



Quick Reference: Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW)

The EAW is a brief document designed to lay out the basic facts of a project necessary to determine if an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required for the proposed project. The [EAW form](#) consists of 20 questions that provide the information needed to determine if the project will have significant environmental impacts. In addition to the legal purpose of the EAW in determining the need for an EIS, the EAW also provides permit information, informs the public about the project, and helps identify ways to protect the environment. The EAW is not meant to approve or deny a project, but instead act as a source of information to guide other approvals and permitting decisions. The EAW is completed by the Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) designated according to [Minnesota Rules 4410](#).

Environmental Review Exemptions

Some projects of a specific size and nature are exempted from the environmental review process as indicated in [Minnesota Rules 4410.4600](#). If a project is identified as exempt, then it is not required to go through environmental review in order to move forward.

Mandatory Environmental Review

Projects that meet or exceed the thresholds described in [Minnesota Rules 4410.4300](#) are required to complete an EAW. If a project meets or exceeds the thresholds described in [Minnesota Rules 4410.4400](#), then an EIS is required. When determining if a project meets a mandatory environmental review category threshold, it is important to keep in mind any connected actions, phased actions, or project expansions within the last three years that cumulatively may trigger mandatory environmental review. These provisions are described in [Minnesota Rules 4410.1000](#), Subpart 4, and [Minnesota Rules 4410.4300](#), Subpart 1 respectively.

Discretionary Environmental Review

Projects that are not exempt nor require a mandatory environmental review can still go through the EAW process according to [Minnesota Rules 4410.1000](#), Subpart 3. A government unit with approval authority over a project can order a discretionary EAW if it determines that the project may have the potential for significant environmental effects. A discretionary EAW can be particularly appropriate for projects with some possibility of significant adverse environmental impacts or the perception of such. A discretionary EAW can help the RGU identify the adverse environmental impacts of a project and their severity. Additionally, discretionary environmental review may be ordered by a RGU in response to a citizen petition or if the project proposer wishes to initiate environmental review to determine if the project has the potential for significant environmental impacts.

Please note that this quick reference guide is not intended to substitute for [Minnesota Rules 4410](#). It is designed to help RGUs and others implement the environmental review process more effectively and efficiently. The guide does not alter the rules or change their meaning; if any inconsistencies arise between this guide and the rules, the rules take precedent. Please contact EQB Staff with any questions at Env.Review@state.mn.us or 651-757-2873.

EAW Process Steps

(Minnesota Rules 4410.1000 – 1700)

The EAW should be prepared as early as practicable in the project development process. The RGU as designated in [Minnesota Rules 4410](#) is responsible for preparing the EAW based on data submitted by the project proposer. The EAW process includes a comment period and the option for an RGU to host a public meeting to gather additional comments. Once the EAW process is completed, the RGU must make a decision on the need for an EIS. [Minnesota Rules 4410.1700](#), Subpart 1 specifies that a positive EIS decision shall be made for projects that “have the potential for significant environmental effects”. If a project does not have the potential for significant environmental effects, then the RGU shall issue a negative EIS decision, and the project can move forward.

