National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Notice of Adoption of Department of the Interior/Bureau of Land Management Categorical Exclusion C. Forestry (2)

For Use in NASA National Environmental Policy Act Compliance

AGENCY: National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

ACTION: Notice of categorical exclusion adoption.

SUMMARY:
NASA hereby provides public notice of its adoption of the U.S. Department of the Interior, Categorical Exclusion C. Forestry (2), codified in DOI NEPA Handbook, Appendix 2, Section11.9, (C)(2), for application within NASA's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance process. This CATEX pertains to the removal of individual trees or small groups of trees that are dead, diseased, injured, or constitute a safety hazard, where access requires no more than maintenance of existing roads. NASA has determined that the category of actions defined under this CATEX is appropriate to its operations and does not normally result in significant effects on the human environment.

DATES:

The categorical exclusion adoption is effective October 1, 2026.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Interagency Consultation with DOI/BLM

In accordance with NASA's NEPA procedures for adopting another agency's categorical exclusion, NASA consulted with the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land

Management (BLM) regarding the applicability and scope of the Forestry (C)(2) CATEX. NASA coordinated directly with BLM subject matter experts, who provided information on BLM's NEPA procedures, forestry management practices, and historical use of the CATEX. NASA reviewed representative examples of BLM's application of this CATEX and confirmed with BLM that the CATEX category—removal of hazardous, dead, diseased, or injured trees with access limited to maintenance of existing roads—is appropriate for adoption and consistent with NASA's analogous safety and infrastructure-related forestry actions.

This consultation supported NASA's determination that the Forestry (C)(2) CATEX is suitable for NASA's operational contexts, aligns with demonstrated non-significant environmental impact patterns, and can be responsibly implemented within NASA's NEPA framework.

Rational for Adoption

NASA conducts limited forestry management actions necessary to maintain facility safety, mission assurance, airfield operations, security, and infrastructure integrity. Examples include removal of hazardous trees:

- Obstructing line-of-sight for tracking antennas, telemetry systems, cameras, or navigational instruments;
- Posing risks to personnel, aircraft, spacecraft, or critical equipment;
- Threatening perimeter security fencing or creating persistent maintenance hazards.

These NASA actions closely parallel activities historically approved by the BLM in reliance upon under the Forestry (C)(2) CATEX. Through repeated field use, BLM has confirmed that such actions do not normally result in significant effects on the quality of the human environmental.

TEXT OF ADOPTED CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

516 DM 1, Appendix 2, 11.9(C)(2) – Forestry
"Sale and removal of individual trees or small groups of trees which are dead, diseased, injured, or which constitute a safety hazard, and where access for the removal requires no more than maintenance to existing roads."

NASA will apply this CATEX to comparable NASA actions including:

- Removal of hazardous or compromised trees affecting mission operations or flight safety;
- Clearing individual trees that present structural or aviation hazards;
- Removal of trees that damage or threaten fences, roads, utilities, or operational corridors;
- Work requiring only routine maintenance of existing roads or access routes.

No new road construction is permitted under this CATEX.

EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES REVIEW

Before applying this CATEX, NASA will review proposed actions for extraordinary circumstances identified in Department of the Interior regulations (43 CFR 46.205). NASA may not apply the CATEX if the proposed action may:

a) Have significant impacts on public health or safety.
b) Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; floodplains; national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.
c) Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.
d) Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.
e) Have a direct relationship to other actions that implicate potentially significant environmental effects.
f) Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau.
g) Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.
h) Significantly limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.
i) Contribute to potentially significant effects resulting from the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or from other actions that promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act).

NASA will document its extraordinary circumstances review for each use of this CATEX.

DOCUMENTATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS

NASA will document each use of this CATEX, including:

- A description of the proposed activity;
- Confirmation of CATEX applicability;
- Completed extraordinary circumstances review;
- Any required consultations (e.g., NHPA Section 106, ESA Section 7).

Documentation will be retained according to NASA NEPA procedures and be made available upon request consistent with Federal disclosure requirements.

AUTHORITY

National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.);
NASA NEPA Procedural Requirements (14 CFR part 1216 subpart 1216.3);
Department of the Interior Manual CE is 516 DM 1, Appendix 2, Section 11.9 (C)(2).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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