

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Welcome back to our weekly column. This week, we continue to take a closer look at the Environmental Impact Assessment process in Guyana.

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process plays an integral part in the environmental authorisation process for projects whose impacts may significantly impact the environment. As mentioned last week, the EPA implements a process that allows it to decide whether or not to grant permission for developmental projects to be executed. For projects that may have significant impacts on the environment, the EPA requires that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) be done. This assessment is to better inform the EPA of the potential impacts of the proposed project so that it can make the best decision for the environment, human health and development.

Your involvement is a legal requirement.

The Environmental Protection Act Cap 20:05, makes provision for public participation in the EIA process. In this regard, before an EIA is commenced, the Agency publishes a notice of the project in one daily newspaper informing members of the public that the project will require an EIA. At this stage, members of the public have an opportunity within twenty-eight days from the date of publication of the notice referred to above, to make written submissions to the Agency setting out those questions and matters which they require to be answered or considered in the EIA.

Moreover, during the course of the EIA, the developer and the person carrying out the EIA are required to consult members of the public, interested bodies and organizations; and provide to members of the public on request, at a reasonable cost of photocopying, copies of information obtained for the purpose of the EIA.

Once the EIA is completed and submitted to the EPA, the EPA informs members of the public of this by publishing a notice in one daily newspaper. Members of the public are then given 60 days following the publication of this notice to review the EIA and submit questions, concerns and comments to the Agency as they consider appropriate.

Why should you be involved?

The EIA process provides the opportunity for members of the public to share their opinions and concerns so that they can be considered in the EIA study. Further, information on the project is shared during the process so that people can learn how a project will be operated and possible ways it will be of benefit to them. Participation in the EIA process increases the capacity of people to be involved in environmental decision-making by helping to shape a project through their questions and concerns. Participation also provides an opportunity to contribute to safeguarding the environment and human health from potential harm.

You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O Communications Department, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: eit.epaguyana@gmail.com. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram and subscribe to our YouTube channel.