

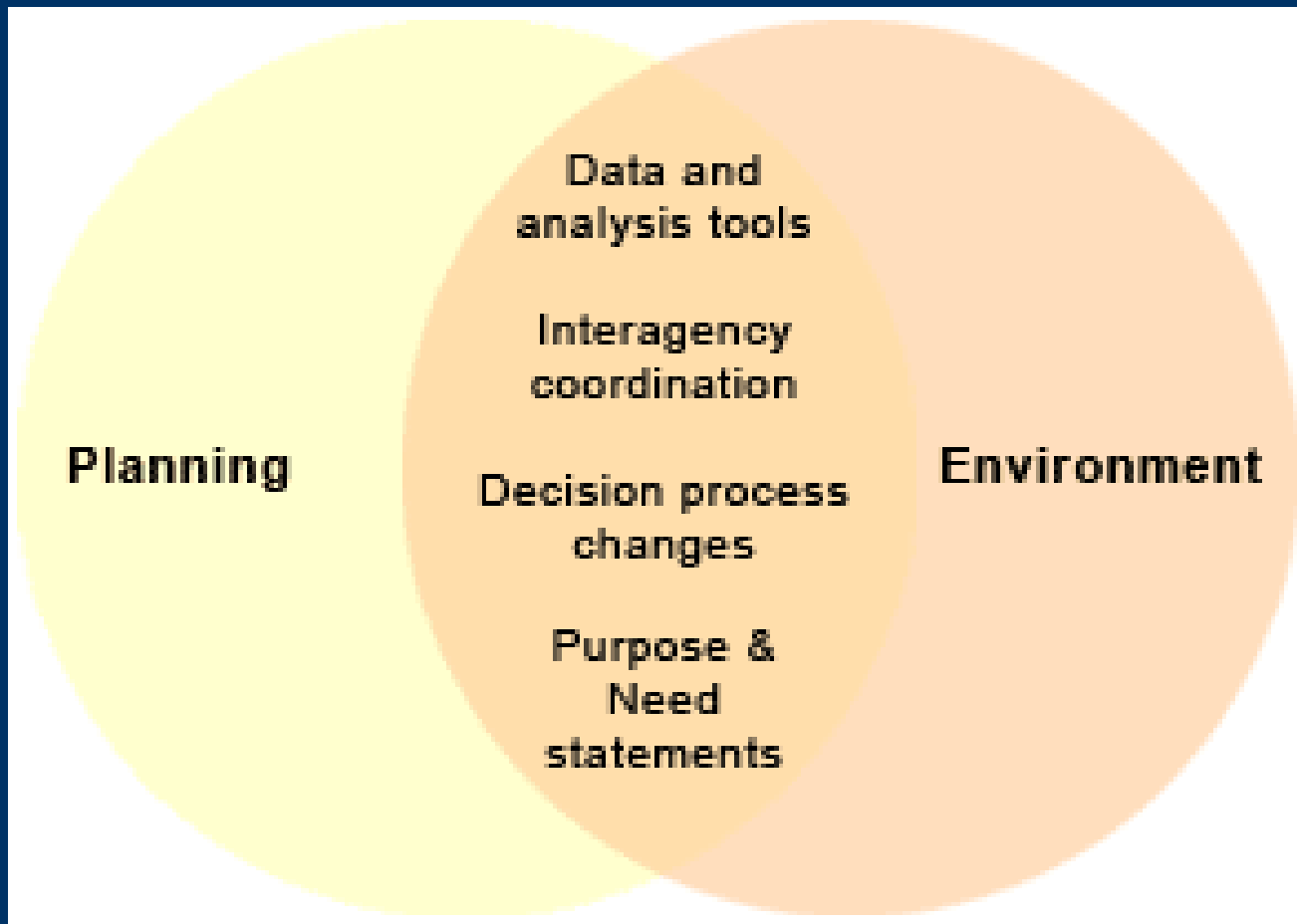
# **Integrating Planning Decisions in the NEPA Process**

Planning Conference

South Charleston, WV

September 16-17, 2009

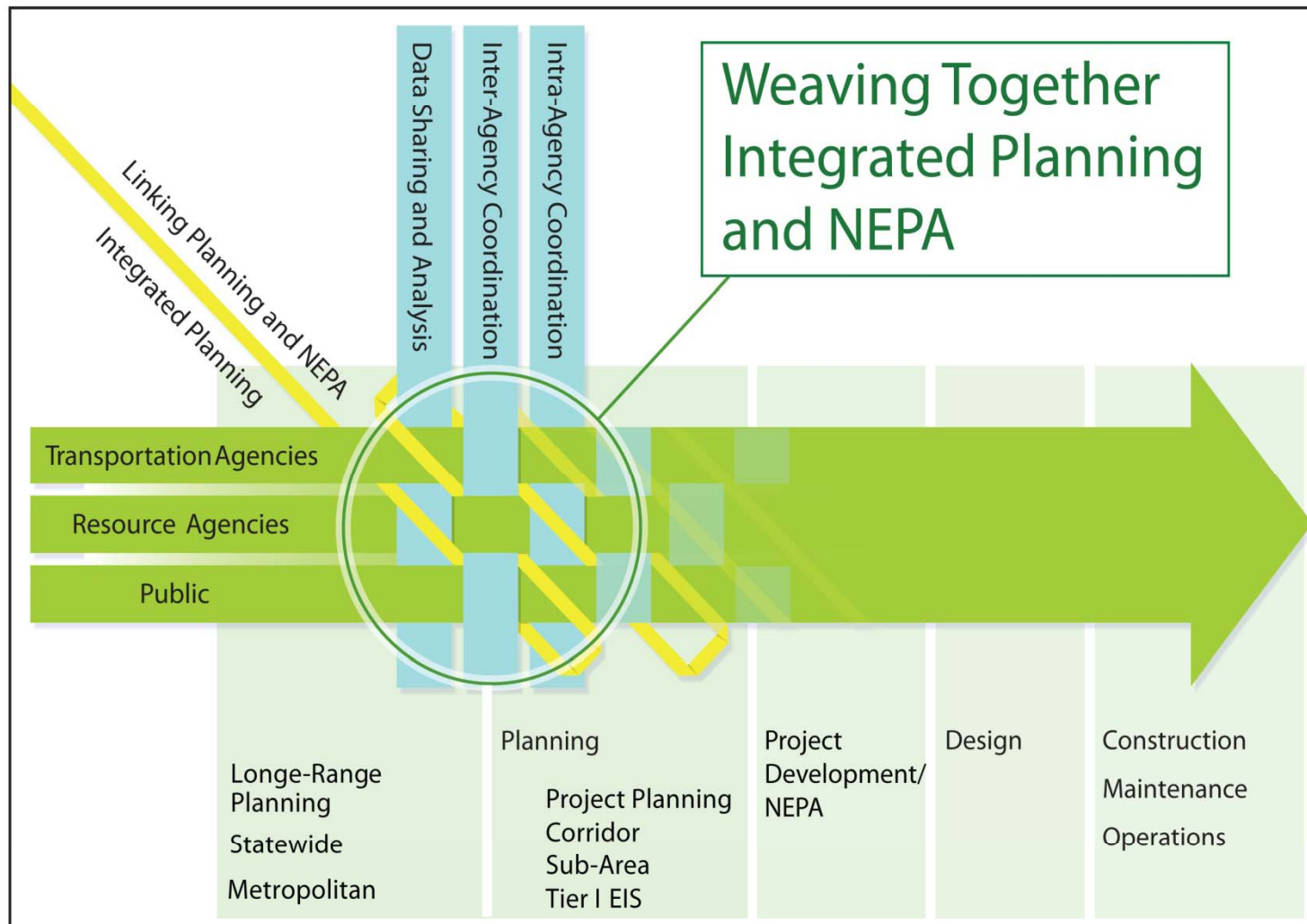
# Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL)



# What is PEL?

- An *APPROACH* to transportation decision-making
- A *PROGRAM* promoting tools and resources
- Supports FHWA/FTA Planning and NEPA Regulations

# Elements of PEL



# Benefits of PEL

- Address complex environmental challenges early and avoid environmentally sensitive natural resources
- Design projects that meet mobility, environmental and community needs
- Minimize potential duplication of efforts and data within the planning and NEPA processes
- Improved relationship with resource agencies

# Feedback to FHWA

## From Transportation Agencies:

- Need more guidance
- Lack of examples
- Mitigation?
- Flexibility is good
- Not another planning requirement
- Need training

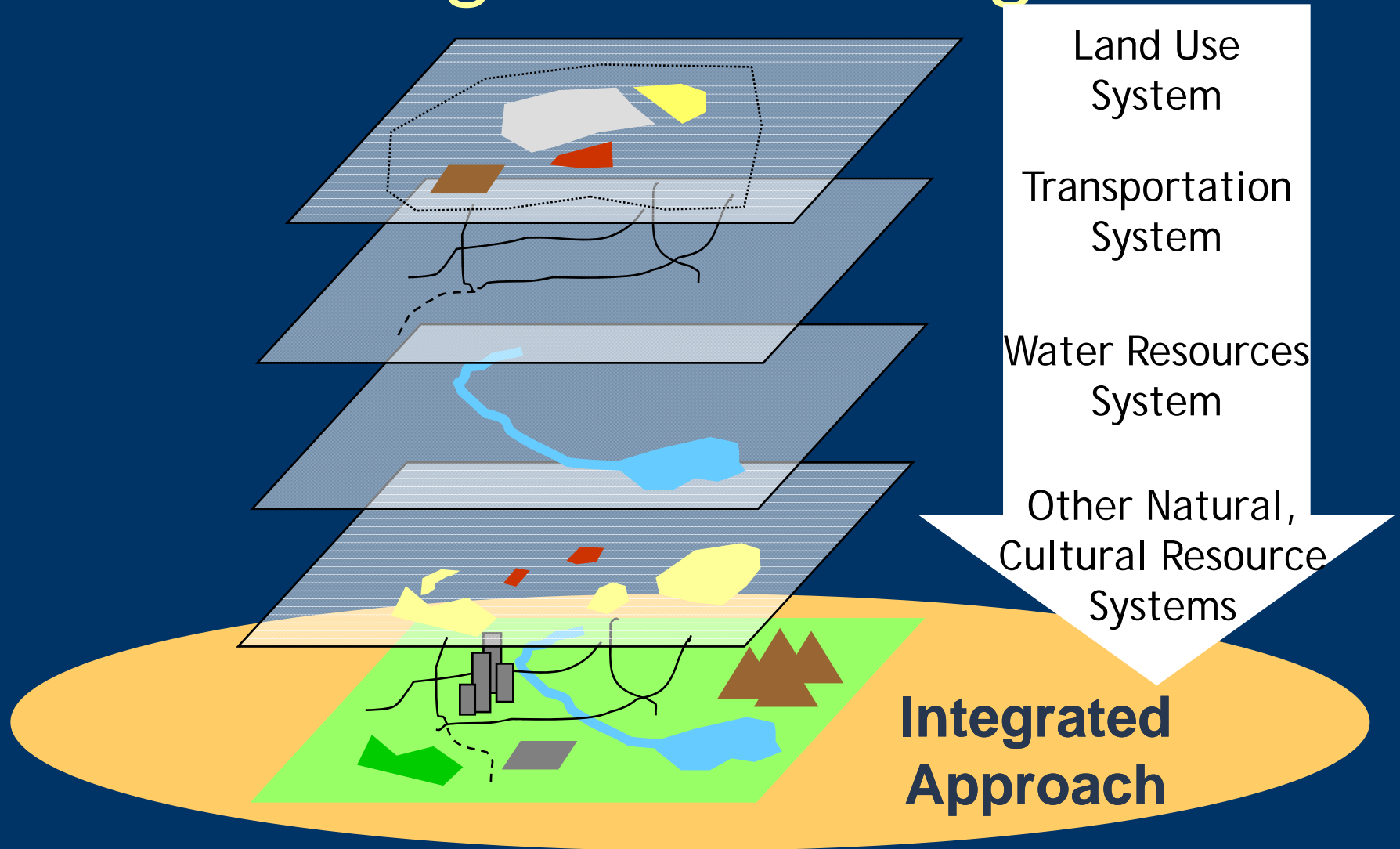
## From Resource Agencies:

- Great opportunity
- Don't have the resources
- Early input may affect ability to make decisions later
- Need training
- How to be useful, provide valuable input
- Don't understand their role

# Where we are based on the GAO

- In progress, too soon to tell
- Several existing obstacles
  - Limited funding and staff at resource agencies
  - Limited incentives to contribute
  - Unfamiliarity with the other's processes
- Opportunities recognized
  - Improved project management
  - Weed out critical issues early
  - Agencies informed and involved early

# Integrated Planning



Opportunities to support multiple community goals and improve quality of life



# Integrating Planning Requires a New Way of Doing Business

From...

To...

A focus on delivering transportation outputs	A focus on achieving multiple outcomes that are consistent with community and resource agency goals
An understanding of the effects of specific transportation modes	An understanding of the transportation system and how that system fits within broader human and natural systems
Separate planning based on who owns and operates infrastructure and services	Collaborative planning based on achieving sound system-wide outcomes
Planning transportation and land use separately	Planning transportation and land use concurrently and iteratively to achieve desired outcomes
Transportation planning often does not recognize environmental factors	Environmental affects and advanced mitigation are considered during transportation planning

# Regulatory Requirements

23 U.S.C. Parts 133 and 134 Require:

- Resource agency consultation
- Potential Environmental Mitigation

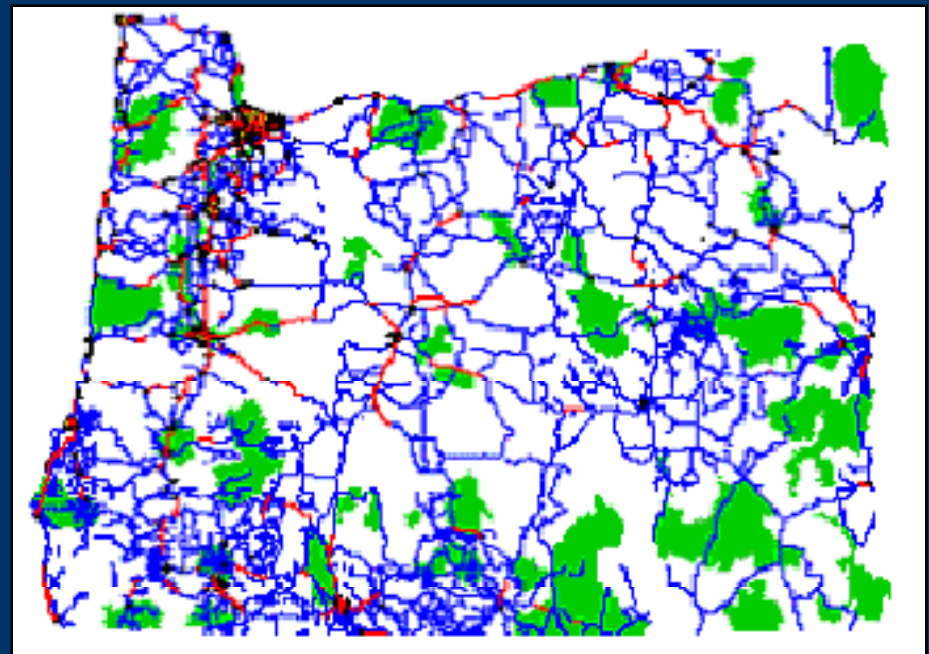
Reflected in 2007 Planning Regulations

*23 C.F.R. § 450*

# Consultation Requirements

Requires comparison of transportation plans with available

- State conservation plans or maps
- Inventories of natural or historic resources
- Consultation with Agency Experts



STIP overlaid on map of conservation opportunity areas

# Environmental Mitigation Requirements

Environmental mitigation activities are “intended to be regional in scope, and may not necessarily address potential project-level impacts.”

- 23 CFR 450.104



# Environmental Mitigation Examples

## Example:

South Carolina DOT –  
Carolina Bays Ecosystem  
Initiative



## Example:

Mississippi DOT –  
Deaton Ecological Preserve



# West Virginia Efforts

- WVU research to identify potential wetland mitigation sites for WVDOH
- Private wetland and stream banks
- Maintenance and expansion of Greenbottom Wetland Complex by Wal-Mart
- WVDOH considering development of sole source wetland and stream mitigation banks

---

# **Tools & Methods**

## for Integrating Transportation and Environmental Plans and Data

# Education and Training

Provides agencies with a common understanding of one another's roles and responsibilities.

Example:

FHWA's Linking Conservation & Transportation Planning Workshops



# Formalizing Interagency Coordination

Interagency Agreements can foster the early and continuous involvement of environmental, regulatory, and resource agencies in the planning process.

## Sample Actions:

- Establish interagency work groups or committees
- Develop MOUs/MOAs

# Interagency Coordination – An Example

## Example:

Transportation Resource Agency Consultation and Environmental Streamlining (TRACES)

## Example:

Colorado's Planning and Environmental Linkages Partnering Agreement

# Fund Resource Agency Positions

Use of Federal-aid and/or State funds to provide dedicated staffing at resource agencies

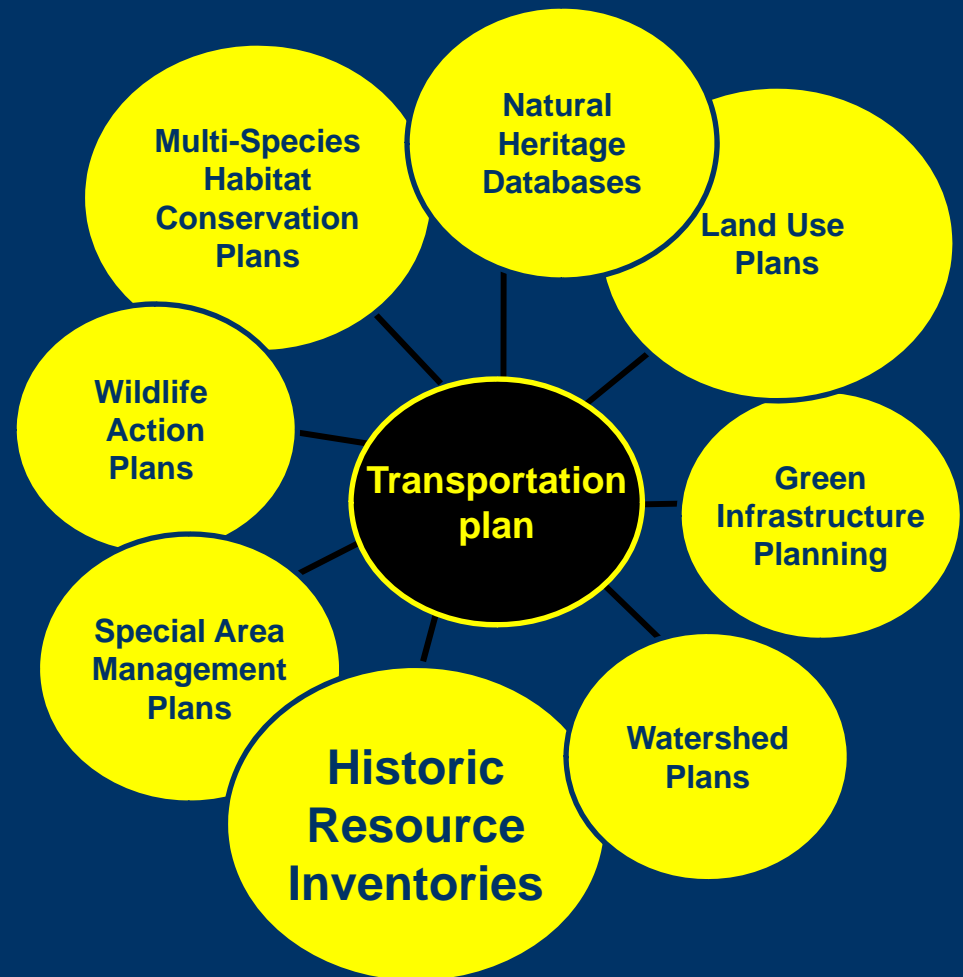


# WV DOT Funded Positions

- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
  - Funding is provided to SHPO allowing WVDOH to set project priorities and to ensure expedited review
- United States Army Corps of Engineers
  - Funding is provided for one full time Regulatory Specialist
  - This position works solely on WVDOH projects
  - Works with WVDOH to set project priorities
- These positions are generally utilized in the project review and clearance process
- A greater emphasis needs to be placed on their interaction in the planning process

# Data and Information Sharing

What are the other plans or inventories that might be considered?



# Additional WVDOH Efforts

- Blanket Approval for Threatened and Endangered Species
- WVDOH District Environmental Coordinators clearance of minor projects
- Environmental GIS screening of ARRA projects
- ASAP Bridge Program
- Historic Bridge Inventory
- Wetland and stream mitigation tracking
- Freshwater mussel survey program

***NEPAssist:***  
***A Web-Based Mapping Application for***  
***Environmental Review and Assessments***



# Why NEPAassist?

- *NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act*
- *Simplify the Process for Review of EISs and EAs*
- *Access to Core Geo-Data*
- *Environmental Screening of all Proposed Projects*
- *Streamlined Review Process*



# NEPAssist Overview

- *Aides in the Development of NEPA Documents*
- *Web-based GIS Tool ...* No training; No licensing; No desktop configuration; No desktop data needed
- *Distributed Geo-Spatial Application ...* via Web Services
- *Provides Easy Access to Consistent Datasets*

# Select Study Area



## NEPAssist

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY



[Contact Us](#) Search:  All EPA  This Area

You are here: [EPA Home](#) » [NEPAssist](#)

[NEPAssist Home](#)

[National Environmental Policy Act](#)

[Office of Federal Activities](#)

[NEPAssist Support](#)

[Contact Us](#)

## Select Project Area

To get started, please select the proposed project area for analysis. Specify a ZIP code, city/county and state, Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC), congressional district, township/range, or latitude/longitude in the spaces provided below.

Define New Project Area  Open Saved Session

State:

### ADDRESS/CITY/ZIP

[County](#)

[Airport](#)

[Watershed](#)

[Congressional District](#)

[Township and Range](#)

[Coordinates](#)

Specify either an individual city or ZIP code; or a full address, city, and ZIP combination:

Address:

City:  ZIP:

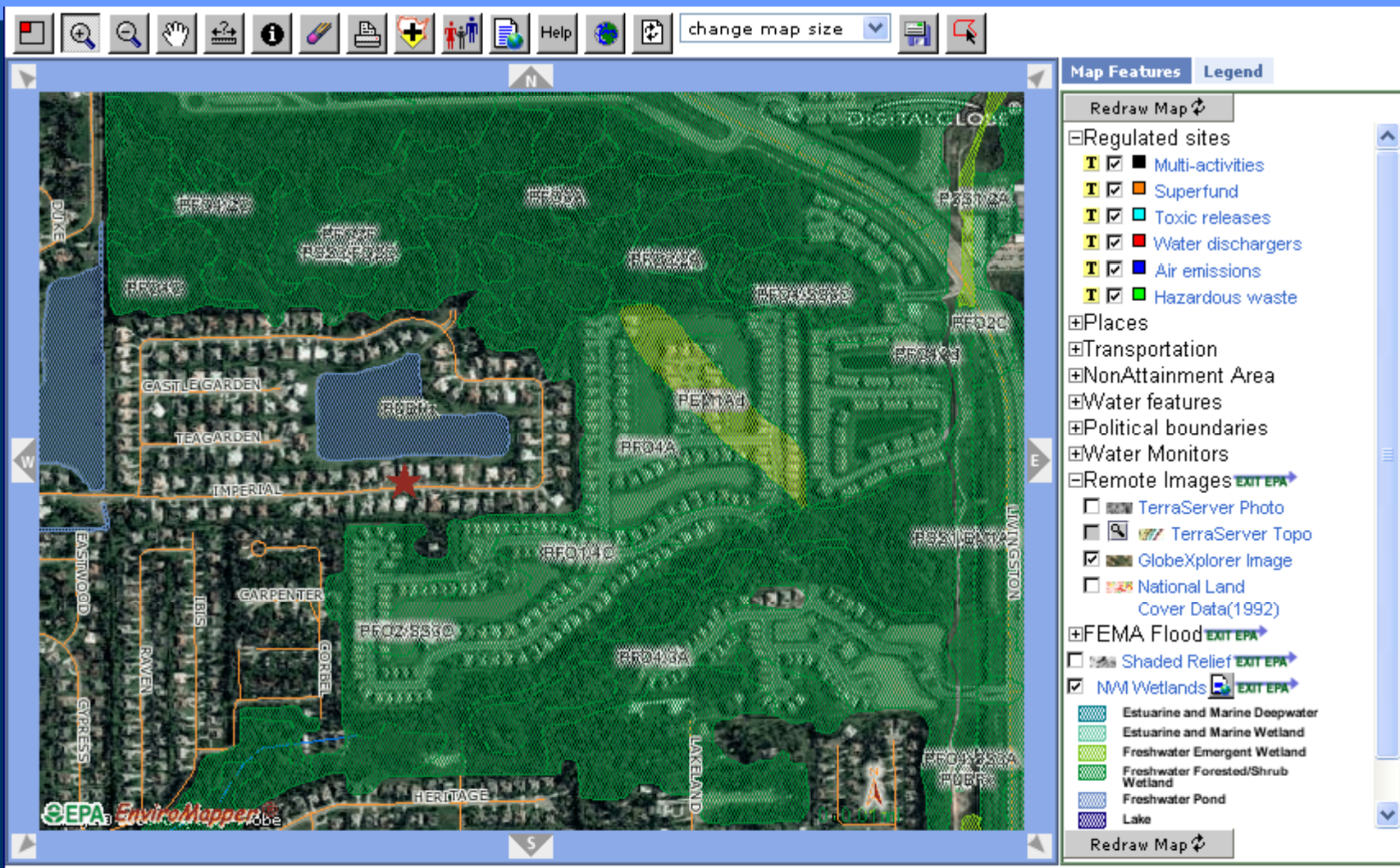
# Interactive Map

The screenshot displays an interactive map interface. At the top, a toolbar contains icons for zooming, panning, and other map controls, along with a 'change map size' dropdown menu. The main map area shows a satellite view of Key Largo, Florida, with various environmental data overlays. A legend panel on the right side of the map provides a detailed list of features and their corresponding symbols and colors.

**Map Features Legend**

- Redraw Map ↻
- Regulated sites
  - Multi-activities
  - Superfund
  - Toxic releases
  - Water dischargers
  - Air emissions
  - Hazardous waste
- Places
  - Cities
  - Schools
  - Churches
  - Hospitals
- Transportation
- NonAttainment Area
- Water features
- Political boundaries
- Water Monitors
- Remote Images [EXIT EPA](#)
  - TerraServer Photo
  - TerraServer Topo
  - GlobeExplorer Image
  - National Land Cover Data(1992)
- FEMA Flood [EXIT EPA](#)
  - Shaded Relief [EXIT EPA](#)
  - NWI Wetlands [EXIT EPA](#)
- Redraw Map ↻

# Add Data Layers



The screenshot displays the EPA EnviroMapper web application interface. The main map area shows a topographic map with various data layers overlaid, including regulated sites, water features, and wetlands. The interface includes a toolbar at the top with navigation and map control icons, a search bar, and a "change map size" dropdown. The legend panel on the right is titled "Map Features Legend" and lists several categories of data layers with checkboxes and icons.

**Map Features Legend**

- Redraw Map ↻
- Regulated sites
  - Multi-activities
  - Superfund
  - Toxic releases
  - Water dischargers
  - Air emissions
  - Hazardous waste
- Places
  - Transportation
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- FEMA Flood [EXIT EPA](#)
  - Shaded Relief [EXIT EPA](#)
  - NWI Wetlands [EXIT EPA](#)
    - Estuarine and Marine Deepwater
    - Estuarine and Marine Wetland
    - Freshwater Emergent Wetland
    - Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
    - Freshwater Pond
    - Lake

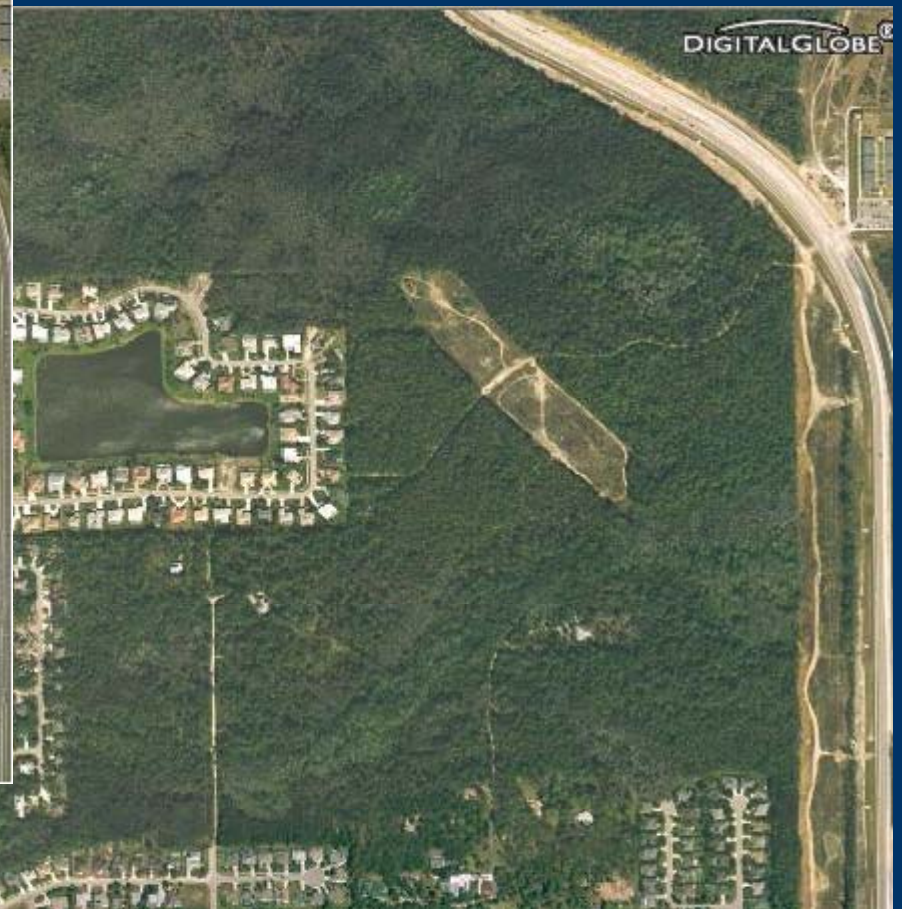
Redraw Map ↻

# Historic Imagery



Image © 2008 DigitalGlobe

# Historic Imagery



# Digitize Project Location

The screenshot displays the EPA EnviroMapper software interface. At the top is a toolbar with various navigation and tool icons, including a search icon, a hand icon, a digitize icon, and a help icon. The main map window shows an aerial view of a residential area with a red-shaded polygon representing the project location. The polygon is irregular and covers a significant portion of the map. The map is overlaid with a grid of streets, many of which are labeled with names such as "CALLE 1", "CALLE 2", "CALLE 3", "CALLE 4", "CALLE 5", "CALLE 6", "CALLE 7", "CALLE 8", "CALLE 9", "CALLE 10", "CALLE 11", "CALLE 12", "CALLE 13", "CALLE 14", "CALLE 15", "CALLE 16", "CALLE 17", "CALLE 18", "CALLE 19", "CALLE 20", "CALLE 21", "CALLE 22", "CALLE 23", "CALLE 24", "CALLE 25", "CALLE 26", "CALLE 27", "CALLE 28", "CALLE 29", "CALLE 30", "CALLE 31", "CALLE 32", "CALLE 33", "CALLE 34", "CALLE 35", "CALLE 36", "CALLE 37", "CALLE 38", "CALLE 39", "CALLE 40", "CALLE 41", "CALLE 42", "CALLE 43", "CALLE 44", "CALLE 45", "CALLE 46", "CALLE 47", "CALLE 48", "CALLE 49", "CALLE 50", "CALLE 51", "CALLE 52", "CALLE 53", "CALLE 54", "CALLE 55", "CALLE 56", "CALLE 57", "CALLE 58", "CALLE 59", "CALLE 60", "CALLE 61", "CALLE 62", "CALLE 63", "CALLE 64", "CALLE 65", "CALLE 66", "CALLE 67", "CALLE 68", "CALLE 69", "CALLE 70", "CALLE 71", "CALLE 72", "CALLE 73", "CALLE 74", "CALLE 75", "CALLE 76", "CALLE 77", "CALLE 78", "CALLE 79", "CALLE 80", "CALLE 81", "CALLE 82", "CALLE 83", "CALLE 84", "CALLE 85", "CALLE 86", "CALLE 87", "CALLE 88", "CALLE 89", "CALLE 90", "CALLE 91", "CALLE 92", "CALLE 93", "CALLE 94", "CALLE 95", "CALLE 96", "CALLE 97", "CALLE 98", "CALLE 99", "CALLE 100".

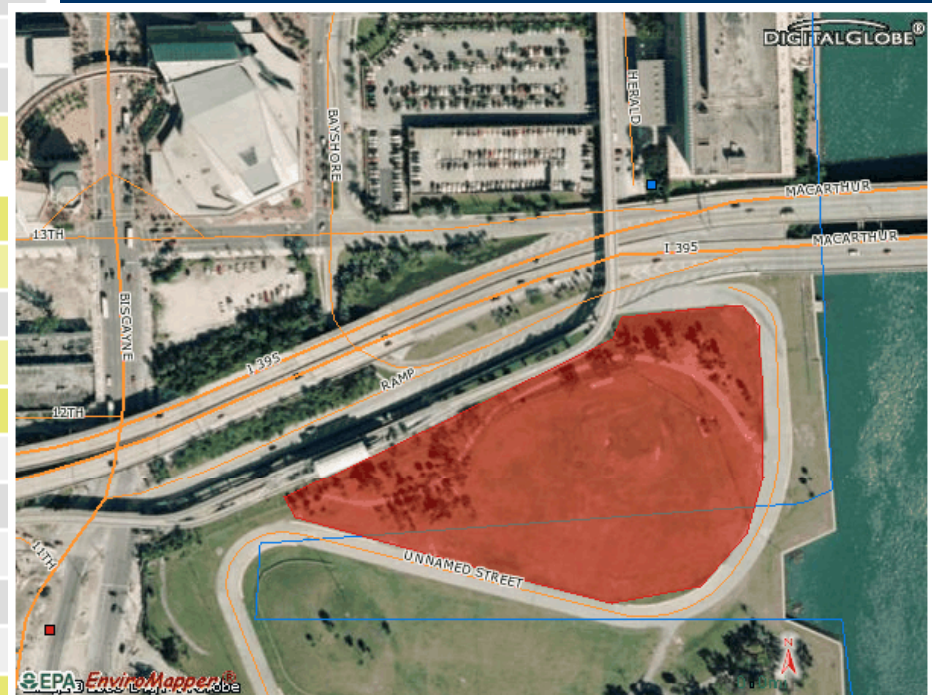
On the right side of the interface, there is a control panel with the following elements:

- Map Features** and **Legend** tabs.
- A **Redraw Map** button.
- A section titled **Choose a digitize option:** with three radio buttons:  Polygon,  Line, and  Point.
- A section titled **Coordinates:** with a text input field containing the coordinates: `66.238052, 18.3975`, `73, -`, `66.234097, 18.3910`, and `17, -`.
- A section titled **Area:** displaying the value: `0.2861 mile2 (7.976e+6 ft2)`.
- Two buttons: **NEPA analysis** and **Cancel**.
- A **Redraw Map** button at the bottom.

# Preliminary Environmental Assessment

*A GIS tool that assists with the review process of Environmental Impact Statements and Environmental Assessments*

Sites	
Within 400 meters of a school?	<u>yes</u>
Within 400 meters of a hospital?	<u>no</u>
Within 400 meters of a port?	<u>yes</u>
Nonattainment	
Within 400 meters of a SOx nonattainment area?	<u>no</u>
Within 400 meters of a lead nonattainment area?	<u>no</u>
Within 400 meters of a CO nonattainment area?	<u>no</u>
Within 400 meters of an ozone nonattainment area?	<u>yes</u>
EcoSystem	
Within 400 meters of an area of level 4 ecoregions?	<u>yes</u>
Within 400 meters of a designated sole source aquifer?	<u>yes</u>
Within 400 meters of a designated priority watershed?	<u>no</u>
Within 400 meters of a major river?	<u>yes</u>
Within 400 meters of a designated 100-year FEMA floodplain?	<u>yes</u>
Within 400 meters of a National, State, or Local forest or park?	<u>no</u>
Within 400 meters of a National wildlife refuge?	<u>no</u>
Within 400 meters of a managed land/conservation area?	<u>no</u>
Within 400 meters of a wild and scenic river?	<u>no</u>
Within 400 meters of a designated AL NWM wetlands area?	<u>no</u>
Within 400 meters of a designated FL NWM wetlands area?	<u>yes</u>
Within 400 meters of a designated GA NWM wetlands area?	<u>no</u>





# EPA Region Specific Reports

EJ areas within 300 meters ?	Yes
Within 200 meters of nonattainment area for SO2?	No
Within 400 meters of a wetland protected under section 404 of the Clean Water Act?	Yes
Within an area that exceeds the median risk indicator amount for the state as determined by the Toxic Risk Inventory Screening Tool?	Yes
Within an area that exceeds the median risk indicator amount for the state as determined by the National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment?	Yes
Within State and Local Parks?	No
Within 400 meters of a Wild and Scenic River ?	No
Within 400 meters of a 303(d) listed reaches?	Yes
Within Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge?	No
Within National Forest ?	No
Within 400 meters of Coral Reefs ?	No

## Sites

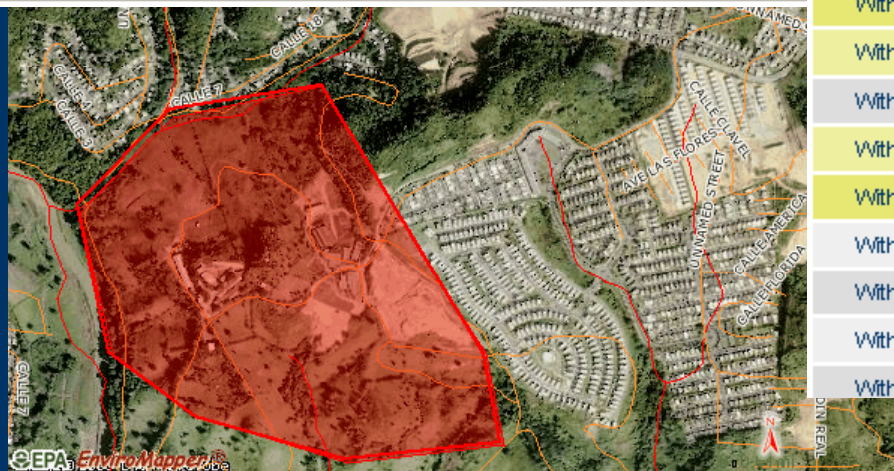
- Within 400 meters of a school?
- Within 400 meters of a hospital?
- Within 400 meters of a port?

## Nonattainment

- Within 400 meters of a SOx nonattainment area?
- Within 400 meters of a lead nonattainment area?
- Within 400 meters of a CO nonattainment area?
- Within 400 meters of an ozone nonattainment area?

## EcoSystem

- Within 400 meters of an area of level 4 ecoregions?
- Within 400 meters of a designated sole source aquifer?
- Within 400 meters of a designated priority watershed?
- Within 400 meters of a major river?
- Within 400 meters of a designated 100-year FEMA floodplain?
- Within 400 meters of a National, State, or Local forest or park?
- Within 400 meters of a National wildlife refuge?
- Within 400 meters of a managed land/conservation area?
- Within 400 meters of a wild and scenic river?



# Data Drill Downs

## Sites

Within 400 meters of a school?	<u>yes</u>
Within 400 meters of a hospital?	<u>no</u>
Within 400 meters of a port?	<u>yes</u>

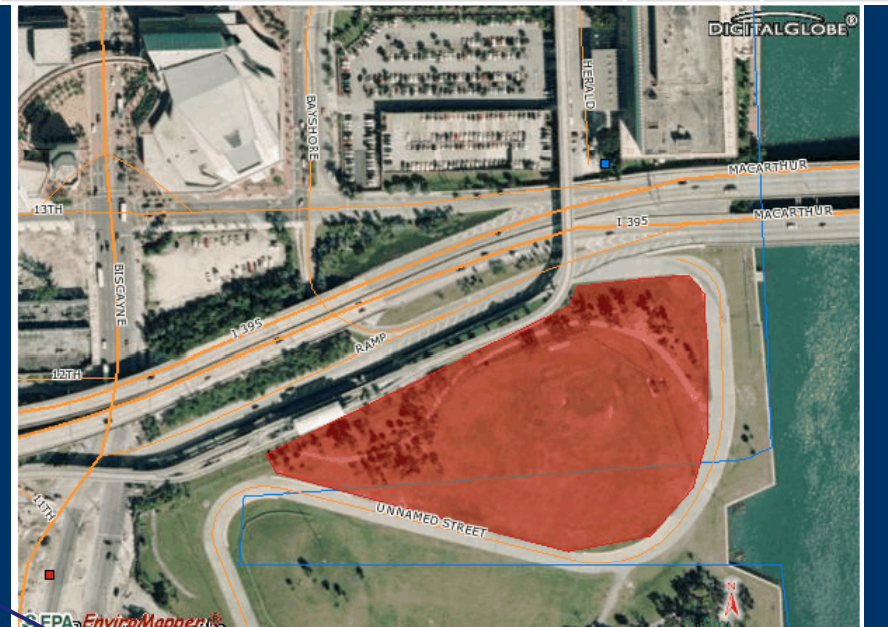
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Within 400 meters of a designated GA NWM wetlands area?	<u>no</u>

Name	Distance	Units
Casino Princesa Mooring.	0	meters
City of Miami, Miamarina at Bayside Outer Wall Mooring.	50.44	meters
Marine Spill Response Corp., Bays 201 to 204.	250.65	meters
DuPont Plaza Hotel Wharf.	257.86	meters
City of Miami, Miamarina at Bayside Basin.	260.08	meters



Name	Distance	Units
Biscayne NP	11.07	kilometers
Thompson Park	28.46	kilometers
Everglades NP	31.21	kilometers
South Beach Park	37.76	kilometers
Holiday Park	39.43	kilometers
Hugh Taylor Birch State Park	40.70	kilometers
John Pennekamp Coral Reef Stat	47.87	kilometers

# NEPAssist Benefits

- *Raises Important Environmental Issues at the Earlier Stages of Project Development*
- *Enhances Collaboration with Other Agencies for the Review of NEPA Documents*
- *Provides Easy Access to Region Specific Geo-Data*
- *Customized Regional Assessments*
- *Streamlined Review Process*

---

# Linking Planning and NEPA

# Unifying Planning and NEPA Decision-Making

Traditional  
Environmental  
Analysis in the  
Project Planning/  
Project  
Development Stage

Transportation planning often does not incorporate environmental factors

Environmental agencies have little understanding of or influence on transportation plans and programs

Planning decisions are often revisited under NEPA

Environmental reviews often are conducted without knowledge of prior planning studies and activities

Public and elected officials become impatient, confused, frustrated over apparent revisiting of previous decisions

# How Can Planning Products be used in NEPA?

## Transportation Planning

Transportation Deficiencies  
& Needs

Problem Statement

Solutions Evaluation &  
Screening

Preferred Solutions

Documentation

## NEPA Decision Making

Project Scoping

Purpose & Need

Alternatives

Preferred Alternative

Documentation

# Using Planning Products in the Purpose and Need

## Transportation Planning

Transportation Deficiencies  
& Needs

Problem Statement

Solutions Evaluation &  
Screening

Preferred Solutions

Documentation

## NEPA Decision Making

Project Scoping

Purpose & Need

Alternatives

Preferred Alternative

Documentation

# Using Planning Products in the Development of Alternatives

## Transportation Planning

Transportation Deficiencies & Needs

Problem Statement

Solutions Evaluation & Screening

Preferred Solutions

Documentation

## NEPA Decision Making

Project Scoping

Purpose & Need

Alternatives

Preferred Alternative

Documentation



# Using Planning Products to Develop the Preferred Alternative

## Transportation Planning

Transportation Deficiencies & Needs

Problem Statement

Solutions Evaluation & Screening

Preferred Solutions

Documentation

## NEPA Decision Making

Project Scoping

Purpose & Need

Alternatives

Preferred Alternative

Documentation

# Documentation

## Transportation Planning

Transportation Deficiencies & Needs

Problem Statement

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Project Scoping

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Preferred Alternative

Documentation

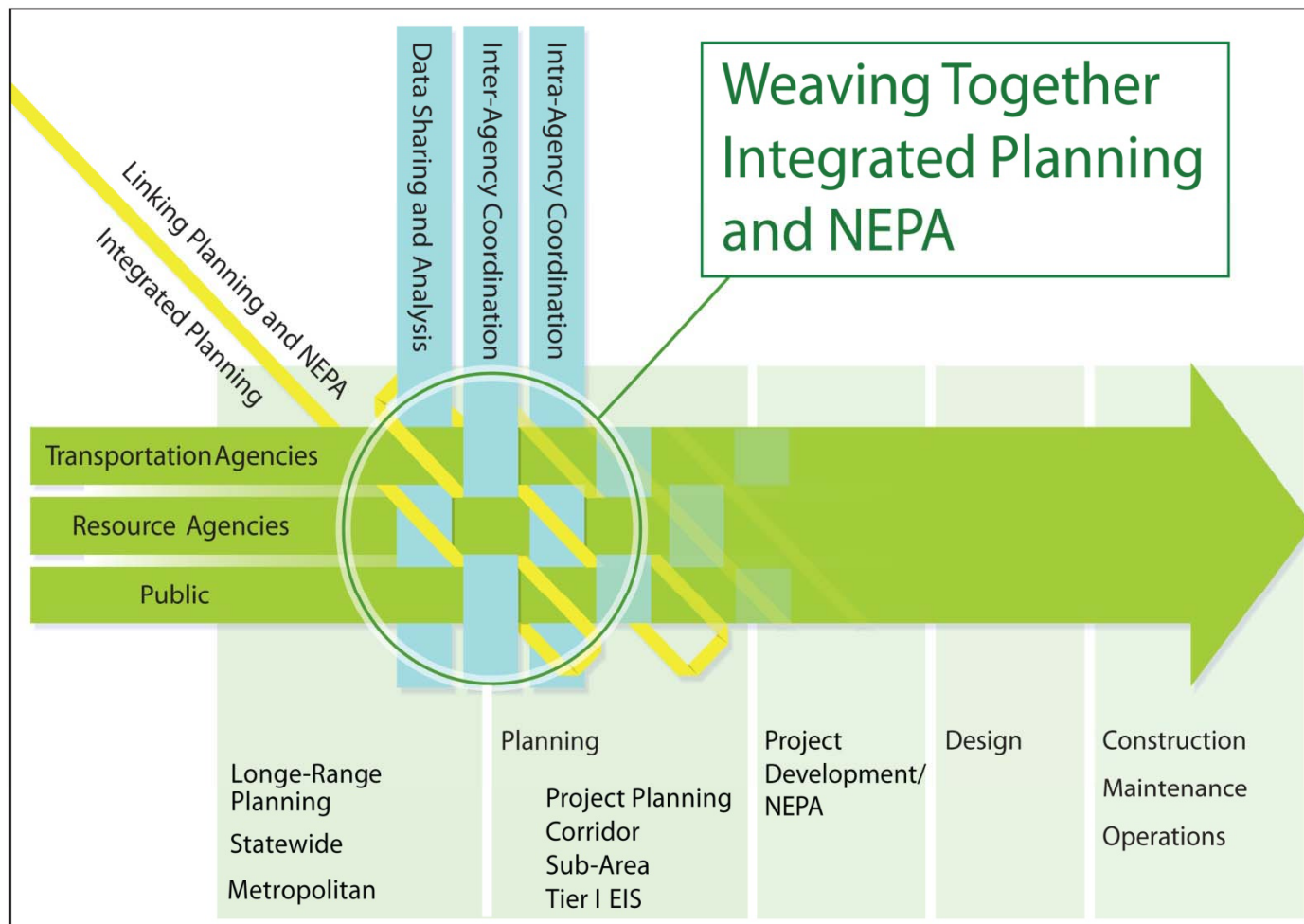
# Documenting Planning-Level Information for NEPA

There are three potential levels of documentation:

- Identification of issues or concerns that will need to be studied during NEPA
- Passing data or analyses from planning to NEPA
- Accepting planning decisions in NEPA



# Summary



# PEL website

<http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/integ/index.asp>

U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration

FHWA Home | Feedback

Environment FHWA > HEP > Environment > Toolkit Home

TOOLKIT HOME    Planning and Environment    NEPA and Project Development    Streamlining/Stewardship    Historic Preservation    Section 4(f)    Environmental Competency Building

## Planning and Environment Linkages

Search the website

- Overview
- Implementation
- Effective Practices
- Publications
- Integrated Planning Work Group
- Training & Workshops
- Data & Analysis Tools
- PEL Legislation, Regulations and Guidance

[More Information](#)  
[Website Feedback](#)

### Overview

Welcome to the FHWA's website on Planning and Environment Linkages.

This website offers a wealth of information developed and compiled by the FHWA and its partners to assist in strengthening planning and environment linkages, including:

- [Benefits](#) of using a Planning and Environment Linkages approach.
- [Implementation](#) tools and examples of how other agencies strengthen Planning and Environmental Linkages.
- [Effective Practices](#) from states nationwide, including case studies on activities that encourage the integration of planning and the environment.
- [Publications](#) that provide information on benefits and techniques to integrate planning and environment.
- [Training & Workshop](#) opportunities to gain knowledge and practical skills to undertake PEL activities.
- [Data & Analysis Tools](#) to achieve stronger linkages between planning and the environment.
- [Legislation, Regulations and Guidance](#).

### Benefits of Planning and Environment Linkages

State and local agencies can achieve significant benefits by incorporating environmental and community values into transportation decisions early in planning and carrying these considerations through project development and delivery. Benefits include:

- *Relationship-building benefits:* By enhancing inter-agency participation and coordination efforts and procedures, transportation planning agencies can establish more positive working relationships with resource agencies and the public.
- *Process efficiency benefits:* Improvements to inter-agency relationships may help to resolve differences on key issues as transportation programs and projects move from planning to design and implementation. Conducting some analysis at the planning stage can reduce duplication of work, leading to reductions in costs and time requirements, thus moving through the project development process faster and with fewer issues.
- *On-the-ground outcome benefits:* When transportation agencies conduct planning activities equipped with information about resource considerations and in coordination with resource agencies and the public, they are better able to conceive transportation programs and projects that serve the community's transportation needs more effectively. This leads to smaller negative impacts, and incorporates more effective environmental stewardship.

### What's New!

Colorado's [PEL Partnering Agreement](#) among CDOT, FHWA, FTA, Federal and State resource agencies, regional organizations/agencies, and regulatory and land management agencies

A [Linking Conservation and Transportation Planning Workshop](#) was held in Nevada to showcase conservation planning tools and explore opportunities for data sharing and collaborative decision making.

### What is a Planning and Environment Linkage?

Planning and Environment Linkages represent an approach to transportation decision-making that considers environmental, community, and economic goals early in the planning stage and carries them through project development, design, and construction.

This can lead to a seamless decision-making process that minimizes duplication of effort, promotes environmental stewardship, and reduces delays in project implementation.

### Who is Involved?

- Transportation planners
- NEPA practitioners
- Resource agency staff involved in conservation planning or NEPA
- Public



For questions or feedback on this subject matter content, please contact [Mike Culp](#) or [Sharlene Reed](#). For general questions or web problems, please send feedback to the [web administrator](#).

# PEL website

<http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/integ/index.asp>

U.S. Department of Transportation  
 Federal Highway Administration

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FHWA > HEP > Environment > Toolkit Home
Environment

TOOLKIT HOME
Planning and Environment
NEPA and Project Development
Streamlining/ Stewardship
Historic Preservation
Section 4(f)
Environmental Competency Building

## Planning and Environment Linkages

Search the website

- Overview
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- ▶ Effective Practices
- Publications
- Integrated Planning Work Group
- Training & Workshops
- Data & Analysis Tools
- PEL Legislation, Regulations and Guidance

[More Information](#)  
[Website Feedback](#)

### Effective Practices

Each of the following case studies summarizes the experiences of a state or metropolitan area that decided to implement an approach to conducting planning and environmental processes. The case studies summarize why and how change was achieved, some of the challenges encountered, and a few lessons learned. The table identifies key PEL implementation categories that each case study addresses.

Click on the following aspects of the transportation decision-making process to learn more about how it relates to PEL. Click on the title of each case study to view the complete report.

- [Long-Range Planning](#)
- [Corridor Planning](#)
- [Linking Planning and NEPA](#)

**Learn About PEL Activities Nationwide**

Learn about PEL activities from across the country and discuss important questions and issues with your peers through the following resources:

- Environmental Streamlining and Stewardship [State Practices Database](#)
- Re:NEPA's [Transportation Planning and NEPA linkages](#) topic area

### Long-Range Planning

Long-Range Planning is the process by which statewide and metropolitan transportation organizations develop multimodal transportation plans looking at least 20 years into the future. Key areas where transportation organizations must address environmental considerations in long range-planning include:

- **Consultation** — Compare transportation plans to natural and cultural resource inventories, maps or plans. Consult with Federal, State, Tribal and local agencies as appropriate. ([23 CFR 450](#) Parts 212 and 214)
- **Mitigation** — Explore potential environmental mitigation opportunities and potential areas to carry out those activities in consultation with Federal, State, and Tribal land management, wildlife, and regulatory agencies. ([23 CFR 450](#) Parts 212 and 214)

State	Case Study	Inter-Agency Coordination & Consultation	Mitigation	Spatial Data & Tools; GIS	Process Guidelines or Changes
Colorado	<a href="#">Geospatial Environmental and Community Analysis in Pueblo and El Paso Counties</a>	X	X	X	X
Colorado	<a href="#">PEL Partnering Agreement</a> <span style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 2px;">NEW!</span>	X			X
Georgia	<a href="#">MPO 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan — Chatham Urban Transportation Study, Savannah Region</a>				X
Illinois	<a href="#">2030 Regional Transportation Plan for Northeastern Illinois — Chicago Area Transportation Study</a>				X
Michigan	<a href="#">SEMCOG Integrates Environmental Issues in Its Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)</a>	X	X	X	X
New York	<a href="#">New Visions 2021 — Capital District Transportation Committee</a>	X			

# Information Resources

## Additional Resources:

- PEL Website:  
<http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/integ/index.asp>

## Contacts:

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Jason.workman@dot.gov  
304-347-5271