



Environmental Review: A Glossary



This document is not a substitute for Environmental Quality Board rules and should be used in conjunction with the definitions included in Minnesota Administrative Rules Chapter 4410.0200. Copies of the rules are available from Minnesota's Bookstore, www.minnesotasbookstore.com, or at the Revisor of Statutes homepage at www.revisor.mn.gov. Further information about the environmental review process is available in guidance documents available on the EQB website. Upon request, this document will be made available in an alternate format, such as braille, large print or audiotape. For TTY, contact Minnesota Relay Service at 800-282-5077 and ask for the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board.

Abbreviation	Phrase
AUAR	Alternative Urban Areawide Review
EAW	Environmental Assessment Worksheet
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EQB	Environmental Quality Board
RGU	Responsible Government Unit

Definitions

Alternative Urban Areawide Review- Starts with a set of questions much like an Environmental Assessment Worksheet. It is designed to look at the cumulative impacts of anticipated development scenarios within a given geographic area. The AUAR is a planning tool that local governments can use to understand how different development scenarios will affect the environment of their community. It is a way of performing an environmental analysis in advance, before major development occurs in an area. It also is a way to use the information from the analysis to guide local planning and zoning decisions. Future projects in the area will not require individual EAW and EIS documents as long as they are consistent with the development scenarios discussed in the AUAR, and project proposers implement the mitigation measures required by the AUAR Mitigation Plan. The AUAR is also the only environmental review document that must be updated to stay relevant.

Comprehensive plan- States the goals, policies, and standards that guide a city, township, or county in its growth and development. The comprehensive plan is the primary planning document for a community and is the one on which all related ordinances are based, including zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations.

Connected actions- Are two or more projects that are related, interdependent parts, or a larger whole. Projects are considered connected if one project would directly lead to the other, if one project is a prerequisite for the other, or if neither project is considered justified by itself. Whenever two or more projects are related in any of these ways, they must be considered one project regardless of ownership or timing. If several projects are considered connected action, the RGU should consider the size of all connected projects when determining if the project has crossed a mandatory threshold.

Environmental Assessment Worksheet- Provides a brief analysis and overview of the potential environmental impacts of a specific project and to help the RGU determine if an EIS is necessary. Of the three environmental review documents, EAWs are usually the shortest at 15-50 pages. The EAW consists of a list of 20 questions and is meant to set out the basic facts of the project's environmental impacts. It usually takes about two to three months for a project to complete the entire EAW process, although it may take longer depending on the complexity of the project. The EAW is not meant to approve or deny a project, but is a source of information to guide other approvals and permitting decisions.



Environmental Impact Statement- Is a detailed analysis of the key environmental, social, and economic issues that are likely to result from the project. The initial steps of the EIS process, the scoping EAW and draft decision document, start with a questionnaire much like an EAW and identifies the concepts in an EIS. The EIS also examines if there are alternative project designs or locations that would result in fewer environmental impacts. It can take as long as one year for a project to complete the entire EIS process.

Environmental Quality Board- Draws together a representative from the governor's office (the Chair), the heads of the nine state agencies that play a vital role in Minnesota's environment and development, and five appointed citizen members. The EQB develops policy, creates long-range plans, and provides oversight for the environmental review process. The governor is responsible for appointing the five citizen members to the board; two of the five must be conversant in water management issues in the state.

Motion- Is considered the formal mode in which a member of a city, township, or county board or council proposes a measure for consideration and action.

Ordinance- Is the local government equivalent of a law or statute. In other words, ordinances are the formal regulations created by a council/board to govern the community. Ordinances are generally enforceable by criminal prosecution or by civil actions, such as a court order or injunction.

Phased actions- Are future actions by the *same proposer* that an RGU determines will have environmental effects on the *same geographic area* and are substantially certain to be undertaken *sequentially over a limited period of time*. In other words, if an RGU has a substantial reason to believe a project will expand in the near future, it should look at both the current project proposal and future expansions at the same time. This definition includes three components: same proposer, same area affected, and timing. Only one and not all of a group of owners need to be involved in both projects as long as that owner's stake is substantial. If several projects are considered phased actions, then the RGU should consider the size of all the phased projects when determining if the project has crossed over a mandatory threshold.

Resolution- Is a formal expression of the opinion or will of a governing body. Resolutions are generally used by local government councils/boards to express a particular position, to make an appointment or designation, or to adopt a policy that is administrative and not legislative in nature.

Subdivision regulations- Govern the division and development of land. They help establish procedures for dividing a land area into streets, blocks, buildable lots, and open spaces. Standards are set for lot and street design, drainage, park dedication, improvement requirements, and similar concerns. Subdivision regulations can be included as part of a zoning ordinance, or they can be adopted as a stand-alone ordinance.

Responsible Government Unit- In the environmental review process, an RGU is the governmental organization that must oversee the preparation and analysis of environmental review documents. The RGU can be any state agency or any general or special purpose unit of government in the state. The RGU is the governmental unit determined to have the greatest authority to approve or disapprove a project.

Zoning ordinance- Typically translates the comprehensive plan into a legally enforceable ordinance. The zoning ordinance provides the local government with the legal authority to regulate the way land is used under its jurisdiction. At the very least, a good zoning ordinance should contain a definition of the types of zoning districts, a list of permitted



and conditional uses for each district, a statement of all procedures, and general conditions that will be considered by the council/board when it makes zoning-related decisions.