



California Department of
Fish and Wildlife

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A Summary of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

(California Public Resources Code, Sections 21000 - 21178, and Title 14 CCR, Section 753, and Chapter 3, Sections 15000 - 15387)

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is California's broadest environmental law. CEQA helps to guide the Department during issuance of permits and approval of projects. Courts have interpreted CEQA to afford the fullest protection of the environment within the reasonable scope of the statutes. CEQA applies to all discretionary projects proposed to be conducted or approved by a California public agency, including private projects requiring discretionary government approval.

The purpose of CEQA is to:

- Disclose to the public the significant environmental effects of a proposed discretionary project, through the preparation of an Initial Study (IS), Negative Declaration (ND), or Environmental Impact Report (EIR).
- Prevent or minimize damage to the environment through development of project alternatives, mitigation measures, and mitigation monitoring.
- Disclose to the public the agency decision making process utilized to approve discretionary projects through findings and statements of overriding consideration.
- Enhance public participation in the environmental review process through scoping meetings, public notice, public review, hearings, and the judicial process.
- Improve interagency coordination through early consultations, scoping meetings, notices of preparation, and State Clearinghouse review.

California Public Resources Code Sections 21000-21004 generally state that:

- State agencies shall regulate the activities of private individuals, corporations, and other public agencies whose activities may affect the environment shall regulate to prevent environmental damage.
- Government agencies shall develop standards and procedures necessary to maintain, protect, rehabilitate and enhance environmental quality, including fish and wildlife populations and plant and animal communities.
- Projects carried out by public agencies shall be subject to the same level of review as private projects requiring approval by public agencies.
- No projects which would cause significant environmental effects should be approved as proposed if there are feasible alternatives or mitigation measures that would lessen those effects.
- Environmental impact reports (EIRs) shall be used to provide full public disclosure of the environmental impacts of a proposed project.
- EIRs shall include identification of all significant effects, alternatives, and potential mitigation measures.

- Local agencies should integrate CEQA with other environmental review, planning, and information gathering so as to cut costs and time and to apply the conservation of financial, governmental, physical, and social resources towards better mitigation.
- Identification of significant effects, alternatives and mitigation measures, as well as comments from the public and public agencies, and relevant information about significant effects should be made as early as possible in the process.

Failure to comply with CEQA to provide full disclosure of information during the CEQA process, which would result in relevant information not being presented to the public agency, would constitute prejudicial abuse of discretion leaving the project proponent open to possible lawsuits.

Contact CDFW's CEQA Program: CEQA@wildlife.ca.gov (<mailto:CEQA@wildlife.ca.gov>)

NOTE: CDFW staff cannot make decisions or intercede on CEQA projects under the jurisdiction of another lead agency. Please address project-specific comments to the project's lead agency.

Habitat Conservation Planning Branch (<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Explore/Organization/HCPB>)

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CEQA Review

[The California Environmental Quality Act](https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CEQA/Purpose) (<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CEQA/Purpose>)

[External CEQA Project Review Procedures](https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CEQA/External-Review) (<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CEQA/External-Review>)

[CEQA Filing Fees](https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CEQA/Fees) (<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CEQA/Fees>)

[Process for No Effect Determinations](https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CEQA/NED) (<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CEQA/NED>)

[Federal Project Review \(https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CEQA/Federal-Review\)](https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CEQA/Federal-Review)

[CDFW's Internal CEQA Procedures \(https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CEQA/Procedures\)](https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CEQA/Procedures)

[Other Types of CEQA Project Reviews \(https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CEQA/Other\)](https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/CEQA/Other)

Related Links

- [2014 CEQA Statutes and Guidelines \(PDF\) \(https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=77795&inline=1\)](https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=77795&inline=1)
- [CEQA FAQ \(PDF\) \(https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=4009&inline=1\)](https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=4009&inline=1)
- [CEQA Public Notices \(https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Notices\)](https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Notices)
- [SB 1535 \(PDF\) \(https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=76455&inline=1\)](https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=76455&inline=1) Changes in filing fees
- [Fish and Game Code Section 711.4 and Section 713 \(https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=71768&inline=1\)](https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=71768&inline=1) Legal information on filing fees

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