

## Memorandum

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Be energy efficient!*

To: ENVIRONMENTAL DISTRICT DEPUTY DIRECTORS  
DIVISION ENVIRONMENTAL BRANCH/OFFICE CHIEFS

Date: October 1, 2012

File: NEPA Assignment

From: JAY NORVELL  
Chief  
Division of Environmental Analysis

Subject: **Environmental Document Quality Control Program under NEPA Assignment**

### Background

Caltrans has updated the Environmental Document Quality Control (EDQC) Program in response to the assignment of responsibilities under the Surface Transportation Project Delivery Program, pursuant to 23 USC 327, as amended by Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21). The formal assignment of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) responsibilities took effect on October 1, 2012 with the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding (NEPA Assignment MOU) between the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Caltrans.

Caltrans' application<sup>1</sup> for NEPA Assignment specified that Caltrans would implement quality control procedures for environmental documents (EDs) to ensure compliance with NEPA and other applicable federal laws. This policy memorandum describes those procedures.

### Summary

The Caltrans EDQC Program requires five reviews for all EDs. The required reviews, documentation protocols, and the necessary professional qualifications for the personnel conducting them are presented in the attachment to this policy memo. The Caltrans EDQC Program includes the following:

- Quality Control reviews by interdisciplinary staff
- Defined purpose and function of quality control reviews
- The option of a District/Region Quality Control Plan
- Quality Control Certification forms for Internal or External reviews

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<sup>1</sup> The MOU which authorizes Caltrans' NEPA Assignment Program incorporates, by reference, Caltrans' May 21, 2007 Pilot Program Application, terms and conditions of the Pilot Program MOU and its amendments. The MOU terminates eighteen months from the effective date of FHWA regulations developed to clarify amendments to 23 USC 327 or on January 1, 2017.

### Applicability

Effective immediately, for projects under the NEPA Assignment program, this memorandum supersedes the following Division of Environmental Analysis memoranda for quality control procedures:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Subject</b>
July 2, 2007	Environmental Document Quality Control Program under the NEPA Pilot Program
January 13, 2003	Written Certification of Document Quality Reviews
July 11, 2002	District Environmental Document Control
November 29, 2001	Environmental Document Quality Control

If you have any questions regarding this memorandum, please call Dale Jones, NEPA Assignment Manager, at (916) 653-5157 or Wendy Waldron, NEPA Program Statewide Coordinator, at (805) 542-4656.

### Attachments

1. EDQC Program (October 2012)
2. Internal Certification Form (September 15, 2008)
3. External Certification Form (September 15, 2008)

cc: Denix Anbiah, Division Chief of Local Assistance  
David McCray, Legal  
Margaret Buss, Local Assistance  
Design District Deputy Directors  
Project Management District Deputy Directors  
Planning District Deputy Directors  
Dale Jones, Office Chief, NEPA Assignment and Staff Development  
Gina Moran, Office Chief, Environmental Management  
Anmarie Medin, Office Chief, Cultural Studies  
Amy Bailey, Office Chief, Biology  
Pete Conn, Office Chief, Hazardous Waste, Air, Noise & Paleontology  
Joyce Brenner, Office Chief, Stormwater Program Implementation  
Bhaskar Joshi, Office Chief, Stormwater Program Development  
John Chisholm, District Environmental Coordinator  
Jody Brown, District Environmental Coordinator  
Jeremy Ketchum, District Environmental Coordinator  
Bob Pavlik, District Environmental Coordinator

# **Environmental Document Quality Control Program**

## **October 2012**

### **Purpose and Function of Quality Control Program Reviews**

#### **Resource/Technical Specialist Review**

The purpose of the resource/technical specialist review is to ensure the accuracy of specific resource studies and technical information summarized in the Environmental Document (ED). A Resource/Technical Specialist Review will be completed for each resource topic discussed in the ED. The review will be conducted for those sections in each chapter that contain information about the individual resource or technical area under consideration (e.g., Summary; Affected Environment, Environmental Consequence, and Avoidance, Minimization &/or Mitigation Measures; Cumulative Impacts), and will provide comments, to ensure the following:

- Accuracy of the information in the ED
- Consistency between the technical study and the information as summarized in the ED;
- All avoidance, minimization and/or mitigation measures are appropriately characterized and are feasible to implement;
- All anticipated permit and/or approval actions have been accurately identified within the ED.

Reviewer Qualifications: The Resource/Technical specialist who prepared the technical study or another staff member with equivalent knowledge of the subject area will conduct the review of the given subject area. Technical/Resource Specialist Review includes reviews as appropriate, by Project Managers, Design Managers, Landscape Architecture, Construction, Maintenance, and Traffic in addition to the environmental functional unit reviews.

#### **Internal Peer Review**

The Internal Peer Review is intended provide a 'fresh set of eyes,' by having a qualified environmental staff member who, to guarantee independence and objectivity has not participated in, supervised or technically reviewed the project. The Peer Review is a comprehensive, rigorous and critical review of the ED conducted by an individual knowledgeable about regulations, guidelines and standards and will provide comments to ensure:

- The ED complies with the appropriate and current version of the annotated outline;
- The text 'tells the story' in a logical manner that is consistent in voice, with clarity and concise prose readily comprehensible to the lay reader;
- Graphics and table included in the ED support the text and are visually clear and understandable.

In those instances when an ED is brokered to another District or Region, the Peer Reviewer for the ED should be from the District/Region in which the proposed project is located.

**Reviewer Qualifications:** The Internal Peer Review is to be conducted by a Caltrans staff member with knowledge and experience equivalent to that needed for original work at the Associate Environmental Planner level or higher.

### **Technical Editor Review**

The intent of the technical editing review is to ensure that the ED achieves high editorial standards, is consistent with ED annotated outlines and is ready to be released to the public. The Technical Editor will review the entire ED and undertake the following:

- Make corrections to the text as necessary to assure correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax and consistent use of terminology;
- Ensure that typescript, subject headings, headers, footers and other formatting conventions are being employed in a consistent manner;
- Ensure that the graphics, tables and figures are consistent with the text and that important textual references have been included;
- Ensure that the ED is written clearly and in a consistent voice, that textual information is provided in a concise manner that is easily understandable to the lay reader.

**Reviewer Qualifications:** A staff member with demonstrated experience in the preparation and/or editing of professional documents of any type, or a professional editor retained through a consultant contract.

### **NEPA Quality Control Review**

The purpose of the NEPA Quality Control Review is to ensure that the project complies with the Council on Environmental Quality NEPA regulations and FHWA regulations, policies and standards for the implementation of NEPA and all other applicable federal environmental laws. The NEPA Quality Control Review will provide comments to ensure the following:

- Adequacy of the project's purpose and need statement, logical termini, independent utility and project description;
- Completeness of the alternatives analysis, including information supporting the range of alternatives selected for study in the ED;
- All proposed avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures are properly identified, characterized and are reasonable and practicable to implement.
- Evidence of coordination with any federal, state and local agencies necessary to comply with federal regulatory requirements
- Compliance with FHWA Environmental Impact and Related Procedures (23 CFR 771) and FHWA environmental policies and applicable guidance;

- Compliance with other federal laws and regulations such as Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, Executive Order 11990-Protection of Wetlands, Executive Order 11988-Floodplain Management, and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act

Reviewer Qualifications: The NEPA Quality Control reviewer must have the following qualifications (1) at least two years of experience leading the development of, or performing consultant oversight for transportation EDs in California, (2) demonstrated experience in preparing complex EDs or supervisory experience in a unit that reviews Environmental Impact Statements or Environmental Assessments and (3) certificate of completion in NEPA Compliance Training.

**Environmental Branch Chief Review**

The supervisor of the primary author of the ED conducts the Environmental Branch Chief Review. The Environmental Branch Chief shall ensure that all EDQC Program standards are being met for the project, that the document is technically accurate and consistent with the Standard Environmental Reference (SER)<sup>3</sup>, the annotated outlines and other applicable guidance. The Environmental Branch Chief Review shall provide comments to ensure:

- The adequacy of the purpose and need statement, logical termini, independent utility, and project description;
- All project alternatives are adequately described to support anticipated project impacts and proposed avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures;
- All applicable State and federal laws, regulations and guidance documents have been adhered to relative to resource issues addressed in the ED;
- All resource discussions derived from technical studies and memoranda are accurately summarized in the ED.

The Environmental Branch Chief shall ensure that all required the appropriate staff members have completed quality control reviews.

Reviewer Qualifications: This review is to be conducted by the Environmental Branch Chief -the Senior Environmental Planner overseeing the environmental assessment unit of the planner who prepared the subject environmental document.

**Quality Control Plan**

The District/Region may elect to prepare a quality control plan to implement the Quality Control Program Review process. This EDQC policy memo shall control to the extent there is any conflict between this policy and any District/Region prepared quality control plan.

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<sup>2</sup> A list of those federal laws for which Caltrans is assuming the responsibilities of the FHWA can be found in the Pilot Program MOU

<sup>3</sup> The Standard Environmental Reference developed and maintained by Division of Environmental Analysis

### Quality Control Certification Forms

All staff personnel who have served as a reviewer on a project document shall sign a Quality Control Certification Form at the conclusion of their review of the ED. The reviewer's signature certifies that the ED meets professional standards and federal and State requirements in the reviewer's area of expertise and is consistent with the SER and annotated outlines. There are both an Internal Certification form and an External Certification form. The Internal Certification form is used for all EDs when Caltrans is NEPA lead agency.

The External Certification form is used for EDs prepared by a consultant or local agency. External quality control review is required for all such EDs. This review is to be performed by the consultant and local agency, if applicable, and documented on the External Certification form. All reviews on the form are to be completed: Technical Specialist Reviews and Technical Editor Review. The Environmental Consultant will certify that the ED is internally consistent and is in compliance with Caltrans and FHWA requirements and guidance, the Caltrans Division of Environmental Analysis Standard Environmental Reference (SER) and the current applicable SER ED annotated outline. For local assistance projects or projects on the SHS for which there is a local agency sponsor, the Local Agency will also sign the form certifying that the required quality control reviews shown above have been satisfactorily completed and that the ED meets all Caltrans and FHWA requirements. Following the external Quality Control review, the ED and supporting technical studies will be submitted to Caltrans for an abbreviated Quality Control review. The Caltrans review of externally prepared documents will consist of Technical Specialist Review, NEPA Quality Control Review, and Oversight Coordinator and Environmental Branch Chief review and certification. The Internal Certification Form will be used to document the Caltrans portion of the Quality Control review of these projects

Caltrans, as NEPA lead agency, will use the Internal Certification form and undergo the review specified in the Quality Control Program above for all EDs.



# INTERNAL CERTIFICATIONS ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT QUALITY CONTROL REVIEWS

Project Name: \_\_\_\_\_  Local Assistance  SHS  
 DIST-CO-RTE-PM: \_\_\_\_\_ EA: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Federal-Aid No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Document Type:  EA  EIS  IS  EIR  Draft  Final  
 District Local Assistance Engineer (DLAE): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Document Preparer or Oversight Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

**Technical Specialist Reviewers:** I have performed the required quality control review assigned to me and find that this environmental document satisfactorily meets State and federal requirements, as applicable, in my area of expertise and is consistent with the applicable technical study.

Type of Review	Reviewer (Print Name)	Reviewer's Signature	Verification Date
Check the box for each stand-alone technical study prepared for the environmental document; technical specialist review is only required for each resource topic with a stand-alone technical study.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Biology	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> CIA	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Visual	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous Waste	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Floodplain	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Water Quality	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Noise	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Traffic	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Peer Reviewer*</b>	_____	_____	_____
<b>Technical Edit Reviewer</b>	_____	_____	_____

\* Peer reviewer cannot have participated in or supervised the development of the environmental document, prepared a technical study for the project, or performed technical specialist review of the environmental document.  
 Required signatures may appear on multiple versions of this form to allow concurrent reviews by specialists, peer, and technical editor.

**Draft and Final Environmental Document/Section 4(f):** I have reviewed this document and find that it complies with FHWA policies and guidance and the requirements of all applicable federal laws, executive orders, and regulations.  
**Section 4(f) Finding/Evaluation:** None  De minimis  Programmatic  Individual   
 **Final Environmental Document only:** Public review comments have been appropriately addressed.  
 NEPA QC Reviewer:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Print Name Signature Date

I have reviewed this environmental document and find that it is internally consistent and was prepared consistent with the applicable SER annotated environmental document outline. I also find that this document was distributed to the internal PDT for review.

**Environmental Document Preparer/Oversight Coordinator:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Print Name Signature Date

I have reviewed this environmental document and find that the required quality control reviews shown above have been satisfactorily completed and that the environmental document meets all Caltrans and FHWA requirements.

**Chief, Environmental Branch** (signed only after all other QC signatures are gathered):

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Print Name Signature Date

Date form sent to project file \_\_\_\_\_

## EXTERNAL CERTIFICATIONS ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT QUALITY CONTROL REVIEWS

**Project Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  Local Assistance  SHS  
**DIST-CO-RTE-PM:** \_\_\_\_\_ **EA:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Federal-Aid No.:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Document Type:**  EA  EIS  IS  EIR  Draft  Final  
**District Local Assistance Engineer (DLAE):** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Local Agency:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Contact:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone No:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Caltrans Oversight Coordinator:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Environmental Consultant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Contact:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone No:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Technical Specialist Reviewers:** I have performed the required quality control review assigned to me and find that this environmental document satisfactorily meets State and federal requirements, as applicable, in my area of expertise and is consistent with the applicable technical study.

Type of Review	Reviewer (Print Name)	Reviewer's Signature	Verification Date
Check the box for each stand-alone technical study prepared for the environmental document; technical specialist review is only required for each resource topic with a stand-alone technical study.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Biology	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> CIA	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Visual	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous Waste	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Floodplain	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Water Quality	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Noise	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Traffic	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Section 4(f)	_____	_____	_____
(check one) <input type="checkbox"/> De minimis* <input type="checkbox"/> Programmatic <input type="checkbox"/> Individual			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Technical Edit Reviewer</b>	_____	_____	_____

\*Signature also required for Section 4(f) de minimis finding.  
 Required signatures may appear on multiple versions of this form to allow concurrent reviews by specialists and technical editor.

I have reviewed this environmental document and find that it is internally consistent and was prepared consistent with the applicable SER annotated environmental document outline and meets all Caltrans and FHWA requirements.

**Environmental Consultant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name Signature

I find that the required quality control reviews shown above have been satisfactorily completed and that the environmental document meets all Caltrans and FHWA requirements.

**Local Agency:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name Signature

Date form sent to project file \_\_\_\_\_