



ReConnect Program Webinar

Environmental Overview

Agenda

- Environmental Overview Introduction
- Key Changes from FY2019 Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)
 - FY2020 FOA Requirements
 - Rural Development (RD) Environmental Requirements
- Completing the Environmental Components within the Application System
 - Project Tab
 - Environmental Tab
 - NEPA Review
 - Drawing Sites and Routes
 - Site and Route Descriptions
 - Environmental Questionnaires (EQs)
 - Additional Environmental Documents
- Post-Award Requirements
- Sites and Routes Descriptions

FOA Requirements



Changes from FY2019 Funding Opportunity Announcement

- Submission on project maps or site plans are required to identify cable routes, building locations, tower locations, equipment locations and all structures and facilities that are part of the project
- USDA will use data provided in the intake system to complete the environmental review and may require applicants to provide additional information and studies after the application has been submitted

FY2020 Funding Opportunity Announcement Requirements

1. Applicants must adhere to Federal environmental laws, statutes, regulations, and Executive Orders found in 7 CFR 1970 and supply required environmental authorizations and permits
 - National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)
 - National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) – Section 106
 - Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA)
 - +40 additional laws and regulations
2. Applicants must provide completed Environmental Questionnaires (EQs) including the following:
 - Site/Route Questionnaire
 - Project Questionnaire
 - NHPA Section 106 Project Questionnaire

FY2020 Funding Opportunity Announcement Requirements (continued)

3. It is the applicants' responsibility to obtain all necessary federal, tribal, state, and local governmental permits and approvals necessary for the proposed work to be constructed
 - Permits are not required at the time the application is submitted
4. Applicants will be required to cooperate with the granting agencies in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts
5. The ReConnect Program is covered under the National Programmatic Agreement (NPA)

RD Environmental Requirements

- Regulations found at 7 CFR 1970 establish the policies and procedures to ensure that RUS complies with NEPA and other applicable environmental requirements
 - Subpart B: Categorical Exclusions (CE)
 - Subpart C: Environmental Assessment (EA)
 - Subpart D: Environmental Impact Statements (EIS)
 - Subpart H: Section 106 National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA)
 - Subpart N: Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA)
- The agency and all ReConnect applicants must comply with these regulations as well as more than 40 other statutes, Executive Orders, and regulations applicable to agency programs

Completing the Environmental Components of the Application System



Project Tab

| Project | Service Area(s) | Network | Financials | Environmental | Evaluation Criteria | Licenses & Agreements | Certifications | Documents | Summary/Submit |
|---|-----------------------------|---|--|---|---|-----------------------|---|---------------------------|----------------|
| Project Information NEPA Review Project Documents | Service Area(s) Information | Network Design Build-out Timeline and Milestones Capital Investment Workbook (CIW) <input type="checkbox"/> Capital Investment Sched <input type="checkbox"/> Network Documents | Local Network Services Revenue <input type="checkbox"/> Competitor Service Offerings <input type="checkbox"/> Depreciation Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Long-Term Debt Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Capital Contributions <input type="checkbox"/> Amortization Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Operating Net Income Plant-in-Service Schedule Network Access Services Revenue Income Statement Balance Sheet Statement of Cash Flow Financial Documents | Construction Map Site/Route Descriptions Environmental Questionnaire Environmental Documents | Evaluation Criteria Evaluation Criteria Summary Evaluation Criteria Documents | Licenses & Agreements | Certifications Certification Documents | Manage Uploaded Documents | Summary/Submit |

Project Tab – Required Level of NEPA Review

Project > Service Area(s) > Network > Financials > Environmental > Evaluation Criteria > Licenses & Agreem... > Certifications > Documents > Summary/Submit

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Review

Rural Development has identified classes of actions and the level of environmental review required for applicant proposals and Agency actions in subparts B (CEs), C (EAs), and D (EISs) of 7CFR1970. These sections are available online at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/publications/regulations-guidelines/instructions> scroll down to PART 1970: ENVIRONMENTAL.

Is the proposed action one that Rural Development has identified as requiring an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (see 7CFR1970.151) or has an EIS been prepared due to the involvement of another federal agency?

*

required

Is the proposed action one that Rural Development has identified as requiring an Environmental Assessment (EA) (see 7CFR1970.101) or has an EA been prepared due to the involvement of another federal agency?

*

required

Project Tab – Required Level of NEPA Review (continued)

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Review

Rural Development has identified classes of actions and the level of environmental review required for applicant proposals and Agency actions in subparts B (CEs), C (EAs), and D (EISs) of 7CFR1970. These sections are available online at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/publications/regulations-guidelines/instructions> scroll down to PART 1970: ENVIRONMENTAL.

Is the proposed action one that Rural Development has identified as requiring an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (see 7CFR1970.151) or has an EIS been prepared due to the involvement of another federal agency?

*

Yes



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



Is the proposed action one that Rural Development has identified as requiring an Environmental Assessment (EA) (see 7CFR1970.101) or has an EA been prepared due to the involvement of another federal agency?

*

Yes



ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT



If a response of "Yes" is selected for either of the above questions, please contact the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) at ReConnectEnvironmental@usda.gov for further guidance. Have you contacted RUS?

*



Environmental Tab

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Environmental Tab – Construction Map

- The Construction Map is where an applicant draws their sites and routes
 - Sites - assets such as new or existing facilities, towers, parking lots, and access roads
 - Routes - all fiber being installed minus service connections to a subscriber
- The map includes 14 different environmental resource layers
 - i.e., Flood Hazard Zones and National Wetlands Inventory layers

Note: the resources seen as layers in the map will come up again in the EQs which reference specific subparts of the 7 CFR 1970

Environmental Tab – Sites and Routes

- Applicants should create multiple routes to delineate different technology types, installation methods, and right-of-way requirements
- Applicants must enter descriptions for each site and route once they've been created in the Construction Map
- Descriptions should specify the types of facilities to be built or upgraded at each location
 - Descriptions will be used along with the EQs to determine the anticipated environmental and regulatory impact from construction or installation activity
- The information submitted in this section will determine the requirements for the EQ section

Environmental Tab – Environmental Questionnaires

✓ Project > Service Area(s) > Network > Financials > Environmental > Evaluation Criteria > Licenses & Agreem... > Certifications > Documents > Summary/Submit

Environmental Questionnaire

No sites or routes have been drawn on the Construction Map. This application is ineligible for funding consideration until the proposed facilities to be funded have been drawn on the map.

By checking the box, I affirm that I have completed the Construction Map and Site/Route Descriptions. While checked, the Construction Map and Site/Route Descriptions will lock for completion of the below EQs. To edit the Construction Map and/or Site/Route Descriptions, uncheck the box. Changing the information provided on the previous pages may result in changes to the requirements for the EQs.

One Project Level EQ should be completed for the entire project and a Site/Route EQ should be completed for each site or route. All Site/Route EQs should be completed first as those answers will be used to identify requirements in the Project Level EQ. Download the Project Level EQ and Site/Route EQ below.

Site/Route Environmental Questionnaire

Project Environmental Questionnaire

NHPA Section 106 Environmental Questionnaire

Environmental Tab – Site/Route EQ

- Captures the appropriate environmental information for each proposed Site and Route
- A few things to keep in mind when completing the Site/Route EQs:
 - The information contained in the Site/Route EQ must be consistent with the Construction Map and the site/route descriptions
 - Site/Route EQs are based on the different layers contained within the Construction Map
 - When completing the EQs applicants should ensure that the appropriate features and options are selected in the Construction Map
 - User errors in the Construction Map will likely cause the EQs to be completed incorrectly and may lead to RUS finding the application to be ineligible

Environmental Tab – Accessing Endangered Species Information for Sites and Routes

- Applicants must review the Official List of Endangered Species for each site or route to complete the EQ
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) IPaC Planning Tool opens in another browser tab
 - Applicants will have to create a free account access the IPaC Planning Tool
 - Projects occurring in water or in proximity to water should obtain lists from the appropriate Fisheries office

Note: Applicants must have an account with Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) first before being able to obtain the official species list for their overlapping areas

Environmental Tab – Project EQ

- Captures the appropriate environmental information for the overall proposed project
- A few things to keep in mind when completing the Project EQ:
 - The Site/Route EQs inform the responses to the Project EQs
 - Only one Project EQ is needed per project unless there's an exceptional circumstance
 - E.g. If a project had construction in two geographically unrelated areas with environmental impacts that are different in each location
 - E.g. If there are multiple service areas in an application, applicants may need to fill out a Project EQ for each service area if they are non-contiguous or geographically dissimilar

Environmental Tab – NHPA Section 106 EQ

- The application system includes several built-in validations that help determine whether applicants are required to complete a NHPA Section 106 EQ
 - If prompted to fill out this EQ, the applicant should consider consulting professional cultural resources contractors or consultants who meet the Secretary of the Interior (SOI) Professional Qualification Standards to prepare Section 106 information
- This EQ consists of Section 106 Questions

Environmental Tab – Environmental Documents

- In the Environmental Documents subsection of the Environmental Tab, applicants can upload environmental documents, including EQs as part of the application
- Applicants can view, download, delete, and replace all documents previously uploaded within the Environmental sections
- Applicants should complete the Construction Map, the Site/Route descriptions and the EQs before uploading environmental documents

Environmental Tab – Additional Environmental Documents

- Applicants may be requested to submit additional environmental documentation after submission on a case-by-case basis
 - Per the FOA, if additional information is requested, the applicant will have up to 30 calendar days to submit the information
 - Per the FOA, if additional information is required after an application is accepted for funding, funds can be withheld by the Agency under a special award condition requiring the Awardee to submit additional environmental compliance information
- Examples of requested documentation may include the following items:
 - Evidence of consultation with Federal, State, and/or Local Agencies
 - Description of mitigation measures

Tips for Success

- Clearly identify and describe sites and routes on the Construction Map
- Understand and be aware of what environmental and historic resource areas the project will impact
- Determine whether the project will impact floodplains, wetlands, and other resources
- Identify if the proposed project will require new rights-of-way, or if it can be built within existing rights-of-way
- Establish USFWS accounts and contact the appropriate NOAA office to get species information before starting the application
- Facilitate early consultation with resource agencies

Post-Award Requirements

- Inform USDA if there are any deviations from the proposed project plan after obligation
 - USDA must approve any change and will engage the environmental staff to confirm compliance
- If additional information is required after an application is accepted for funding, funds can be withheld by the agency under a special award condition requiring the Awardee to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient for the USDA to assess any impacts that a project may have on the environment

Sites and Routes Descriptions



Navigating to Site/Route Descriptions

The screenshot displays a web application interface with a horizontal navigation bar at the top. The navigation bar consists of ten tabs: Project, Service Area(s), Network, Financials, Environmental, Evaluation Criteria, Licenses & Agreements, Certifications, Documents, and Summary/Submit. The 'Environmental' tab is highlighted with a red border. Below the navigation bar, the 'Environmental' section is expanded, showing a list of items: Construction Map, Site/Route Descriptions, Environmental Questionnaire, and Environmental Documents. A red dashed box highlights a dropdown menu that is open, showing the 'Environmental' section header and the same list of items: Construction Map, Site/Route Descriptions, Environmental Questionnaire, and Environmental Documents.

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Environmental

- Construction Map
- Site/Route Descriptions
- Environmental Questionnaire
- Environmental Documents

Create Sites and Routes

Project Service Area(s) Network Financials Environmental Licenses & Agreements Certifications Documents Summary/Submit

Find address or place

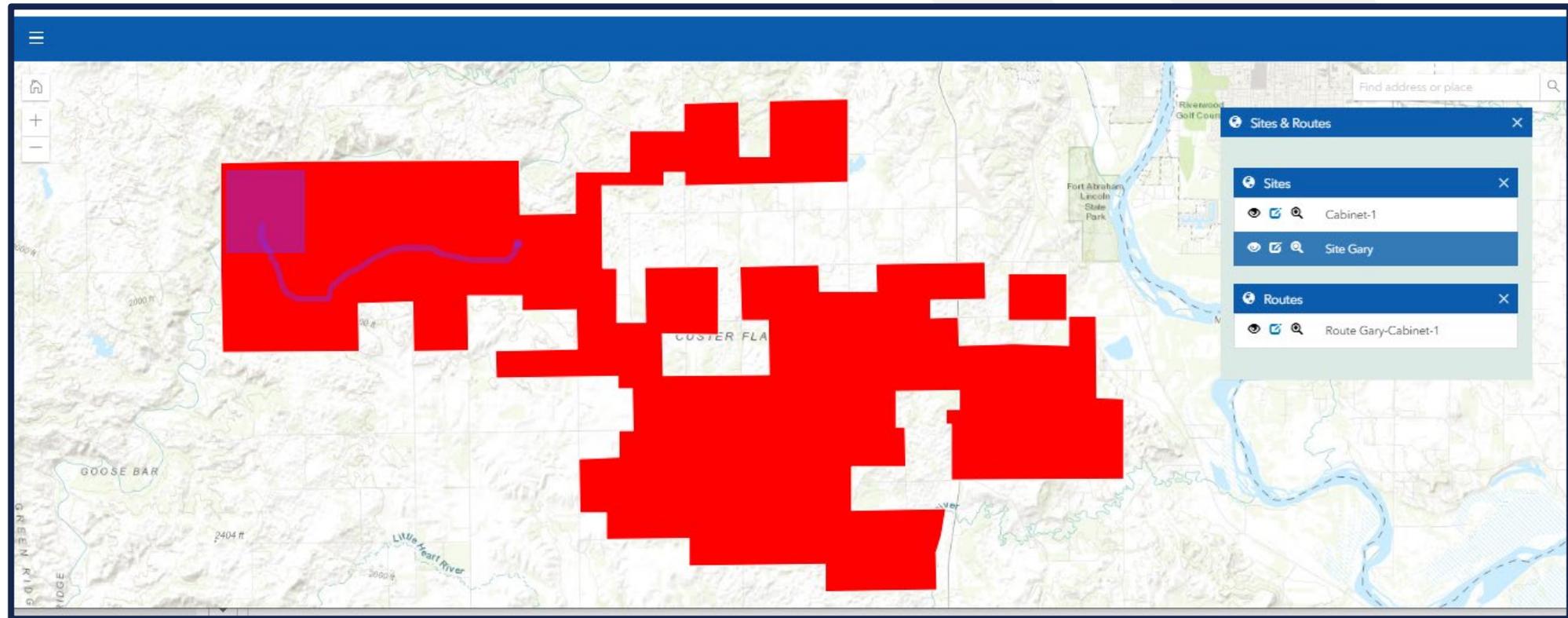
Sites & Routes

- Sites**
 - Cabinet-1
 - Site Gary
- Routes**
 - Route Gary-Cabinet-1

Sites & Routes

- Sites**
 - Cabinet-1
 - Site Gary
- Routes**
 - Route Gary-Cabinet-1

Drawing Sites and Routes



Understanding Site/Route Descriptions

- After all sites and routes and their respective shapes have been created via the Construction Map, applicants must enter descriptions for each site and route
- Project site and route descriptions will specify the types of facilities to be built or upgraded at each location and the estimated environmental and regulatory impact from construction or installation activity
- Applicants cannot enter a description for a site or route before it is created in the Construction Map
- This section must be completed before the applicant begins the Environmental Questionnaire, or EQ section, because the information provided in this section will determine the requirements for the EQ section

Creating a Site/Route Description

Site Descriptions

| Name | |
|-----------|----------------------------------|
| Cabinet-1 | Edit Description |
| Site Gary | Edit Description |

Number of rows [« Prev](#) [1](#) [Next »](#)

Route Descriptions

| Name | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Route Gary-Cabinet-1 | Edit Description |

Number of rows [« Prev](#) [1](#) [Next »](#)

Creating a Site/Route Description (Cont.)

Route Gary-Cabinet-1 Description

Is the proposed route located on or does it cross Tribal Land(s) as identified in the Tribal Lands layer of the construction map? Only answer "Yes" if the American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Area (AIANNHA) Census Code for that area falls within 0000 - 4990. *

No ▼

Is the proposed route located on or does it cross Federally Managed Land(s) as identified in the Formally Classified Lands layer of the construction map? *

No ▼

Is the route New or Upgrading / rebuilding existing telecommunication facilities? *

New
 Upgrading/Rebuilding

Is the route in a previously-developed, existing right-of-way? (Select all that apply) *

Yes. The Route will be in a previously-developed, existing Right-of-Way
 No, a new right-of-way or easement will be required
 No, but area is already in or committed to urbanized development as characterized by a highly disturbed environment with human-built features

What is the installation method? (Select all that apply) *

Plowed
 Bored
 Open Trench
 Existing Conduit Systems
 Existing Ducts
 Aerial Cables on Existing Poles
 Aerial Cables on New Poles
 Underwater

Aerial Cables on Existing Poles Miles: *

100

Will associated cabinets or underground vaults be installed nearby in previously-disturbed or developed land? *

Yes ▼

[Save and Continue](#)

Example 1: Large Enclosure Cabinet

New Asset Section

NAME: test cabinet

TYPE: Large Enclosure Cabinet

-- Clear --

Access Road/Parking Lot

Building

Tower

Large Enclosure Cabinet

Example 1: Large Enclosure Cabinet (Cont.)

✓ Project > Service Area(s) > Network > Financials > Environmental > Licenses & Agreements > Certifications > Documents > Summary/Submit

test cabinet

Is this an existing cabinet or a cabinet to be constructed?

Existing

Will there be any improvements made to the existing Cabinet?

No

Is the Applicant proposing to install any network & access equipment in this cabinet?

Yes

Please select the type of equipment that will be installed. Select all that apply:

- Antenna(e)
- Batteries/UPS
- Rack-mounted equipment

Save and Continue

Example 2: Tower

New Asset Section

NAME: *
Tower A

TYPE: *
Tower ▼

[Return To Previous Page](#) [Add and Continue](#)

Example 2: Tower (Cont.)

Tower A

Is this an existing tower or a tower to be constructed? *

To be Constructed

Please select the type of tower to be constructed: *

Guyed Tower

Please indicate the total limits of disturbance that will be required (in feet):

Length: *

20

Width: *

20

Depth: *

20

Is the land or this tower/pole currently owned by the applicant, leased or to be purchased? *

Leased

TOWER LEASE AGREEMENT 

Is a FCC license required for this tower/pole? *

No

What is the height of this tower/pole (in feet)? *

75

Is the applicant proposing to install any network & access equipment on this tower/pole? *

No

Example 2: Tower (Cont.)

Is the Applicant proposing to install a generator at this tower/pole? *

Yes

How many generators will be installed at this tower/pole? *

2

Please select the type(s) of generator(s) that will be installed: *

Back-up generator
 Primary generator

What is the installation method for the generator(s)? *

Poured concrete
 Pre-fabricated concrete

Please indicate the total limits of disturbance that will be required (in feet):

Length: *

30

Width: *

30

Depth: *

30

Save and Continue

Available Resources

7 CFR 1970 – Title 07: Agriculture at <https://ecfr.io/Title-07/pt7.14.1970>

- Environmental Questionnaire hyperlinks to specific subparts of the 1970 Environmental Regulation
- **Technical Assistance**
 - Workshops
 - Webinars
- **Resources**
 - ReConnect website: <https://reconnect.usda.gov>
 - Fact Sheets & FAQs
- **Help Desk**
- **Rural Development eConnectivity Toolkit**
 - Rural Prosperity Taskforce - Launched February 6, 2019
 - <https://usda.gov/broadband>
- **General Field Representative (GFR) & State Office**
 - <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/telecom-gfr/all>
 - <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices>





Rural Development

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE