

# Cattle Producer's Handbook

## National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for Ranchers

*Jim Sprinkle, Area Extension Agent, Animal Sciences, University of Arizona*  
*George Ruyle, Professor and Rangeland Management Specialist, University of Arizona*  
*Carolyn Eppler, U.S. Forest Service (retired), Action Analysis Partners, LLC, Payson, Arizona*  
*David Cook, DC Cattle Company, LLC, Globe, Arizona*  
*Missy Merrill-Davies, Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor, University of California Extension*

### What is NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a statute that substantially altered the manner in which federal agencies make decisions. Enacted into law on Jan. 1, 1970, NEPA laid the foundation for a coherent national approach to the environment. Through NEPA, the federal government began requiring three vital processes, collectively known as the NEPA Process, during federal project planning that had not been consistently undertaken before. These requirements are:

1. All federal agencies consider the environmental impacts of their proposed action and alternatives,
2. The public be informed of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, and
3. The public be involved in planning and analysis relevant to actions that impact the environment.

When reissuing federal grazing permits, an *Environmental Assessment* (EA) or an *Environmental Impact Statement* (EIS) are the procedural documents used (Fig. 1). Proposed federal actions having potential to **significantly affect** the quality of the human environment (which by definition includes people's relationship with the natural and physical environment) requires an EIS. Most proposed grazing permit renewals are prepared using an EA.

Environmental consequences of no action, proposed action, and/or any action

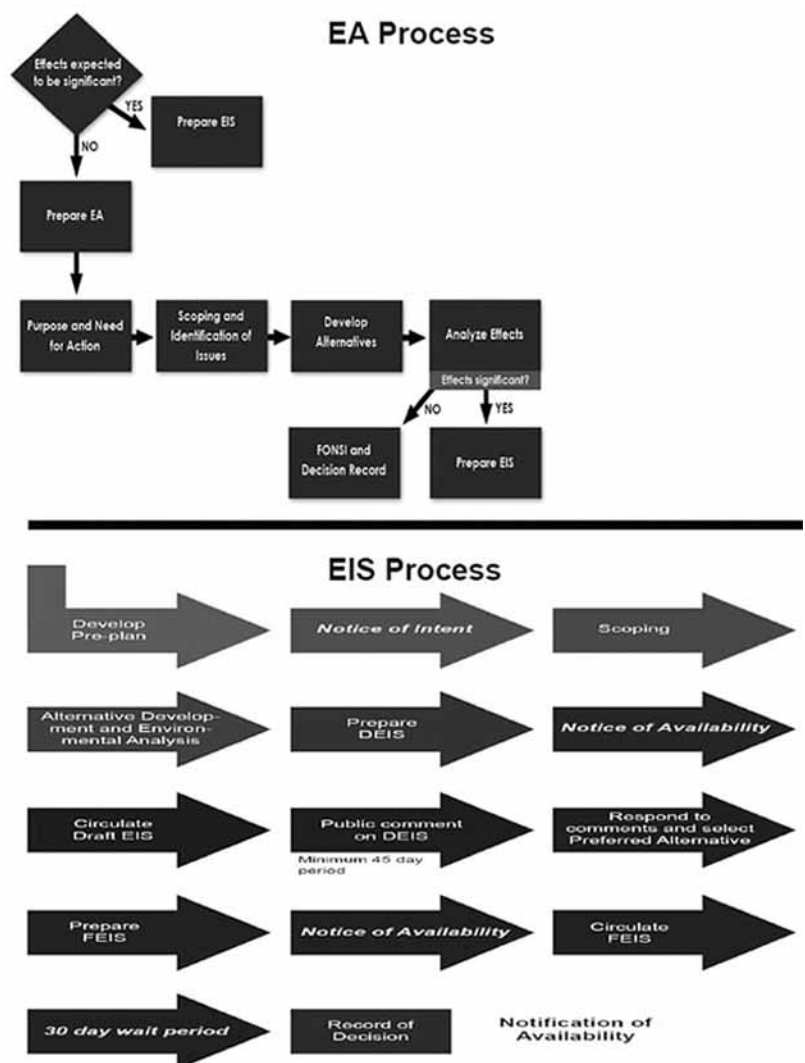


Fig. 1. Adapted from BLM H-1790-1, National Environmental Policy Act Handbook.