

# LESSONS LEARNED

*To better understand lessons learned during the NEPA process, Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance staff interviewed NEPA Compliance Officers, NEPA Document Managers, and contractors who recently completed environmental assessments (EAs). The two resulting articles below demonstrate how NEPA practitioners adapt to new information and challenges to help support DOE's decisionmaking.*

## Efforts to Identify Stakeholders and Address their Concerns Builds Trust in NEPA Process

During a 2-year delay after scoping had been completed for the Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA's) *Kalispell-Kerr Transmission Line Rebuild Project Environmental Assessment* (DOE/EA-1961; 2016), BPA staff took the opportunity to continue work with landowners to better accommodate farming and irrigation operations by adjusting the proposed location of access roads and wood pole structures. BPA realty specialists also utilized the extra time to identify the correct landowners for Indian tribal allotment lands. These steps helped save time and cost later in the NEPA process.



*The EA cover photo depicts the transmission line corridor.*

### Project Objectives

BPA owns and operates more than 15,000 circuit miles of high-voltage transmission lines in its service territory (Idaho, Oregon, Washington, western Montana and small parts of eastern Montana, California, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming). The transmission lines move most of the Northwest's

high-voltage power from facilities that generate the power to users throughout the region. The Federal Columbia River Transmission System Act directs BPA to provide safe and reliable power and transmission service to its customers.

*(continued on page 3)*

## Early Outreach to Permitting Agencies Speeds Up an EA

The U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) is the largest government-owned stockpile of emergency crude oil in the world. Established in the aftermath of the 1973–74 oil embargo, the SPR provides the President with a response option should a disruption in commercial oil supplies threaten the U.S. economy. It is also the critical component for the United States to meet its International Energy Agency obligation to maintain emergency oil stocks.

The Office of Fossil Energy maintains the readiness of the oil stockpile through equipment modernization and regular maintenance. To meet this objective, the SPR Project

Management Office (PMO) completed the *SPR Repair/Enhancement of Access to Remote Pipeline Valve Stations - West Hackberry EA* ("Remote Valve Station Access EA," DOE/EA-2040) in December 2016 to analyze proposed access improvements to four remote valve stations for the SPR pipeline in southwestern Louisiana.

### Project Objectives

Pipeline leaks and spills are managed through equipment located in valve stations at regular intervals along the pipeline

*(continued on page 4)*

## Inside *Lessons Learned*

Welcome to the 91<sup>st</sup> quarterly report on lessons learned in the NEPA process. This issue highlights lessons learned shared by a NEPA Document Manager, a NEPA Compliance Officer, and others involved in the completion of two recent EAs. Thank you for your continued support of the Lessons Learned program. As always, we welcome your suggestions for improvement.

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Brian Costner  
Acting Director  
Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance

## Be Part of Lessons Learned

### We Welcome Your Contributions to *LLQR*

Send suggestions, comments, and draft articles, especially case studies on successful NEPA practices, to Yardena Mansoor at [yardena.mansoor@hq.doe.gov](mailto:yardena.mansoor@hq.doe.gov).

### Quarterly Questionnaires Due August 1, 2017

For NEPA documents completed April 1 through June 30, 2017, NEPA Document Managers and NEPA Compliance Officers should submit a [Lessons Learned Questionnaire](#) as soon as possible after document completion, but not later than August 1. Other document preparation team members are encouraged to submit a questionnaire, too. Contact [askNEPA@hq.doe.gov](mailto:askNEPA@hq.doe.gov) for more information.

### *LLQR* Online

All issues of *LLQR* and the Lessons Learned Questionnaire are available on the DOE NEPA Website at [energy.gov/nepa](http://energy.gov/nepa). To be notified via email when a new issue is available, send your email address to [yardena.mansoor@hq.doe.gov](mailto:yardena.mansoor@hq.doe.gov). (DOE provides paper copies only on request.)

### Email Updates

Subscribe [here](#) to receive emails announcing the availability of DOE NEPA documents and notices on the DOE NEPA Website.

## 500 Cities Project Provides Local Health Data

Data about local health conditions may be helpful when characterizing the affected environment and potential health impacts in a NEPA review. A common example is the prevalence of asthma, which may be important to understanding potential impacts associated with particulate emissions, such as from a construction project. One source for this type of data is the [500 Cities Project: Local Data for Better Health](#).

The 500 Cities Project includes an interactive public website that provides city- and census tract-level estimates for 27 chronic disease measures for 500 cities in the United States. This project provides the “first-of-its kind data analysis to release information on a large scale for cities and for small areas within cities,” explains the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on the [project website](#).

The project includes data for the 497 largest U.S. cities and, to ensure that cities from all 50 states are included, also provides data from the largest cities in Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. The data includes [27 chronic disease measures](#) grouped into three categories: health outcomes, prevention,

and unhealthy behaviors. These data can be used to identify the health issues facing a city or neighborhood, identify emerging

health problems, establish health objectives, and develop and implement targeted prevention activities, CDC explains.

There are a few limitations to the data produced by the 500 Cities Project. CDC explains on the project website that the data can only compute estimates for adults 18 years old and over, and the initial release of the 500 Cities Project does not include any stratifications by race and ethnicity. Therefore, results from the 500 Cities Project may need to be supplemented with detailed local information, experience, and other resources.

The 500 Cities Project is a collaboration of CDC, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the CDC Foundation. 



### Builds Trust in NEPA Process *(continued from page 1)*

The 41-mile-long Kalispell-Kerr transmission line in rural Montana was constructed in 1947. To ensure system reliability and meet current industry standards, replacement of the transmission line was necessary. In addition, access roads were in poor condition; water controls such as culverts needed replacing; and overgrown vegetation needed clearing to ensure safe access to each transmission structure for ongoing maintenance and emergency repairs.

#### NEPA Strategy in Action

BPA NEPA Document Manager Justin Moffett was actively involved in the Kalispell-Kerr Transmission Line Rebuild Project from the beginning: forming the NEPA team, serving as the environmental compliance lead in larger meetings with management and the transmission line design team, drafting an initial schedule, and discussing strategy and next steps with BPA NEPA Compliance Officer Stacy Mason and the Public Affairs staff.

Even though public scoping is not required for EAs, Mr. Moffett recommended that BPA conduct two scoping meetings to ensure affected landowners and other interested members of the public were informed of and could provide comments on the proposed project. Landowners were generally supportive, he recalled, and they asked BPA staff to consider relocating transmission line pole structures to improve views and accommodate farming and irrigation practices, and relocate access roads farther from their houses to lessen noise and protect privacy.

The BPA design team honored requests when possible within the technical design constraints. To alleviate landowner concerns that all-terrain vehicle riders used access roads to trespass on private property, BPA incorporated additional gates along the access roads. Mr. Moffett noted that based on the outcome of the scoping process, BPA determined that no public hearings were needed for the draft EA – a decision that saved BPA time and money.

#### Work Continued with Funding Restrictions

BPA normally initiates the NEPA process for a transmission line project when design is 30–50 percent complete. Due to capital funding constraints resulting from construction delays on other transmission projects, BPA postponed planning and construction for the Kalispell-Kerr project for one year. The project was delayed a second year due to the process to implement Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. While the lack of funding necessitated that the design and survey work temporarily stop, the realty, tribal consultation, and environmental review processes continued.

Realty specialists were responsible for contacting hundreds of landowners to secure permission to enter property to complete environmental surveys. Old and inaccurate records delayed the identification of the correct landowners, particularly on tribal lands. About 14 miles of the project, affecting approximately 155 acres, passes through the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' Flathead Indian Reservation. Realty specialists worked with the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs to identify the tribal landowners necessary to secure permission to enter the property to complete survey work.

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*BPA's transmission lines need to stay compatible with the public, private, and tribal lands they cross. So when it comes to issues such as changing land use, which is not addressed in a formal regulatory process, the NEPA review provides a way for the public to make known their issues of concern. BPA can then document in the EA how this information influenced the decisionmaking process, which ultimately builds trust between BPA and its stakeholders.*

— Justin Moffett, NEPA Document Manager, BPA

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#### Tribal Land Ownership

Identifying landowners on tribal lands can be particularly complicated due to the legacy of the General Allotment Act of 1887. The Act's purpose was to reduce collective land ownership on tribal lands by authorizing the survey and division of certain tribal lands into 40 to 160 acre parcels (or allotments) for individual Indians. Initially, federal law did not provide a mechanism for allottees to transfer their ownership upon death (i.e., through will), and even when this changed in 1910, few did so because of unfamiliarity with property law. Therefore, when the allottee died, default state intestate succession rules applied, which provided that each of their heirs inherited an equal, undivided share of ownership, meaning each heir had an equal right to use of the entire property. According to the Department of the Interior, this resulted in smaller and smaller undivided interests descending to successive generations. Many allotments now have hundreds and even thousands of individual owners. In order to make decisions regarding the use of a given tract of fractionated land, a required percentage of individual owners must consent to the decision. [See: <https://www.doioig.gov/sites/doioig.gov/files/WR-EV-BIA-0002-2010Public.pdf> and <https://www.doi.gov/buybackprogram/FAQ>]

## Lessons Learned from Recent NEPA Reviews

### Builds Trust in NEPA Process *(continued from previous page)*

Another process that benefited from the additional time was the tribal consultation. The Tribes initially suggested that they undertake the cultural resources surveys themselves. However, after discussions regarding tribal staff capacity to conduct the work, BPA hired a private consultant that tribal staff accompanied during the surveys.

BPA staff also used the additional time to resolve the substantive issues prior to completing the draft EA. Changes in response to comments on the draft EA were minor, and BPA was able to issue an abbreviated final EA consistent with an approach described in Council on Environmental Quality NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1503.4(c)).

“BPA considers whether an abbreviated final [EA] is appropriate on a case-by-case basis,” explained Ms. Mason. An abbreviated final EA saves time and money, she said, and often can be easier for both the decisionmaker and the public

to review as “it is straight to the point on what minor changes were made.” However, even if changes from the draft are minor, she continued, “there are some documents in which a full final [EA] works better.” She offered as an example that a complete document incorporating all changes can be an easier reference to use during a project with a long construction timeframe.

Mr. Moffett explained that retaining key NEPA contractor staff over the course of the project proved difficult not only because of the lengthy timeframe, but also because the initial contractor merged with another firm. Mr. Moffett noted that by the time the NEPA process was finished, there had been four different contractor project managers. While working with new contractor staff to orient them to the project takes additional time for BPA staff, Mr. Moffett stated that such situations are unavoidable and are handled as best as one can. **LL**

### Remote Valve Station Access EA *(continued from page 1)*

route. Valve stations contain block valves, which can isolate a section of the pipeline for maintenance; devices that collect information about valve function, line pressure, and rate of flow; automatic leak-detection systems; and alarms that communicate the information to a central location in real time. Safe and unobstructed access to the valve stations is necessary for DOE personnel to conduct field inspections, regular maintenance, and emergency repairs.

The four remote valve stations evaluated in the EA are located adjacent to, and are only accessible from, the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and walking paths overgrown with vegetation. The valve stations are located on elevated spoil banks created by the construction of the waterway, where access was difficult



*The Office of Fossil Energy prepared an EA to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of proposed access improvements to four remote valve stations of the SPR pipeline that are only accessible from the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.*

and potentially hazardous for DOE personnel. Shallow water during low-water seasons, along with siltation and submerged rocks, presented navigational hazards. Due to continuing land loss and shoreline erosion, water often inundated walking paths to the valve stations located in the tidally influenced marshlands, resulting in uncertain footing.

The Remote Valve Station Access EA evaluated proposed actions to improve access to the valve stations by constructing elevated, galvanized steel boat landings and walkways connecting to walking paths that would be cleared of overgrown vegetation and resurfaced with gravel. The goals of the project were to improve safety for personnel and property, reduce costs and increase the efficiency of maintenance operations at the valve stations, and ensure future access to the valve stations.

#### NEPA Strategy and Processes Working Together

For then Acting NEPA Compliance Officer Will Woods, NEPA strategy and processes worked hand-in-hand. The strategy to complete the EA required close coordination between two distinctly different teams: the design engineers who determined the necessary infrastructure to meet the project’s goals and the NEPA contractors who analyzed and reported the potential environmental impacts in the EA.

As originally conceived, the Remote Valve Station Access EA was to analyze two separate projects: enhancing access to the remote valve stations, and repairing and replacing valves and other equipment at the valve stations. However, during internal

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## Lessons Learned from Recent NEPA Reviews

### Remote Valve Station Access EA *(continued from previous page)*

scoping, SPR staff recognized that the repair and replacement work was needed independent of the enhanced access and appropriately fit within categorical exclusion B1.3, routine maintenance.

Mr. Woods explained that, based on field experience from the maintenance work, the design engineers realized that the equipment necessary to safely access the valve stations did not need to be as big as they had originally thought. By becoming more familiar with site conditions, design engineers were able to revise their original plans and reduced the footprint of the access equipment needed. This, in turn, reduced the project's cost and impact on biological resources.

Not having completed an EA on the SPR pipeline since the 2005 *Proposed Site Modifications at the SPR's West Hackberry Raw Water Intake Structure Site (DOE/EA-1523)*, Mr. Woods stated that the Remote Valve Station Access EA provided a good opportunity to review and update SPRPMO's NEPA processes. Work began by providing the NEPA contractor with the most recent *Supplement Analysis of the Site Specific and Programmatic EIS on the SPR: the 2014 Operational and Engineering Modifications and Regulatory Review (EIS-0075-SA-03)*. Using the information on the area's flora and fauna developed for the 2014 document, NEPA contractors were able to conduct biological surveys necessary for the Remote Valve Station Access EA in 2 days.

#### Coordination and Experience Proved Beneficial

SPRPMO Maintenance and Operations (M&O) contractor Gabriel Adams stated that the NEPA process provided a beneficial platform that DOE staff utilized to coordinate

with federal, state, and local permitting agencies, particularly the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which jointly issue the federal consistency determination for work within Louisiana's coastal zone under the Coastal Zone Management Act. At the beginning of the NEPA process, DOE staff asked agencies with permit authority for their input on the project and their interest in receiving a copy of the draft EA. Mr. Adams stated that because DOE understood and addressed permitting agencies' concerns early in the NEPA process, agencies submitted no substantive comments during the comment period on the draft EA.

Mr. Adams also explained that having an experienced subcontractor knowledgeable of the NEPA process was very helpful. After informing the subcontractor about the aspects of the NEPA process that are unique to DOE, and providing them with background guidance including DOE's NEPA implementing procedures (10 CFR Part 1021), the subcontractor completed all work in a timely and efficient manner. To facilitate teamwork between the NEPA subcontractor, design engineers, and DOE staff, periodic meetings were scheduled to provide the entire team with updates on outstanding issues and the schedule. During the initial scoping meeting with the subcontractor, it was decided that the subcontractor would provide portions of the EA (1 to 2 sections to start, and cumulative drafts after early sections had undergone review and comment) for internal review rather than waiting for the entire EA to be completed. Mr. Adams noted that the NEPA subcontractor would revise reviewed sections while DOE staff reviewed newly completed sections so work on the EA was never at a standstill. **LL**

#### What is the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA)?

Established in 1972, the CZMA encourages coastal states to develop and implement Coastal Zone Management Plans, with the aim of preserving, protecting, developing, and restoring the coastal zone and coastal resources, while balancing the often competing and occasionally conflicting demands of coastal resource use, economic development, and conservation. Participation by states is voluntary and the Coastal Zone Management Program is administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). To date, NOAA has approved the Coastal Zone Management Plans of 34 states.

The CZMA contains a "federal consistency provision," that requires federal agency activities that have reasonably foreseeable effects on state coastal zones to be consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of a coastal state's federally approved coastal management program. This also applies to federally authorized and funded nonfederal actions.

See NOAA's [webpage](#) about the Coastal Zone Management Program for more information.

# Earth Day 2017: “There Is No Planet B!”

DOE Headquarters celebrated the 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day from April 10 through 21 with the theme “There is no Planet B!” Exhibits showcased Departmental environmental activities, and DOE staff were offered the opportunity to tour environmental projects underway near the Forrestal Building.

## DOE NEPA Success Stories

The NEPA Office’s poster (right) highlighted recent environmental success stories from across the Department. The office provided copies of *LLQR* and pointed visitors to the updated *NEPA Success Stories from Lessons Learned Quarterly Reports*, a collection of articles on NEPA’s contribution to the Department’s decisionmaking, including better informed decisionmaking, significant project cost savings, and improved environmental outcomes.



## NEPA Success Stories

### Long Baseline Neutrino Facility



DOE’s Fermi Site Office prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to support research on the role of neutrinos (tiny subatomic particles) in the universe. The EA preparation team received a Special Act Award from the Office of Science for their successful work on this unique project. (DOE/EA-1943, 2015)

### Los Alamos National Laboratory



The Los Alamos National Laboratory Trails Management Program earned the National Association of Environmental Professionals’ Environmental Excellence Award for establishing a program (including an EA, Finding of No Significant Impact, and mitigation action plan) to balance recreational trail uses with environmental, cultural, safety, security, and operational concerns. (DOE/EA-1431, 2003)

### Upper Great Plains Wind Energy



The Western Area Power Administration and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service jointly developed a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement to streamline NEPA review of wind power development in upper Midwestern states. Through the tiered project-level reviews, the lead agencies are already yielding immediate efficiencies. (DOE/EIS-408, 2015)



## Tour of National Mall Upgrades

Mike Stachowicz, Turf Management Specialist from the National Park Service, led an hour-long tour on (and under) the National Mall, highlighting recently completed and ongoing work on water storage infrastructure.

## Fuel Cell/Electric Car Demonstration

DOE employees and contractors were invited to test drive two fuel cell cars from the DOE fleet. The Fuel Cell Technologies Office also provided an introduction to fuel cell technology.



## Tour of the Smithsonian Castle Gardens

Michael Riordan, Head Horticulturist of the Enid A. Haupt Garden from the Smithsonian Institution, led staff through the Moongate Garden during a tour of the Smithsonian gardens across the street from DOE Headquarters. **LL**

# Transitions: New NCO

## Office of Legacy Management: Joyce Chavez

Joyce Chavez was designated as a new NCO for the Office of Legacy Management (LM), where she also serves as the Reuse Asset Manager. Prior to joining DOE, she served as a NEPA program manager for the U.S. Air Force and as an environmental program manager for various programs with the U.S. Army and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Ms. Chavez holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry from the University of Colorado at Boulder. She can be reached at [joyce.chavez@lm.doe.gov](mailto:joyce.chavez@lm.doe.gov) or 720-377-3820.

*Joyce Chavez joins Tracy Ribeiro, who continues to serve as an LM NCO.*

*Richard Bush, who served as NCO since LM was established in 2003, no longer has NEPA responsibilities but will continue to serve as the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act Program Manager.*



## Training Opportunities

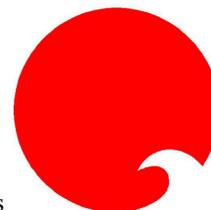
### U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution Collaboration in NEPA October 18–19; Phoenix, Arizona



The U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution – a program of the Udall Foundation, an independent federal agency – is offering a 2-day course entitled “[Collaboration in NEPA](#),” which builds on guidance from the Council on Environmental Quality’s handbook, *Collaboration in NEPA*. The syllabus states that, “Participants will learn how to assess and plan for successful collaboration in NEPA processes using appropriate tools, techniques, and best practices. Participants also will develop a better understanding of the policy goals of NEPA and the benefits of using collaborative approaches to achieve those goals. This interactive and experiential training will include real-world NEPA case studies and skills practice and enable participants to analyze the potential and plan for collaboration in upcoming NEPA activities.”

### NAEP Conference Abstracts and Environmental Awards Nominations Due September 15

The National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP) seeks abstracts for individual speakers, panels, and posters to be presented at its 43<sup>rd</sup> annual conference, which will be held March 11–14, 2018, in Tacoma, Washington. With the theme of *Sound Leadership in Environmental Adaptation and Resiliency*, the conference will cover NEPA and related subjects and is open to environmental professionals in all levels of government, academia, and the private sector. Abstracts are due by September 15, 2017, and may be submitted on the 2018 conference [webpage](#). Questions may be directed to Caroline Levenda at [caroline.levenda@acom.com](mailto:caroline.levenda@acom.com) or 312-697-7265.



NAEP also invites nominations for its annual Environmental Excellence Awards, which recognize outstanding NEPA achievements and exceptional performance in environmental management, stewardship, education, and other categories. The nominator and nominee need not be members of NAEP, and nominations may include projects or programs recognized by others. Award nominations are due by September 15 and may be submitted on NAEP’s awards [webpage](#). Questions may be directed to Abby Murray at 856-470-4521.

*The listing of any privately sponsored conferences or training events should not be interpreted as an endorsement of the conference or training by the government.*

# EAs and EISs Completed January 1 to March 31, 2017

For an EA, completion time is measured from EA determination to final EA issuance; the EA date is also the date of a finding of no significant impact (FONSI), unless otherwise indicated. For an EIS, completion time is measured from the Federal Register notice of intent to the EPA notice of availability of the final EIS. Costs shown are the estimated amounts paid to contractors to support preparation of the EA or EIS, and do not include federal salaries.

## EAs

### Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability

DOE/EA-2019 (1/12/17)

Lake Erie Connector Project, Erie County, Pennsylvania

EA preparation cost was paid by the applicant; therefore, contractor costs are not applicable to DOE. Time: 13 months

### Richland Operations Office

DOE/EA-2044 (1/6/17)

Energy Northwest WNP-1/4 Lease Renewal, Hanford Site, Washington, Benton County, Washington

EA preparation cost was paid by the applicant; therefore, contractor costs are not applicable to DOE. Time: 7 months

### Strategic Petroleum Reserve Project Office/ Office of Fossil Energy

DOE/EA-2039 (2/9/17)

Brine Disposal Pipeline Replacement Project associated with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, West Hackberry Facility, Cameron Parish, Louisiana

Cost: \$7,000  
Time: 9 months

### Western Area Power Administration

DOE/EA-2048 (1/13/17)

Olmsted Hydroelectric Power Plant Replacement Project, Utah County, Utah

EA was adopted; therefore, contractor cost and time data are not applicable to DOE. [Department of the Interior and Central Utah Water Conservancy District were lead agencies; DOE was a cooperating agency.]

## EIS

### Office of Fossil Energy

DOE/EIS-0501 (1/27/17)

(Draft EIS EPA Rating: EC-2)

Golden Pass LNG Export Project, Jefferson and Orange Counties, Texas, and Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana

EIS was adopted; therefore, contractor cost and time data are not applicable to DOE. [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission was the lead agency; DOE was a cooperating agency.]

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA) RATING DEFINITIONS

##### Environmental Impact of the Action

- LO – Lack of Objections
- EC – Environmental Concerns
- EO – Environmental Objections
- EU – Environmentally Unsatisfactory

##### Adequacy of the EIS

- Category 1 – Adequate
- Category 2 – Insufficient Information
- Category 3 – Inadequate

(For an explanation of these definitions, see the EPA [website](#).)

## NEPA Document Cost and Time Facts

### EA Cost and Completion Times

- For this quarter, the cost for the EA for which cost data were applicable was \$7,000.
- For this quarter, the median completion time for 3 EAs for which time data were applicable was 9 months; the average completion time was 10 months.
- Cumulatively, for the 12 months that ended March 31, 2017, the median cost for the preparation of 6 EAs for which cost data were applicable was \$65,000; the average was \$139,000.

- Cumulatively, for the 12 months that ended March 31, 2017, the median completion time for 11 EAs for which time data were applicable was 14 months; the average was 18 months.

### EIS Cost and Completion Times

- For this quarter, no EISs were completed for which DOE was the lead agency.
- For the 12 months that ended March 31, 2017, no EISs were completed for which DOE was the lead agency.

# Questionnaire Results

## What Worked and Didn't Work in the NEPA Process

To foster continuing improvement in the Department's NEPA Compliance Program, DOE Order 451.1B requires the Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance to solicit comments on lessons learned in the process of completing NEPA documents and distribute quarterly reports.

*The material presented here reflects the personal views of individual questionnaire respondents, which (appropriately) may be inconsistent. Unless indicated otherwise, views reported herein should not be interpreted as recommendations from the Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance.*

### Schedule

#### Factors that Facilitated Timely Completion of Documents

- *Review of sections of the EA.* DOE NEPA staff and contractors concurrently reviewed sections of the EA as they were completed rather than waiting for an entire draft to be finished. This strategy kept review time to a minimum, allowing staff to remain on top of their other assigned duties.

### Teamwork

#### Factors that Facilitated Effective Teamwork

- *Close coordination with project proponents and DOE NEPA team and contractors.* Holding several conference calls with the applicant early in the NEPA process ensured that the DOE NEPA team had an accurate description of the proposed project and that pertinent questions were answered before NEPA analysis moved forward.
- *Regular discussions between DOE NEPA team and NEPA contractors.* Regularly scheduled conference calls and meetings allowed the DOE NEPA team and NEPA contractors to clarify the scope of the proposed project, coordinate project site visits, discuss the approach for NEPA analysis, and review working drafts of EA sections.

### Effectiveness of the NEPA Process

For the purposes of this section, "effective" means that the NEPA process was rated 3, 4, or 5 on a scale from 0 to 5, with 0 meaning "not effective at all" and 5 meaning "highly effective" with respect to the environment.

- For the past quarter, in which 3 questionnaire responses were received, 2 respondents rated the NEPA process as "effective."
- One respondent who rated the process as "3" stated that due to the nature of the project and very limited alternatives, the EA was done as part of the process to help coordinate interaction with the various resource agencies with regulatory authority.
- The other respondent who rated the process as "3" stated that the NEPA analysis assisted decisionmakers.
- The respondent who rated the process as a "1" stated that the proposed project had low potential to impact resources due to the industrialized nature of the site, which had the majority of its infrastructure already in place.