

§ 325.2 Processing of applications.

(a) *Standard procedures.*

(1) When an application for a permit is received the district engineer shall immediately assign it a number for identification, acknowledge receipt thereof, and advise the applicant of the number assigned to it. He shall review the application for completeness, and if the application is incomplete, request from the applicant within 15 days of receipt of the application any additional information necessary for further processing.

(2) Within 15 days of receipt of an application the district engineer will either determine that the application is complete (see 33 CFR 325.1(d)(9) and issue a public notice as described in §325.3 of this part, unless specifically exempted by other provisions of this regulation or that it is incomplete and notify the applicant of the information necessary for a complete application. The district engineer will issue a supplemental, revised, or corrected public notice if in his view there is a change in the application data that would affect the public's review of the proposal.

(3) The district engineer will consider all comments received in response to the public notice in his subsequent actions on the permit application. Receipt of the comments will be acknowledged, if appropriate, and they will be made a part of the administrative record of the application. Comments received as form letters or petitions may be acknowledged as a group to the person or organization responsible for the form letter or petition. If comments relate to matters within the special expertise of another federal agency, the district engineer may seek the advice of that agency. If the district engineer determines, based on comments received, that he must have the views of the applicant on a particular issue to make a public interest determination, the applicant will be given the opportunity to furnish his views on such issue to the district engineer (see §325.2(d)(5)). At the earliest practicable time other substantive comments will be furnished to the applicant for his information and any views he may wish to offer. A summary of the comments, the actual letters or portions thereof, or representative comment letters may be furnished to the applicant. The applicant may voluntarily elect to contact objectors in an attempt to resolve objections but will not be required to do so. District engineers will ensure that all parties are informed that the Corps alone is responsible for reaching a decision on the merits of any application. The district engineer may also offer Corps regulatory staff to be present at meetings between applicants and objectors, where appropriate, to provide information on the process, to mediate differences, or to gather information to aid in the decision process. The district engineer should not delay processing of the application unless the applicant requests a reasonable delay, normally not to exceed 30 days, to provide additional information or comments.

(4) The district engineer will follow Appendix B of 33 CFR part 230 for environmental procedures and documentation required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. A decision on a permit application will require either an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement unless it is included within a categorical exclusion.

(5) The district engineer will also evaluate the application to determine the need for a public hearing pursuant to 33 CFR part 327.

(6) After all above actions have been completed, the district engineer will determine in accordance with the record and applicable regulations whether or not the permit should be issued. He shall prepare a statement of findings (SOF) or, where an EIS has been prepared, a record of decision (ROD), on all permit decisions. The SOF or ROD shall include the district engineer's views on the probable effect of the proposed work on the public interest including conformity with the guidelines published for the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States (40 CFR part 230) or with the criteria for dumping of dredged material in ocean waters (40 CFR parts 220 to 229), if applicable, and the conclusions of the district engineer. The SOF or ROD shall be dated, signed, and included in the record prior to final action on the application. Where the district engineer has delegated authority to sign permits for and in his behalf, he may similarly delegate the signing of the SOF or ROD. If a district engineer makes a decision on a permit application which is contrary to state or local decisions (33 CFR 320.4(j) (2) & (4)), the district engineer will include in the decision document the significant national issues and explain how they are overriding in importance. If a permit is warranted, the district engineer will determine the special conditions, if any, and duration which should be incorporated into the permit. In accordance with the authorities specified in §325.8 of this part, the district engineer will take final action or forward the application with all pertinent comments, records, and studies, including the final EIS or environmental assessment, through channels to the official authorized to make the final decision. The report forwarding the application for decision will be in a format prescribed by the Chief of Engineers. District and division engineers will notify the applicant and interested federal and state agencies that the application has been forwarded to higher headquarters. The district or division engineer may, at his option, disclose his recommendation to the news media and other interested parties, with the caution that it is only a recommendation and not a final decision. Such disclosure is encouraged in permit cases which have become controversial and have been the subject of stories in the media or have generated strong public interest. In those cases where the application is forwarded for decision in the format prescribed by the Chief of Engineers, the report will serve as the SOF or ROD. District engineers will generally combine the SOF, environmental assessment, and findings of no significant impact (FONSI), 404(b)(1) guideline analysis, and/or the criteria for dumping of dredged material in ocean waters into a single document.

(7) If the final decision is to deny the permit, the applicant will be advised in writing of the reason(s) for denial. If the final decision is to issue the permit and a standard individual permit form will be used, the issuing official will forward the permit to the applicant for signature accepting the conditions of the permit. The permit is not valid until signed by the issuing official. Letters of permission require only the signature of the issuing official. Final action on the permit application is the signature on the letter notifying the applicant of the denial of the permit or signature of the issuing official on the authorizing document.

(8) The district engineer will publish monthly a list of permits issued or denied during the previous month. The list will identify each action by public notice number, name of applicant, and brief description of activity involved. It will also note that relevant environmental documents and the SOF's or ROD's are available upon written request and, where applicable, upon the payment of administrative fees. This list will be distributed to all persons who may have an interest in any of the public notices listed.

(9) Copies of permits will be furnished to other agencies in appropriate cases as follows:

(i) If the activity involves the construction of artificial islands, installations or other devices on the outer continental shelf, to the Director, Defense Mapping Agency, Hydrographic Center, Washington, DC 20390 Attention, Code NS12, and to the National Ocean Service, Office of Coast Survey, N/CS261, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910–3282.

(ii) If the activity involves the construction of structures to enhance fish propagation (e.g., fishing reefs) along the coasts of the United States, to the Defense Mapping Agency, Hydrographic Center and National Ocean Service as in paragraph (a)(9)(i) of this section and to the Director, Office of Marine Recreational Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service, Washington, DC 20235.

(iii) If the activity involves the erection of an aerial transmission line, submerged cable, or submerged pipeline across a navigable water of the United States, to the National Ocean Service, Office of Coast Survey, N/CS261, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910–3282.

(iv) If the activity is listed in paragraphs (a)(9) (i), (ii), or (iii) of this section, or involves the transportation of dredged material for the purpose of dumping it in ocean waters, to the appropriate District Commander, U.S. Coast Guard.

(b) *Procedures for particular types of permit situations.*

(1) **Section 401 Water Quality Certification.** If the district engineer determines that water quality certification for the proposed activity is necessary under the provisions of section 401 of the Clean Water Act, he shall so notify the applicant and obtain from him or the certifying agency a copy of such certification.

(i) The public notice for such activity, which will contain a statement on certification requirements (see §325.3(a)(8)), will serve as the notification to the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) pursuant to section 401(a)(2) of the Clean Water Act. If EPA determines that the proposed discharge may affect the quality of the waters of any state other than the state in which the discharge will originate, it will so notify such other state, the district engineer, and the applicant. If such notice or a request for supplemental information is not received within 30 days of issuance of the public notice, the district engineer will assume EPA has made a negative determination with respect to section 401(a)(2). If EPA determines another state's waters may be affected, such state has 60 days from receipt of EPA's notice to determine if the proposed discharge will affect the quality of its waters so as to violate any water quality requirement in such state, to notify EPA and the district engineer in writing of its objection to permit issuance, and to request a public hearing. If such occurs, the district engineer will hold a public hearing in the objecting state. Except as stated below, the hearing will be conducted in accordance with 33 CFR part 327. The issues to be considered at the public hearing will be limited to water quality impacts. EPA will submit its evaluation and recommendations at the hearing with respect to the state's objection to permit issuance. Based upon the

recommendations of the objecting state, EPA, and any additional evidence presented at the hearing, the district engineer will condition the permit, if issued, in such a manner as may be necessary to insure compliance with applicable water quality requirements. If the imposition of conditions cannot, in the district engineer's opinion, insure such compliance, he will deny the permit.

(ii) No permit will be granted until required certification has been obtained or has been waived. A waiver may be explicit, or will be deemed to occur if the certifying agency fails or refuses to act on a request for certification within sixty days after receipt of such a request unless the district engineer determines a shorter or longer period is reasonable for the state to act. In determining whether or not a waiver period has commenced or waiver has occurred, the district engineer will verify that the certifying agency has received a valid request for certification. If, however, special circumstances identified by the district engineer require that action on an application be taken within a more limited period of time, the district engineer shall determine a reasonable lesser period of time, advise the certifying agency of the need for action by a particular date, and that, if certification is not received by that date, it will be considered that the requirement for certification has been waived. Similarly, if it appears that circumstances may reasonably require a period of time longer than sixty days, the district engineer, based on information provided by the certifying agency, will determine a longer reasonable period of time, not to exceed one year, at which time a waiver will be deemed to occur.

(2) ***Coastal Zone Management consistency.*** If the proposed activity is to be undertaken in a state operating under a coastal zone management program approved by the Secretary of Commerce pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Act (see 33 CFR 320.3(b)), the district engineer shall proceed as follows:

(i) If the applicant is a federal agency, and the application involves a federal activity in or affecting the coastal zone, the district engineer shall forward a copy of the public notice to the agency of the state responsible for reviewing the consistency of federal activities. The federal agency applicant shall be responsible for complying with the CZM Act's directive for ensuring that federal agency activities are undertaken in a manner which is consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with approved CZM Programs. (See 15 CFR part 930.) If the state coastal zone agency objects to the proposed federal activity on the basis of its inconsistency with the state's approved CZM Program, the district engineer shall not make a final decision on the application until the disagreeing parties have had an opportunity to utilize the procedures specified by the CZM Act for resolving such disagreements.

(ii) If the applicant is not a federal agency and the application involves an activity affecting the coastal zone, the district engineer shall obtain from the applicant a certification that his proposed activity complies with and will be conducted in a manner that is consistent with the approved state CZM Program. Upon receipt of the certification, the district engineer will forward a copy of the public notice (which will include the applicant's certification statement) to the state coastal zone agency and request its concurrence or objection. If the state agency objects to the certification or issues a decision indicating that the proposed activity requires further review, the district engineer shall not issue the permit until the state concurs with the certification statement or the Secretary of Commerce determines that the proposed activity is consistent with the

purposes of the CZM Act or is necessary in the interest of national security. If the state agency fails to concur or object to a certification statement within six months of the state agency's receipt of the certification statement, state agency concurrence with the certification statement shall be conclusively presumed. District engineers will seek agreements with state CZM agencies that the agency's failure to provide comments during the public notice comment period will be considered as a concurrence with the certification or waiver of the right to concur or non-concur.

(iii) If the applicant is requesting a permit for work on Indian reservation lands which are in the coastal zone, the district engineer shall treat the application in the same manner as prescribed for a Federal applicant in paragraph (b)(2)(i) of this section. However, if the applicant is requesting a permit on non-trust Indian lands, and the state CZM agency has decided to assert jurisdiction over such lands, the district engineer shall treat the application in the same manner as prescribed for a non-Federal applicant in paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section.

(3) **Historic properties.** If the proposed activity would involve any property listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the district engineer will proceed in accordance with Corps National Historic Preservation Act implementing regulations.

(4) **Activities associated with Federal projects.** If the proposed activity would consist of the dredging of an access channel and/or berthing facility associated with an authorized federal navigation project, the activity will be included in the planning and coordination of the construction or maintenance of the federal project to the maximum extent feasible. Separate notice, hearing, and environmental documentation will not be required for activities so included and coordinated, and the public notice issued by the district engineer for these federal and associated non-federal activities will be the notice of intent to issue permits for those included non-federal dredging activities. The decision whether to issue or deny such a permit will be consistent with the decision on the federal project unless special considerations applicable to the proposed activity are identified. (See §322.5(c).)

(5) **Endangered Species.** Applications will be reviewed for the potential impact on threatened or endangered species pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act as amended. The district engineer will include a statement in the public notice of his current knowledge of endangered species based on his initial review of the application (see 33 CFR 325.2(a)(2)). If the district engineer determines that the proposed activity would not affect listed species or their critical habitat, he will include a statement to this effect in the public notice. If he finds the proposed activity may affect an endangered or threatened species or their critical habitat, he will initiate formal consultation procedures with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service. Public notices forwarded to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service will serve as the request for information on whether any listed or proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species may be present in the area which would be affected by the proposed activity, pursuant to section 7(c) of the Act. References, definitions, and consultation procedures are found in 50 CFR part 402.

(c) [Reserved]

(d) ***Timing of processing of applications.*** The district engineer will be guided by the following time limits for the indicated steps in the evaluation process:

(1) The public notice will be issued within 15 days of receipt of all information required to be submitted by the applicant in accordance with paragraph 325.1.(d) of this part.

(2) The comment period on the public notice should be for a reasonable period of time within which interested parties may express their views concerning the permit. The comment period should not be more than 30 days nor less than 15 days from the date of the notice. Before designating comment periods less than 30 days, the district engineer will consider:

- (i) whether the proposal is routine or noncontroversial,
- (ii) mail time and need for comments from remote areas,
- (iii) comments from similar proposals, and
- (iv) the need for a site visit.

After considering the length of the original comment period, paragraphs (a)(2) (i) through (iv) of this section, and other pertinent factors, the district engineer may extend the comment period up to an additional 30 days if warranted.

(3) District engineers will decide on all applications not later than 60 days after receipt of a complete application, unless

- (i) precluded as a matter of law or procedures required by law (see below),
- (ii) the case must be referred to higher authority (see §325.8 of this part),
- (iii) the comment period is extended,
- (iv) a timely submittal of information or comments is not received from the applicant,
- (v) the processing is suspended at the request of the applicant, or
- (vi) information needed by the district engineer for a decision on the application cannot reasonably be obtained within the 60-day period.

Once the cause for preventing the decision from being made within the normal 60-day period has been satisfied or eliminated, the 60-day clock will start running again from where it was suspended. For example, if the comment period is extended by 30 days, the district engineer will, absent other restraints, decide on the application within 90 days of receipt of a complete application. Certain laws (e.g., the Clean Water Act, the CZM Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Preservation of Historical and Archeological Data Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and the

Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act) require procedures such as state or other federal agency certifications, public hearings, environmental impact statements, consultation, special studies, and testing which may prevent district engineers from being able to decide certain applications within 60 days.

(4) Once the district engineer has sufficient information to make his public interest determination, he should decide the permit application even though other agencies which may have regulatory jurisdiction have not yet granted their authorizations, except where such authorizations are, by federal law, a prerequisite to making a decision on the DA permit application. Permits granted prior to other (non-prerequisite) authorizations by other agencies should, where appropriate, be conditioned in such manner as to give those other authorities an opportunity to undertake their review without the applicant biasing such review by making substantial resource commitments on the basis of the DA permit. In unusual cases the district engineer may decide that due to the nature or scope of a specific proposal, it would be prudent to defer taking final action until another agency has acted on its authorization. In such cases, he may advise the other agency of his position on the DA permit while deferring his final decision.

(5) The applicant will be given a reasonable time, not to exceed 30 days, to respond to requests of the district engineer. The district engineer may make such requests by certified letter and clearly inform the applicant that if he does not respond with the requested information or a justification why additional time is necessary, then his application will be considered withdrawn or a final decision will be made, whichever is appropriate. If additional time is requested, the district engineer will either grant the time, make a final decision, or consider the application as withdrawn.

(6) The time requirements in these regulations are in terms of calendar days rather than in terms of working days.

(e) **Alternative procedures.** Division and district engineers are authorized to use alternative procedures as follows:

(1) **Letters of permission.** Letters of permission are a type of permit issued through an abbreviated processing procedure which includes coordination with Federal and state fish and wildlife agencies, as required by the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, and a public interest evaluation, but without the publishing of an individual public notice. The letter of permission will not be used to authorize the transportation of dredged material for the purpose of dumping it in ocean waters. Letters of permission may be used:

(i) In those cases subject to section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 when, in the opinion of the district engineer, the proposed work would be minor, would not have significant individual or cumulative impacts on environmental values, and should encounter no appreciable opposition.

(ii) In those cases subject to section 404 of the Clean Water Act after:

(A) The district engineer, through consultation with Federal and state fish and wildlife agencies, the Regional Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, the state water quality certifying agency, and, if appropriate, the state Coastal Zone Management Agency, develops a list of categories of activities proposed for authorization under LOP procedures;

(B) The district engineer issues a public notice advertising the proposed list and the LOP procedures, requesting comments and offering an opportunity for public hearing; and

(C) A 401 certification has been issued or waived and, if appropriate, CZM consistency concurrence obtained or presumed either on a generic or individual basis.

(2) **Regional permits.** Regional permits are a type of general permit as defined in 33 CFR 322.2(f) and 33 CFR 323.2(n). They may be issued by a division or district engineer after compliance with the other procedures of this regulation. After a regional permit has been issued, individual activities falling within those categories that are authorized by such regional permits do not have to be further authorized by the procedures of this regulation. The issuing authority will determine and add appropriate conditions to protect the public interest. When the issuing authority determines on a case-by-case basis that the concerns for the aquatic environment so indicate, he may exercise discretionary authority to override the regional permit and require an individual application and review. A regional permit may be revoked by the issuing authority if it is determined that it is contrary to the public interest provided the procedures of §325.7 of this part are followed. Following revocation, applications for future activities in areas covered by the regional permit shall be processed as applications for individual permits. No regional permit shall be issued for a period of more than five years.

(3) **Joint procedures.** Division and district engineers are authorized and encouraged to develop joint procedures with states and other Federal agencies with ongoing permit programs for activities also regulated by the Department of the Army. Such procedures may be substituted for the procedures in paragraphs (a)(1) through (a)(5) of this section provided that the substantive requirements of those sections are maintained. Division and district engineers are also encouraged to develop management techniques such as joint agency review meetings to expedite the decision-making process. However, in doing so, the applicant's rights to a full public interest review and independent decision by the district or division engineer must be strictly observed.

(4) **Emergency procedures.** Division engineers are authorized to approve special processing procedures in emergency situations. An "emergency" is a situation which would result in an unacceptable hazard to life, a significant loss of property, or an immediate, unforeseen, and significant economic hardship if corrective action requiring a permit is not undertaken within a time period less than the normal time needed to process the application under standard procedures. In emergency situations, the district engineer will explain the circumstances and recommend special procedures to the division engineer who will instruct the district engineer as to further processing of the application. Even in an emergency situation, reasonable efforts will be made to receive comments from interested Federal, state, and local agencies and the affected public. Also, notice of any special procedures authorized and their rationale is to be appropriately published as soon as practicable.

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