

Unified Federal Review Process



Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review: Fact Sheet for Community Leaders Guiding Disaster Recovery

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

A variety of federal laws, regulations and executive orders are aimed at the protection and 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 and children and the elderly. Collectively, these are known as environmental and historic preservation (EHP) requirements.

Following a presidentially declared disaster a variety of 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. 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. For more detailed information on how local leaders can assist in EHP reviews see the Environmental and Historic Preservation Guidance for Federal Disaster Recovery Applicants on the UFR Webpage, the link is provided at the bottom of this page.

Important Things to Remember:

- Local leaders play an important role in helping their communities to recover efficiently by assisting federal agencies to identify coordination needs early before projects are developed.
- Think about the role the federal government will play in your community's recovery either through existing funding or activity in the community, or through recovery appropriations and where coordinated review efforts may be critical to expediting federal assistance.

The Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review Process

The Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review Process (UFR Process) was established on July 29, 2014, by eleven federal departments and agencies entering into a Memorandum of Understanding Establishing the UFR Process (UFR MOU). The UFR Process focuses on the federal EHP requirements for proposed disaster recovery projects following a presidentially declared disaster under the Stafford Act. Through the UFR Process, federal agencies that fund or permit disaster recovery projects and those that perform EHP reviews for those projects will coordinate their processes to expedite decision making, which can result in efficient delivery of assistance and implementation of recovery projects. The UFR Process also recognizes the important role of state agencies, tribes, localities and the general public in working together with federal agencies to effectively coordinate in EHP reviews.

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 states, tribes, local communities 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, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. For example, some recovery projects are designed to address multiple needs, such as reconstruction of physical buildings as well as the resiliency of natural systems. In addition to addressing multiple needs in a single project, some projects have multiple federal agencies involved in funding; for example some FEMA recovery projects have HUD Community Development Block Grant money used as matching funds.

Other federal agencies have the protection of environmental and/or cultural resources 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, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service.

How Community Leaders Can Support EHP Reviews and the UFR Process

Normally, you would not directly interact/interface with federal funding or resource/regulatory agencies unless you are representing an applicant. However, you may have valuable information or expertise to inform EHP reviews and the UFR Process during disaster recovery efforts in your community.

For example:

- Provide information on facilities damaged or destroyed by a disaster.
- Help develop, implement and revise continuity, recovery and hazard mitigation plans. Identify and consider the stewardship of natural and cultural resources in these plans. Ensure plans are actionable and feasible based on available funding and capacity.
- Help examine recovery alternatives, risks and vulnerabilities, focus resources on the greatest needs and help prioritize disaster recovery projects.
- Establish and leverage partnerships between local government offices, businesses, organizations, volunteer groups etc. and coordinate activities across these groups during the formulation of recovery projects (identify opportunities for communication and collaboration across different local entities). Resolve potential duplication of effort or assistance.
- Communicate recovery priorities to federal and state governments and other recovery stakeholders.