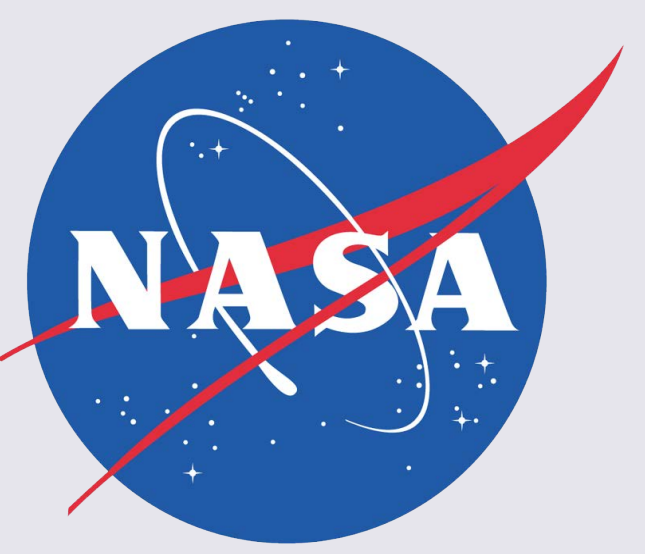


# What is a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS)?



The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to conduct an environmental impact statement (EIS) for major actions that could have significant impacts on the environment. Under NEPA, “environment” includes the natural and physical environment (such as air, water, geography, geology) as well as people’s relationship with the environment (such as health, safety, jobs, schools, housing, and aesthetics). An EIS looks at both short-term and long-term effects and considers possible measures to reduce or mitigate those effects.

## **The EIS Process**

An EIS is prepared in a series of steps: gathering government and public comments to define the issues that should be analyzed in the EIS (a process known as “scoping”); preparing the draft EIS; receiving and responding to public comments on the draft EIS; and preparing the final EIS. Decisions are not made in an EIS; rather, the EIS analysis is one of several factors decisionmakers consider. The decision is announced in the Record of Decision (ROD) after the final EIS has been published. NASA completed a final EIS under NEPA in support of the Mars 2020 mission in 2014 and issued a Record of Decision (ROD) in January 2015. NEPA requires the preparation of a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) when:

- An agency makes substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns; or
- There are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts.

Since publication of the 2014 final EIS and issuance of the ROD in 2015, NASA and the Department of Energy (DOE) have completed a more detailed risk analysis. Based on the new and updated information associated with postulated launch vehicle accident scenarios resulting in potential release of nuclear materials, NASA determined that it is appropriate to prepare this SEIS.

## **Notice of Intent**

NASA published a Notice of Intent to prepare a SEIS in the Federal Register on September 20, 2019.

## **Draft SEIS**

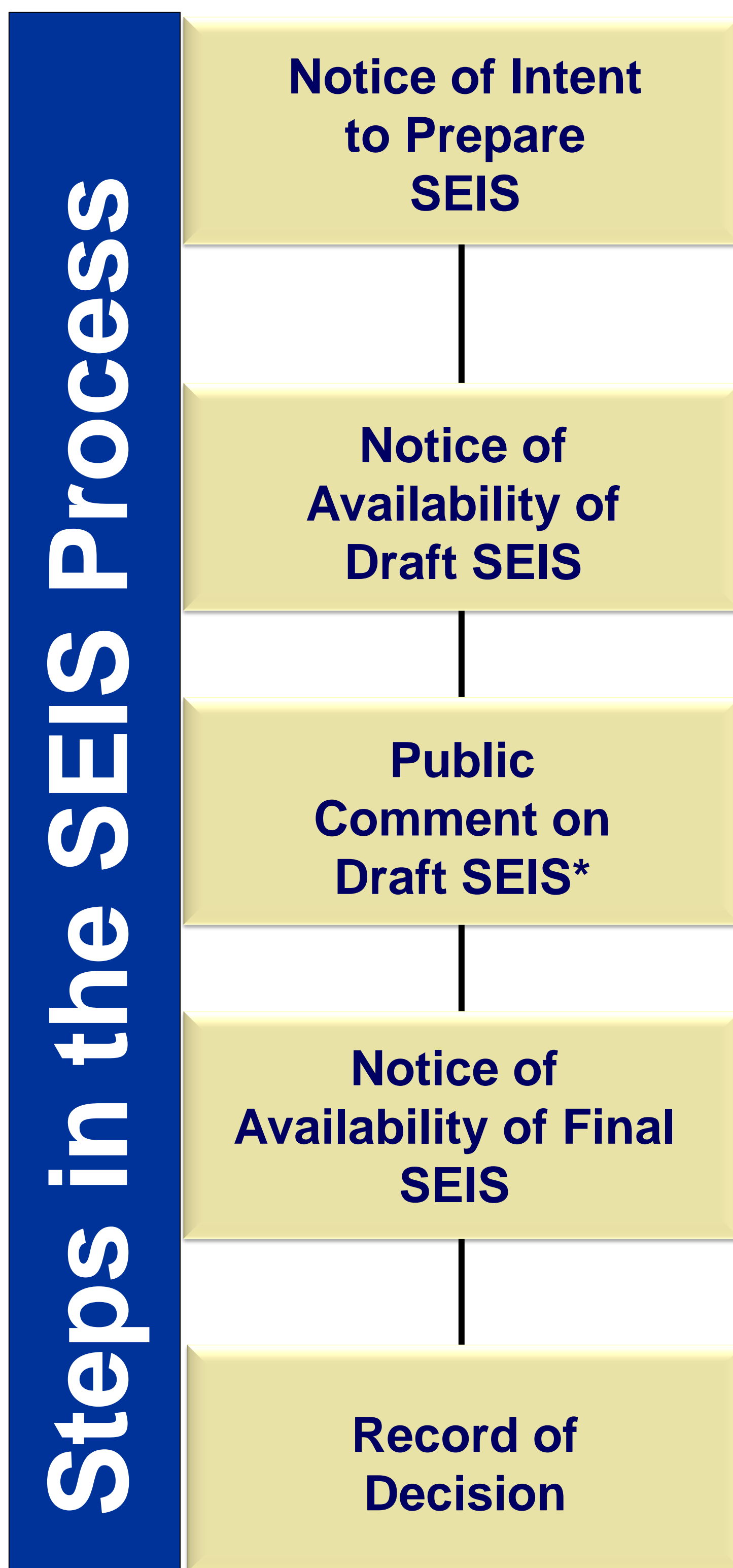
Preparation of a draft SEIS is the next step in the process. The draft SEIS presents and analyzes the changes in the proposed action and/or affected environment since the 2014 final EIS and compares the potential environmental impacts as presented in 2014 vs. 2019. A Notice of Availability (NOA) was published in the *Federal Register* announcing the availability of the draft SEIS for public review and comment on October 25, 2019. The NOA begins a 45-day comment period. Public comments on the draft SEIS are considered in the preparation of the final SEIS.

## **Final SEIS**

Once the public comment period on the draft SEIS has been completed, a final SEIS is prepared and distributed. Responses to public comments on the draft SEIS are included in the final SEIS.

## **Record of Decision**

After the final SEIS is published, a minimum 30-day waiting period is required before a ROD can be issued. The ROD notifies the public of the decision made and presents the reasons for that decision. The decision-making process may include consideration of factors such as cost, technical feasibility, agency statutory missions, and national objectives, as well as the potential environmental impacts of an action(s). No action can be taken until the decision has been finalized.



We are Here

\*Opportunities for Public Participation