

ACT 312

S.B. NO. 2873

A Bill for an Act Relating to Environmental Impact Statements.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. Chapter 343, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

“§343- Exception to applicability of chapter. (a) Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, for any primary action that requires a permit or approval that is not subject to a discretionary consent and that involves a secondary action that is ancillary and limited to the installation, improvement, renovation, construction, or development of infrastructure within an existing public right-of-way or highway, that secondary action shall be exempt from this chapter; provided that the applicant for the primary action shall submit documentation from the appropriate agency confirming that no further discretionary approvals are required.

(b) As used in this section:

“Discretionary consent” means:

- (1) An action as defined in section 343-2; or
- (2) An approval from a decision-making authority in an agency, which approval is subject to a public hearing.

“Infrastructure” includes waterlines and water facilities, wastewater lines and wastewater facilities, gas lines and gas facilities, drainage facilities, electrical, communications, telephone, and cable television utilities, and highway, roadway, and driveway improvements.

“Primary action” means an action outside of the highway or public right-of-way that is on private property.

“Secondary action” means an action involving infrastructure within the highway or public right-of-way.”

SECTION 2. Section 343-5, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by amending subsections (c) and (d) to read as follows:

“(c) Whenever an applicant proposes an action specified by subsection (a) that requires approval of an agency and that is not a specific type of action declared exempt under section 343-6, the agency initially receiving and agreeing to process the request for approval shall require the applicant to prepare an environmental assessment of the proposed action at the earliest practicable time to determine whether an environmental impact statement shall be required; provided that, for an action that proposes the establishment of a renewable energy facility, a draft environmental impact statement shall be prepared at the earliest practicable time. The final approving agency for the request for approval is not required to be the accepting authority.

For environmental assessments for which a finding of no significant impact is anticipated:

- (1) A draft environmental assessment shall be made available for public review and comment for a period of thirty days;
- (2) The office shall inform the public of the availability of the draft environmental assessment for public review and comment pursuant to section 343-3; and
- (3) The applicant shall respond in writing to comments received during the review, and the agency shall prepare a final environmental assessment to determine whether an environmental impact statement shall be required. A statement shall be required if the agency finds that the proposed action may have a significant effect on the environment. The agency shall file notice of the agency's determination with the office, which, in turn, shall publish the agency's determination for the public's information pursuant to section 343-3.

The draft and final statements, if required, shall be prepared by the applicant, who shall file these statements with the office.

The draft statement shall be made available for public review and comment through the office for a period of forty-five days. The office shall inform the public of the availability of the draft statement for public review and comment pursuant to section 343-3.

The applicant shall respond in writing to comments received during the review and prepare a final statement. The office, when requested by the applicant or agency, may make a recommendation as to the acceptability of the final statement.

The authority to accept a final statement shall rest with the agency initially receiving and agreeing to process the request for approval. The final decision-making body or approving agency for the request for approval is not required to be the accepting authority. The planning department for the county in which the proposed action will occur shall be a permissible accepting authority for the final statement.

Acceptance of a required final statement shall be a condition precedent to approval of the request and commencement of the proposed action. Upon acceptance or nonacceptance of the final statement, the agency shall file notice of such determination with the office. The office, in turn, shall publish the determination of acceptance or nonacceptance of the final statement pursuant to section 343-3.

The agency receiving the request, within thirty days of receipt of the final statement, shall notify the applicant and the office of the acceptance or nonacceptance of the final statement. The final statement shall be deemed to be accepted if the agency fails to accept or not accept the final statement within thirty days after receipt of the final statement; provided that the thirty-day period may be extended at the request of the applicant for a period not to exceed fifteen days.

In any acceptance or nonacceptance, the agency shall provide the applicant with the specific findings and reasons for its determination. An applicant, within sixty days after nonacceptance of a final statement by an agency, may appeal the nonacceptance to the environmental council, which, within thirty days of receipt of the appeal, shall notify the applicant of the council's determination. In any affirmation or reversal of an appealed nonacceptance, the council shall provide the applicant and agency with specific findings and reasons for its determination. The agency shall abide by the council's decision.

(d) Whenever an applicant requests approval for a proposed action and there is a question as to which of two or more state or county agencies with jurisdiction has the responsibility of ~~preparing the~~ determining whether an environmental assessment[~~is required~~, the office, after consultation with and assistance

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from the affected state or county agencies, shall determine which agency ~~[shall prepare the assessment.]~~ has the responsibility for determining whether an environmental assessment by the applicant is required, except in situations involving secondary actions under section 343- ; provided that in no case shall the office be considered the approving agency."

SECTION 3. Act 87, Session Laws of Hawaii 2009, is repealed.

SECTION 4. Act 45, Session Laws of Hawaii 2011, is repealed.

SECTION 5. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed and new statutory material is underscored.¹

SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved July 9, 2012.)

Note

1. Edited pursuant to HRS §23G-16.5.