



STATE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (SEPA) BASICS

What is the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)?

- SEPA is the North Carolina Environmental Policy Act of 1971.
- It encourages the wise, productive and beneficial use of natural resources without damage to the environment.
- It requires state agencies to consider and report on environmental aspects and potential consequences of their actions.

Why is SEPA important?

- SEPA establishes a process which brings to light possible environmental issues, and may result in redesign or implementation of mitigation measures to lessen project impacts.
- The environmental information is considered by decision-makers along with technical, economic, and other factors as they decide whether or not to approve a project.

When is SEPA compliance required?

- Any project or activity that will 1) involve a state action, 2) use public funds or state land, and 3) have a potential environmental impact is subject to SEPA.
- Environmental review occurs in the planning stages of a project, before state decisions on permits, licensing, and/or construction expenditures are made.

How does the SEPA process work?

- For each proposed action subject to SEPA, the state agency considering the action is responsible for preparing an environmental analysis and submitting it to the State Environmental Review Clearinghouse.
 - o Basic information required includes a project description, the existing environmental characteristics of the site, and the potential environmental impacts.
 - o Additional detail and discussion of alternatives and measures to mitigate potential impacts is needed for projects with potential significant environmental impacts.
- The State Environmental Review Clearinghouse distributes copies of an environmental analysis to state and regional agencies for review, and provides notice of availability of the document.
- Government agencies, organizations and members of the public review the document and provide comments to help ensure potential impacts are considered.
- The State Environmental Review Clearinghouse forwards all comments to the state project agency and recommends whether any further action is needed to comply with SEPA.