

33 CFR Part 327

Public Hearings

AUTHORITY: 33 U.S.C. 1344; 33 U.S.C. 1413.

Section 327.1 - Purpose.

This regulation prescribes the policy, practice and procedures to be followed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the conduct of public hearings conducted in the evaluation of a proposed DA permit action or Federal project as defined in Section 327.3 of this Part including those held pursuant to section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344) and section 103 of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA), as amended (33 U.S.C. 1413).

Section 327.2 - Applicability.

This regulation is applicable to all divisions and districts responsible for the conduct of public hearings.

Section 327.3 - Definitions.

- a. **Public hearing** means a public proceeding conducted for the purpose of acquiring information or evidence which will be considered in evaluating a proposed DA permit action, or Federal project, and which affords the public an opportunity to present their views, opinions, and information on such permit actions or Federal projects.
 - b. **Permit action**, as used herein means the evaluation of and decision on an application for a DA permit pursuant to sections 9 or 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or section 103 of the MPRSA, as amended, or the modification, suspension or revocation of any DA permit (see 33 CFR 325.7).
 - c. **Federal project** means a Corps of Engineers project (work or activity of any nature for any purpose which is to be performed by the Chief of Engineers pursuant to Congressional authorizations) involving the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States or the transportation of dredged material for the purpose of dumping it in ocean waters subject to section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or section 103 of the MPRSA.
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Section 327.4 - General policies.

- a. A public hearing will be held in connection with the consideration of a DA permit application or a Federal project whenever a public hearing is needed for making a decision on such permit application or Federal project. In addition, a public hearing may be held when it is proposed to modify or revoke a permit. (See 33 CFR 325.7).
- b. Unless the public notice specifies that a public hearing will be held, any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in the public notice on a DA permit application or on a Federal project, that a public hearing be held to consider the material matters at issue in the permit application or with respect to Federal project. Upon receipt of any such request, stating with particularity the reasons for holding a public hearing, the district engineer may expeditiously attempt to resolve the issues informally. Otherwise, he shall promptly set a time and place for the public hearing, and give due notice thereof, as prescribed in Section 327.11 of this Part. Requests for a public hearing under this paragraph shall be granted, unless the district engineer determines that the issues raised are insubstantial or there is otherwise no valid interest to be served by a hearing. The district engineer will make such a determination in writing, and communicate his reasons therefor to all requesting parties. Comments received as form letters or petitions may be acknowledged as a group to the person or organization responsible for the form letter or petition.
- c. In case of doubt, a public hearing shall be held. HQDA has the discretionary power to require hearings in any case.
- d. In fixing the time and place for a hearing, the convenience and necessity of the interested public will be duly considered.

Section 327.5 - Presiding officer.

- a. The district engineer, in whose district a matter arises, shall normally serve as the presiding officer. When the district engineer is unable to serve, he may designate the deputy district engineer or other qualified person as presiding officer. In cases of unusual interest, the Chief of Engineers or the division engineer may appoint such person as he deems appropriate to serve as the presiding officer.
- b. The presiding officer shall include in the administrative record of the permit action the request or requests for the hearing and any data or material submitted in justification thereof, materials submitted in opposition to or in support of the proposed action, the hearing transcript, and such other material as may be relevant or pertinent to the subject matter of the hearing. The administrative record shall be available for public inspection with the exception of material exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

Section 327.6 - Legal adviser.

At each public hearing, the district counsel or his designee may serve as legal advisor to the presiding officer. In appropriate circumstances, the district engineer may waive the requirement for a legal advisor to be present.

Section 327.7 - Representation.

At the public hearing, any person may appear on his own behalf, or may be represented by counsel, or by other representatives.

Section 327.8 - Conduct of hearings.

- a. The presiding officer shall make an opening statement outlining the purpose of the hearing and prescribing the general procedures to be followed.
- b. Hearings shall be conducted by the presiding officer in an orderly but expeditious manner. Any person shall be permitted to submit oral or written statements concerning the subject matter of the hearing, to call witnesses who may present oral or written statements, and to present recommendations as to an appropriate decision. Any person may present written statements for the hearing record prior to the time the hearing record is closed to public submissions, and may present proposed findings and recommendations. The presiding officer shall afford participants a reasonable opportunity for rebuttal.
- c. The presiding officer shall have discretion to establish reasonable limits upon the time allowed for statements of witnesses, for arguments of parties or their counsel or representatives, and upon the number of rebuttals.
- d. Cross-examination of witnesses shall not be permitted.
- e. All public hearings shall be reported verbatim. Copies of the transcripts of proceedings may be purchased by any person from the Corps of Engineers or the reporter of such hearing. A copy will be available for public inspection at the office of the appropriate district engineer.
- f. All written statements, charts, tabulations, and similar data offered in evidence at the hearing shall, subject to exclusion by the presiding officer for reasons of redundancy, be received in evidence and shall constitute a part of the record.
- g. The presiding officer shall allow a period of not less than 10 days after the close of the public hearing for submission of written comments.
- h. In appropriate cases, the district engineer may participate in joint public hearings with other Federal or state agencies, provided the procedures of those hearings meet the requirements of this regulation. In those cases in which the other Federal or state agency allows a cross-examination in its public hearing, the district engineer may still participate in the joint public hearing but shall not require cross examination as a part of his participation.

Section 327.9 - Filing of the transcript of the public hearing.

Where the presiding officer is the initial action authority, the transcript of the public hearing, together with all evidence introduced at the public hearing, shall be made a part of the administrative record of the permit action or Federal project. The initial action authority shall fully consider the matters discussed at the public hearing in arriving at his initial decision or recommendation and shall address, in his decision or recommendation, all substantial and valid issues presented at the hearing. Where a person other than the initial action authority serves as presiding officer, such person shall forward the transcript of the public hearing and all evidence received in connection therewith to the initial action authority together with a report summarizing the issues covered at the hearing. The report of the presiding officer and the transcript of the public hearing and evidence submitted thereat shall in such cases be fully considered by the initial action authority in making his decision or recommendation to higher authority as to such permit action or Federal project.

Section 327.10 - Authority of the presiding officer.

Presiding officers shall have the following authority:

- a. To regulate the course of the hearing including the order of all sessions and the scheduling thereof, after any initial session, and the recessing, reconvening, and adjournment thereof; and
- b. To take any other action necessary or appropriate to the discharge of the duties vested in them, consistent with the statutory or other authority under which the Chief of Engineers functions, and with the policies and directives of the Chief of Engineers and the Secretary of the Army.

Section 327.11 - Public notice.

- a. Public notice shall be given of any public hearing to be held pursuant to this regulation. Such notice should normally provide for a period of not less than 30 days following the date of public notice during which time interested parties may prepare themselves for the hearing. Notice shall also be given to all Federal agencies affected by the proposed action, and to state and local agencies and other parties having an interest in the subject matter of the hearing. Notice shall be sent to all persons requesting a hearing and shall be posted in appropriate government buildings and provided to newspapers of general circulation for publication. Comments received as form letters or petitions may be acknowledged as a group to the person or organization responsible for the form letter or petition.
- b. The notice shall contain time, place, and nature of hearing; the legal authority and jurisdiction under which the hearing is held; and location of and availability of the draft environmental impact statement or environmental assessment.