

## *NEPA Process*

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3 NEPA – The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 United States Code sections  
4 4321 to 4370d) – is our national charter for protecting the environment. The goals of NEPA  
5 are to: 1) consider all appropriate environmental factors when making decisions, not basing  
6 decisions solely on technical and economic factors, 2) involve the affected and interested  
7 public early in the environmental analysis process, 3) seek less environmentally damaging  
8 ways to do our jobs, and 4) document in plain language for the decision-maker (in this case,  
9 the District Engineer) and the public the environmental process we used in developing the  
10 Greers Ferry Lake Shoreline Management Plan. The product we use to document our  
11 analysis of the likely effects of implementing the preferred plan or a plan containing different  
12 combinations of key lakeshore management elements (alternative management options) is the  
13 Environmental Impact Statement, or EIS, the highest level of analysis prepared under NEPA.  
14 Compliance with NEPA guidance for our EIS preparation involved several steps:  
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- 16 1. *Announce that an EIS will be prepared.* For this EIS, a Notice of Intent was  
17 published on August 23, 2000 in the Federal Register.  
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- 19 2. *Conduct scoping.* This was the first step in identifying relevant issues to be analyzed  
20 in depth and eliminating issues that were not relevant. Within this process we were  
21 very active in soliciting comments from the public, local governments, Federal and  
22 State agencies, tribes, and environmental groups to ensure their concerns and issues  
23 about the proposed project were included in the analyses. For this EIS, the Corps  
24 held a scoping meeting on December 5, 2000 in Heber Springs, Arkansas. In  
25 addition, in January 2001 the Corps sent 24 Intergovernmental Interagency  
26 Coordination of Environmental Planning (IICEP) letters to announce the proposal  
27 and planned scoping meetings and to request input from governmental agencies.  
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- 29 3. *Prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA).* The decision to prepare an EIS often  
30 begins with the preparation of an assessment of environmental consequences (called  
31 an EA) of the proposed action. This EA process, which is always conducted before  
32 an EIS, is not as in depth as an EIS. The EA usually provides enough information  
33 and analysis to determine either that the proposed action would not result in  
34 significant environmental impact (resulting in a document called a Finding of No  
35 Significant Impact, or FONSI), or a decision that a more in-depth study is needed.  
36 This in-depth study is the EIS. The Corps used extensive public input and analysis to  
37 prepare the EA. The EA was finalized in March 2000. This EA addressed 525  
38 comments received orally at public hearings on the proposal and in writing from the  
39 public and agencies. Upon completion of the EA, the Corps concluded that the  
40 proposed action would not result in significant environmental impacts, and produced  
41 a FONSI. In a court hearing, a judge ruled that the conclusions in the FONSI were  
42 not properly supported by the EA. While it was possible to rewrite the EA in an  
43 attempt to better support the conclusions of the FONSI, the Corps decided it would  
44 be better to prepare an EIS.  
45
- 46 4. *Prepare a Draft EIS.* This document examines environmental issues associated with  
47 the proposed project determined to be relevant from our scoping initiatives. It  
48 considers a range of alternatives analyzing in detail those representative of “all  
49 reasonable” alternatives and a procedurally required “no action” alternative and  
50 provides rationale for alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed analysis.

1 Over 100 copies of the Draft EIS will be distributed to agencies, the public that has  
2 requested copies, and several repositories to ensure the widest dissemination  
3 possible. The Draft EIS will be placed in the Greers Ferry Lake Project Office, local  
4 public libraries, and will also be placed electronically on a web site.  
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6 5. *Have a public comment period on the Draft EIS.* Our goal during this process will be  
7 to solicit oral and written comments about the Draft EIS. We will accomplish this by  
8 receiving comments through the mail as well as conducting public hearings. The  
9 public hearings will be held in Heber Springs, Arkansas. The hearings will provide a  
10 feedback mechanism for the public and agencies to orally address or submit written  
11 comments directly to the Corps.  
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13 6. *Prepare a final EIS.* Following the public comment period, a final EIS will be  
14 prepared. This document will be a revision of the Draft EIS, including all public and  
15 agency comments and the Corps' responses. It will provide the decision maker a  
16 comprehensive review of the alternatives and their environmental impacts.  
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18 7. *Issue a Record of Decision (ROD).* The final step in the NEPA process is the ROD.  
19 It identifies which alternative has been selected by the decision maker and what  
20 measures will be carried out by the Corps to reduce adverse impacts to the  
21 environment.  
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