agencies to minimize environmental impacts.