



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Chief Information Officer

Washington, D.C. 20230

November 19, 2009

Mr. Alex Hunt
Chief Information Policy Branch
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Hunt:

The Department of Commerce (DOC) requests an emergency review of a new information collection request entitled, "Department of Commerce National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Questionnaire and Checklist" (EQC). This emergency review will facilitate the execution of projects authorized under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

NEPA requires that Federal Agencies consider the environmental impacts of their projects prior to execution of those projects. To accomplish this, Federal Agencies must be informed of the environmental conditions associated with both the specific location of the project and the types of actions associated with the project. The EQC was developed to address this need and allow the Federal Agency to make an informed decision regarding the potential impacts associated with the project.

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009" (Recovery Act) into law (Pub.L.111-5, 123 stat 115(2009)). The Recovery Act funding authorization expires on September 30, 2010; therefore, demand for program funds are immediate. The emergency review and approval of the Commerce Department's NEPA Environmental Questionnaire and Checklist will allow DOC to effectively determine the level of NEPA documentation required for each submitted project and meet the Recovery Act time restrictions. Without this emergency approval of the checklist, DOC will be unable to determine if the potential environmental impacts of a project would qualify for a Categorical Exclusion (CE) or require additional environmental documentation. A CE determination greatly reduces both the financial and time burden on the applicant, and permits applicable projects to move forward expeditiously. To address these matters, we are requesting approval of this review by December 7, 2009.

We appreciate your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Hilding