

NEPA REGULATIONS

40 CFR PARTS 1500-1508

Sec. 1508.27 Significantly.

“Significantly” as used in NEPA requires considerations of both context and intensity:

- a) **Context.** This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short-and long-term effects are relevant.
- b) **Intensity.** This refers to the severity of impact. Responsible officials must bear in mind that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action. The following should be considered in evaluating intensity.
 - 1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.
 - 2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.
 - 3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.
 - 4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.
 - 5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.
 - 6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.
 - 7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.
 - 8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
 - 9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
 - 10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

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