

Nomination Received by Council on Environmental Quality, Executive Office of the President
For the CEQ NEPA Pilot Project Program
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/nepa/nepa-pilot-project-nominations>

PART I. NOMINATOR

First Name:	Janis
Last Name:	Piland
Organization:	Federal Highway Administration
Project Title:	Illinois Project Notification System (PNS)
Submitted by:	Federal Agency
Date Received:	6/15/2011

PART II. SHORT ANSWERS

I. What Federal agency or agencies will be involved in this pilot project?

This applies to FHWA's responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The implementing regulations (36 CFR 800) require us to gather information from Tribes to consider their interests in identifying historic properties potentially affected by our undertakings. The PNS was designed to directly implement this requirement in a streamlined manner.

II. What is the Federal action to which this NEPA pilot project applies?

This applies to FHWA's responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The implementing regulations (36 CFR 800) require us to gather information from Tribes to consider their interests in identifying historic properties potentially affected by our undertakings. The PNS was designed to directly implement this requirement in a streamlined manner.

III. How will this pilot project reduce the costs and time needed to complete the NEPA process?

Notifications of federal undertaking involves sending Tribes project information, location maps, and known archaeological sites. Notification for hundreds of projects is accomplished electronically through the PNS. This saves paper cost and resources, personnel time to print information packages, and mail processing and delivery time. The Tribes choose if they want to print the information. Their comments will be considered in identification of historic properties.

IV. How will this pilot project ensure rigorous environmental protection?

The PNS provides a tool to quickly inform all interested Tribes of federal undertakings so they can review project information, location maps, and known mounds and burial sites within 2 miles of the project area. The Tribes can also provide comments to IDOT through the PNS. Their comments will be considered in identification of historic properties.

V. How will this pilot project improve the quality and transparency of agency decisionmaking?

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All comments received from Tribes through the PNS are received by IDOT.
If a Tribe requests to be a consulting party, expresses an interest in the party, or requests more information, they are treated as a consulting party.
IDOT provides the Tribe's comments to FHWA for FHWA to contact by email/ phone to begin consultation with the Tribe. With the notification, the Tribes know all archaeological information that IDOT does about the project area, and they are assured the opportunity to provide their comments and express interest so that their views will be taken into consideration when making decisions on historic property identification.

VI. Will this pilot project develop best practices that can be replicated by other agencies or applied to other Federal actions or programs? Please describe?

Yes, the web based program should be able to be replicated, provided Internet access is available.

PART III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

(See attachment on following page.)

PART III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Consultation with federally recognized American Indian Tribes is an integral part of the public involvement process for projects that require not only NEPA but also National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 compliance. The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) in collaboration with the Illinois State Archaeological Survey (ISAS) at the University of Illinois and the Illinois Division of the FHWA has implemented a time-saving and cost-effective web-based Projection Notification System (PNS) for transportation projects in Illinois. PNS is a password-protected, interactive method of communicating with Tribes that utilizes email messaging. It allows Tribes to obtain IDOT project information as soon as it is available to IDOT engineers, ISAS archaeological survey teams, and the Illinois SHPO. Designated Tribal members receive an email notification with a link to the PNS website each time a new project is posted to the website. Each posting includes project information (IDOT Environmental Survey Request form), project location maps, and the location of known mounds and burial sites within two miles of the project area. This information is in a PDF format that can be down-loaded and/or printed, if desired. If Tribes have comments or concerns about a project, they can immediately transmit their comments or concerns to IDOT by via a comment link on the PNS website, which sends an email message to IDOT, who then notifies FHWA so that consultation with the Tribe may begin.

The PNS website design was developed at the University of Illinois after a 2008 Tribal Consultation Workshop, and was implemented early in 2009. At a follow up 2009 Tribal Consultation Workshop, PNS was accepted by all in attendance (Tribes and agencies) as the standard method of project notification. In 2010, 2,572 email notifications were sent to Tribes and agencies for a total of 182 IDOT projects. Currently, 11 federally recognized tribes receive notifications via PNS for proposed projects in their identified counties of interest in Illinois. Follow-up email notifications are sent to Tribes and agencies when the ISAS archaeological survey report is posted and when the Illinois SHPO's concurrence is posted.

All participating Tribes have demonstrated reliable Internet access. Minor technical problems have been encountered, but these problems have been quickly resolved. The PNS has received positive comments from participating Tribes, archaeologists from other state departments of transportation have inquired about its design, and in 2010 FHWA recognized its innovativeness and effectiveness with an Exemplary Human Environment Initiative (EHEI) Award. The public page of PNS can be viewed at <https://idotrfc.itarp.illinois.edu/>.

The PNS utilizes information technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public engagement efforts focused on Tribal consultation, which helps to increase transparency of IDOT's process. The resources needed for the broader usage of PNS would be minimal because PNS uses existing Internet connections, and the PNS website design should be easily replicable.