

## *Environmental Stakeholders*

### **SEPA Rules Update Process Goal, Principles and Priorities**

**Goal:** The Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) will protect and restore the natural and built environments, will require meaningful participation in government decisions by a fully informed public, and will require that governmental decision-makers are fully informed and educated about the potential significant adverse environmental impacts of their decisions before those decisions are made. Efficient and effective administration by local and regional governments and state agencies engaged in the SEPA process is important and should be promoted, but should not be given priority over the other principles and goals stated herein.

#### **Principles:**

1. The amended SEPA rules will maintain protection for the built and natural environments and restore impaired environments where needed to fill gaps in other local, state, and federal laws and regulations.
2. The amended SEPA rules will provide for effective notice to the public, local, regional, state, and federal governments, and Indian tribes and nations.
3. The amended SEPA rules will provide meaningful opportunities for comment by the public, local, regional, and state governments, and Indian tribes and nations.
4. The amended SEPA rules will provide for agreements with Indian tribes and nations to protect their cultural patrimony.
5. The SEPA rules will provide for efficient and effective administration and enforcement.

#### **Priorities:**

1. **Public notice.** Given that last year's rule will soon go into effect and that public notice was not taken care of despite increased thresholds, we believe this should be the first priority for consideration in the 2013 rulemaking process. The goal would be to improve notice requirements to ensure that impacted citizens receive timely notice.
2. **Opportunity for public participation.** Similar to our first priority, we believe this is a crucial priority focus for the 2013 rulemaking with a goal of providing citizens with immediate and full access to documents and adequate time to comment on proposals that may affect them.
3. **Consultation with tribal governments.** Similar to the first two priorities, we believe addressing issues with the consultation of tribal governments is an

important priority for the 2013 rulemaking given that the categorical exemptions have been substantially increased from today's measures. The goal here is to provide a process by which tribal governments are able to receive appropriate notice to ensure protection of their cultural patrimony.

4. **SEPA/GMA integration.** We believe that current law provides for the flexibility to integrate SEPA and GMA processes and that we may all benefit from better understanding why this hasn't happened to the extent that most stakeholders would prefer. The goal would be to better understand what statutory or regulatory challenges exist and need to be changed to better integrate SEPA and GMA processes. We suggest that this be the fourth priority and that this should occur before considering reducing other thresholds.
5. As an on-going process issue, we request that proposed draft regulation language be provided to the Committee Members and Alternates each month that address the discussions that occurred in the prior month so that draft regulation language can receive review and comment while the prior month's discussions are fresh in everyone's minds.

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