

# Tips & Timesavers

## Improve Your Permit Experience

### ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITTING

Permitting takes time and careful planning. So, before you draw any plans, dig any holes, or build any structures, think about how you can work with the permitting system. By doing this—and planning ahead—you'll make getting the permits you need a whole lot easier.

We developed these tips and timesavers to help you avoid costly, time-consuming delays and...*get it right the first time.*

#### **TIP** Select the appropriate site.

For example, choose sites that are:

- ▶ Zoned correctly for the project.
- ▶ Located more than 200 feet from water bodies.
- ▶ Vested with enough water rights to provide for full build out.
- ▶ Supported by utilities, transportation infrastructure, and emergency services.

#### **TIP** Start planning early.

Some permits can take up to a year to receive!

- ▶ Complete ORA's Project Questionnaire, at [www.ora.wa.gov](http://www.ora.wa.gov), as soon as you begin to think about a project. It can help identify what permits, approvals, and licenses you may need.
- ▶ Learn permit timelines. This will help you better plan for when you can realistically start construction.
- ▶ Consult with the permit agencies early in the planning stage to avoid costly, time-consuming mistakes.

#### **TIP** Know your site.

Sites that are culturally, historically, or archeologically important, or have sensitive habitat areas, often have legal protections.

- ▶ Hiring an environmental consultant can help you understand your site and any special protections that may apply.
- ▶ ORA can also help you learn more about these resource protections and their requirements.

#### **TIP** Learn local planning priorities.

Identify local land use priorities such as trails, public access, or green space. Incorporating some of these elements into your design will help local planning goals and increase community support for your project.

#### **TIP** Avoid impacts to sensitive areas.

Today's laws require compensation for negative impacts to the environment through a process called *mitigation*.

- ▶ By avoiding or minimizing impacts you may reduce the number of permits required.
- ▶ If your project must impact a sensitive area, plan ahead for mitigation. An environmental consultant can help you determine what areas require mitigation and how much is needed.



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### **TIP** Schedule a pre-application meeting.

Once you have a plan, request a pre-application meeting with the local planning agency or, for complex projects, with ORA. Pre-application meetings give you the opportunity to:

- ▶ Explain your project and hear feedback from agency permitting staff before you submit your application.
- ▶ Understand permitting requirements and avoid mistakes.

### **TIP** Be proactive and flexible.

- ▶ Ask for courtesy reviews of draft products and early notice of issues of concern. Stay on top of the rules and periodically check the status of your application.
- ▶ Promptly respond to agency information requests to keep the process moving.
- ▶ If agencies ask you to consider making changes to the project to reduce environmental impacts, be open-minded about them. They may reduce the need for complicated mitigation.

### **TIP** File complete applications.

- ▶ Before submittal, check to be sure your application has all the required documents. Most agencies can't begin review until an application is complete.
- ▶ Provide comprehensive project descriptions that include pre-construction, construction, and operation stages.
- ▶ Provide complete contact information such as authorized agent, project site contact, and any property owners involved in the project.
- ▶ Include photos of the project site to help permit reviewers understand your site plans.
- ▶ Be sure that documents agree with each other in their project descriptions. For example, list the same project size and the same location of project elements on each document.
- ▶ Consider hiring an environmental consultant to help you. The cost of having a good consultant prepare reports and permit applications can save you time and money in the long run.
- ▶ Last but not least, **sign your application!** Unsigned applications are returned.

### **TIP** Contact ORA.

For additional advice and one-on-one help, contact the ORA Service Center. Give us a call Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., or send us an email. We may be able to answer your permit questions with one call!

**The Governor's Office of Regulatory Assistance (ORA)** helps you find the information you need to navigate the environmental permitting process. With knowledgeable staff and up-to-date online and print tools, we can answer your questions about local, state, and federal regulations and can even research project-specific permit requirements.

If you require this document in another format, contact the Office of Regulatory Assistance. Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability can call (877) 833-6341.

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