

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (SEPA)

What Is Environmental Review?

Pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), RCW 43.21C and the SEPA Rules, WAC 197-11, Thurston County has adopted Chapter 17.09 of the Thurston County Code which requires review of certain proposals to assess the impact of those proposals on the environment before making decisions. "Environment" means the land, air, water, plants, and animals as well as impacts to noise, traffic, utilities, aesthetics, recreation and housing.

There are three categories of determinations that may be issued through SEPA. The determination is made after review of an Environmental Checklist. The purpose of the checklist is to provide information to help identify impacts from a proposal or to reduce or avoid impacts from the proposal.

A Determination of Non-Significance may be issued if it is found that any significant environmental impacts from a proposal are already addressed by existing codes.

A Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance may be issued if there are significant environmental impacts requiring mitigation not already addressed by existing codes. Any mitigating conditions become conditions of project approval.

Lastly, a Determination of Significance (DS) will be issued if it is found that a proposal will have probable significant adverse environmental impacts that cannot be mitigated. Issuance of a DS requires an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to be prepared. If an EIS is required, the applicant will be notified in writing of the particular areas of concern. Most applicants hire a consultant to prepare the EIS for them. Either the applicant or consultant will work with Thurston County Planning staff throughout the preparation of the document to assure the EIS meets the requirements of the SEPA law.

When Is Environmental Review Required?

Any one of the following proposals will always require an Environmental Checklist.

- Preliminary Plat
- Rezone
- Forest Practice Permit
- Mobile Home Parks (over 5 spaces)

In addition, an Environmental Checklist is required if a project meets any of the following thresholds.

- Any work conducted over water or in the water
- Commercial buildings of more than 8,000 square feet
- Filling or excavation of more than 500 cubic yards throughout the lifetime of the project
- Agricultural buildings of more than 20,000 square feet
- Parking lot with more than 30 spaces
- Underground storage tanks more than 10,000 gallons
- More than four dwelling units in the Rural County
- More than nine dwelling units in the Urban Growth Area
- Non-Project proposals such as adoption of ordinances, plans and policies

If a proposal requires environmental review, an Environmental Checklist application must be completed and submitted with the underlying project proposal.

How Do I Apply?

Submit a completed application package, including Environmental Checklist to the Permit Assistance Center with the applicable fee. Complete package requirements are outlined on the application. **Use only the Environmental Checklist provided by Thurston County.**

Review Process and Timing

An Environmental Checklist is always accompanied by another application such as those listed above. Depending on the type of application, the review time could take up to 148 days. The review time may take longer if a request for additional information is required or if an EIS is required.

Appeal

All decisions may be appealed. An Appeal form and associated appeal fee must be submitted within 14 days from the date of the decision. All appeal forms are submitted to the Permit Assistance Center.

I Still Have Questions...

The information in this bulletin is a general guideline of the procedures and rules. You should not rely on this bulletin to identify the specific requirements for your project. For additional information, speak with a staff member at the Permit Assistance Center. Contact information is listed below. You may also review all Thurston County Codes online on the County website referenced at the bottom of this page.