

## Environmental Review Timelines

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The most frequently asked question about the Environmental Reviews (ERs) is: how long is it going to take? This is a difficult question to answer given the possibility of various scenarios, issues, and players working at different levels of understanding and motivation to complete the ER.

The steps in the ER process are shown below. Each step can take more or less time depending upon a number of factors.

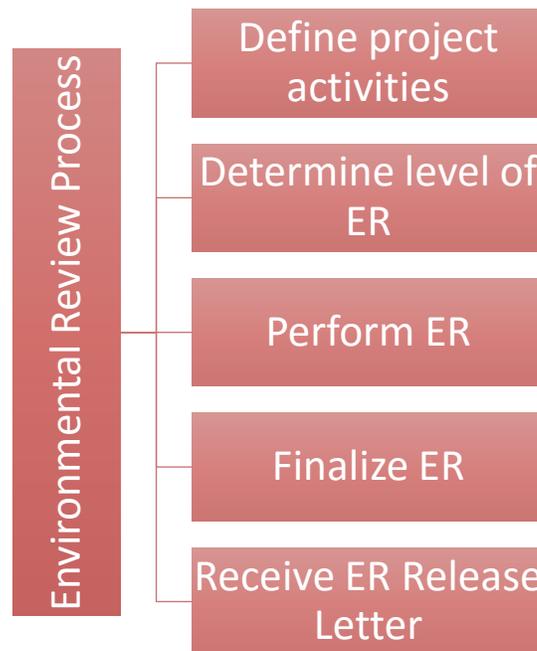


Figure 1. The Environmental Review process.

In order to give you a sense of the timeframe for actual projects, the following are a few examples of ERs, issues that arose, and length of time.

### Case Study 1

This exempt ER was for a planning grant to review the current Town Office's best use of space and incorporate accessibility modifications. This project involved hiring a consultant to review the current layout of the building, and provide cost estimates and designs for the new layout. This ER was completed rather quickly by the Town Administrator, who had no experience conducting an ER in [GEARS](#). It was opened February 25, 2015. The pre-approval was accepted on February 27 but the ER was not submitted until March 23<sup>rd</sup>. The ER was approved on March 27, 2015.

**Total ER time:** 2 months (two months preparation and using GEARS)

## **Case Study 2**

This DR project to relocate elderly and disabled residents to a new development outside of the floodplain was completed relatively quickly. This occurred even though the new site had high contamination levels and required several environmental reports, all the way up to an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) approved CAP. In addition, the players who prepared the ER were very experienced and understood that a CAP was necessary. A CAP is essentially the final report when there is serious contamination that requires remediation and engineering and/or institutional controls to prevent the risk of human exposure. Typically, one must complete a Phase I ESA, Phase II ESA, possible supplemental reports, and then finally a Corrective Action Plan (CAP). Understanding that this sequence is a required process, assisted the project in moving forward in a timely fashion. It was extremely helpful that the preparer of the ER was especially responsive to requested changes and made the changes quickly. The ER was opened in GEARS on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and four months later, the ER was approved. However, the preparers started the ER on their end by receiving sign-off from the Division for Historic Preservation and authorized Historic Preservation (HP) consultant and beginning the contamination reports in August 2013.

**Total ER time:** 1 year 4 months (One year preparation and four months using GEARS)

## **Case Study 3**

This project involved substantial rehabilitation, demolition, and expansion of the existing footprint. However, the ER preparers were experienced and motivated. Significant opposition to this project from the adjoining residential community was present and did slightly delay the project. In addition, there was slight contamination but not to the extent of a CAP. This ER was started in February 2014. In March, it was submitted for pre-approval. In May, the ER was approved. However, they received their HP sign-off in July 2013 and the published date of their first contamination report (Phase I ESA) was September 2013.

**Total ER time:** 9 months (six months preparation and three months using GEARS)

## **Case Study 4**

This project involved the relocation of a structure from a site damaged by flooding and toxic contamination to a new site out of the floodplain. The preparers did not have experience conducting ERs and did not fully understand that one contamination report led to another, thereby adding additional time between reports. In addition, they were

not forthcoming about an important ER concern (i.e. a wetland). The applicants visually observed the presence of the wetland during a site visit the previous fall but continued to deny the existence of the wetland on the property. Upon several requests of changing the wording under the Wetland Protection regulation, it was discovered by the Environmental Officer that a wetland was located on the property and was going to be impacted by construction. This led to completion of the 8-step process, two public notices, and communication with the Army Corps of Engineers and DEC— all of which caused delay to the project. The ER was opened in October of 2013 but documentation was not ready for review until February of 2014. The ER was approved in August of 2014.

**Total ER time:** 10 months (four months preparation and six months using GEARS)