

In the complex field of permitting and land consulting, industry-specific acronyms and jargon can be overwhelming. Having this glossary at your fingertips helps ensure clear communication among stakeholders, accelerates project planning, and reduces misunderstandings. Whether you're a project manager, engineer, landowner, or consultant, this resource will empower you to navigate regulations with confidence and onboard new team members or clients quickly. Should you need any help navigating through a specific project contact us, our right of way specialist would be happy to help you.

Glossary of Common Terms

An alphabetical glossary of 100 key permitting and land consulting terms with definitions:

- **Acquisition:** The process of obtaining property rights, either by purchase, lease, or easement, for project use.
- **Agent of Service Process:** A designated individual or entity authorized to accept legal documents on behalf of a property owner.
- **Alluvium:** Sediment deposited by flowing water, often subject to special permitting for disturbance or development.
- **Appraisal:** A professional valuation of real property to determine fair market value for acquisitions or easements.
- **Archaeological Survey:** Field investigation to identify and document cultural or historic resources on a project site.
- **As-Built Drawings:** Finalized construction drawings reflecting all changes made during the build process.
- **Asbestos Survey:** Inspection and testing to determine presence of asbestos-containing materials before demolition or renovation.
- **Assessment:** Evaluation of environmental, cultural, or geotechnical factors affecting a project site.
- **Baseline Study:** Initial data collection on ecological, cultural, or topographical conditions ahead of project impact assessments.

- **Biological Assessment:** Analysis of potential impacts on threatened or endangered species under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.
- **Buffer Zone:** A protective area surrounding sensitive resources (e.g., wetlands) where development is restricted.
- **CAD (Computer-Aided Design):** Software used to create precise engineering and permit-exhibit drawings.
- **Capital Costs:** Upfront expenses for land acquisition, permitting, and construction equipment.
- **Certificate of Compliance:** Official document confirming a project meets applicable environmental or safety standards.
- **CFR (Code of Federal Regulations):** The codified rules and guidelines issued by federal agencies.
- **Clean Air Act:** Federal law regulating air emissions, often requiring permits for construction or operation of facilities.
- **Clean Water Act:** Federal statute governing discharges into waters of the U.S.; Section 404 implements wetland permitting.
- **Construction Easement:** Temporary or permanent right to use private property for construction access and staging.
- **Corridor Analysis:** Study of multiple route options to identify the most feasible alignment for linear projects.
- **Cumulative Impacts:** The combined environmental effects of a project when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions.
- **Decommissioning:** The process of safely retiring infrastructure and restoring land to its prior condition.
- **Demarcation:** Marking property boundaries or easement limits with physical monuments or markers.
- **Design-Build:** Project delivery method where design and construction services are contracted together to streamline schedules.

- **Detailed Survey:** Precise field measurement of property lines, elevation, and existing structures to support permit applications.
- **Deed:** A legal document conveying title or interest in real property from one party to another.
- **Deed of Trust:** A security instrument similar to a mortgage, placing title in a trustee until conditions are met.
- **Discharge Permit:** Authorization to release treated or untreated water into a specific water body under environmental regulations.
- **Easement:** A legal right to use another party's land for a specific purpose without owning it.
- **Easement by Necessity:** A court-granted right of access to landlocked property when no other access exists.
- **Easement in Gross:** A personal right to use land, not tied to ownership of adjacent property.
- **Environmental Assessment (EA):** A NEPA screening document to determine if an EIS is required.
- **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS):** A detailed NEPA report evaluating significant environmental effects of a project.
- **Environmental Site Assessment (ESA):** Phase I or Phase II study to identify potential contamination hazards on a property.
- **Erosion Control Plan:** A strategy outlining methods to prevent soil loss and sedimentation during construction.
- **Excavation Permit:** Authorization to dig, grade, or remove soil within a jurisdiction.
- **FAA Permit:** Approval from the Federal Aviation Administration for activities affecting navigable airspace or airports.
- **Feasibility Study:** Analysis of technical, economic, and environmental viability of a proposed project.
- **Federal Agency Coordination:** Collaboration and submittal of permit applications to U.S. government departments (e.g., BLM, USACE).

- **Fee Simple:** The most comprehensive form of land ownership, granting full rights to use, sell, or bequeath property.
- **FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission):** Agency regulating interstate energy projects, including pipeline certificates.
- **Floodplain:** Low-lying area adjacent to rivers or streams subject to periodic flooding; often regulated for development.
- **GIS (Geographic Information System):** Digital mapping platform for spatial data analysis and permit exhibit creation.
- **GPS (Global Positioning System):** Satellite-based technology for precise location and surveying in the field.
- **Grading Permit:** Local government authorization for earthwork that alters site topography.
- **Habitat Mitigation:** Actions taken to compensate for environmental impacts, such as wetland restoration or species relocation.
- **Hydraulic Modeling:** Computational analysis of water flow and pressure for pipeline or drainage design.
- **Impact Fee:** Charge imposed by local governments to offset costs of public services necessitated by new development.
- **Impervious Surface:** Non-porous ground cover (e.g., pavement) that prevents water infiltration and increases runoff.
- **Interference Analysis:** Study of potential conflicts between new infrastructure and existing utilities or right-of-way users.
- **Joint Use Agreement:** Contract between utility providers to share poles, trenches, or other infrastructure real estate.
- **Jurisdictional Determination:** Official USACE or state agency finding on boundaries of waters and wetlands subject to regulation.
- **Lease Agreement:** Contract granting the use of land or facilities for a specified term and conditions.

- **License to Use:** Permission to temporarily occupy land without creating an easement or fee interest.
- **LiDAR Survey:** Remote sensing method using lasers to generate high-resolution topographic maps.
- **Lot Split:** Division of a single parcel into two or more lots, often requiring plat approval.
- **Maintenance Agreement:** Contract outlining responsibilities for upkeep of easements, access roads, or shared facilities.
- **Memorandum of Agreement (MOA):** Document formalizing roles and responsibilities between agencies or stakeholders.
- **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):** Federal law requiring environmental review for major federal actions.
- **NEPA Documentation:** The collective EA, EIS, or Categorical Exclusion records prepared under NEPA.
- **New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO):** State agency overseeing trust lands and issuing ROW easements in New Mexico.
- **Noise Study:** Assessment of sound levels and potential impacts to residences or wildlife from project activities.
- **Notice of Intent (NOI):** Formal announcement to prepare an EIS or to apply for a specific permit.
- **Notice to Proceed:** Authorization from the client or agency to begin construction or project implementation.
- **NPDES Permit:** National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit for point-source water discharges.
- **Offsite Easement:** Easement granting rights on property not directly within the primary project footprint.
- **Onsite Easement:** Easement located within the project boundaries used for operations or access.

- **Parcel Mapping:** Creation of detailed maps showing property lines, easements, and ownership parcels.
- **Permit Shield:** Regulatory provision that protects projects from certain future permit requirements once compliance is certified.
- **Plat Map:** Publicly recorded map showing subdivision boundaries, lots, and easements.
- **Preliminary Engineering:** Early design phase establishing project parameters and preliminary cost estimates.
- **Property Line:** Legal boundary delineating ownership limits of a parcel.
- **Public Notice:** Announcement to the public of pending permit applications or environmental reviews.
- **Purchase Option:** Agreement granting the right to buy property or easement at a later date under specified terms.
- **QA/QC (Quality Assurance/Quality Control):** Procedures ensuring project deliverables meet defined standards.
- **RCRA (Resource Conservation and Recovery Act):** Federal law governing hazardous waste management and permitting.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Adherence to applicable laws, regulations, and permit conditions throughout a project.
- **Release of Easement:** Legal document terminating or modifying an existing easement.
- **Right-of-Way (ROW):** The legal right to pass through property owned by another for infrastructure installation or access.
- **Right-of-Way Easement:** Specific type of easement granting ROW rights for a linear project.
- **Right-of-Way Release:** Formal relinquishment of previously granted ROW rights.
- **ROW Corridor:** Defined strip of land reserved for linear infrastructure projects.
- **Section 106:** Advisory review process under the National Historic Preservation Act for impacts to historic properties.

- **Section 106 Consultation:** Coordination with State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and other stakeholders under Section 106.
- **Section 404 Permit:** Authorization for discharging dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S. under the Clean Water Act.
- **Section 404 of the Clean Water Act:** Statutory provision governing wetland permitting and aquatic resource protection.
- **Section 7 Consultation:** Endangered Species Act process reviewing project effects on protected species.
- **Section 9 Permit:** Authorization for activities involving endangered wildlife under the Endangered Species Act.
- **Section 10 Permit:** Permit for taking or importing threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act.
- **Survey Control:** Established reference points and benchmarks for accurate field surveying.
- **Survey Monumentation:** Permanent markers placed in the field to indicate surveyed boundaries.
- **Temporary Workspace Permit:** Authorization for short-term land use outside the permanent ROW for construction support.
- **Title Insurance:** Policy protecting against losses from defects in property title or undisclosed liens.
- **Traffic Control Plan:** Engineered plan for maintaining safe vehicle and pedestrian movement during construction.
- **Tree Preservation Plan:** Strategy for protecting trees and vegetation affected by development.
- **Utility Relocation:** Process of moving existing utilities to accommodate new infrastructure routes.
- **Variance:** Administrative relief from specific zoning or permitting requirements under certain conditions.



- **Wetland Delineation:** Field determination of wetland boundaries based on hydrology, soils, and vegetation.
- **Wetland Mitigation:** Restoration or creation of wetlands to compensate for permitted impacts.
- **Wetland Restoration:** Rehabilitation of degraded wetlands to improve ecological functions.
- **Zoning Ordinance:** Local law defining permitted land uses, density, setbacks, and development standards.

Have additional terms you'd like defined? Contact Us

