

Environmental Questionnaire

Instructions: Complete the Environmental Questionnaire and include it, along with any supplemental information (e.g., maps, environmental review documents), in Schedule Q of your loan application.

Any project-related activity that may adversely affect the environment must not be undertaken prior to the completion of the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) environmental review process. Doing so may jeopardize consideration of your application. All of the following questions must be completed. If a question is not applicable, please enter "N/A" instead of leaving the section blank.

Note: Applicants may submit a copy of any environmental review document that has been prepared in connection with obtaining permits, approvals, or other financing for the proposed project from state, local, or other federal agencies. Such material, to the extent relevant, may be used to meet the requirements herein. To facilitate a timely review of your application, applicants shall not reference items provided in other parts of the application package; all materials relevant to this questionnaire must be integrated in Schedule Q. Again failure to do so will delay or jeopardize the consideration of your application.

i. Project Description and Location:

Describe **ALL** project-related construction activities, including, but not limited to:

1. The construction and installation of buried or aerial cable (e.g. method of cable construction, the number of route miles, and how many miles are buried vs. aerial construction, number of cabinets/pedestals/handholds with approximate dimensions, whether all or part of the project is to be located on or within previously disturbed road rights-of-ways); and
2. Installation of telecommunications transmission facilities including construction of new tower sites, satellite dishes, and equipment collocations on existing towers and/or structures. Indicate whether any of the facilities will use Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licensed spectrum; and
3. Building construction, including installation of prefabricated buildings, internal modifications, or equipment additions to buildings or other structures (e.g., relocating interior walls or adding computer facilities).

Complete descriptions and locations, if known, must be provided for each site affected by project-related construction activities. If project locations are unknown please state so.

ii. Maps:

Include a map (or maps) that show the location of all project construction activities known at the time of application (recommend U.S. Geological Survey 7.5-minute quadrangle maps at a map scale of 1:24,000; larger scale maps may be provided for site-

specific proposals). USGS maps may be obtained and purchased at USGS's [website](#). All project elements, if known at the time of the application, must be clearly depicted on any map provided. If appropriate, photographs or aerial photographs of site-specific proposals may be provided.

iii. **Property Changes:**

Describe and indicate the amount of property to be cleared, excavated, fenced, or otherwise disturbed for each site affected by construction.

1. Describe the current land use and zoning for all lands disturbed by project construction activities.
2. Determine and document whether the proposed project, or any project component, is within the bounds of a park, forest lands, wildlife refuge, or management area owned or managed by the federal government. If so, identify each applicable federal agency and describe the proposed construction activities within each federally owned or managed area. For information related to federal lands see Bureau of Land Management's [website](#). This website provides cadastral survey and land management information and data from the National Integrated Land System specifically the distribution of the Public Land Survey System (PLSS), other survey-based data, and federal land boundaries. State land boundary information may be obtained through state government websites or sources.
3. Determine and document if any project components are located on *tribal lands*, meaning lands within the exterior boundaries of any Indian reservation and all dependent Indian communities or on Indian allotment lands. If so, identify the applicable tribe and describe the proposed construction activities within tribal lands. For information related to tribal lands see the following websites – http://rockyweb.cr.usgs.gov/outreach/mapcatalog/images/culture/indian_land_areas_11x14.pdf and <http://www.nps.gov/nagpra/DOCUMENTS/ResMap.htm>

iv. **Wetlands:**

Determine and describe whether wetlands are present on or near the project site(s) affected by construction. Maps of wetlands may be obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wetland Inventory [website](#) or from soil maps obtained from the USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service's [website](#) (NRCS maps provide delineations of hydric soil areas that are indicative of potential wetland areas). Wetland information may be obtained from state agencies in those states that have such resources.

v. **Threatened and Endangered Species:**

Determine and describe whether any project site(s) or activities will directly or indirectly affect any threatened, endangered or candidate species or is within or near critical habitats. To document the analysis, applicants must provide species lists and appropriate species accounts obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's [website](#) for each county affected by construction of the project.

vi. **Floodplains:**

Determine and describe whether or not any facilities or sites are located within a 100-year floodplain. Information related to floodplains and National Flood Insurance Maps may be obtained from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) [website](#). If any project-related construction activities are within floodplains, a copy of the FEMA, "FIRMette" with construction activities depicted on the map must be included. For obtaining FIRMettes review the tutorial provided by [FEMA](#).

vii. **Historic Properties:**

Provide a list of historic properties that have been listed on the [National Register of Historic Properties](#) (NRHP) including [National Historic Landmarks](#) and any properties, if known, that have religious and cultural significance to Indian tribes located within a quarter mile radius of the project area. Information related to such resources can be obtained from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in your respective State - see the [website](#) of the National Conference of SHPO; and

Describe how identified historic properties may be affected or impacted by the proposed construction activities (e.g. possible disturbance to archaeological sites, visual effects of tower construction).

Identify Indian tribes that may have an interest in your project area. Information regarding historic properties located on tribal lands may be obtained from the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) or the tribe's official representative for historic preservation [website](#). For further information see the following resources: [HUD Tribal Directory Assessment Tool](#), [2011 Tribal Directory](#), and the [NPS Native American Consultation Database](#).

viii. **Coastal Areas:**

Determine whether or not the project is within the boundaries of a coastal zone management area (CZMA). For boundary and contact information related to CZMA, see the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management's [website](#).

ix. **Brownfields:**

Determine whether the project is located within a brownfield site. Per 42 U.S.C. 9601, the term "brownfield site" means real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Maps and locations of sites, facilities and properties that have been contaminated by hazardous materials and are being, or have been, cleaned up under USEPA's Superfund, RCRA and/or brownfields cleanup programs can be found at this website.

Detailed Instructions for Completing the Environmental Questionnaire

RUS uses your completed Environmental Questionnaire (EQ) to identify the potential environmental impacts of proposed projects and determine the level of environmental review required to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Endangered Species Act, and other related requirements, as referenced in the EQ and RUS's Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR 1794). You are requested to plan your project to avoid or minimize any adverse environmental impacts. Doing so not only meets the intent of federal environmental policy goals, but will allow for timely reviews and completion of the agency's environmental review process.

The environmental issues of concern for RUS project activities include the potential to adversely affect or convert wetlands from non-linear actions, floodplains, threatened and endangered species, avifauna including migratory birds and bats, and historic properties. Historic property means any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places maintained by the Secretary of the Interior.

It is important to understand that the above-referenced environmental review requirements are not unique to RUS-funded activities. In accordance with the President's Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) implementing regulations for NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500); all federal agencies must independently review and assess each proposal's potential to impact the human environment, including cultural resources and historic properties. Consequently, you must prepare and submit appropriate environmental information so that RUS can take into account the full scope and potential environmental impacts of all project-related activities that are requesting financial assistance

The EQ contains a list of 9 questions or items that require determinations and responses, most of which require supporting documentation and maps to allow the agency to independently verify the accuracy of the submitted information. Specific instructions are contained under each item in the EQ and will not be repeated here. All of the EQ items must be completed or the application may be considered incomplete. If an item is not applicable, please enter "N/A" instead of leaving the section blank.

Below are supplemental requests and additional guidance for each item, to be used in your response.

- i. **Project Description and Location** - To avoid delays in the review, this description must accurately discuss ALL construction-related activities proposed in the application. For all buildings or structures, you must provide accurate dimensions and complete descriptions of proposed construction and/or modifications.
- ii. **Map** - If possible, locations of all proposed activities must be indicated and clearly depicted on each map submitted. If specific locations of project components are

unknown, then proposed service area territories must be delineated on any map(s) created. The map is required in order to verify locations of the proposed construction activities or service territories and will assist RUS in making the environmental determinations it is required to make under federal laws. More than one map may be necessary in order to convey the information required to facilitate the review.

- iii. **Property Changes** - No additional guidance is offered for this item; the instructions on the EQ are self-explanatory.
- iv. **Wetlands** - If a project occurs in or near, or has the potential to affect, a wetland, applicants must provide additional information, such as maps or documentation of whether any permits or correspondence with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) or other responsible federal or state agencies have been obtained or will be necessary. For buried cabling, state whether a USACE Nationwide Permit will be used.
- v. **Threatened and Endangered Species** - In addition to the link provided in the EQ, it may be useful to visit the USFWS webpage for general information related to Endangered Species Act [requirements](#). You can determine lists of species for each county affected by the proposed project by visiting this USFWS [website](#). If a threatened or endangered species is listed in the area, you may be required to assist in a consultation with the USFWS upon the award of your proposal. However, in the EQ, applicants must provide species information and determine whether any critical habitat crucial to those species is present and will be affected in the project area.
- vi. **Floodplains** - A FIRMette is a full-scale section of a FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map that you can create online and is formatted to fit on printers commonly found in offices. There is no cost for creating a FIRMette. Buildings or habitable structures within the 100-year floodplain must demonstrate compliance with local floodplain ordinances.
- vii. **Historic Properties** - The response must document actions you took to respond to this item and the information that was gathered. You must contact the appropriate State Historical Preservation Officer/Tribal Historical Preservation Officer (SHPO/THPO) as soon as possible. All responses or comments received from the SHPO/THPO must be submitted with the EQ. RUS will evaluate the submitted information in order to determine how to conclude the review process (Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), 16 U.S.C. § 470f, and its implementing regulations, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR Part 800)). If the SHPO/THPO is not forthcoming with information, then you should state this fact in your response, including the date when the SHPO/THPO was contacted.
- viii. **Coastal Areas** - State coastal zone management (CZM) programs that have received approval from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

(NOAA) may review any proposed federal assistance to a state or local government entity for an activity that is listed in the state's management program as a type of activity that will (a) have a reasonably foreseeable effect on any coastal use or resource, and (b) occur within the coastal zone (see 15 CFR 930.95(a)) or within a described geographic area outside of the coastal zone (see 15 CFR 930.95(b)). You must provide to the state's CZM office a copy of the application along with a brief evaluation of the relationship of the proposed project and its reasonably foreseeable coastal effects to the enforceable policies of the state's management program. However, these requirements only apply to Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance (<https://www.cfda.gov/>) funds that each coastal state has specifically listed that it wants to review for consistency purposes.

You should consult with the state as to whether RUS funds are listed for review. If the state agency responsible for consistency reviews intends to review the project, then you are obligated to notify RUS. In this instance, RUS will not approve the release of federal funds until the state agency completes the federal consistency review and concurs that the project is consistent with the enforceable policies of the state's CZM program.

- ix. **Brownfields** - If a proposed project is located within a brownfield site, then you should contact the appropriate federal/state regulatory authority responsible for environmental contamination from releases of hazardous substances to determine whether there are any land use restrictions or regulations regarding development of the site. If there are restrictions, then you must provide that information in the application along with an analysis of how any such restriction could affect the proposed project whether short or long-term,

a) Resources

Should you have any questions, or need advice or help in understanding and complying with the RUS environmental review process, feel free to contact RUS:

Mark S. Plank, Director
Engineering and Environmental Staff
Rural Utilities Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Mail Stop 1571, Room 2242
Washington, DC 20250
Phone 202-720-1649
Fax: 202-690-0649

List of Internet Environmental and Historic Preservation Resources

Resource	Website
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) for guidance on the Section 106 review	http://www.achp.gov
Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Web site (U.S. Department of the Interior [DOI]) for issues related to government managed lands	http://www.geocommunicator.gov/GeoComm/fedland/home/index.html
White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Web site for guidance on NEPA issues	http://www.whitehouse.gov/ceq
CEQ NEPA site, NEPANet for guidance and information concerning environmental review process	http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/nepanet.htm
EPA Regional Office Contacts	http://www.epa.gov/epahome/regions.htm
FEMA Regional Offices for regional information related to flood plain development issues	http://www.fema.gov/about/contact/regions.shtm
Local Emergency Planning Committee Database Web site (for hazardous materials)	http://yosemite.epa.gov/oswer/lepddb.nsf/HomePage
National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (NATHPO) Web site	http://www.nathpo.org/THPO/state_list.htm
National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO) contact information	http://www.ncshpo.org/stateinfolist/fulllist.htm
National Register of Historic Places Web site	http://www.nps.gov/nr
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Zone Management Program for information on coastal development issues	http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/programs/czm.html
USDA Web site	http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome
USDA National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Web site	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site (U.S. DOI) for issues related to Endangered Species	http://www.fws.gov/endangered/
U.S. Forest Service (USDA) for Issues Related Special Use Permits	http://www.fs.fed.us/specialuses/
USACE Wetlands Information	http://www.usace.army.mil/CECW/Pages/reg_perm_it.aspx
USACE Wetlands Delineation Manual	http://www.fedcenter.gov/Bookmarks/index.cfm?id=6403
USDA RUS Environmental Review Information	http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/UWP-environmental.htm