



# Environmental Deep Dive

USDA RUS ReConnect Program

# Agenda

- Environmental Requirements
- NEPA Review
- Sites and Routes
- Environmental Questionnaires (EQs)
- Environmental Documents
- Additional Information
- Tips and Post-Award Requirements

# Environmental Requirements



# Getting Started

- Submission on project maps or site plans are required to identify cable routes, building locations, tower locations, equipment locations and all structures and facilities that are part of the project. The default buffer is set to 25 feet.
- **DO NOT START** consultation without first speaking with RUS Telecom Division staff. You can reach out through the "Contact Us" link in the application with any questions.
  - Expanding use of .53 authority for "No Potential" determinations per Secs. 7 ESA and 106 NHPA.
  - Not requiring initiation of coordination prior to application submission.

# ReConnect Program Requirements

1. Applicants must adhere to Federal environmental laws, statutes, regulations, and Executive Orders found in 7 CFR 1970 and supply required environmental authorizations and permits
  - National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)
  - National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) – Section 106
  - Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA)
  - +40 additional laws and regulations
2. Applicants must provide completed Environmental Questionnaires (EQs) including the following:
  - Site/Route Questionnaire
  - Project Questionnaire
  - NHPA Section 106 Project Questionnaire

## ReConnect Program Requirements (continued)

3. It is the applicants' responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, tribal, state, and local governmental permits and approvals necessary for the proposed work to be constructed.
  - Permits are not required at the time the application is submitted.
  - However, we encourage pre-application meetings with land management agencies.
  - State laws may be more restrictive and time consuming than federal.
4. Applicants will be required to cooperate with the granting agencies in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts.
5. Expanding use of the National Programmatic Agreement (NPA) authority under ReConnect.

# Rural Development Environmental Requirements


- Regulations found at 7 CFR 1970 establish the policies and procedures to ensure that RUS complies with NEPA and other applicable environmental requirements.
  - Subpart B: Categorical Exclusions (CE)
  - Subpart H: Section 106 National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA)
  - Subpart N: Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA)
- The agency and all ReConnect applicants must comply with these regulations as well as more than 40 other statutes, Executive Orders, and regulations applicable to agency programs.
- The applicant is responsible for complying with state and local regulations.

# NEPA Review




# Project Tab – NEPA Review

- From the Application Navigation bar, select the “Project” section header. The Application Navigation Bar will expand. Next, select the “NEPA Review” hyperlink.

 **Application**  
101001727

Funding Type  
100% Grant

 **Project** Service Area(s) Network Financials Environmental Evaluation Criteria Licenses & Agreements Certifications Documents Summary/Submit

Project Information	Service Area(s) Information	Network Design	Local Network Services Revenue	Construction Map	Evaluation Criteria	Licenses & Agreements	Certifications	Manage Uploaded Documents	Summary/Submit
<b>NEPA Review</b>		Build-out Timeline and Milestones	Competitor Service Offerings	Site/Route Descriptions	Evaluation Criteria Summary		Certification Documents		
Project Documents		Capital Investment Workbook (CIW)	Depreciation Schedule	Environmental Questionnaire	Evaluation Criteria Documents				
		Capital Investment Schedule	Long-Term Debt Schedule	Environmental Documents					
		Network Documents							

# Project Tab – Required Level of NEPA Review

## Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Review

Rural Development has identified classes of actions and the level of environmental review required for applicant proposals and Agency actions in subparts B (CEs), C (EAs), and D (EISs) of 7CFR1970. These sections are available online at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/environmental-guidance>.

Is the proposed action one that Rural Development has identified as requiring an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (see 7CFR1970.151) or has an EIS been prepared due to the involvement of another federal agency?

\*

Yes



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



Is the proposed action one that Rural Development has identified as requiring an Environmental Assessment (EA) (see 7CFR1970.101) or has an EA been prepared due to the involvement of another federal agency?

\*

Yes



ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT



If a response of "Yes" is selected for either of the above questions, please contact the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) at [ReConnectEnvironmental@usda.gov](mailto:ReConnectEnvironmental@usda.gov) for further guidance. Have you contacted RUS?

\*

Yes



RUS EA/EIS CONSULTATION



Exit Without Saving

Save and Finish

# Sites and Routes



# Navigating to the Environmental Tab

Project	Service Area(s)	Network	Financials	Environmental	Evaluation Criteria	Licenses & Agreements	Certifications	Documents	Summary/Submit
Project Information NEPA Review Project Documents	Service Area(s) Information	Network Design Build-out Timeline and Milestones Capital Investment Workbook (CIW) Capital Investment Schedule Network Documents	Local Network Services Revenue Competitor Service Offerings Depreciation Schedule Long-Term Debt Schedule Amortization Schedule Non-Operating Net Income Plant-in-Service Schedule Network Access Services Revenue Income Statement Balance Sheet Statement of Cash Flow Financial Documents	Construction Map Site/Route Descriptions Environmental Questionnaire Environmental Documents	Evaluation Criteria Evaluation Criteria Summary Evaluation Criteria Documents	Licenses & Agreements	Certifications Certification Documents	Manage Uploaded Documents	Summary/Submit

## Environmental

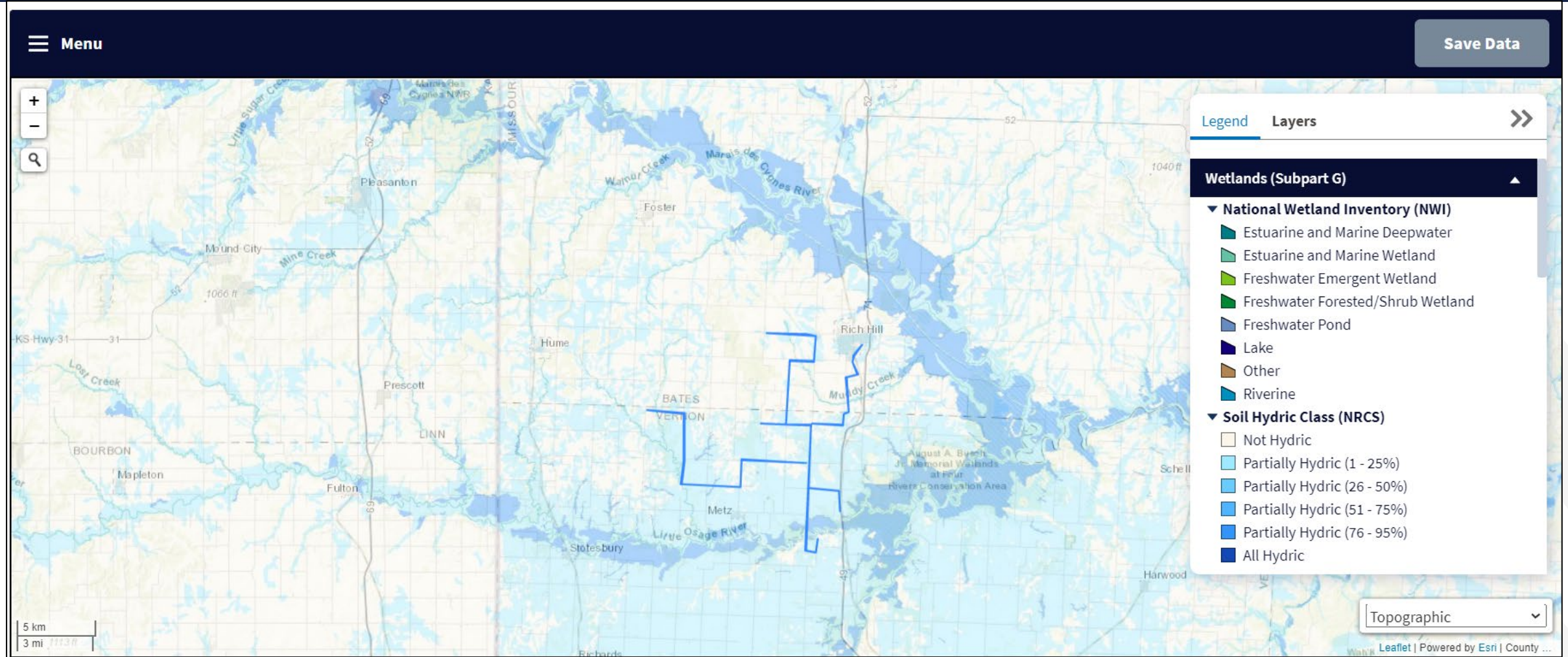
Construction Map

Site/Route Descriptions

Environmental Questionnaire

Environmental Documents

# Environmental Tab – Construction Map



# Environmental Tab – Construction Map

- An applicant draws their sites and routes on the **Construction Map**. Not the PFSA Map.
  - The maps should be drawn as accurately as possible as they will be used to complete your environmental review. Changes to design can later be handled as a scope change after initial approval.
  - Sites - assets such as new or existing facilities.
    - Pads: towers, huts, cabinets
    - Parking lots and access roads
  - Routes - all fiber being installed minus service connections to a subscriber.
  - A live demo of how to complete the construction map will be conducted during the upcoming ReConnect workshop.
- The map includes various environmental resource layers.
  - Flood Hazard Zones and National Wetlands Inventory layers, Historic and Cultural Resources, Critical Habitats, etc.
- Note: the resources seen as layers in the map will come up again in the EQs which reference specific subparts of the 7 CFR 1970.

# Understanding Site/Route Descriptions

- After all sites and routes and their respective shapes have been created via the Construction Map, applicants must enter descriptions for each site and route.
- Project site and route descriptions will specify the types of facilities to be built or upgraded at each location and the estimated environmental and regulatory impact from construction or installation activity.
- Applicants cannot enter a description for a site or route before it is created in the Construction Map.
- This section must be completed before the applicant begins the Environmental Questionnaire, or EQ section, because the information provided in this section will determine the requirements for the EQ section.

# Understanding Site/Route Descriptions (continued)

- Accuracy and detail are key to an environmental approval.
- Applicants should create multiple routes to delineate different technology types, installation methods, and right-of-way requirements.
- Descriptions should specify the types of facilities to be built or upgraded at each location.
  - Descriptions will be used along with the EQs to determine the anticipated environmental and regulatory impact from construction or installation activity
- The information submitted in this section will determine the requirements for the EQ section.

The screenshot displays two sections: 'Site Descriptions' and 'Route Descriptions'. Each section contains a table with a blue header row labeled 'Name'. The 'Site Descriptions' table has two rows: 'site' and 'Site 2'. The 'Route Descriptions' table has two rows: 'route' and 'Route 2'. To the right of each row is an 'Edit Description' button, which is highlighted with a red rectangle. Below each table is a 'Number of rows' control set to 5.

Site Descriptions	
Name	
site	Edit Description
Site 2	Edit Description

Number of rows: 5

Route Descriptions	
Name	
route	Edit Description
Route 2	Edit Description

Number of rows: 5

# Site Description

## site Assets

Please describe the access road(s)/parking lot(s), building(s), cabinet(s), and tower(s) that are currently or will be located at this site. If the asset type is a “cabinet” but is akin to a [handhold](#), it does not need to be drawn on the Construction Map. Only [large enclosure cabinets](#) need to be drawn on the map.

### Buildings

Name		
test	<a href="#">Describe</a>	<a href="#">Delete</a>

Number of rows 5

[« Prev](#) [1](#) [Next »](#)

## New Asset Section

NAME: \*

TYPE: \*

[Return To Previous Page](#)

[Add and Continue](#)

# Route Description

Is the proposed route located on or does it cross Tribal Land(s) as identified in the Tribal Lands layer of the construction map? Only answer "Yes" if the American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Area (AIANNHA) Census Code for that area falls within 0000 - 4990.

\*

No



Is the proposed route located on or does it cross Federally Managed Land(s) as identified in the Formally Classified Lands layer of the construction map? \*

No



Is the route New or Upgrading / rebuilding existing telecommunication facilities? \*

- ☐ New
- ☒ Upgrading/Rebuilding

Is the route in a previously-developed, existing right-of-way? (Select all that apply) \*

- ☒ Yes. The Route will be in a previously-developed, existing Right-of-Way
- ☐ No, a new right-of-way or easement will be required
- ☐ No, but area is already in or committed to urbanized development as characterized by a highly disturbed environment with human-built features

What is the installation method? (Select all that apply) \*

- ☒ Plowed
- ☒ Bored
- ☐ Open Trench
- ☐ Existing Conduit Systems
- ☐ Existing Ducts
- ☐ Aerial Cables on Existing Poles
- ☐ Aerial Cables on New Poles
- ☐ Underwater

Plowed Miles: \*

28

Bored Miles: \*

# Environmental Questionnaires (EQs)



# Environmental Tab – Environmental Questionnaires

☒ By checking the box, I affirm that I have completed the Construction Map and affiliated Site/Route Descriptions. While checked, all mapping tools will lock for completion of the below EQs. To edit either the Service Area Map, the Construction Map, and/or Site/Route Descriptions, uncheck the box. Changing the information provided on the previous pages may result in changes to the requirements for the EQs.

**Do not complete the NHPA Section 106 Environmental Questionnaire or initiate the Section 106 process at this time** unless the S106 process has already been initiated with Tribes, the State Historic Preservation Office, or other interested parties. Please reach out to RUS by submitting a question through [Contact Us](#) before proceeding with initiating S106 process. The proposed actions identified in the Site/Route Description section of this application could require completion of the Section 106 process.

One Project Level EQ should be completed for the entire project and a Site/Route EQ should be completed for each site or route. All Site/Route EQs should be completed first as those answers will be used to identify requirements in the Project Level EQ. Download the Project Level EQ and Site/Route EQ below.

Site/Route Environmental Questionnaire

Project Environmental Questionnaire

NHPA Section 106 Environmental Questionnaire

Save

# Environmental Tab – Site/Route Environmental Questionnaire

- Captures the appropriate environmental information for each proposed Site and Route.
- A few things to keep in mind when completing the Site/Route EQs:
  - This is going to be what is reviewed for environmental. Accuracy is key.
  - The information contained in the Site/Route EQ must be consistent with the Construction Map and the site/route descriptions.
  - Site/Route EQs are based on the different layers contained within the Construction Map.
  - When completing the EQs applicants should ensure that the appropriate layers are selected and visible in the Construction Map.
  - User errors in the Construction Map will likely cause the EQs to be completed incorrectly and may lead to RUS finding the application to be ineligible.

# Environmental Tab – Accessing Endangered Species Information for Sites and Routes

- Applicants must review the official list of endangered species for each site or route to complete the EQ.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information Planning and Consultation (IPaC) Tool opens in another browser tab.
  - Applicants will have to create a free account to access the IPaC Tool
  - Projects occurring in water or in proximity to water should obtain lists from the appropriate NOAA Fisheries office
  - Complete Subpart N Special Status Plant and Wildlife Species Table for known listed species identified.

Note: Applicants must have an account with USFWS first **before** being able to obtain the official species list for their overlapping areas

# Environmental Tab – Project EQ

- Captures the appropriate environmental information for the overall proposed project
- A few things to keep in mind when completing the Project EQ:
  - The Site/Route EQs inform the responses to the Project EQs.
  - Certain circumstances will require multiple Project EQs:
    - E.g. If a project had construction in two geographically unrelated areas with environmental impacts that are different in each location.
    - E.g. If there are multiple service areas in an application, applicants may need to fill out a Project EQ for each service area if they are non-contiguous or geographically dissimilar.
  - Making changes to your service areas will affect your Project EQs. Complete the Service Area(s) tab of the application before starting on the Environmental section of the application.

# Environmental Tab – NHPA Section 106 EQ

- The application system includes several built-in validations that help determine whether applicants are required to complete a NHPA Section 106 EQ
  - If prompted to fill out this EQ, it does not mean that you should start the Section 106 Process. Please wait for RUS Telecom guidance before proceeding with Section 106.
  - Desktop or Heritage Reviews are recommended but not required for the application.
- This EQ consists of Section 106 questions that will be used to review your application for environmental purposes.
- RUS will advise on starting the Section 106 process at the appropriate time.
- **RUS will be responsible for initiating all consultation through the Awardee.**

# Environmental Documents



# Environmental Tab – Environmental Documents

- In the Environmental Documents subsection of the Environmental Tab, applicants can upload environmental documents, including EQs as part of the application.
- Applicants can view, download, delete, and replace all documents previously uploaded within the Environmental sections.
  - RUS cannot retrieve deleted environmental documents for an applicant. This action cannot be reversed.
- Applicants should complete the Construction Map, the Site/Route descriptions and the EQs before uploading environmental documents.
- While a survey is not required prior to submission, a desktop review of the proposed routes may be appropriate if you are confident that Section 106 consultation will likely occur.

## Environmental Tab – Environmental Documents (continued)

- Applicants may be requested to submit additional environmental documentation after submission on a case-by-case basis.
  - If additional information is requested, the applicant will have up to 30 calendar days to respond to RUS.
  - If additional information is required after an application is accepted for funding, funds can be withheld by the Agency under a special award condition requiring the Awardee to submit additional environmental compliance information.

# Additional Information



## 1970.53 Categorical Exclusions

- Actions that normally only require minimal environmental documentation, as long as the Agency doesn't find a potential for extraordinary circumstances.
- Actions in this section may be determined to require no further review under 36 CFR part 800 because they have no potential to cause effect to historic properties.
- Actions in this section may be determined to have no effect to listed threatened or endangered species.

## 1970.53 Actions

- **C (8)** New utility [service](#) connections to individual users or construction of utility lines or associated components where the applicant has no control over the placement of the utility facilities;
  - **Note:** This would include drops to subscribers.
- **D (1)** Upgrading or rebuilding existing telecommunication facilities (both wired and wireless) or addition of aerial cables for communication purposes to electric power lines that would not affect the environment beyond the previously-developed, existing rights-of-way;
- **D (2)** Burying [new facilities](#) for communication purposes in **previously developed, existing rights-of-way and in areas already in or committed to urbanized development** or rural settlements whether incorporated or unincorporated that are characterized by high human densities and within contiguous, highly disturbed environments with human-built features. **Covered actions include associated vaults** and pulling and tensioning sites outside rights-of-way in nearby previously disturbed or developed land;

## 1970.53 Actions (continued)

- **D (3) Changes to electric transmission lines that involve pole replacement** or structural components only where either the same or substantially equivalent support structures at the **approximate** existing support structure locations are used; and
- **D (5) Collocation of [telecommunications](#) equipment on existing infrastructure** and deployment of distributed antenna systems and small cell networks provided the latter technologies are not attached to and will not cause adverse effects to historic properties.

## 1970.54 Categorical Exclusions With Report

- **§ 1970.54 CEs involving small-scale development with an environmental report.**
- Contact the RUS Telecom staff prior to starting an ER as templates are available.
- Construction of telecommunications towers and associated facilities, if the towers and associated facilities are 450 feet or less in height and would not be in or visible from an area of documented scenic value.
- Installation of new linear telecommunications facilities and related equipment and infrastructure.
- Construction or repair of roads, streets, and sidewalks, including related structures such as curbs, gutters, storm drains, and bridges, in an existing right-of-way with minimal change in use, size, capacity, purpose, or location from the original infrastructure.
- **The Agency's review may determine that classification as an EA or an EIS is more appropriate than a CE classification.**

# Extraordinary Circumstances?

- Extraordinary Circumstances – 1970.52
  - Extraordinary circumstances are unique situations presented by specific proposals, such as characteristics of the geographic area affected by the proposal, scientific controversy about the environmental effects of the proposal, uncertain effects or effects involving unique or unknown risks, and unresolved conflicts concerning alternate uses of available resources within the meaning of section 102(2)(E) of NEPA.
  - An adverse effect to environmental resources on the CE checklist (e.g., NHPA, ESA, CWA).
  - In the event of extraordinary circumstances, a normally excluded action will be the subject of an additional environmental review by the Agency to determine the potential effects.

That's Extraordinary!

# Environmental EQ's Formally Classified Land

## Formally Classified Lands (Subpart L):

Contact that land's managing agency to obtain permission to proceed.

- 1) Does the applicant have a special use permit to construct on the Formally Classified Lands for the applicable managing agency or agencies?

- ☐ NO Please contact RUS using the Contact Us page (available at this link: <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us>) and describe the project. Additional information may be requested by RUS at the time the application is reviewed.
- ☐ YES Applicants must contact the formally classified lands' managing agency(s) to ensure that the permit they have in place is applicable for the proposed project.

- 2) Have the appropriate managing agency or agencies been contacted?

- ☐ NO Applicants must contact the formally classified lands' managing agency and upload evidence of that correspondence to the Environmental Documents section of this application.
- ☐ YES Upload copies of all correspondence to and from the managing agency or agencies – along with any required mitigating measures – to the Environmental Documents section of this application.

**Formally Classified Lands (Subpart L):** Use the **Formally Classified Lands** layer available in the construction map in conjunction with local resources or maps that indicate state and local municipally-managed lands to determine overlap with formally classified lands. A detailed list of areas considered Formally Classified Lands can be found in RD Instruction 1970 – Subpart L – Land Use and Formally Classified Lands (available at this link: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/1970I.pdf>).

Will the proposed action occur within or adjacent to any Formally Classified Lands?

- ☐ NO The Formally Classified Lands review for this project is complete.
- ☐ YES [Formally Classified Lands \(Subpart L\)](#) under the Detailed Environmental Responses section must be completed by the applicant.

# Environmental EQ's - ESA

## Special Status Plant and Wildlife Species Table Guidance:

**Special Status Plant and Wildlife Species Identified as Potentially Occurring in the Project Vicinity Table**

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	Critical Habitat* Present?	Critical Habitat	Description of Suitable Habitat* (Cite source)	Potential for Occurrence (is suitable habitat present)	Explain reasoning for selected Potential for Occurrence (Cite sources)	Proposed Finding of Effect	Explain reasoning for Proposed Determination (Cite Source)

- Cross-reference the species information gained through your research with your knowledge of the project site or route to determine listed species' home range, presence, or designated habitat. Engage federal land managers where applicable.
- Where ESA listed species or habitats occur within project area or area of potential effects, consult with a qualified biologist to begin informal or formal consultation with the ESA jurisdictional agency. Consider project design strategies and mitigation to minimize impacts to listed species.
- A qualified biologist will propose a Finding of Effect(s) to listed species and complete the table (NLAA, LAA).

# Environmental EQ's Wetland

- Use the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) layer available in the construction map to determine potential impact to a wetland.
  - Note: some areas may need wetland delineation where evidence of wetlands exist but not mapped. Consult with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in those cases.
- **Is the applicant's proposed action located in a wetland?**
  - Does the applicant's proposed action have the potential to be affect a wetland?
  - Does the applicant's proposed action have the potential to be affected by a wetland?
  - What kind of permit is required to address wetland impacts? USACE individual, Nationwide/General, Local
- Practicable Alternatives: for each site that may impact a wetland, identify and evaluate practicable alternatives to locating the proposed action in the wetland.

# Environmental EQ's NHPA -106

- Identify Historic Properties: Review existing information on historic properties within the Area of Potential Effects (APE)
  - APE is defined as the area in which eligible properties may be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed project
  - Include listed or eligible properties or properties (includes sites/artifacts) that are at least 50 years old but have not been evaluated for eligibility.
  - Adverse Effect - if the project diminishes the integrity of a property's location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, then there is an adverse effect.
- The applicant is encouraged to consult a Cultural Resource Management (CRM) contractor to conduct identification efforts – including cultural resources surveys – desktop reviews and field surveys.
- Programmatic Agreements or Memorandums of Agreement may be utilized for NHPA compliance where necessary.

# Tips and Post-Award Requirements



# Tips for Success

- To avoid issues with uploading a shapefile in the construction map, ensure the shapefile complies with the following:
  - For Sites, the Shapefile can only include a single contiguous polygon.
  - For Routes, the Shapefile can include a single polygon or polyline, multi-part feature or multiple noncontiguous polygons and polylines.
  - The polygon(s) must be closed, non-overlapping, and must have an assigned projection with an accompanying .prj file.
  - The Shapefile must use an unprojected WGS84 Geographic Coordinate System.
  - The Shapefile must be submitted as a \*.zip file.
  - Please note, once a Route is initially uploaded, the width of the Route cannot be modified. Users may draw/upload additional segments to the Route and specify the width using the Edit Attribute tool on the map. **This will be covered in a live demo during the ReConnect workshop.**

# Tips for Success (continued)

- Sites and Routes may take a couple of minutes to upload. An upload status will appear at the top of the map. Avoid navigating away from the page while your site or route is uploading or saving.

The screenshot displays a web application interface for managing sites and routes. At the top, a navigation bar shows the current step: 'Project', followed by 'Service Area(s)', 'Network', 'Financials', 'Environmental', 'Evaluation Criteria', 'Licenses & Agreeme...', 'Certifications', 'Documents', and 'Summary/Submit'. Below this, a map is shown with a blue polygon representing a site. A progress bar at the top of the map area indicates 'Calculating Layer Intersections...' at 70%. To the right of the map, a sidebar titled 'Sites and Routes' contains a '+ Add Site or Route' button and lists existing sites and routes. The map also shows geographical features like 'Longford', 'Badger Creek', 'Chapman Creek', 'Basket Creek', 'McMurray Creek', 'Navajo Rd', 'Wakefield', and 'Quimby Creek'.

Funding Type  
100% Grant

Project Service Area(s) Network Financials Environmental Evaluation Criteria Licenses & Agreeme... Certifications Documents Summary/Submit

Menu

Calculating Layer Intersections... 70%

Processing...

Sites and Routes

+ Add Site or Route

Sites

- site
- Site 2

Routes

- route
- Route 2

## Tips for Success (continued)

- Clearly identify and describe sites, routes and proposed method of construction on the map.
- Understand and be aware of what environmental and historic resource areas the project will impact.
- Determine whether project activities can avoid impacting floodplains, wetlands, and other resources.
- Identify if the proposed project will require new rights-of-way, or if it can be built within existing rights-of-way.
- Build environmental costs into your budget, capped at 3% pre and 3% post award.
- **DO NOT START** Section 106 without agency recommendation.

## Tips for Success (continued)

- Routes should be as narrow as realistically possible. The default buffer for routes is set to a 25 ft construction corridor. Unless you are planning more than a 25ft disturbance corridor, use the default buffer.
- When creating a site be sure to clarify site disturbance i.e., site size versus hut or building size. We had several situations where the description was 50 feet in every direction for a pre-fab hut causing confusion and delays in the review. Site maps and drawing are useful for review purposes.
- An existing aerial route (owned by another utility) is not a new pole, do not choose new poles unless you know that a new pole line will be installed.
- If you are not clear on any portion of how to input or handle a situation reach out to RUS using “Contact Us” in the application portal and it will be routed to the appropriate staff. **DO NOT** guess or leave out details, it will delay review.

## Tips for Success (continued)

- A Right of Way (ROW) may be existing, disturbed or new.
- Examples of an existing ROW wholly owned by the applicant with previously present infrastructure; it could be buried or aerial.
- ROW that is owned by another entity, such as an electric co-op that the applicant is collocating on would be an existing ROW.
- Roadside ROW where there is existing disturbance, water, sewer, ditches, etc. would be an existing ROW. Sometimes justifications or additional details are required in order to know that your project will not go deeper than the previous disturbance.
- Account for Construction areas: Borrow sites, staging areas, etc.

# Post-Award Requirements

- Inform USDA if there are any deviations from the proposed project plan after staking the project and finalizing any engineering designs.
  - USDA must approve any change and will engage the appropriate parties as needed in order to clear the changes.
  - These will be handled by RUS Telecom staff as scope changes.
- Post award 3% environmental costs – scope changes, studies, monitoring, etc.
- If additional information is required after an application is accepted for funding, funds can be withheld by the agency under a special award condition requiring the Awardee to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient for the USDA to assess any impacts that a project may have on the environment.

# Available Resources

- **7 CFR 1970 – Title 07:** Agriculture at <https://ecfr.io/Title-07/pt7.14.1970>
  - Environmental Questionnaire hyperlinks to specific subparts of the 1970 Environmental Regulation
- **Application Guide (updated version coming soon):** <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/forms-and-resources>
- **Register for upcoming events:** <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/events>
- **ReConnect Website:** <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect>
- **Regulation:** <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-XVII/part-1740>
- **Contact Us:** <https://www.usda.gov/reconnect/contact-us>
- **FOA:** <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/08/04/2022-16694/rural-econnectivity-program>
- **General Field Representative (GFR) & State Office**
  - <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/telecom-gfr/all>
  - <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices>



