



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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Expires: 09/30/2027

To: All Field Officials
From: Assistant Director, Resources and Planning
Subject: Socioeconomics in Land Use Planning and NEPA

Program Area: All Program Areas

Purpose: This Instruction Memorandum (IM) provides guidance on addressing socioeconomic issues, data, and analyses in the land use planning and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance processes at the BLM.

Administrative or Mission Related: Mission

Policy/Action: Using socioeconomic information, methods, and principles to understand the human context and consequences of BLM's activity leads to better management outcomes and is required by law and executive mandate.

This IM updates and formalizes guidance for how to address and review socioeconomic issues, including environmental justice (EJ), in the NEPA compliance process and for revision and amendment of land use plans under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The BLM will meet socioeconomic requirements by following the principles and practices in *Desk Guide: Socioeconomic Aspects of Planning and NEPA* (2024, Attachment 1). The Desk Guide specifies the types of information that can or should be considered in the socioeconomic sections of environmental assessments (EAs) and environmental impact statements (EISs), provides suggestions for obtaining internal and external socioeconomic expertise, and

summarizes best practices for how, when, and to what degree socioeconomic data and analyses should be incorporated into BLM NEPA and land use planning documents.

This Desk Guide clarifies what kind of coordination is needed between managers, members of interdisciplinary teams, planners and environmental coordinators, socioeconomic staff, and contractors supporting NEPA compliance or land use planning efforts. Information provided here is consistent with the BLM's National Environmental Policy Act Handbook (H-1790-1, rel. 1-1710) and Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1, rel. 1-1693), and is the approach supported by the BLM's Socioeconomics Program. Where differences exist between Land Use Planning Handbook Appendix D and this Desk Guide, the newer approach outlined in the Socioeconomic Desk Guide supersedes the former. For example, this IM removes the requirement for stand-alone economic workshops if the same purpose can be met as part of other public engagement efforts. The majority of this Desk Guide addresses the role of socioeconomic in the NEPA process. Additional considerations for actions specific to BLM land use planning are addressed in Section 5, Planning-Specific Considerations.

The Desk Guide establishes a consistent framework and minimum requirements for socioeconomic analyses, recognizing the need for flexibility due to the resources affected and the nature of the document (EA or EIS). In addition to the Desk Guide, additional resources for considering socioeconomic and environmental justice are provided on the BLM Socioeconomics SharePoint site and may be referenced to ensure consistency and the use of high-quality information.

Timeframe: This policy is effective immediately.

Budget Impact: No significant budget impacts are anticipated.

Background: Socioeconomic data and analysis of proposed actions are required under NEPA, FLPMA, EO 12898, EO 14008, and additional executive guidance. NEPA states that “...it is the continuing policy of the Federal Government...to foster and promote the general welfare, to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans.” In addition, the NEPA directs the BLM to “insure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences...in planning and decisionmaking.” The Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA specify that the human environment or environment is defined as “comprehensively the natural and physical environment and the relationship of present and future generations with that environment.” (40 CFR 1508.1(r); citing regulations effective July 1, 2024). Additional guidance addresses specific topics such as environmental justice, equity, subsistence, and ecosystem services and climate (e.g., E.O. 12898, E.O. 13166, E.O. 13985, E.O. 14008, E.O. 14096, Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act).

There is no universal procedure for conducting socioeconomic analysis, as there is a broad range of issues, data, methods, and concepts that may be considered under the umbrella of

socioeconomics. The approaches used for socioeconomic analysis should be tailored for the size and complexity of the project or land use plan in question. The BLM conducted a review of recent BLM EAs and EISs prepared pursuant to NEPA, which indicated socioeconomic topics were not always addressed, even when it might have been appropriate to do so. Further, where socioeconomic topics were addressed, there was inconsistency in the topics considered and whether information was provided quantitatively or qualitatively. Socioeconomic staff are a scarce resource at BLM and the attached Desk Guide will improve the ability of other BLM staff to conduct socioeconomic analyses appropriately, confidently, and consistently, as well as identify when a socioeconomic expert or contractor should be consulted or utilized.

Manual/ Handbook Sections Affected: Land Use Planning Handbook, H-1601-1, rel. 1-1693 Appendix D

Coordination: This document was developed by the BLM Socioeconomics Program through collaboration among program staff in HQ-210, the National Operations Center, National Training Center, Zoned Socioeconomic Specialists, and some BLM State Offices and Field Offices. The team also consulted with BLM's NEPA, Planning, and Mitigation Programs.

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Division of Regulatory Affairs and Directives (HQ630)

Attachment

1. [Desk Guide: Socioeconomic Aspects of Planning and NEPA \(24 pages\)](#)