

# Memorandum

*Making Conservation  
a California Way of Life*

**To:** DISTRICT DEPUTY DIRECTORS FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND  
DISTRICT DEPUTY DIRECTORS FOR PLANNING

**Date:** March 2, 2021

**From:** PHILIP J. STOLARSKI *Philip J. Stolarski*  
Chief  
Division of Environmental Analysis

DEE LAM   
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**Subject: NEPA PROCESS IMPROVEMENT TEAM: CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION CHECKLIST NOT REQUIRED**

In August 2019, the Division of Local Assistance and Division of Environmental Analysis formed the NEPA Process Improvement Team (Team) to review Caltrans' current NEPA and other federal environmental procedures and policies. The overall Team and the Team's Steering Committee consists of District and Headquarters environmental staff from both the capital program and local assistance program. The Team is considering federal statute, FHWA's current regulations and policies, and other state departments of transportation's implementation of NEPA to determine whether and how to modify our existing procedures and policies to provide for more efficiencies and flexibilities in delivery of Federal-aid projects. This memorandum (memo) is the first in what will be a continuing series of memos announcing the approval by the Steering Committee of modifications to Caltrans' NEPA and NEPA-related policies and procedures.

Effective immediately, Caltrans will no longer require the use of the Categorical Exclusion Checklist (CE Checklist), and as such the CE Checklist does not have to be kept as part of the Uniform Filing System. The CE Checklist will instead become an optional tool for environmental planners, and one that is particularly encouraged for newer environmental planners that are learning what is needed for NEPA compliance for categorically excluded projects. Caltrans must still meet internal policy requirements, as well as requirements set forth in statute, FHWA NEPA regulations, and FHWA national-level NEPA policies, as well other applicable federal laws and executive orders.

Thank you for your continuing professionalism and diligence in delivering projects for Caltrans and our project delivery partners. If you have any questions regarding this memo, please contact Scott Williams, Office Chief responsible for NEPA Assignment, at (916) 216-2741 or Kelly Hobbs, Office Chief responsible for Local Assistance environmental compliance, at (916) 838-9085.