

# Hicks-Ray Associates



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TO: WESTCAS

FROM: Fred B. Hicks and Tom Ray

SUBJECT: CEQ Draft Guidelines for Preparing and Performing Project Evaluations

Some may wonder why we keep returning to the issue of the Council on Environmental Quality “Principals and Guidelines” and “Principals and Standards,” particularly when the rules under consideration do not expand current Federal environmental laws.

There are two reasons. The first is that these new proposed CEQ guidelines require that before receiving a permit, virtually all federal water projects demonstrate a balance among economic benefit, public safety, and environmental protection. And one of the most important components of environmental protection is for the local sponsor to demonstrate that there is no “practicable alternative,” to the proposed project.

Second, CEQ’s guidelines will apply to a wide variety of federal agencies including the Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, USEPA, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and many others. The bottom line is that almost all local sponsors, be they from the public or private sector, will have to pass muster with these standards before they can receive a federal permit for their project. It won’t matter whether the project involves federal funding.

With this in mind, we urge you to review the attached draft “Guidelines for Preparing and Performing Project Evaluations” so you can begin thinking how your agency or employer might working within these new guidelines. You might start by looking at page 5 of the document which enumerates 13 “Planning Standards.”

Like it or not, this is the world that most WESTCAS members are going to be living in once CEQ issues its final rule. The proposal has been referred to the National Academy of Sciences for a detailed review. This is expected to take many months. WESTCAS is working actively with CEQ and with a number of stakeholder organizations. We will keep you posted as this issue continues to develop.

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