



Where projects see progress

## **Permitting Council Invests \$30M in Technologies to Accelerate Federal Permitting Review**

The Permitting Council will make \$30 million in investments to support the development of new technology that will enhance permitting efficiency across agencies, enabling timely environmental reviews while protecting communities and environmental resources. The Permitting Council's assistance for these tools will further its role as a center for permitting excellence and will support best practices, including interagency coordination and reducing administrative burdens for agencies, applicants, Tribes, and other stakeholders. IT solutions that are broadly applicable or replicable will be highlighted for other agencies and will help the Permitting Council identify future best practices.

**Technology investments to automate processes for routine actions, improving public transparency and saving time.** More than 90 percent of National Environmental Policy Act reviews are completed as "categorical exclusions," the simplest form of review; however, identifying applicant eligibility and processing these and other routine reviews can still be time-consuming. Other permit processes are also made unnecessarily difficult due to the use of paper-based applications and other antiquated systems. Improving efficiency for agencies to complete permits for low- or no-impact activities will save time and money, help increase public trust in government, and also enable agency staff to focus on more complex applications. Project examples:

- At the Department of Commerce, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) will integrate environmental screening into their application process for Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program (BEAD) grants to identify permit requirements and speed up processing of categorical exclusions



- At the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development will develop an application portal and tool to determine earlier in the review process whether submissions qualify for lower-level categorical exclusions
- At the Department of the Interior (DOI), the Bureau of Indian Affairs will evaluate the feasibility of developing a new system to process routine Right-of-Way Applications
- The US Coast Guard (USCG) will begin development of an online Bridge Permit Application System to replace the word document template currently in use
- The Forest Service will build a digital interface for applicants requesting special use authorizations for broadband infrastructure that will serve as a unified permitting point of entry for the public

**Tools to manage complex reviews and improve shared data quality, simplifying coordination, analysis and decision making.** For major infrastructure projects with the potential for significant environmental impacts, the environmental review and permitting can result in a tremendous volume of documents and data, posing challenges for the review and interagency coordination. Data collected for a permit decision is also not always preserved for future agency use. Tracking systems to manage complex reviews and better data systems will enable efficient interagency coordination by facilitating project-level collaboration and through the use of shared data and common standards and procedures. Project examples:

- At DOI, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management will develop a system to manage, automate and streamline their offshore renewable energy planning, leasing, and plan review processes
- The Fish and Wildlife Service at DOI will enhance its species monitoring systems to better preserve and analyze information on species and habitats, and enable users to more easily contribute current field data to improve information sharing and preservation
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development, which maintains a government-wide system of current contact information for Tribal lands, will make it easier for users to search for contacts in specific geographic areas, and to update contact information to facilitate timely consultations



- A new mathematical model at USCG will facilitate the complex analysis for projects that impact the safety of navigable waters, helping to reduce risks to the safety and security of ports and waterways

**Leveraging technologies to save time and improve outcomes.** Innovative projects will pilot cutting-edge technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and also better integrate capabilities such as geographic information systems (GIS) into environmental review processes. These tools offer tremendous opportunity to modernize systems, process data more quickly, and improve analysis on the potential impacts of federal actions. Such tools will enable project sponsors to better avoid vulnerable resources while also benefiting from faster reviews.

- The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation will develop the plan for the centralized geolocation database of U.S. historic properties to allow federal agencies and project sponsors to accurately and efficiently identify and avoid impacts on historic properties
- The USCG will be able to improve and expedite NEPA reviews for bridge permits by developing an integrated GIS layer identifying environmental information and the navigability or jurisdiction of waterways
- The DOI Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance will use AI to streamline the collection, synthesis, and analysis of the millions of public comments provided on NEPA reviews
- The Department of Energy is piloting the use of AI to augment the abilities of staff in preparing environmental documents and will extend this pilot to other agencies, exploring how AI can enable agencies to use data and analysis from past reviews to prepare initial draft descriptions for environmental documents



	Investment
<b>Agency Project</b>	
<b>DOC - NTIA - Environmental and Historic Preservation Screening and Permitting Tracking (Salesforce) Tool</b>	<b>\$2,600,000</b>
<b>USDA RD- Rapid Environmental Approval Portal-Electronic Review</b>	<b>\$1,900,000</b>
<b>DOI-BIA- Right-of-Way System Feasibility Study</b>	<b>\$385,000</b>
<b>DHS - USCG - Bridge Permit Online Application System</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>
<b>USDA FS- Special Uses ePermitting</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>
<b>DOI-BOEM- InfoSys for Renewable Energy program</b>	<b>\$4,410,000</b>
<b>DOI-FWS- ECOSphere Enhancing Workflow</b>	<b>\$3,000,000</b>
<b>HUD - Tribal Directory Assessment Tool Enhancements</b>	<b>\$760,000</b>
<b>DHS - USCG - Waterways Management Risk Module</b>	<b>\$323,492</b>
<b>ACHP - Integrated Electronic Nationwide Properties Map</b>	<b>\$750,000</b>
<b>DHS - USCG - U.S. Aids to Navigation Information Management System Bridge Tile System</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>
<b>DOI-Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance - Public Comment Analysis Tool</b>	<b>\$6,500,000</b>
<b>DOE - PolicyAI Pilot</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$30,018,492</b>

