



washington dc update

December 4, 2009

ALERT!

CEQ Issues Proposal for Revised Principles and Guidelines

We know it's Friday and you may be perhaps attending a round of Christmas parties, or perhaps thinking about the great football games this weekend or maybe contemplating some holiday shopping. But we urge you to read this report very carefully because we have never sent out information on a more important issue.

Yesterday, the White House Council on Environmental Quality issued its revised Principles and Guidelines for Water Resources. These new guidelines will be applied to all relevant Federal agencies. CEQ has forwarded these revised principals on to the National Academy of Sciences for review with a goal of completing this process and issuing the final Guidelines by November, 2010 and has established a 90 public comment period as well.

Here is a brief summary of the key issues:

- These Guidelines will govern America's water resource planning and will be administered by all relevant Federal agencies along the following principals:
- All projects must improve the economic well-being of the nation for the present and future generations.
- Better protect communities from the effects of floods and storms.
- Help communities and individuals make better choices about where to build based on an understanding of risk and the protection and restoration of the environment.

Specifically, water resources projects must be based on:

- Sound science.
- Increased consideration of both monetary and non-monetary benefits to justify and select a project.
- Improved transparency and consideration of nonstructural approaches that can solve the flooding problem without adversely impact floodplain functions.

And there is more. According to CEQ, the four most important changes in the Revised P&G include:

1. Achieving co-equal goals. ".....the new approach calls for development of water resources projects based on sound science that maximize net national economic, environmental, and social benefits."

2. Considering Monetary and Non-Monetary Benefits. “Specifically, this revised version will consider both monetary and non-monetary benefits to justify and select a project that has the greatest net benefits—regardless of whether those benefits are monetary or non-monetary.
3. Avoiding the Unwise Use of floodplains. “The decision to modify water resources on floodplains will be based on evaluations of the services gained and lost by such an action. **Only those actions that provide a net benefit will be further pursued or recommended for construction. For the first time such evaluations must give full and equal consideration to nonstructural approaches that can solve the flooding problem without adversely impact floodplain functions.”**
4. Increasing Transparency and Good Government Results. “The proposed changes were made to deliver ‘good government’ results for the American people. It is expected that the use of best science, peer review, and full transparency will ensure that projects undergo a more rigorous study process, which should inform authorization and funding decisions.”

CONCLUSION

In addition to fundamentally altering the water resources landscape, these P&G Revisions also open the door to other Executive Branch actions such as the issuing of the Executive Order on Floodplain management which is expected next year.

We have attached the actual Revised Principals and Guidelines for your review.

Can you imagine, as a WESTCAS member, the challenge of demonstrating to the satisfaction of multiple Federal agencies that there is no “practicable alternative” to your project?

We urge WESTCAS to create a working group that will draft a response to CEQ. Nobody has to give us the holiday season to participate because it is a 90 comment period. But we trust that reading this report will make you want to (1) **study the attached document carefully** and (2) **participate in the WESTCAS workgroup that drafts our response to CEQ.**

Contact Fred or Tom

Fred Hicks – 703.626.5384	Tom Ray – 254.855.0880
P.O. Box 2115	P.O. Box 955
Springfield, VA 22152-0115	Waco, TX 76703-0955
fbhicks@aol.com	tom@hicks-ray.com