



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Highway
Administration**

Little Joe Road Project *Environmental Status*

Western Federal Lands Highway Division

Volume 1

“Where are we, environmentally?”

Feature

*Where are we,
environmentally?*

*Western Fed-
eral Lands
Highway Divi-
sion*

*Questions and
Answers*

The environmental process of any project runs concurrently with planning and design administration. The Western Federal Lands Highway Department (WFLHD) has developed numerous preliminary environmental processes that are critical for any project to begin.

The environmental process has several steps that must be taken before construction can begin.

There are four main categories in the process: Scoping, Data Collection & Analysis, Documentation, and Decision. Little Joe is about 75% through this process.

Scoping

Scoping refers to the initial investigation of the project. Included in the scoping process are; developing a Project Identification Report (PIR), Establishing a Social, Economic, and Environmental (SEE) team, issuing public

notice, establishing agency roles, schedule and budgets. Currently Little Joe is about 90% of the way through the scoping process.

Data Collection & Analysis

Data Collection & Analysis refers to the gathering of information for the project. This includes geotechnical investigation, biological analysis, fisheries analysis, and cultural resources analysis. During this time a Project Checklist is developed. Little Joe is about 90% through this process.

Documentation

Documentation involves the preparation of the draft Environmental Assessment (EA), circulation of the draft EA, finalization of the EA, and any amendments of the EA that may be necessary. Little Joe is about 50% of the way through this process.

Decision

At this point enough information has been collected for the SEE team to make a decision, and determine if a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is appropriate. Now is the time to prepare and finalize the FONSI. Little Joe is not yet at this stage. The Documentation of the Little Joe project will have to be virtually finalized before a decision can be made.



Little Joe Road

Western Federal Lands Highway Division

This project will be designed and constructed by Western Federal Lands Highway Division (WFLHD). WFLHD is a division of the Federal Highway Administration that is involved in the planning, design and construction of roads that provide safe and adequate transportation access to and through Federally owned lands.

The majority of our work is for the Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. WFLHD's jurisdiction includes the northwestern states of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana, and the National Parks of Wyoming (Yellowstone and Grand Teton).

Our office is located in Vancouver, Washington (see contact names and address below).

Q&A



This project was proposed by Mineral County in conjunction with the Lolo National Forest.

Q: What is NEPA?

A: The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was signed into law in 1970, making it one of the nation's oldest environmental laws. NEPA sets forth the nation's environmental policy. NEPA requires federal agencies to disclose environmental impacts of proposed actions. "The purposes of this Act are: To declare a national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the Nation; and to establish a Council on Environmental Quality."

Q: What is a Project Checklist?

A: The Western Federal Lands Highway Division (WFLHD) uses

the project checklist as part of its early coordination and data gathering process. The checklist provides those people affected and governmental agencies having regulatory or administrative interest an opportunity to become informed and involved in the project development process at an early stage.

Q: What is an Environmental Assessment (EA)/Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)?

A: An EA is a concise public document prepared by a federal agency when a proposed action is not a categorical exclusion or otherwise exempt from NEPA, and impacts do not appear to warrant an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In short, an EA lists the alternatives, and the environmental effects. A FONSI is a decision making document that describes why a proposed action would not have a significant effect on the human environment and, therefore, does not require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

Q: How will I know what's next?

A: The WFLHD has set up numerous locations to gain access to information about the project, and its status. Visit the web at: www.wfl.fha.dot.gov/projects/LittleJoe or call/email the number/names listed on this announcement.

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