Department of Homeland Security
Environmental Planning, Office of Safety and Environment
Washington, D.C. 20528

Subject: Don't undermine NEPA Protections

Dear Secretary Ridge and Homeland Security Staff,

I'm writing to oppose the Department of Homeland Security's current proposal for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act. The proposal calls for too many exclusions from NEPA and would withhold important information from the public.

First of all, the proposal would allow for too many exclusions from the public review of agency actions that is currently allowed under NEPA. Although exclusions that don't threaten the environment are acceptable, some of the proposed exclusions involve activities that could cause significant harm. For example, the building of fences and barriers by the Border Patrol could interfere with wildlife migration. Some of the proposed exclusions, such as logging and disposal of waste and hazardous materials, should be complete eliminated because of the potential danger to humans, wildlife, and the environment.

Secondly, I disagree with the proposal to withhold a significantly greater amount of information from the public than is currently allowed. At present, only classified information is withheld form NEPA documents; however, much of the information that would be withheld under the proposal would not threaten national security. For example, information on a gas pipeline's potential for leaks and explosions should not be withheld, since the public has the right to be informed about possible dangers to which they might be exposed.

In summary, I urge you to limit the use of categorical exclusions and the withholding of information as narrowly as possible. The proposal goes far beyond what could be deemed necessary to protect national security. In fact, it could destroy the same democratic ideals that the Department of Homeland Security has been created to protect.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. I would appreciate a reply stating what you intend to do.

Sincerely,

Sarah Wolff

Sarah Wolff