

Drafting a purpose and need statement

Excerpted from NEPA training materials from Gretchen Harrington NOAA Fisheries



Purpose and Need for Action

- Critical first step
- Informed thru the public process
- Answers key questions—
 - **WHAT is the problem?**
 - **WHY are we taking action?**
 - **WHAT are the objectives of the action (solution)?**
 - **WHAT are we trying to achieve?**
- *Simple and concise*



Why is the “Purpose and Need” Important?

- Sets the stage for the entire document
- Should be neither too broad nor too narrow
- **Helps define all of the alternatives considered**
- If an alternative does not meet the purpose and need it should not be analyzed but could be included as “considered but eliminated from detailed study”



Relationship between the P & N and Alternatives

- **The purpose and need determines the *reasonable range of alternatives***

Iterative process...

- **Does the P & N yield a reasonable range of alternatives?**
- **Does the range of alternatives match the P & N?**



What is a reasonable range of alternatives?

- A reasonable alternative answers:
 - **Does the alternative meet the objectives and fulfill the underlying need for the action?**
 - **Is it technically and economically practical/feasible?**
 - **Does it make common sense?**
- Includes a “no action” alternative