

ODOT NEPA Manual

411 Scoping

Overview

This section addresses REC roles and responsibilities during the ODOT scoping process. ODOT scopes projects to validate their purpose and potential investment strategies while identifying delivery risks and opportunities. Outputs of scoping include defining the project context, scope, schedule (for funding and programming purposes), budget, risks, and opportunities. The scoping and selection process often provides additional context and identifies expectations for stakeholder input and public engagement.

During the draft STIP phase, the REC will participate in project scoping to provide a preliminary identification of possible environmental impacts. RECs investigate proposed STIP projects through site visits, database research, conversations with other Agencies, and discussions with scoping team members to determine the presence / absence of environmental resources and the potential for project activities to affect those resources, and to estimate the appropriate NEPA project classification ([23 CFR 771.115 NEPA Classes of Action](#)). The REC is responsible to produce a draft scoping report, draft environmental budget, and draft environmental schedule.

Applicability

The requirements and procedures herein are general overviews of the environmental scoping process. Each Region has developed its own specific scoping process and documentation requirements. However, statewide guidance sets the [scoping expectations framework](#) that must be met during the scoping process.

Environmental Impacts and Risks

During the scoping process, the REC needs to identify potential environmental impacts from the risks to the proposed project. Impacts and risks identified could include the following:

- What is the rough Area of Potential Impact (API) and project limits?
- Are there specific environmental resources present in the API that must be avoided to hold the project schedule and budget?
- What natural (wetlands, waters, Endangered Species Act listed species, etc.) and cultural resources are present within or near the API of the project?
- Will the project require detailed cultural resource surveys and will it affect resources that require mitigation (Memorandum of Agreement) or extensive Tribal consultation

- Are resources that are particularly sensitive to Tribal governments present in the project API (such as “Traditional Cultural Properties” or ancestral burial grounds)?
- How can the project team avoid or minimize impacts to the natural and cultural resources identified within the API?
- How are project siting, alignment, and design fitted to the context of the surrounding landscape?
- Which, if any, of the following may be required to be addressed and/or approved for the project?
 - Aesthetics / Visual Resources (State or Federal Scenic Highway or byway, State Scenic Waterway or Wild and Scenic River, State or Federal Scenic Area or Corridor, etc.)
 - Air Quality
 - Biological resources (fish, birds, wildlife, plants / habitat)
 - Archaeological and Historic resources
 - Economic and Social Impact considerations
 - Energy resources
 - Environmental Justice considerations
 - Hazardous materials and sites
 - Land Use Compatibility / Permits
 - Noise Study / Mitigation
 - Public parks / recreation resources
 - Right of Way needs (permanent and temporary)
 - Section 4(f) evaluation and documentation
 - Section 6(f) identification and coordination with Oregon Parks and Recreation documentation
 - Traffic Analysis and Study Report
 - Wetlands and Waters of the state / US
 - Water resources / water quality / stormwater
 - Coast Guard Bridge Permit
- Other Federal Agency NEPA Coordination and Approval (e.g., US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, etc.)

Through the scoping process, the REC is required to identify potentially affected resources as well as state / federal regulatory and land management agency stakeholders early in the process. The REC is also required to estimate project impacts, concerns, and, if possible, mitigation solutions which would lead to regulatory compliance. Each Region has its own scoping templates, but generally, the [Environmental Prospectus](#) is the document most often used for the environmental scoping process.

Potential impacts and risks, as well as potential environmental stakeholders, should be summarized in the scoping report prepared for the project and submitted to the Project Leader assigned to the scoping effort. The risk summary should identify estimated

timelines for conducting surveys and completing clearances. In addition to the risk summary, a draft budget estimate for the project needs to be developed based on the compliance risks identified and assumed level of effort for each required environmental survey and clearance or approval. The budget needs to encompass all possible environmental studies identified as possibly being required for the project and broken out by discipline area with hours needed to complete each task. More than one environmental budget may need to be produced to account for different project impact scenarios. The REC should consult with individual discipline specialists for estimates of hours and level of effort.

The environmental scoping document is used by the Project Leader in combination with other discipline scoping documents to assemble a consolidated scoping summary report for each project. The summary will include the project scope of work, project cost estimate, project schedule, project approvals, supporting documentation (e.g., environmental impacts, utilities, right of way, etc.), and a list of the scoping team members. The summary is then used to develop the project [business case](#) and [charter](#).

The scoping summary begins the process of prioritizing the projects for the STIP. Accurate and thorough scoping reports and preliminary estimates are crucial to providing the correct information for prioritization of projects selected for the STIP.