**Categorical Exclusion by Review (CER)**

**Environmental Information Checklist (Checklist)**

**Instructions and Guidance**

(Last updated: July 2021)

**Instructions**

* Complete the Checklist in its entirety and, if required. Include a copy of the checklist as “Section 7: Environmental Information Document” in the Engineering Report/Environmental Information Document (ER/EID).
* Use the provided space in the Checklist to indicate any figures, attachments, or other references included either in Section 7 or as an appendix of the ER/EID.
* The guidance below is intended to assist with completing the table. For more detailed information on environmental review and documentation, refer to the expanded guidance here: <https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-infrastructure/i-have-funding/engineering-reportenvironmental-information>.

**General Guidance**

* Note that if the project is co-funded with CDBG-I funds, this Checklist cannot be used. The CDBG-I environmental review process must be followed.
* Types of Impacts
	+ Direct Impact – Those effects on the environment that occur at the same time and place as the project. Direct impacts include impacts from construction-related activities as well as impacts related to operation of a newly constructed or modified facility upon completion of construction.
	+ Secondary & Cumulative Impacts (SCI) – Secondary impacts are effects to the environment and natural resources that are more removed in time and distance from a project’s construction and operation activities. Cumulative impacts are effects that result from the project’s direct impacts added together with impacts from other past, present, and future projects that can be reasonably predicted. Projects that qualify for a Categorical Exclusion are not expected to have significant SCI.
* Scope of Impacts – The scope of impacts is the area that should be investigated to identify impacts to various resources that are included in the impact analysis. The scope of impacts for projects eligible for Categorical Exclusion should consider the project site and immediately surrounding area that can potentially be impacted. The extent of the surrounding area to be considered will vary based on the nature of the project and the resource. For example, impacts to prime and unique farmlands are not likely to extend beyond the project site, but impacts to water resources can potentially extend downstream from the project area. Similarly, impacts related to noise or air emissions may extend beyond the immediate project site.
* Mitigative Measures – Actions taken to prevent and/or minimize adverse impacts. Examples might include obtaining and following required permits, limiting construction activities to specific hours, using emission control devices or mufflers.
* All figures must include the following:
	+ The project location;
	+ North arrow
	+ Legend
	+ Labeling of features such as major roads, water bodies, significant environmental features

**Section 1: Floodplains**

* Floodplain maps should be obtained from <https://fris.nc.gov/>
* Discuss whether the project will encroach on the 100-year floodplain and/or floodway.
* Describe both temporary and permanent impacts.
* Note that for projects funded through the CWSRF of DWSRF programs, permanent impacts to floodplains are only allowed where there is no practicable alternative. The test of what is practicable depends on the situation and includes consideration of all pertinent factors such as environment, cost, and technology. Clearly explain why alternatives that would not impact the floodplain were rejected.

**Section 2: Prime & Unique Farmland**

* Utilize the Natural Resources Conservation Service to identify soil types: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/soils/home/>

**Section 3: Wetlands & Streams**

* National Wetland Inventory maps are available through NCOneMap: <http://data.nconemap.com/geoportal/catalog/main/home.page>
* When describing impacts, distinguish between temporary and permanent impacts.

**Section 4: Threatened and Endangered Species**

* The North Carolina Natural Heritage Program (NCNHP) website has a number of resources for identifying the potential presence of threatened and endangered (T&E) species including county or quadrangle lists, interactive maps, and customized searches: <https://ncnhde.natureserve.org/>
* County lists are also available through the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, but note that these lists do not include state-listed T&E species, which must also be addressed in the environmental review. <https://www.fws.gov/raleigh/species/cntylist/nc_counties.html>
* If T&E species are present in the county where a project is located, additional research is needed to determine whether the species is likely to be impacted by the project. Additional information can include information about known occurrences of the species and/or whether the project area includes suitable habitat.
* Note that some T&E species thrive in disturbed areas, so the fact that a project is located in a disturbed area is not sufficient evidence that T&E species will not be impacted.

**Section 5: Wild & Scenic Rivers**

* Utilize the website for [National Wild and Scenic Rivers System](http://www.rivers.gov/north-carolina.php) to determine if any wild and scenic rivers are located in the project area.
* If any impacts are anticipated, consult with the appropriate U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service office in [Asheville](https://www.fws.gov/raleigh/) or [Raleigh](https://www.fws.gov/raleigh/).

**Section 6: Coastal Resources**

* The following counties are covered by the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA): Beaufort, Bertie, Brunswick, Camden, Carteret, Chowan, Craven, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Hertford, Hyde, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico, Pasquotank, Pender, Perquimans, Tyrrell, Washington
* The FWS has a [CBRS Mapper](http://www.fws.gov/cbra/Maps/Mapper.html) available online to determine if a project is located in a CBRS community

**Section 7: Areas of Archaeological or Historical Value**

* The Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has web mapping applications available to locate historic resources: <https://nc.maps.arcgis.com/home/group.html?id=d56ec9c8aa77423b931f4d359f103ae6%2Fhpoweb%2Fdefault.htm&view=list&categories=%5B%22%2FCategories%2FHPOWEB%22%5D&showFilters=false#content/hpoweb/>

**Section 8: Air Quality**

* National Ambient Air Quality Standards attainment status and additional air emissions

**Section 9: Environmental Justice**

* Utilize the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s [EJ Screen](https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen) tool. When using this tool, be sure to determine percent minority population and percent low-income population. Note: Do not use percentiles. Tutorial videos are available at <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen/learn-use-ejscreen>. Print out the map produced and provide the appropriate figure or reference number in the table. Directions are below.
1. Select Location – From the menu button on the left, choose “Select Location” from the drop down, and then there are many options people can choose from – use whatever works best for the particular project location (can choose a specific point, create a polygon shape to pull data, create a line, etc or choose a census block.
2. Once the area is chosen, click the area on the map and a menu pops up.
3. At the top is an option to define a buffer to use – this is where the data will pull from. So if you’ve selected a line or point, you put in a buffer around it. IF you did a polygon that already extends beyond your project boundaries, you don’t need a buffer. (How big the buffer should be is up to professional judgement and not something we define, but bear it mind that the point of the exercise is to identify populations that might be disproportionately impacted, so want to focus on the area where impacts will be felt and not dilute that by looking an area that is too broad.)
4. After setting the buffer, if needed, select “Get Printable Standard Report.” I like this report be because it is easy to include as an appendix. It clearly shows the area that was used. (The report will open in a new tab and is does take a little time)
5. From the report, scroll down to the table that is below the map and look for the “People of Color Population” and “Low Income Population” rows. The “Value” is the percentage that we need.
* Alternatively, utilize data from the American Community Survey (ACS) as described below. This may be completed using a GIS in combination with the ACS data. Complete the table below and provide the appropriate figure or reference number in the table.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A picture containing text, clipart  Description automatically generated | **Division of Water Infrastructure****Categorical Exclusion by Review (CER)****Environmental Information Checklist**(Last updated: July 2021) | Logo, company name  Description automatically generated |
| **Owner Name:**       |
| **Project Name:**       |
| **Project Number:**       |
| **Section 1: Floodplains** |
| Attach floodplain map and provide figure number or reference. |       |
| 1. *Is the project in the 100-year floodplain?*
 | [ ]  Yes | [ ]  No |
| 1. *Is the project in the 100-year floodway? (If so, show in Environmental Features Figure.)*
 | [ ]  Yes | [ ]  No |
| *If “Yes" to (1) or (2) Briefly describe impacts and mitigation and provide a Floodplain Map with project location and floodplain boundaries clearly marked. If the project will have permanent impacts to floodplains, explain why other alternatives are not practicable.* |
|       |
| **Section 2: Prime & Unique Farmland** |
| Attach soil map and provide figure number or reference. |       |
| 1. *Does the project area contain prime and unique (P&U) farmlands? If yes, show on soils figure the soil types that are prime and unique farmland. (If “No” skip the rest of the section.)*
 | [ ]  YesQuantity (acres)      | [ ]  No  |
| 1. *Will P&U farmland be directly impacted by the project?*

 *(If “No” skip questions 3-5.)* | [ ]  YesQuantity (acres)      | [ ]  No  |
| 1. *What is the total acreage of P&U farmland in the county?*
 |       |
| 1. *What is the percentage of P&U farmland in the county that will be impacted? (Divide answer to Question 2 by answer to Question 3)*
 |       |
| 1. *Briefly describe impacts, including whether the land that may be impacted is currently in agricultural use.*

      |
| **Section 3: Wetlands & Streams** |
| Attach wetlands map and provide figure number or reference. |       |
| 1. *Are wetlands present on or near the project site?*
 | [ ]  Yes | [ ]  No |
| 1. *Are streams present on or near the project site?*
2. *(If “No” for both (1) and (2), skip the rest of the section.)*
 | [ ]  Yes | [ ]  No |
| 1. *Discuss the type, quality, function, and relative importance of wetlands and identify any streams.*
 |
|       |
| 1. *Describe impacts of the project (construction and operational impacts) and mitigation.*
 |
|       |
| 1. *If there will be any stream and/or wetland crossings, complete the table below, show each crossing on the figure, and provide the total impacts from the table here.*
 | *Wetland Impacts* *(Acres):*      *Stream Impacts* *(Linear Feet):*        |
| **Wetland/Stream Crossings****Complete for Wetland/Stream Crossings noted above.** |
| Attach stream and wetlands crossing map and provide figure number or reference. |       |
| *Wetland Crossings (add rows as needed; include all crossings, even if impact is zero feet).* |
| **# Keyed to Map** | **Diameter & Type of Sewer** | **Installation Method** | **Acres Impacted** |
|       |       |       |       |
|       |       |       |       |
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|       |       |       |       |
| **Total Wetland Impacts (acres):** |  |
| *Stream Crossings (add rows as needed; include all crossings even if impact is zero feet.)* |
| **# Keyed to Map** | **Diameter & Type of Sewer** | **Installation Method** | **Linear Feet Impacted** |
|       |       |       |       |
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| **Total Stream Impacts (feet):** |  |
| **Section 4: Threatened and Endangered Species** |
| Provide appendix or reference number as needed. |       |
| *Are state and/or federal T&E species present within or near the project site? If Yes, list all T&E species below (add rows as needed).* | [ ]  Yes | [ ]  No |
| *Common Name* | *Scientific Name* | *Status* | *Approximate Location (e.g., ~1 mi. NE of Project)* |
|       |       |       |       |
|       |       |       |       |
|       |       |       |       |
|       |       |       |       |
| *Describe impacts to any threatened and endangered species and any mitigation that will be implemented. If species are listed but no impacts are anticipated, explain why the listed species will not be impacted.* |
|       |
| **Section 5: Wild & Scenic Rivers** |
| Provide appendix or reference number as needed. |       |
| *Is the project located within one mile of one of the designated Wild & Scenic Rivers or a river in the Nationwide Rivers inventory, or its tributaries?* |
| *Chattooga River* *Horsepasture River* *Lumber River*  | [ ]  Yes [ ]  No[ ]  Yes [ ]  No[ ]  Yes [ ]  No | *New River**Wilson Creek* | [ ]  Yes [ ]  No[ ]  Yes [ ]  No |
| *If “Yes” is the stream reach in the project area designated as Wild & Scenic?*  | [ ]  Yes  | [ ]  No |
| *If “Yes”, Describe the stream reach and potential impacts to the stream:*      |
| *If impacts are anticipated, consult with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to determine if mitigation is required. Describe required mitigation:*      |
| **Section 6: Coastal Resources** |
| Provide appendix or reference number as needed. |       |
| ***CAMA*** |
| 1. *Is the project in a CAMA county listed in the guidance? If “No,” skip the rest of the section.*
 | [ ]  Yes | [ ]  No |
| 1. *Does the project involve new construction, land conversion, major rehabilitation, and substantial improvement activities?*
 | [ ]  Yes | [ ]  No |
| *If “Yes” to 1 and 2, discuss consistency review with Division of Coastal Management and include any relevant documentation in an appendix.*      |
| ***Coastal Barriers*** |
| 1. *Is project located within a CBRS community? If “Yes,” attach a FIRM map indicating whether construction activity occurs in a CBRS and provide documentation of US Fish and Wildlife Service approval in an Appendix. Include the appropriate Appendix Reference at the top of this table.*
 | [ ]  Yes | [ ]  No |
| **Section 7: Areas of Archaeological or Historical Value** |
| Provide figure or reference number. |       |
| *Are areas of archaeological or historical value in the project site?* | [ ]  Yes | [ ]  No |
| *Name* | *Type* | *Location (e.g., 1 mi. NE of Project)* |
|       |       |       |
|       |       |       |
|       |       |       |
|       |       |       |
| *If Yes, discuss impacts and mitigation related to areas or archaeological or historical value?* |
|       |
| **Section 8: Air Quality** |
| *Discuss the general air quality and identify current sources of emissions at the project site and the immediate surrounding area. Note whether odors have been a problem.* |
|       |
| *Discuss impacts and mitigation for impacts to air quality. Be sure to include construction and operational impacts. If open burning will occur, describe what will be burned.* |
|       |
| **Section 9: Environmental Justice** |
| Was the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Environmental Justice Geographic Assessment Tool used?If no, then complete the existing conditions cells below. | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No |
| Provide figure or reference number. |       |
| *Minority Populations* |
| *County* | *Census Tract* | *Census Block Group* | *Total Population* | *Total Minority Population* | *Percent Minority Population* | *Significant Minority Population?* |
|       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
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| *Low-Income Populations* |
|       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
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| Are there any potentially significant environmental justice populations in the project area? | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No |
| *If the answer is yes, then below, list the impacts to the minority and / or low-income populations and whether the impacts are potentially significant. If potentially significant, contact Division staff.* |
| *Impact* | *Potentially Significant?* |
|       | [ ]  Yes [ ]  No |
|       | [ ]  Yes [ ]  No |
|       | [ ]  Yes [ ]  No |
|       | [ ]  Yes [ ]  No |
|       | [ ]  Yes [ ]  No |
|       | [ ]  Yes [ ]  No |
|       | [ ]  Yes [ ]  No |
|  |
| I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the entire project is below the minor construction activity bright lines and that information above is accurate. I have attached a map showing the project and existing property boundaries and / or ROW and provided any additional figures as needed. |
|  |  |  |
| Project Preparer |  | Date |