

2025 Annotated Outline Update

Summary of Changes

What's new

For this update, three major changes were made (see additional details under corresponding headings).

1. Updates were made throughout the document to reflect current regulations, policies, and guidance.
2. All five annotated outlines (Initial Study/Environmental Assessment, Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment, Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement, NEPA only Environmental Assessment, and NEPA only Environmental Impact Statement) were combined to create one new **“Environmental Document Annotated Outline”** that contains guidance for all document types. This new combined document will allow for more comprehensive reviews and will streamline efforts when updates are required. The new Annotated Outline was designed to work cohesively with the six writing templates located on the [SER Forms and templates page](#).
3. Numerous formatting changes were made to make the Annotated Outline compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Effective May 16, 2025, **ALL** documents must follow the guidance provided in the [Direction Regarding Federal Environmental Changes to Date](#). In addition, documents should follow the guidelines below:

- New documents started after July 1, 2025, must follow the new Annotated Outline.
- Documents that have not yet circulated as of August 1, 2025, should follow the new Annotated Outline. Contact your Headquarters Environmental Coordinator if you have questions.
- For documents that have already circulated, contact your Headquarters Environmental Coordinator for guidance.

Updates made to reflect most recent regulations, policy, and guidance

Changes were made throughout the entire Annotated Outline. The major changes include:

- Updates to reflect the removal of the NEPA implementing regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508).
- A new section for the Environmentally Superior Alternative was added to the CEQA Evaluation chapter (Environmental Impact Reports only).
- The Traffic and Transportation/Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities section was renamed to “Transportation” and several edits were made to this section.
- The Environmental Justice section was removed.

- The boilerplate Climate Change paragraph located at the end of the Air Quality section was removed.
- Several edits were made to the Growth, Air Quality, Energy, and Biology sections.
- A new section on Senate Bill 743 was added to the CEQA Evaluation chapter.
- The Cumulative section was moved to the CEQA Evaluation chapter and updated to reflect the new [Interim Guidance](#).
- A new appendix was created for Air Quality Conformity Documentation.

Changes made to create the combined Annotated Outline

- Changed all “Department” to “Caltrans.”
- The Summary and Alternatives sections had substantial changes (these sections varied the most between the five annotated outlines, so information was reorganized and formatted to reflect the various document requirements).
- Several edits were made to the Purpose and Need section.
- Changed the Cover Sheet, General Information pages, and the Title Sheet to examples so that it is not necessary to address all of the different possible document types in the combined Annotated Outline. The writing templates have the correct language for each document type and include form fields.
- Removed the Negative Declaration page and added instructions to see the writing templates. The writing templates have the exact language needed and instructions.
- The Topics Considered but Determined Not to be Relevant section was renamed to “Resource Topics Dismissed from Analysis.”
- Used the same header formatting as writing templates. NOTE: Heading numbers (except for chapters) were not added since the numbering is different in each writing template depending on what sections are included.
- Regulatory settings were slimmed down and rearranged to separate out CEQA and NEPA to make it easier to remove CEQA info for NEPA-only documents.
- The font for the regulatory settings was changed to black, except for Relocations since it is mandatory in this section.
- Made most chapter references generic, e.g., “see the CEQA Evaluation chapter” instead of “see Chapter 3” to reduce any confusion since the chapter numbers do not always match what is used in the writing templates (the chapters vary depending on the type of document being prepared).
- The order of the appendices was moved around to match the writing templates (these were changed when the writing templates were created for better organization of information).
- Font color changes (not for Americans with Disabilities Act):
 - There were a few spots where examples of project types, mitigation measures, etc. were shown in purple. These were changed to blue text because these are more guidance than example language.

- A review of the red boilerplate statements was performed, and it was determined that some of them could be purple (example text) instead of red (boilerplate text).
- Removed specific document references if the instruction applied to all document types (e.g., “If comments are received on the Draft IS/EA” was changed to “If comments are received on the draft environmental document”).
- Moved info around and added terms such as “under CEQA” to make it clear what were requirements for CEQA vs. NEPA. This was done so that the instructions would be easier to understand for NEPA-only documents.

Changes made for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act

- Numerous changes were made to the colors in the Annotated Outline since color alone cannot convey meaning and colors must meet color contrast requirements:
 - Darkened red and green font to meet color contrast requirements.
 - Removed orange color that indicated text needing special attention. Once the orange was darkened enough to pass the color contrast test it looked too much like red. The orange font was changed to blue, and the word “NOTE” was added to bring attention to this text.
 - Removed gray highlight for coastal. For projects in the coastal zone, practitioners should search for the term “coast” to locate guidance as it is spread throughout the document.
 - Added intro and end language as needed to tell the listener when a font other than the blue guidance is used (e.g., **the following example language can be used: The proposed project... [end example]**). This wasn’t needed for the green font since it specifically states, “for local assistance projects.”
 - Added form fields to reduce the number of multiple colors, particularly where there was blue text in the middle of red text. The form fields let the reader know there is an instruction without adding extra information.
 - Rearranged some sections to condense the guidance so there were fewer areas of multiple colors.
- Font enlarged to 12 point (10 point is allowed for tables).
- Added alternative text to graphics.
- Reformatted complex tables (removed split and merged cells) to allow for correct reading order.
- Spelled out several of the previously used acronyms to improve readability for all users.
- Alternative instructions were added for flowcharts.