

# Participate in the Planning Process and Environmental Review

## What is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)?

In 1969, Congress passed NEPA, the national charter for responsible management of the environment. Under NEPA, all branches of the federal government must consider the potential impacts of their proposed actions on the human environment prior to making a decision to implement the action.

The US Department of the Treasury (Treasury) proposes to construct and operate a new currency production facility at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. To consider the potential impacts of this major proposed federal action, Treasury is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). An EIS analyzes and describes the positive and negative environmental effects of a proposed action and considers any reasonable alternatives to the proposed action. Preparation of an EIS also provides an opportunity for the public to learn about and comment on Treasury's proposed action and its potential environmental effects prior to any action being taken. Treasury will consider the EIS' findings and public comments when making a decision on whether to proceed with the proposed action.

## How is an EIS prepared?

A typical EIS involves the following steps:

- 1. Publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS:** This is the formal beginning of the EIS process. Treasury published the NOI for this EIS in the *Federal Register* on **November 15, 2019**. The NOI provided a general description of the proposed action, as well as the purpose and need for action. Concurrently, Treasury advertised the NOI in local newspapers.
- 2. Scoping:** The NOI initiated a 30-day “scoping period” during which government agencies and the public could review the proposed action and provide comments. These comments helped determine the range of issues to consider in the EIS (i.e., the “scope” of the EIS). Scoping often includes a public scoping meeting. Treasury's scoping period for this proposed action occurred between **November 15 and December 15, 2019**. The public scoping meeting was held on **December 3, 2019**.
- 3. Preparation of the Draft EIS (DEIS):** Following the scoping period, Treasury's interdisciplinary team of environmental professionals prepared a DEIS. The DEIS describes, in plain language, the proposed action, the alternatives being considered, and the potential impacts of these alternatives on the environment, both natural (air, water, vegetation, wildlife, etc.) and human-made (land use, cultural resources, traffic and transportation, noise, community resources, etc.).
- 4. Review of the DEIS:** Once complete, the DEIS is made available for review and comment by government agencies and the public. The review period lasts for 45 days and generally includes a public meeting. For this proposed action, the public review and comment period lasts from **November 6 to December 21, 2020**. The public meeting, being held virtually due to Coronavirus restrictions, is scheduled for **December 2, 2020**.
- 5. Preparation of the Final EIS (FEIS):** After the 45-day DEIS review period, Treasury will prepare an FEIS. The FEIS will incorporate and respond to relevant DEIS public comments.
- 6. Publication of the FEIS:** Once completed, Treasury will publish an NOA for the FEIS in the *Federal Register*. This NOA will initiate a 30-day waiting period during which Treasury will begin to prepare its decision about the proposed action. Treasury anticipates publishing the FEIS in **Spring 2021**.
- 7. Record of Decision (ROD):** Following the 30-day waiting period for the FEIS, Treasury will issue a ROD. The ROD will announce and explain Treasury's decision regarding whether to implement the Preferred Alternative (i.e., the proposed action) or the No Action Alternative after having considered the findings of the EIS and the comments received. Treasury anticipates issuing the ROD in **Summer 2021**.

