

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

WASHINGTON

March 1, 1993

Memorandum

To: Assistant Secretaries and Bureau  
Directors

From: Secretary

Subject: The Department of the Interior and the National Environmental Policy  
Act

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (P.L. 91-190, as amended) is a national charter for protection of the environment. Since its passage, NEPA has been a strong tool in protecting public resources and controlling external threats to Interior resources and programs, while allowing environmentally sound development. It has created a balanced forum for early identification, avoidance, and resolution of potential conflicts.

The President is committed to conservation and environmental protection. In that vein we need to refresh and rededicate the Department's activities to the spirit of NEPA. Two major NEPA compliance requirements for effective implementation demand that 0 bureaus focus attention on: (1) compliance with the spirit of the Act in the development and execution of our own proposals and (2) careful scrutiny of other agencies' proposals during external program reviews.

NEPA requires all Federal agencies to be aware of the potential environmental effects of their actions. Analyses prepared under NEPA are the primary tool for determining such environmental effects. The primary instrument reflecting the results of such analyses, of course, is the environmental impact statement. Environmental impact statements inform decision-makers about alternatives and their impacts. I strongly urge you to focus bureau attention on preparing and assisting others to prepare factual, reliable, and clear analytical statements, when they are required, to assist us all. The process should be managed to -ensure that all relevant alternatives are carefully examined and precisely analyzed before final decisions are made and that such decisions are rendered only after the final statement is issued and the public waiting period observed.

I view the public trust to carry out our stewardship of Interior's resources and responsibilities to be the very essence of the policy set forth by NEPA and call upon you to join me in renewed attention to using NEPA effectively in the business of the Department.

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