

A NEPA Storyboard Example

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The goal of an early storyboard is to help NEPA writers create documents that are clear, brief, and legally adequate.

The storyboard example in this newsletter shows the initial 8 pages for a transportation project. We originally prepared these sample pages and some additional ones for inclusion in a Shipley Group training manual for the Federal Highway Administration. As explained in that manual, using storyboards is a major technique designed to help NEPA teams create clear, brief, and legally adequate documents.

The storyboard example displayed below shows how a storyboard for a standard NEPA document might begin. It also shows how multiple contributors can collaborate on a joint vision for a projected NEPA document. Note that a storyboard precedes both the writing of draft text and the preparation of graphics. While a storyboard is similar to the traditional outline, a storyboard is more spatial and visual in nature, capturing the look and feel of each project page in the document. A successful storyboard is also as much a project management tool as it is a guide for writers.

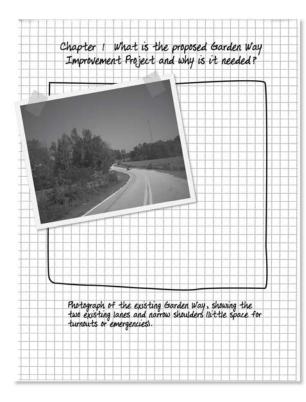
Several earlier Shipley Group newsletters discussed storyboards. These earlier newsletters are available in an archive file at http://www.shipleygroup.com/environmental/index.html?pg=news. Newsletters discussing storyboards are numbers 38, 52, 53, 56, and 58.

The following listed points are some suggestions if you decide to work on storyboard pages for a projected NEPA document.

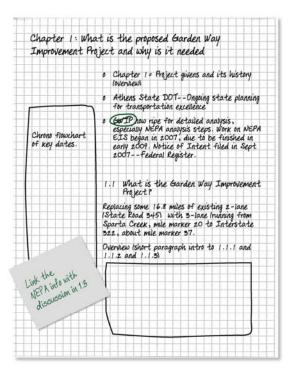
- 1. Choose a convenient approach for your storyboard: blank paper and pens; flipchart pad; a shared computer file, with estimated page breaks; an available wall with a large whiteboard if available.
- 2. Count out estimated pages/screens to match the scope of your intended document.
- 3. Forecast and then answer likely questions from readers/users and list other resource topics of concern.
- 4. Also, record all team members' questions, cautions, or observations.
- 5. Identify and sketch possible graphics, linking them to major content points.
- Encourage all contributors to make suggestions and comments because these will
 ensure that NEPA team members are addressing relevant management objectives
 and major resource issues.

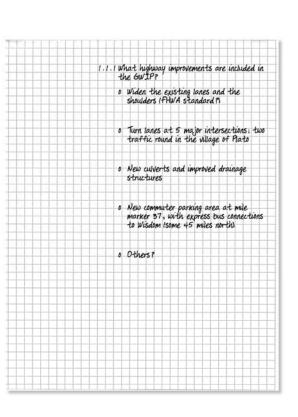
What should a storyboard look like? Messy is good! If it isn't messy, the NEPA team will not be willing to insert new ideas, draw arrows, or revise flawed content. So the storyboard in the following example is left messy to show what an early-stage storyboard might look like.



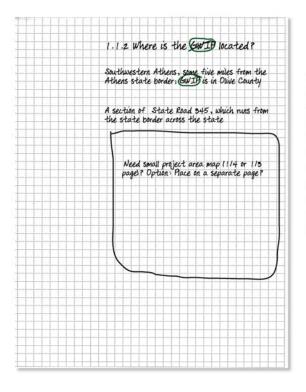




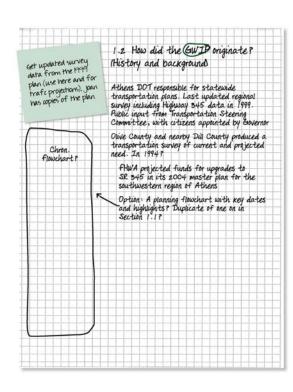












I.3 What sort of environmental analysis is necessary under NEPA? Other laws?

EIS as a disclosure document vs. subsequent ROD (projected for early 2010)

I.3. I NEPA legal mandates:

I Analyze all potential impacts ibeneficial, adverse, long-term, short-term, direct, indirect, etc.)

Z. Explain/disclose all discovered impacts to the public and any other involved or interested governmental body lesp. Native American tribes)

**Needed: Prioritize resource impacts so that major issues (resource questions) receive the most attention.

EA is a shorter option, but too risky, given potential impacts from GWIP. List risks?

List major (SSUES in O Pelay, perhaps cancellation of project (SSUES in O Funding vanish until after 2012 O Credibility with public land other agencies) suffers

O Legal precedents are adverse, esp given the usefulness of EA rather than EIS



A storyboard is an evolving tool; so it helps a team manage a complex NEPA analysis. It begins early, before text is written, and is filled in as contributors fill in project details. An evolving storyboard allows contributors to review their progress on the complex analysis tasks for a NEPA proposal.

Agency decision makers and legal counsels should also be early and ongoing reviewers of storyboards. Such early reviews are all too rare. A project team's usual approach is to delay managerial or legal reviews until text is written and has been edited. Such late-stage reviews are not efficient, especially if reviewers spot major problems, such as ones requiring substantially revised text and additional graphics.

A Suggestion about Using Storyboards

Many NEPA practitioners have not had experience using storyboards. So if you want to introduce storyboards to your colleagues, start slow. Perhaps work on a storyboard for a short newsletter or a scoping notice. Optionally, work up a storyboard for a key section of an EIS or EA, perhaps the content pages for the traditional Chapter 1. (A storyboard is also useful as a planning tool for a web site, especially one with multiple menus and complex links between topics.)

But remember, go slow! As with any new technique, folks need time to get accustomed to a different planning and writing technique.

As you work on a storyboard, monitor your colleagues' views about how the process is going. Your goal (and hopefully theirs) should be to produce the best professional documents as efficiently as possible. Storyboards are just one tool for achieving this goal.