

Low Carbon Energy Project Siting Improvement Study

Advisory Board

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)
May 11, 2022



SEPA

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)

Process for state and local agencies to identify environmental impacts likely to result from projects and decisions such as:

- Issuing permits for private projects
- Constructing public facilities
- Adopting regulations, policies, or plans



SEPA Environmental Impacts

- Environmental impacts are the effects or consequences of action upon the elements of the environment
- The [SEPA environmental checklist](#) describes the elements of the environment to be evaluated during an environmental review



SEPA Elements of the Environment

Natural Environment

- Earth
- Air
- Water
- Plants
- Animals
- Energy and natural resources



SEPA Elements of the Environment

Built Environment

- Environmental health
- Land and shoreline use
- Housing
- Aesthetics
- Light and glare
- Recreation
- Historic and cultural preservation
- Transportation
- Public services
- Utilities



Clean Energy Projects

- Impacts for each project would be evaluated specific to the proposal and the location
- The following slides note the areas where concerns have been raised for clean energy projects, but this does not imply other resources are not potentially affected and the list is not all-inclusive



Air

- Air quality, including greenhouse gases
- Odor
- Climate



Plants and Animals

- Habitat for and numbers or diversity of species of plants, fish, or other wildlife
- Threatened and endangered species
- Migration routes



Earth

- Geology
- Soils
- Topography
- Unique physical features
- Erosion/enlargement of land area



Water

- Surface water movement/ quantity/ quality
- Runoff/absorption/ stormwater
- Floods
- Groundwater movement/ quantity/ quality
- Public water supplies



Energy and Natural Resources

- Amount required/rate of use/efficiency
- Source/availability
- Nonrenewable resources
- Conservation and renewable resources
- Scenic resources



Environmental Health

- Releases or potential releases to the environment affecting public health, such as toxic or hazardous materials
- Noise
- Contamination
- Risk of explosion



Land and Shoreline Use

- Land Use
- Agricultural crops
- Forest land
- Critical areas



Land Use

- Aesthetics
- Housing
- Recreation
- Light and glare



Historic and Cultural Preservation

- Tribal historic or cultural resources
- Historic buildings or structures



Transportation

- Transportation systems
- Vehicular traffic
- Waterborne, rail, and air traffic
- Parking
- Movement of people or goods



Public Services and Utilities

- Fire and police protection
- Schools
- Communications
- Utilities



Tribal Resources and Environmental Justice

- SEPA can be used to evaluate Tribal treaty resources, which can vary by the different elements of the environment
- SEPA can be used to evaluate environmental justice concerns if there are potentially disproportionate impacts to vulnerable populations and overburdened communities



Impacts and Mitigation

SEPA lead agencies:

- Evaluate probable impacts to environmental resources
- Determine whether a proposal's impacts are likely to be significant
- Consider if an applicant can mitigate adverse effects to resources



Mitigation in SEPA

Mitigation means:

- Avoiding
- Minimizing
- Restoring
- Reducing over time
- Compensating
- Monitoring and taking corrective action



Mitigation

- Specific to the probable impacts from a project
- Varies based on the project and site
- Mitigation is proposed during the environmental review process, but not finalized or required until the permitting process



State Environmental Policy Act

Links:

[Washington Administrative Code
\(WAC\) 197-11](#)

[Revised Code of Washington
\(RCW\) 43.21C](#)





Thank you!