

STEP 1

The National Environmental Policy Act process begins when a federal action, like issuing a permit to build a rail yard or deepen a shipping channel, is proposed.

CHANCE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT



STEP 2

A question is asked:

Are the project's environmental effects potentially significant?

NO

Does the proposal fall within a **Categorical Exclusion (CE)**?
A CE includes actions that do not have significant environmental effects and do not require an environmental study.

UNCLEAR

An **Environmental Assessment (EA)** determines if the proposal may result in significant impacts. The agency preparing the EA decides whether to accept public comments or hold public hearings.

Does the EA conclude that the proposal may create significant environmental effects?

YES

A notice of intent to prepare an **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** and conduct "scoping" is published. During the "scoping" process, the public can identify subjects to be studied in the EIS.

CHANCE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT



YES

Does the proposal involve extraordinary circumstances that may create significant environmental effects?

NO

A **Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)** is issued.

A draft EIS is released and the public has at least 45 days to submit written comments.

CHANCE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT



STEP 3

The federal agency accepts or rejects the proposal.

A final EIS and record of decision to accept or reject the proposal is released.