



ESA-FHWA Webtool

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Overview

What is the ESA-FHWA Webtool?

ESA-FHWA Webtool is an online resource to streamline preparation and submittal of complete Biological Assessments (BAs) under Section 7 of the Federal Endangered Species Act for projects where Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is lead federal action agency.

ESA-FHWA Webtool contains many resources to demystify and expedite BA development, submittal and review.

- Library, glossary, search, FAQ resources.
- Nationally standardized BA template with context sensitive instructions.
- Geographic contacts and resources.
- Secure online file cabinets to improve coordination, collaboration and administrative documentation (Fig. 1).
- Geo-spatial, project archiving with posting, searching functionality (Fig. 2).

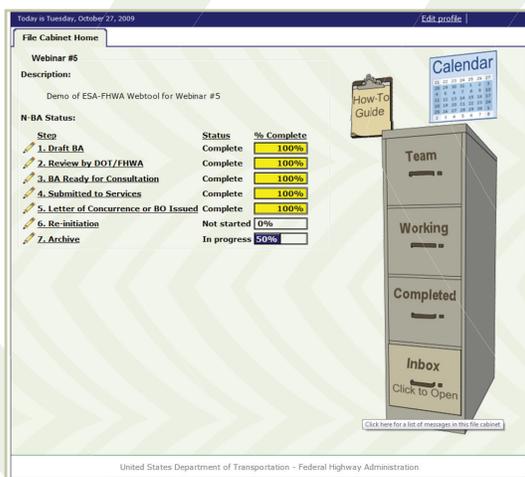


Fig.1 - Secure, project-specific collaboration.

Why Was It Developed?

National Need Exists to Streamline BA Process

ESA-FHWA Webtool was developed to meet a national need to streamline the Biological Assessment (BA) development, submittal and review process.

Development Challenges

- Sharing, managing files can be hard.
- Finding example BAs to start new BAs isn't easy.
- Writing BAs can be time-consuming, inaccurate without easy access to federal data.
- Format, process requirements vary by state.

Submittal Challenges

- Mailing hard copies adds time, increases uncertainty.
- Maintaining accurate administrative record is cumbersome.
- Documents lack consistency in structure, layout.
- Inadequate instructions lead to incomplete or incorrect BAs.

Review Challenges

- Review, response cycles can be long and irregular.
- Review process is not always transparent, nor consistent.

Five Priorities Drove Development of ESA-FHWA Webtool

1. Streamline BA development process by helping BA-preparers develop complete and accurate BAs.
2. Reduce project delays associated with incomplete BAs and requests for additional information.
3. Expedite regulatory review and decision-making transactions.
4. Promote BA consistency (among states and projects), accountability and administrative transparency.
5. Track BA development activities across the nation (Fig. 3).



Is it Making a Difference?

ESA-FHWA Webtool users are routinely surveyed regarding their thoughts, perspectives and improvement ideas for the tool.

Surveyed Users Like:

- Easy-to-use and understand interface
- Efficient, collaborative file sharing and review capability
- Easy ability to build document repository and administrative record (e.g., as a solution for staff turnover)
- Valuable timeline and accountability metrics
- Consistent workflow

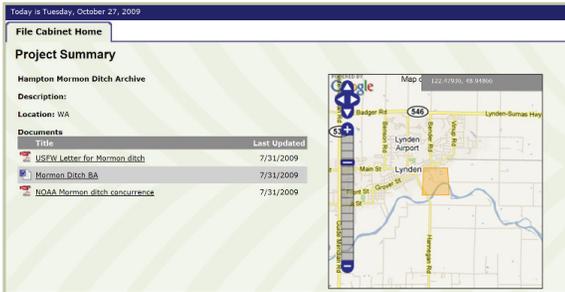


Fig. 2 - Geo-spatial, project archiving.

Surveyed Users Answered “Yes” as Follows:

- 96%** Easy to use
- 96%** Would recommend tool to other states for other uses
- 85%** Useful for building administrative record
- 84%** Improves communication
- 81%** Provides more information
- 60%** Saves time
- 58%** Helps produce higher quality documents
- 54%** Used to review a BA
- 42%** Used to write a BA

Surveyed Users Provided the Following Testimonials:

- “ The site is very easy to use. I like the e-mail notification when a document is ready for review. ..[E]xcellent for allowing reviewers to peruse documents at their convenience and the availability of info... in one location is a great feature. ”
- “ Aside from a higher quality document, we have a standardized document. This is SUCH an important utility of this package. ”
- “ It’s a great tool. I just think it will take some time and a few minor improvements. ”

Looking Forward

What’s Next?

ESA-FHWA Webtool was piloted in 2008 then updated and launched nationally in 2009. For 2010, ESA-FHWA Webtool Support Team will advance and improve the tool. 2010 activities include:

- Compile and update the tool with additional best practices and best resources.
- Develop and apply performance measurement framework to track and report streamlining and efficiency outcomes.
- Provide additional webinars and trainings to State DOTs, Federal Services Agencies and FHWA.
- Add mapping layers and additional searching capabilities to better identify project locations across the nation (e.g., via map “push-pins”).

What’s the Future?

Web tools and Web decision-making systems offer great opportunity to streamline additional high-volume, non-standardized regulatory processes.

- **Categorical Exclusions and Environmental Assessments** under the National Environmental Policy Act.
- **Section 106 reviews** under the National Historic Preservation Act.
- **Geo-spatial mapping and real-time data exchange and analysis** to better support and inform transportation planning, project development.

View File Cabinets		BA Status Report											
Online Tutorial		Filter by Area: North											
Quick Tips		Title	Date Submitted	Type*	State	Area**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
BA Status Report		8006.82 Route 17 Upgrade to I-80: Exits 122A to 126	10/24/2008	I	NY	N	✓	✓	✓	✓			
		8006.84 Rte 17 to I-86 Conversion Exit 131, Town of Morris, Orange County	1/22/2009	I	NY	N	✓	✓	✓	278			
		8177-41 Route 209 over Neversink River	9/21/2009	I	NY	N	✓	✓	36	36			
		8463.15 Slope Failure, Ulster County, Rosendale, NY	7/1/2009	I	NY	N	✓	✓	✓	118			
		Fort Drum Connector	11/1/2007	I	NY	N	✓	✓	✓	✓			
		Fort Drum Connector PIN 7804-26		NA	I	NY	N						
		north		NA	I	NY	N						
		Ocean State Parkway Bkeway Jones Island, NY	10/1/2005	I	NY	N	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
		PIN 72779 Sarah's Bridge		NA	I	NY	N	✓					
		PIN 980541		NA	I	NY	N						
		Road_KB		NA	I	NY	N						
		Roadkill		NA	I	NY	N	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
		Robert Moses Causeway -- Fire Island Inlet Bridge Replacement		NA	I	NY	N	299					

Fig. 3 - Accountability, project tracking.

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