

11.0 Cumulative Effects

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Chapter Summary

- Cumulative effects are effects of future state or private activities that are reasonably certain to occur within the action area.
- Cumulative effects discussions are included only in BAs that require formal consultation, i.e., those with *likely to adversely affect* (LTAA) effect determinations for one or more listed species or designated critical habitats.
- The cumulative effects of a proposed action do not contribute to the definition of the action area.
- Effect determinations for a project are not influenced by cumulative effects.
- The action area defines the geographic scope of the cumulative effects analysis.

This brief chapter discusses the importance of differentiating between cumulative effects and indirect effects. As defined in PART 3, GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS, cumulative effects are the effects of future state or private activities that are reasonably certain to occur within the action area. (This definition of cumulative effects is different from the one provided under NEPA.) Cumulative effects discussions are included only in BAs that require formal consultation, i.e., those with LTAA effect determinations for one or more listed species or designated critical habitats.

If development occurring in the project vicinity cannot be attributed to or linked to the project (i.e., is not demonstrably interrelated or interdependent) and this is verified by local planners or officials, the subsequent developments are not indirect effects of the proposed project and should be addressed in a cumulative effects analysis.

The cumulative effects of a proposed action do not contribute to the definition of the action area. The action area is defined by the limits of direct and indirect effects of the proposed action and also from interdependent and interrelated activities. Therefore, the effect determinations for a project are not influenced by cumulative effects, even if the cumulative effects occur within the action area. The purpose of the cumulative effects analysis is to aid the USFWS and NOAA Fisheries in making jeopardy and no jeopardy calls for a species, in preparing biological opinions, and in tracking the environmental conditions throughout a general area.

