

Unified Federal Review Process



Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review: Fact Sheet for Applicants

Natural resources, cultural institutions and historic properties define communities and contribute to their well-being and unique character. As disasters continue to challenge our nation and communities grapple with issues of preparedness, resiliency and sustainability, federal, tribal, state and local agencies are working together to support the needs of affected communities and continually improve disaster recovery processes. This includes helping communities incorporate environmental stewardship and historic preservation into emergency management decisions.

Environmental and Historic Preservation Requirements

Environmental and historic preservation (EHP) requirements are the federal laws, regulations and executive orders enacted to protect and ensure the stewardship of our nation's water, air, coastal, wildlife, land, agricultural, historical and cultural resources as well as minimizing adverse impacts to low-income and minority populations. Following a presidentially declared disaster, applicants (e.g., state government agencies, individual home and business owners, local governments and special districts, private non-profit organizations and federally recognized tribes) may be eligible to apply for assistance from the federal government for disaster recovery projects.

Anytime one or more federal agencies are involved in a proposed disaster recovery project (through provision of funding, issuing a permit etc.), they must ensure compliance with EHP requirements before the project can proceed. This is done through an EHP review performed by a federal EHP practitioner. The purpose of an EHP review of proposed disaster recovery projects is to ensure that federal actions, including the provision of grant funds or issuance of permits, support disaster recovery needs in an affected community while maintaining the responsibilities of the federal government to act as a steward of natural and cultural resources. Applicants can assist in EHP reviews by providing accurate and timely information about their proposed project, including knowledge of any natural and cultural resources that may be present in the project area. For more information on EHP reviews and the role of applicant, see the EHP Guidance for Federal Disaster Recovery Assistance Applicants (Applicant Guidance) on the UFR Webpage; the link is provided at the bottom of this page.

Important Things to Remember:

- When applying for or receiving assistance from more than one federal agency, notify all agencies involved to ensure early coordination as soon as possible.
- Assist federal EHP practitioners by providing accurate, complete and timely project information.
- Designing projects to avoid or mitigate impacts on natural and cultural resources will lead to efficient completion of EHP reviews.

The Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review Process

The UFR Process was established on July 29, 2014, by eleven federal departments and agencies entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). For more information on this MOU, please visit the UFR Webpage. The UFR Process focuses on the federal EHP requirements applicable to proposed disaster recovery projects following a presidentially declared disaster under the Stafford Act. Examples of these requirements include but are not limited to those contained within the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act. More information on EHP requirements and the role of applicant is found in the Applicant Guidance. Through the UFR Process, federal agencies that fund or permit disaster recovery projects and those that perform EHP reviews associated with those projects will coordinate their independent review processes leading to an expedited decision-making process, which can result in efficient delivery of assistance and implementation of recovery projects.

For more information on the UFR Process, please visit the UFR Webpage at: <http://www.fema.gov/environmental-historic-preservation/unified-federal-environmental-and-historic-preservation-review>

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Several federal agencies provide assistance to tribes, states, local agencies and individuals through monetary grants, loans and other means to aid in the recovery from a disaster. Examples of such funding agencies include the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Other federal agencies have the protection of environmental and/or cultural resources including historic properties as part of their mission and regulatory authority, and perform reviews or evaluations of proposed disaster recovery projects through consultations or issuance of permits. Examples of such resource/regulatory agencies include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service.

How Applicants Can Support EHP Reviews and the UFR Process

- ***Attend kickoff meetings and applicant briefings.*** Through these meetings, you will learn about the federal assistance application process as well as information and documentation requirements needed for an EHP review. Applicant briefings are meetings held by the tribe/state to inform prospective applicants of available assistance and eligibility requirements for obtaining federal assistance under the declared disaster. The kickoff meeting, sponsored by FEMA programs, provides an opportunity for you, funding agency program staff and the federal EHP practitioners who will be reviewing your projects to meet and share information. While not all funding agencies hold kickoff meetings, these meetings are a good opportunity for you to gain a better understanding of EHP requirements and reviews.
- ***Consider designing projects with the stewardship of natural and cultural resources in mind*** and that, when appropriate, include ways to avoid or otherwise mitigate impacts on these resources. This will help to reduce EHP review time and minimize impacts to resources. For example, consider proposing projects that mitigate risk from future disasters by relocating vulnerable infrastructure outside of environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains.
- ***Provide accurate, complete and timely project information.*** See the Applicant Guidance available on the UFR Webpage for a description of the information that may be required. Failure to provide this information may result in delays in EHP reviews, release of funds and implementation of your projects. Although EHP reviews are conducted by EHP practitioners, you are most familiar with the specifics of your proposed projects and therefore can help facilitate these reviews by gathering and providing valuable information.
- ***Notify each agency as soon as possible if applying for or receiving assistance from more than one funding agency.*** When more than one funding agency and/or resource/regulatory agency is involved in a disaster recovery project, there may be opportunities to combine EHP reviews and/or share EHP information to minimize duplication of effort and expedite reviews. Provide copies of any existing EHP-related documentation for your proposed project or similar or related projects (including past projects). Notify each federal agency if there are changes in your project scope of work, funding source(s) etc.
- ***Obtain all necessary permits.*** Applicants are responsible for obtaining all necessary permits. Some of your proposed projects may require permits, such as a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit (administered by the USACE) and a state-issued Section 401 water quality certification. The project information you provide to resource/regulatory agencies may also be relevant to a funding agency's EHP review; therefore, there may be opportunities to share EHP information and expedite reviews.
- ***Visit the UFR Webpage*** for information and resources regarding EHP reviews and the UFR Process, such as: possible sources of federal funding for your disaster recovery projects; federal agency points of contact who can provide EHP information and guidance; web-based tools (e.g., maps, databases) for determining whether your proposed project will affect natural or cultural resources; and lists of permits or approvals that may be required for your proposed project.

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