



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

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To: National Leadership Council

From: Acting Director 

Subject: New Categorical Exclusions List

In January 2001, the National Park Service published the D0-12 Handbook, which provides National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) guidance and includes a list of Categorical Exclusions (CEs) that may be used by NPS personnel. In 2004, the Department of the Interior updated with notice and comment the NPS chapter of the Departmental Manual (DM), 516 DM12. This update contained a list of NPS-specific CEs that differed from CEs published in the D0-12 Handbook in 2001. In 2008, the Department of the Interior published regulations at 43 CFR Part 46 that included updated departmental CEs and extraordinary circumstances under which a higher level of analysis is required. These departmental CEs and extraordinary circumstances also differ slightly from those contained in the 2001 D0-12 Handbook.

The Environmental Quality Division is currently in the process of updating the D0-12 Handbook, including the CE list, to reflect the best NEPA guidance for parks to follow. In the meantime, parks should use the CEs published in the 2004 DM list and those in the 2008 departmental regulations, and parks should refer to the extraordinary circumstances list in the 2008 departmental regulations. All are attached to this memo. The attached CE list also contains guidance that is provided to help parks understand how these CEs should best be applied. The guidance reiterates that CEs should be used only when the actions under the CE will result in no or minor impacts. Parks should immediately replace D0-12 Handbook Chapter 3, Sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 with the attached revised sections. Please note that D0-12 Handbook Chapter 3, Sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9, along with the rest of the D0-12 Handbook, remain in effect and are not being replaced at this time.

The majority of the CEs on the attached list are the same or very similar to the CEs contained in the D0-12 Handbook list that parks have been using. In most cases, there are minor wording differences that do not change the scope or intent of the CEs. The most notable difference in the attached list is the inclusion of a CE for minor construction that was not included in the D0-12 Handbook CE list. Parks should use caution in applying the minor construction CE to avoid inappropriately categorically excluding a project that has more than minor impacts or extraordinary circumstances and, therefore, warrants a higher level of analysis.

Should you have any questions, please contact Tammy Whittington, Chief, Environmental Quality Division, at 303-969-2073.

cc: Tammy Whittington