

OFFICE OF STATE AID ROAD CONSTRUCTION			S.O.P. NO. SA II-2-15
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Subject: S.O.P. GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING FORM SA-ENV-160			Distribution A, B, C, D, E
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Note: Information in “italics” is for guidance only and is not regulatory.

PURPOSE: To Provide Guidelines For Completing Form SA-ENV-160.

The Form SA-ENV-160 serves to document that a project falls into one of thirty-two categories of projects that normally require no additional environmental studies. The SA-ENV-160 also documents that the project does not, nevertheless, have significant environmental effects. If the project does have effects that are or could be significant, it must be processed with an Environmental Assessment (EA) or with an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

This is how you complete the form (attach any information that will not fit on the form proper):

On the top line enter the Project Number, the County in which the project is located, and the highway number, county road number/name, or street name.

1. **PROJECT TERMINI:** Tell where the project is located and where it begins and ends. For example: “*County Road 15 from SR 27 to SR 469,*” or, “*Bridge across Deer Creek on County Road 15, seven miles east of Glendale.*” Indicate the Section, Township and Range of termini and/or bridge sites.

All SA-ENV-160's must have attached a map showing the project location, the alternatives considered, and the project's termini. *The level of detail on the map should reflect the complexity of the project.*

- A. **EXISTING CONDITIONS:** Describe the transportation problem the project is proposed to correct. For example: “*County Road 15 has an unsafe alignment and eight foot lanes,*” or, “*The bridge is unsafe for vehicles weighing over 2,500 pounds and has eight foot lanes.*”
- B. **PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS:** Describe the proposed solution. For example: “*Widen County Road 15 to provide twelve foot lanes and straighten four unsafe curves,*” or, “*Replace the bridge with a concrete box structure with twelve foot lanes. New construction will be to the north of the existing bridge. It must stay open during construction. The south side has serious utility conflicts.*”
- C. **NEW RIGHT OF WAY REQUIRED:** Check “YES” or “NO”. *Right of way does not mean just land that is purchased outright. Easements, including temporary easements, are also right of way.*
- D. **EXCLUDED CATEGORY:** *The most common use of the Form SA-ENV-160 is to document that the project is categorically excluded (a CE). FHWA has developed a list of the types of projects that normally are processed as CE's. If a project is to be approved as a CE, it must fall into one of the thirty-two categories on the list. Sometimes it will fall into more than one category. The list is found at 23 CFR 771.117. An abbreviated version of that list can be found in S.O.P. No. SA II-2-13. 23 CFR 771.117 can be found in the Planning and Environment Section of the Federal Highway*

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Administration's (FHWA's) website (www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/nepa).

When a project is determined to be categorically excluded, the County shall document which category of CE applies by referring to its number in 23 CFR 771.117. *For example: 23 CFR 771.117(c.2.), (d.1.), etc.* If a project fits the list, but has significant environmental effects, it cannot be processed as a CE.

2. **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES EVALUATION:** This section evaluates the severity of a project's environmental consequences for each of twenty-three categories labeled "A" through "W". *For additional explanations of the twenty-three categories, refer to FHWA Technical Advisory T6640.8A. The technical advisory is available in the Planning and Environment section of FHWA's website at (www.fhwa.gov/environment/nepa).*

For each of the twenty-three types of consequences to be evaluated, the evaluator must classify the level of effect as "significant", "minimum", or "none". Unless the effect is "none" the SA-ENV-160 must explain why the effect is rated "significant" or "minimum". If any of the twenty-three categories are rated "significant" the project cannot be processed with a CE.

A "significant" effect would have serious consequences on the element of the natural or the human environment being evaluated. *Normally that effect would not be easily correctable. Some examples of significant effects are: filling large amounts of unique wetlands, major long-term community disruption, destruction of a significant historic site, threatening the extinction of an endangered species.*

A "minimum" effect would cause minor or short term disruption of the natural or human environment. *Such effects would usually be correctable. Some examples of minimum effects are: several families must move, but comparable replacement housing is readily available; a small amount of wetlands will be filled, but replacement wetlands will be created; the pile driving operation will be noisy at a nearby school, but only a few weeks in the summer.*

To rate an effect as "none" you would find that the element of the human or the natural environment being evaluated will not be noticeably changed. *Some examples of where an effect would be found to be "none" are: no wetlands are filled, no communities will be disrupted, the project is not in a flood plain, the project is not on the coast, no one will have to be relocated.*

An explanation of the twenty-three categories follows (*There are more detailed explanations in the Technical Advisory*):

- A. **Land Use Impacts** : Will the proposed project cause a change in the way land in the area is used? *For example: Will it encourage farms to be converted to subdivisions? Will it provide access to a wooded area and allow it to be converted to industry? Such changes are more likely if the project is on new location or increases a road's capacity.*

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- B. Farmland Impacts: Will the project require the acquisition of prime or unique farmland? *If it will or you are not sure, contact the USDA's National Conservation Resource Service, complete their Form AD-1006, and they will tell you.* The Form AD-1006 should be attached to the SA-ENV-160. (See instructions for completing Form AD-1006 in this SOP).
- C. Social Impacts: Will the project disrupt communities or community facilities? When making this call, you must also consider whether the project would disproportionately affect Minority or low income groups.
- D. Relocation Impacts: Will the acquisition of right of way for the project cause any families, businesses, or nonprofit organizations to have to move? If there will be relocation impacts a description of them and an analysis of relocation resources should be attached. *If relocations are involved we suggest that you contact the OSARC for assistance. Relocation assistance under the Federal Uniform Act and Mississippi Law is a very specialized field.*
- E. Economic Impacts: Will the project affect the regional or local economy? *Would it affect the economic vitality of existing highway -related businesses or of a business district?*
- F. Joint Development: Is this project part of some larger effort to preserve or enhance a community's social, economic, environmental or visual values?
- G. Considerations Relating to Pedestrians and Bicyclists: Will the project make provisions for pedestrians and/or bicyclists? Will it have a negative effect on existing pedestrian or bicycle routes?
- H. Air Quality Impacts: Since Mississippi's Air Quality Implementation Plan does not contain any transportation controls, this is not generally an issue for County transportation projects. A carbon monoxide analysis is generally not needed for categorically excluded projects. *Usually this consequence is marked "none".*
- I. Noise Impacts: Projects that are categorically excluded do not normally have noise impacts. Unless there is something unusual about a County's project, the evaluation is "none," and a formal noise study is not required.
- J. Water Quality Impacts: Usually such impacts involve the filling of wetlands or the release of sediment or other pollution into streams. *While such impacts normally take place during construction, they can happen after the project is completed if the design does not incorporate appropriate features to prevent erosion. The Corps of Engineers nationwide wetlands permits require the use of "best management" practices to prevent the sedimentation of streams and other water bodies.*

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- K. Permits: Will Federal or State permits be required in order to complete the project? If so, and you anticipate the permits can be readily obtained, the consequence would be “minimal.” The permits needed should be listed in the comments section.
- L. Wetland Impacts: Will there be any filling or destruction of wetlands? For categorically excluded projects, the evaluation is normally “minimal” or “none.” If a Nationwide Wetlands (404) Permit can be used for the project, the comments section should list the type permit that applies. If a categorically excluded project meets the conditions of any of the other nationwide permits, that nationwide permit, rather than the nationwide permit for categorical exclusions, should be used.
- M. Water Body Modification and Wildlife Impacts: Will the project modify the location or extent of any existing body of water by impoundment, relocation, channel deepening, filling etc.? Will the project affect the use of a body of water for recreation, water supply, or other purposes? Will it harm fish, wildlife, or their habitats?
- N. Flood Plain Impacts : Is the project in a designated regulatory flood way or a flood plain? If so consult with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to determine if the project is consistent with the flood way management plan or if it would require that the management plan be revised. *Flood plain encroachment analysis is primarily a design consideration to ensure that the bridge (opening) is adequate to accommodate a designated regulatory flood way. Designated flood ways are generally found only in urban areas.*
- O. Wild and Scenic Rivers: *As of October 1, 2001, there is only one federally designated Wild and Scenic River in Mississippi. It is a portion of Black Creek.* If your project involves a Wild and Scenic River, contact the OSARC for assistance.
- P. Coastal Barriers: THE Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) protects certain coastal areas from development by prohibiting the use of Federal Funds for new or expanded facilities. Those Counties affected by this Act should be aware of its provisions.
- Q. Coastal Zone Impacts: If the project is within or likely to affect land or water uses in an area covered by the State’s Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP), the County must coordinate with the State Department of Marine Resources to assure that the project is consistent with the plan.
- R. Threatened or Endangered Species: Unless you are sure that no threatened or endangered species or their habitats will be affected by the project, you must consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and attach a copy of their response to the SA-ENV-160. *Generally, projects on existing right of way will not have an effect. However, care should be taken. For example, bridge replacements could affect aquatic species.*

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- S. Historic and Archaeological Preservation and/or 4(f) Lands: If the project requires new right of way, you must obtain an archaeological survey from a qualified Archaeologist. The survey report is to be submitted to the Mississippi Department of Archives and History with a request for a response advising whether or not the project will affect significant historical or archaeological sites. The response letter and a copy of the survey report must be attached to the SA-ENV-160. *4(f) is discussed under paragraph "4" below.*
- T. Hazardous Waste Sites: Are there any hazardous waste sites that will be affected by the project? *If a County purchases a contaminated site, the County can become responsible for the expense of cleaning the site. Releasing underground contaminants into the environment carries liability. The most common site likely to be encountered by a County is a leaking underground gasoline tank.*
- U. Visual Impacts: Will the view from and of the project fit pleasantly into the project's setting? *The question is: Will the project be an eyesore, or will it be designed to blend attractively into its surroundings?*
- V. Energy: Will the construction of the project or its operation at completion result in high energy consumption? If so, are measures planned to minimize this consumption? *For CE projects, this category is almost always rated "none."*
- W. Construction Impacts: Generally Standard Specifications or Special Contract Provisions would require that construction activities minimize effects on the environment and the community. *For example, during construction, machinery will have mufflers, waters will be protected by silt fences, and property owners will be given reasonable access to their properties. Most construction activities are of short duration.* Discuss any construction you anticipate could not be kept at reasonable levels.
3. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS: Do you recommend any specific public involvement? Categorically excluded projects normally require neither a formal public hearing nor that the County offer the public an opportunity for a public hearing. *However, Counties are strongly encouraged to involve the public in the decisions they make about the project. This may be through informal meetings, more formal public meetings, or a formal public hearing. If such meetings are held, they should be documented and that documentation made an attachment to the SA-ENV-160.* If the OSARC believes the proposals for a given project need more than normal public exposure, the OSARC may require the County to hold public meetings or hearings.

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4. **ACTIONS REQUIRED:** Circle to indicate whether the project will be processed as categorically excluded, or with an EA/FONSI, or with an EIS. *If you are using this form, the answer is usually CE. However, the form can be used to determine what type of document needs to be developed or for other purposes.*

4(f): 4(f) is the number of a paragraph in a Federal Code, 49 U.S.C. 303. Circle "4(f)" if the project will use land from:

- A. A publicly owned public park or recreational facility.
- B. A publicly owned wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or
- C. An historical or archeological site that is on or eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. *It's usually easy to determine if a property is on the National Register. Determining if it is "eligible" often requires the advice of the State Department of Archives and History.*

If the project will use land devoted to one or more of these types of activities, you must contact the OSARC for assistance. *These types of properties are highly protected by Federal Law. The use of them requires some often difficult findings by the FHWA.* If the County project is located near one of these types of properties, does not take land from it, but you suspect the County project will have a detrimental effect on the property, you should also contact the OSARC. *In rare cases the property could still be protected from the project. FHWA makes that call.*

5. **WETLANDS FINDING:** If the project is located in wetlands, you must document here your finding that "there are no practical alternatives to construction in wetlands."
6. **PROJECT REVIEWED BY:** The project and the completed Form SA-ENV-160 must be reviewed by the State Aid District Engineer and the County Engineer or their equivalents. They sign and date the form to show that their reviews are completed.
7. **PROJECT APPROVED BY:** After reviewing the Form SA-ENV-160, the State Aid Engineer approves and dates it.
8. **PROJECT SUBMITTED BY:** If the OSARC determines they need the Form SA-ENV-160 reviewed by the Mississippi Department of Transportation's (MDOT's) Environmental and Location Division before it is submitted to FHWA, they may ask for MDOT's assistance. MDOT's Environmental Engineer/Administrator may sign here to show concurrence in the OSARC's approval of the form. This step is optional.
9. **FHWA CONCURRENCE:** FHWA's concurrence approves the location and preliminary design of the project. FHWA serves as lead Federal Agency for environmental approvals for this project. Other Federal Agencies should accept the approved Form SA-ENV-160 as environmental clearance by the U. S. Government.

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING FORM AD-1006, FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING

PART I (To be completed by the County Engineer)

Provide the project number and the proposed land use. The remainder of Part I will be completed by the local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, if required.

PART II (To be completed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NCRS), if required)

PART III (To be completed by the County Engineer)

1. Total acres to be converted directly
Number of acres directly affected by construction of the project.

2. Total acres to be converted indirectly
 - a. *Number of acres not being directly converted but that would no longer be capable of being farmed after the conversion, because the conversion would restrict access to them.*

 - b. *Number of acres planned to receive services from an infrastructure project as indicated in the project justification (e.g. highways, utilities) that will cause a direct conversion.*

3. Total acres in site
Total of A & B.

PART IV (To be completed by the NCRS, if required)

PART V (To be completed by the NCRS, if required)

PART VI (To be completed by the County Engineer) Note! If the point total for Part VI is less than 60, then Part V will be assigned 100 points. If Part VI is 60 points or more, then the form will be forwarded to the local NCRS office for coordination and completion of Part V.

1. How much land is in non-urban use within a radius of 1.0 mile from where the project is intended?
 - More than 90% - 15 points (Maximum)
 - 90% to 20 % - 14 to 1 point(s)
 - Less than 20% - 0 points

2. How much of the perimeter of the site borders on land in non-urban use?
 - More than 90% - 10 points (Maximum)
 - 90% to 20% - 9 to 1 point(s)
 - Less than 20% - 0 points

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3. How much of the site has been farmed (managed for a scheduled harvest or timber activity) more than five of the last ten years?
 - More than 90% - 20 points (Maximum)
 - 90% to 20% - 19 to 1 point(s)
 - Less than 20% - 0 points

4. Is the site subject to state or unit of local government policies or programs to protect farmland or covered by private programs to protect farmland?
 - Site is protected -20 points (Maximum)
 - Site is not protected - 0 points

5. How close is the site to an urban built-up area?
 - This criterion is not to be considered for corridor type projects.
 - Always assign a value of 0.

6. How close is the site to water lines, sewer lines and/or other local facilities and services whose capacities and design would promote non-agricultural use?
 - This criterion is not to be considered for corridor type projects.
 - Always assign a value of 0.

7. Is the farm unit(s) containing the site (before the project) as large as the average-size farming unit in the county? (Average farm sizes in each county are available from the NCRS field offices in each state. Data are from the latest available Census of Agriculture, Acreage of Farm Units in Operation with \$1,000 or more in sales.)
 - As large or larger - 10 points (Maximum)
 - Below average - deduct one point for each five percent below the average, down to zero points if fifty percent or more below the average - 9 to 0 points

8. If this site is chosen for the project, how much of the remaining land on the farm will become non-farmable because of interference with land patterns?
 - Acreage equal to more than 25 percent of acres directly converted by the project - 25 - points (Maximum)
 - Acreage equal to between 25 and 5 percent of the acres directly converted by the project - 24 to 1 point(s)
 - Acreage equal to less than 5 percent of the acres directly converted by the project - 0 points

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9. Does the site have available an adequate supply of farm support services and markets, i.e., farm suppliers, equipment dealers, processing and storage facilities and farmer's markets?
All required services are available - 5 points (Maximum)
Some required services are available - 4 to 1 point(s)
No required services are available - 0 points

10. Does the site have substantial and well-maintained on-farm investments such as barns, fruit trees and vines, field terraces, drainage, irrigation, waterways, or other soil and water conservation measures?
High amount of on-farm investment - 20 points (Maximum)
Moderate amount of on-farm investment - 19 to 1 point(s)
No on-farm investment - 0 points

11. Would the project at this site, by converting farmland to non-agricultural use, reduce the demand for farm support services so as to jeopardize the continued existence of these support services and thus, the viability of the farms remaining in the area?
Substantial reduction in demand for support services if this site is converted - 25 - points (Maximum)
Some reduction in demand for support services if the site is converted - 24 to 1 point(s)
No significant reduction in demand for support services if the site is converted - 0 - points

12. Is the kind and intensity of the proposed use of the site sufficiently compatible with agriculture that it is likely to contribute to the eventual conversion of surrounding farmland to non-agricultural use?
Proposed project is incompatible with existing agricultural use of surrounding farmland - 10 points (Maximum)
Proposed project is tolerable to existing agricultural use of surrounding farmland - 9 to 1 point(s)
Proposed project is fully compatible with existing agricultural use of surrounding farmland - 0 points