#26-05: Preliminary Environmental Study (PES) Form Update

Purpose

The Local Assistance Procedures Manual (LAPM) Exhibit 6-A: Preliminary Environmental Study (PES) Form is replaced with a new dynamic LAPM 6-A: Preliminary Environmental Study form to better meet the needs of Local Public Agencies (LPAs) and Caltrans staff. The current Exhibit 6-A has not had major updates in over a decade and is in need of modernization.

The redesigned PES form (LAPM 6-A) was piloted in early 2026 with new dynamic features and streamlined inputs, and was made available for voluntary use by all Caltrans districts and LPAs. Throughout the year, the Office of Environmental Compliance and Outreach (ECO) provided training and ongoing outreach, including a six-month comment period. ECO worked closely with Caltrans district staff to troubleshoot issues and deliver updates to the form.

The new LAPM 6-A will improve the method of collecting early project development information for project delivery, including a new section to capture environmental commitments and streamline multiple forms into one.

Policy Update

LAPM 6-A will replace the existing Exhibit 6-A permanently in January 2027 and will be hosted on the Caltrans Electronic Forms System (CEFS). The existing Exhibits 6-A: PES Form and 6-B: PES Instructions will be retired in addition to Exhibits 6-J/6-K: PES (NI)/Instructions.

PES form submittals prior to December 31, 2026 may continue to utilize Exhibit 6-A. The new LAPM 6-A will be required for all PES submittals after January 1, 2027.

All federal-aid projects must follow the federal environmental process (NEPA) described in LAPM Chapter 6: Environmental Procedures. LPAs must not commence with any required technical studies until the PES is fully executed by all signatories.

Publication Changes

The following LAPM Exhibits / Chapters will be updated to incorporate the new LAPM 6-A: PES.

LAPM Chapter / Section / Exhibit	Changes that Supersede Current Publication
Exhibit 6-A PES Form	Exhibit 6-A will be retired and replaced with LAPM 6-A with the following improvements:

LAPM Chapter / Section / Exhibit	Changes that Supersede Current Publication
	• List of required attachments • Improved review process with checklists • Added a Paleontology question • Updated the Visual Impact Assessment evaluation scores • Added an Environmental Commitments Record (ECR) sheet • Included a checkbox in the Permits section that confirms permit(s) has been received • Included a Categorical Exclusion document within the PES to streamline environmental processes. • Incorporated the NI project scoping to streamline the process. • Removed signatory requirement for the Cultural Resource Professional Qualified staff. • Other minor text revisions throughout the PES.
Exhibit 6-B PES Instructions	Exhibit 6-B will be retired; instructions for LAPM 6-A are posted at: https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/local-assistance/documents/env/pes-instructions.pdf
Exhibit 6-J PES (NI)	Exhibit 6-J will be retired; non infrastructure (NI) projects are streamlined within LAPM 6-A.
Exhibit 6-K PES (NI) Instructions	Exhibit 6-K will be retired.
LAPM Chapter 6	• "Senior Environmental Planner" title changed to "Environmental Branch Chief" • Figures 6-1, 6-2, 6-3 & 6-4 removed
LAPM Chapters 7, 9 & 13	Existing Exhibit 6-A/6-B links to be replaced with the new LAPM 6-A.

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