
Cannon Falls Work Session

AUAR Overview

March 4, 2025

MINNESOTA ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

- Minnesota Rules 4410: The environmental review process is a state process that aims to avoid and minimize damage to Minnesota's environmental resources caused by public and private actions. <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/4410/>
- The Environmental Quality Board (EQB) oversees the state of Minnesota's environmental review program. <https://www.eqb.state.mn.us/environmental-review/overview>

MINNESOTA ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

- Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU)
- As noted in Minnesota Rules, 4410.0500, the RGU is identified as either:
 - a single government unit that proposes to carry out or has sole jurisdiction to approve a project, or
 - when two or more governmental units propose to carry out or have jurisdiction to approve the project, the RGU is the governmental unit with the greatest responsibility for supervising or approving the project as a whole.

MINNESOTA ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

- The Environmental Review program is not an approval process.
- It is an information gathering process to help governmental units with permitting authority over a project to make better-informed decisions.
- Multiple levels of Environmental Review
 - Based on Minnesota Rules 4410.4300 and 4410.4400
 - Environmental Assessment Worksheet
 - Environmental Impact Statement
 - Alternative Urban Areawide Review

MINNESOTA ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION THRESHOLDS

- The thresholds are established based on the size of the municipality in which the project site or proposed action is located. The class of city or municipality is based on total population and is defined in state statute.

Kimley»Horn October 2019

MN State Environmental Documentation Thresholds

According to Minnesota Rules, an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must be prepared for projects that meet or exceed the thresholds under part 4410.4300 or 4410.4400, respectively. The thresholds most pertinent to development are summarized in the table below. Thresholds for other project types are included in Minnesota Rules, part 4410.

Legislative Class	Population
First Class City	More than 100,000 (includes Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Rochester, and Duluth)
Second Class City	20,001 to 100,000
Third Class City	10,001 to 20,000
Fourth Class City	10,000 or less

Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional Facilities	
Construction of a new or expansion of an existing warehousing or light industrial facility (expressed in gross floor space)	
Threshold for Preparation of an EAW: 600,000 square feet (First Class City) 450,000 square feet (Second Class City) 300,000 square feet (Third/Fourth Class City) 150,000 square feet (Unincorporated)	Threshold for Preparation of an EIS: 1,500,000 square feet (First Class City) 1,000,000 square feet (Second Class City) 750,000 square feet (Third/Fourth Class City) 375,000 square feet (Unincorporated)
Construction of a new or expansion of an existing commercial, institutional, and industrial not including warehousing (including office and hotel) (expressed in gross floor space)	
Threshold for Preparation of an EAW: 400,000 square feet (First Class City) 300,000 square feet (Second Class City) 200,000 square feet (Third/Fourth Class City) 100,000 square feet (Unincorporated)	Threshold for Preparation of an EIS: 1,000,000 square feet (First Class City) 750,000 square feet (Second Class City) 500,000 square feet (Third/Fourth Class City) 250,000 square feet (Unincorporated)

Residential Development (In Twin Cities Metro Area or for First Class Cities)	
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ALTERNATIVE URBAN AREAWIDE REVIEW

- The AUAR process is a hybrid of the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) review processes. Responsible Governmental Units (RGUs) can use an AUAR as a planning tool to understand how different development scenarios would affect the environment of their community before the development occurs.
- The process is designed to look at the cumulative impacts of anticipated development scenarios within a given geographic area.
- <https://www.eqb.state.mn.us/sites/eqb/files/documents/Quick%20Reference-Alternative%20Urban%20Areawide%20Review%20-%20Updated%20Dec2015.pdf>

TOPICS STUDIED IN AN AUAR



Climate Adaption
and Resilience



Contamination/
Hazardous Wastes



Greenhouse
Gas Emissions



Water
Resources



Land Use



Fish/Wildlife/
Plant Communities



Cumulative
Potential Effects



Noise



Geology/Soils



Historic
Properties



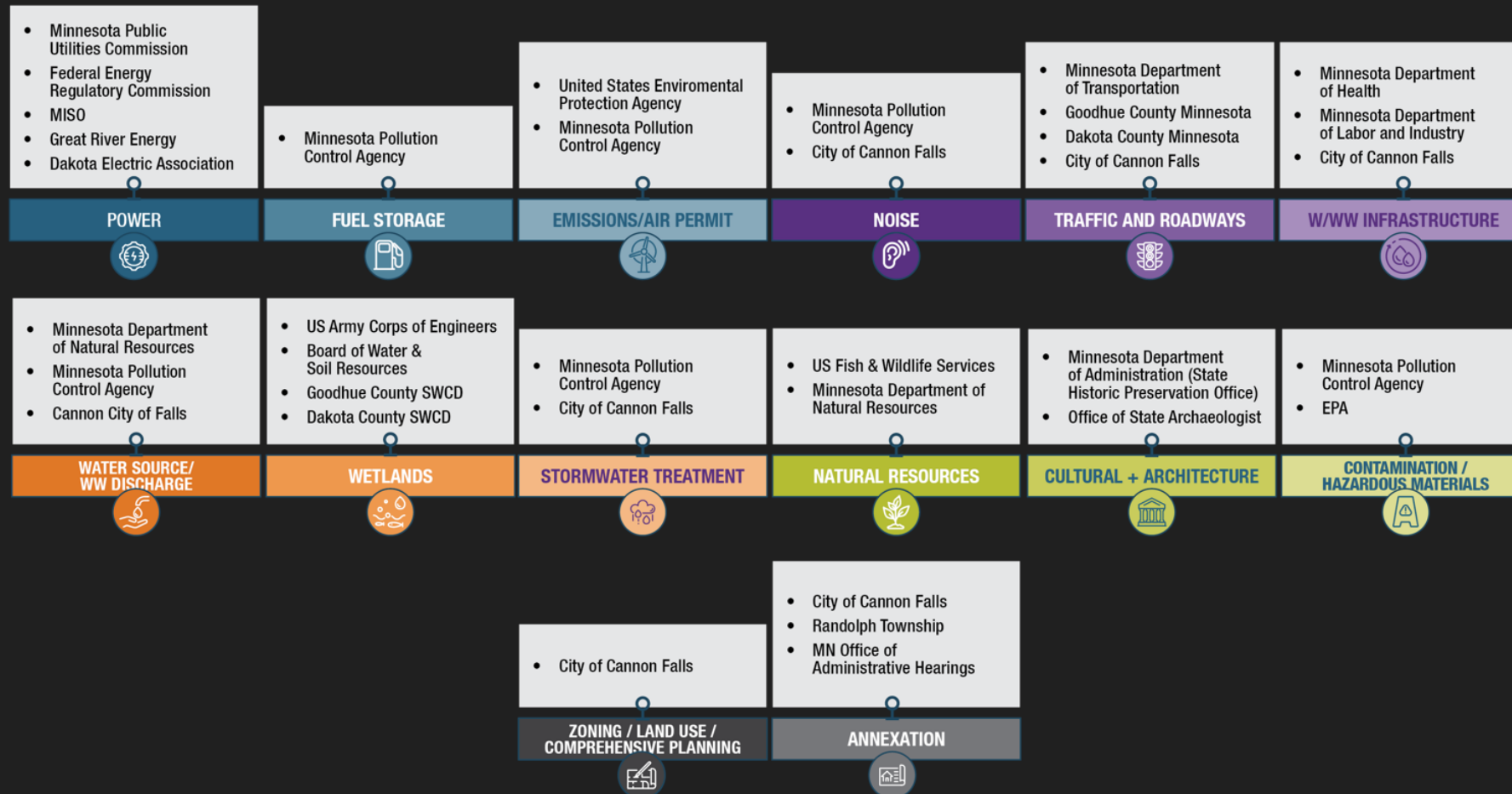
Transportation



Visual



Air

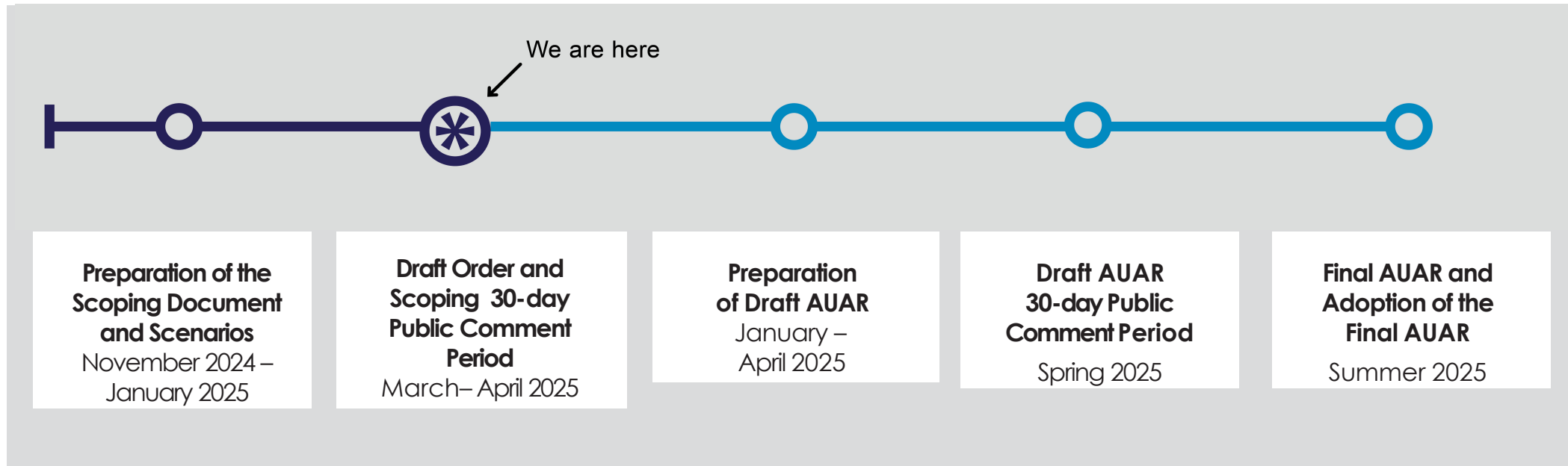


ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION - Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) for EIS/AUAR/EAWs

AUAR – STEPS FOR LARGE PROJECTS

- Draft Order and Scoping Document
 - 30-day Public and Agency Comment Period
- Final Order and Scoping Document adopted by RGU
- AUAR and Mitigation Plan
 - Draft AUAR and Mitigation Plan
 - 30-day Public Comment Period
 - Final AUAR and Mitigation Plan
 - 10-day State Agency Objection Period
- Final AUAR and Mitigation Plan adopted by RGU

TENTATIVE AUAR SCHEDULE



Questions?

More information about the AUAR process can be found on the EQB webpage

<https://www.eqb.state.mn.us/environmental-review/overview/alternative-urban-area-wide-review-auar-process>

TYPICAL DATA CENTER DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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