

## Project Action Area

This section of the BA contains the definition of and supporting rationale for the *action area* for the proposed project. Normally, a map is also provided to illustrate the extent of the action area.

The action area for a proposed project is defined as all areas to be affected directly and indirectly by the federal action, and not merely the immediate area involved in the action (Endangered Species Act (50 CFR 17.11)). The action area includes the geographic extent of physical, biological, and chemical impacts of the project. Consequently, the action area is usually larger than the project area and sometimes larger than the project vicinity.

The action area includes but is not limited to the following areas: equipment staging areas, detour routes around the project area, material sources that are developed due to the project, water bodies receiving highway runoff, the river upstream and downstream of a bridge project, and wetland mitigation sites or other mitigation sites resulting from project impacts. Similarly, the extent of noise impacts should also be included in the action area. For example, if the noise impacts associated with a project extend to a one-mile radius, the action area encompasses this entire area (see [Noise Impact Assessment](#), for more information on how to assess this impact).

The action area is determined independently of the effects of the action on listed species and critical habitat. After the action area is identified, then the distribution of the listed species and critical habitat is overlaid on the same map to determine which species and critical habitat may be subject to effects of the action.

In addition to clearly defining the action area limits, a thorough description of the action area must provide a rationale for these limits. A graphic representation of these limits can prove invaluable for reviewers. The discussion of the action area should include detailed information pertaining to the anticipated impacts of the proposed action upon the areas and resources surrounding the project. Required additional information to support the action area definition includes:

- Describe land uses within the action area.
- Identify any water resources within the action area (e.g., rivers, tributaries, wetlands, floodplains, and aquifer recharge areas).
- Document existing environmental conditions or environmental baseline conditions (i.e., substrate, water quality, tides and currents [where applicable], flow rate, macrofauna, vegetation, wintering concentrations, perch trees, forage areas, spawning or rearing habitats, etc.).

See [Project Action Area](#) for more detailed information pertaining to defining the project action area.