



eMNEPA PII Protection Job Guide

Version 1.2

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WO/EMC/NEPA Services Group

U.S. Forest Service

I. PURPOSE OF THIS JOB GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to provide guidance, options, and instructions for how to comply with Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) requirements to protect personally identifiable information (PII) when posting documents to the web using eMNEPA tools.

II. INTRODUCTION

A. Definitions

Nonpublic Information

Nonpublic Information (NPI) refers to any sensitive information “that an employee gains by reason of Federal employment and that he knows or reasonably should know has not been made available to the general public” (5 CFR 2635.703). This includes PII and other information, such as information that cannot be released in a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request.

Note: PII and FOIA redaction are not the same.

Personally Identifiable Information

PII is information that can be used to identify, locate or contact an individual. This includes (but is not limited to) street and mailing addresses, email addresses and phone numbers.

Names of individuals are not considered PII unless posted in conjunction with other identifying information. Titles and organization names are also not considered PII.

B. Regulatory Compliance

FISMA

The Federal Information Security Act 2014 (FISMA) governs information in federal information systems. There are over 400 separate security controls that information systems and information systems personnel must comply with to continue to operate their systems on government networks. One of these controls applies to federal employee end users who post information to the public web. The control states:

“The organization:

- a. Designates individuals authorized to post information onto a publicly accessible information system;*
- b. Trains authorized individuals to ensure that publicly accessible information does not contain nonpublic information;*
- c. Reviews the proposed content of information prior to posting onto the publicly accessible information system to ensure that nonpublic information is not included; and*
- d. Reviews the content on the publicly accessible information system for nonpublic information periodically* and removes such information, if discovered.*

**USDA-directed frequency: quarterly*

Supplemental guidance for this control clarifies that these requirements apply to information posted to the public web via federal information systems only. Information posted to non-government systems (e.g. Facebook) is covered by organizational policies.

“Supplemental Guidance

In accordance with federal laws, Executive Orders, directives, policies, regulations, standards, and/or guidance, the general public is not authorized access to nonpublic information (e.g., information protected under the Privacy Act and proprietary information). This control addresses information systems that are controlled by the organization and accessible to the general public, typically without identification or authentication. The posting of information on non-organization information systems is covered by organizational policy”.

- FISMA AC-22

Forest Service Manual

The Forest Service Manual (FSM) was updated in October 2018 to incorporate the FISMA requirements for nonpublic information (FSM 6600-Systems Management, 6684.29).

NEPA

The National Environmental Policy Act states that information shall be made available to the public but does not state that information must be posted to the public web.

“Prior to making any detailed statement, the responsible Federal official shall consult with and obtain the comments of any Federal agency which has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved. Copies of such statement and the comments and views of the appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies, which are authorized to develop and enforce environmental standards, shall be made available to the President, the Council on Environmental Quality and to the public as provided by section 552 of title 5, United States Code, and shall accompany the proposal through the existing agency review processes.”

- NEPA Sec. 102(c) [42 USC § 4332]., 51.

CFR Title 36

Title 36 requires that the responsible official shall post a **notice** online of the objections received. The reviewing officer must post the **response to objections** online. Neither of these directives require the objections themselves to be posted online:

36 CFR 219.56 (f)

“Notice of objections filed. Within 10 days after the close of the objection period, the responsible official shall publish a notice of all objections in the applicable newspaper of record and post the notice online.”

36 CFR 219.57 (b)(1)

“The reviewing officer must render a written response to the objection(s) within 90 days of the close of the objection-filing period, unless the allowable time is extended

as provided at §219.56(g). A written response must set forth the reasons for the response but need not be a point-by-point response, and may contain instructions to the responsible official. In cases involving more than one objection to a plan, plan amendment, or plan revision, the reviewing officer may consolidate objections and issue one or more responses. The response must be sent to the objecting party(ies) by certified mail, return receipt requested, and posted online.”

FSH 1909.12, sec. 51.66

“The Reviewing Officer shall issue written response to each objection and provide such responses to objectors, interested persons (sec. 51.62), and the Responsible Official. When appropriate, the response may provide instructions to the Responsible Official. In cases involving more than one objection, the Reviewing Officer may consolidate objections and provide one or more responses...”

4. The response must be sent to the objecting party or parties by certified mail, return receipt requested, and posted on the Forest Service’s applicable website (see 36 CFR 219.57(b) and sec. 51.64).”

III. NONPUBLIC INFORMATION PROTECTION OPTIONS

The following are EMC-recommended procedures for removing nonpublic information from documents before posting to the web, and removing nonpublic information that has already been posted to the web. The instructions refer to PII because this is the majority of nonpublic information involved in the NEPA process.

There are multiple options available for different types of projects and varying levels of public engagement.

1. **Turn off the reading room.** This method is easiest. Use this method when there are not enough resources available to remove PII, or for projects that do not generate a lot of public interest.
2. **Receive comments only through the CARA web form.** This is the most effective methods for projects with an active reading room. Request that the public use the web form to submit comments, and note that only comments submitted via the web form will appear in the reading room.
3. **Remove PII from emails and hardcopy letters before uploading.** All submitted comments will appear in the reading room, but this is the most labor intensive option. This method is best for projects that have an interested public but do not generate large mail campaigns.
4. **Create a second comment period in CARA with an inactive reading room** to collect email and hardcopy comments. One comment period will collect and display comments via the web, and another comment period with identical dates will be used to collect, code and analyze email and postal mail comments without removing PII. This method is effective for projects that receive large numbers of email comments.

The following instructions explain how to implement each of these options.

1. Turn Off the CARA Reading Room

The easiest method to remove PII from the web is to turn off the public reading room for the project.

- This procedure works for both new projects and previously posted content.
- Units may still use all of CARA's letter centralization and coding features.
- Reading rooms are optional; they are not required by any law, regulation or policy.

Using CARA to centralize your comment and objections letters will allow you to easily make your letters available to the public upon request, should you choose not to use the CARA Reading Room. This strategy will allow units to comply with NEPA while minimizing the resources needed to comply with FISMA.

Notice of Availability Comment Period	
Date:	07/29/2019 (Mon) - 08/28/2019 (Wed)
Time Zone:	(UTC-08:00) Pacific Time (US & Canada)
Description:	Notice of Availability
Comment Analysis Status:	Active Archive
Viewing Status:	All CARA Users Set to Team Only
Reading Room Status:	Active (Public Reading Room) Deactivate
Public Comment Form Status:	Active (Public Comment Form) Deactivate
Download All Letters:	Download

Figure 1. Turn off a reading room

When you create a comment period in CARA, the Reading Room is active by default for all Scoping, Notice of Availability and Other scoping periods. Comment periods for objections are inactive by default, and only need to be deactivated if previously activated. To turn off a reading room in CARA:

1. Go to the project and open the comment period with an open reading room.
2. Click the orange **Deactivate** button.

Note: If you close all comment period reading rooms for a project, the project reading room will remain closed when you re-open individual comment periods. To open individual comment periods for viewing on the web, while leaving others closed, open all of the project's reading rooms, and then close the reading rooms that contain PII.

2. Receive Electronic Comments/Objections Exclusively Through the CARA Web Form

This is the simplest method of letter receipt for units that choose to publish letters to the public web in CARA reading rooms. FISMA requirements apply to information posted by federal personnel only; the law does not apply to information posted by members of the public. Therefore, information submitted directly through the *CARA Enter Letter* text box on the web form does not need to be removed. If a user enters personally identifiable information directly into the text box, it will be posted to the reading room, but the agency is not responsible for

removing this information. In addition, as of July 1, 2019, a notice above the CARA web form text field warns users not to input any personally identifiable information, and that such information may be visible to the public.

To implement this method, notify the public that letters for the project will be accepted through the web form. Do not supply an email address for comments. Any hardcopy letters received can be manually uploaded but not published to the reading room.

3. Prevent Posting of PII and Remove PII from the CARA Reading Room

For letters that are not received through the CARA webform (such as via email, postal mail, fax, or regulations.gov), PII must be removed prior to posting to the CARA reading room.

By removing PII prior to posting letters to the web, units may keep their reading rooms open for active and archived projects indefinitely.

- You must remove PII from all comments and objections that are not submitted through the web form before uploading them into CARA.
- As of 7/1/19, all personal information entered into the individual web form fields is not published to the reading room (e.g. Address1, City, State, Email, Phone Number). This function is automatic and does not require any user action. Only personal information entered into the **Letter Text** text box or attachments will be visible in the reading room.
- For all comments and objections posted in CARA by FS personnel prior to 7/1/19, you must remove PII from the CARA text boxes, letter text field and from any attachments.

A. What to Remove

PII includes personal mailing addresses, street addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers. This information must be removed from documents before posting to the web.

Names of individuals and the comments they submit are not considered PII. Names of organizations, titles and organizational contact information for businesses, tribes, nonprofit groups and public figures are not PII. This information is published to the reading room.

B. Remove PII from Emails

1. Upload comments into CARA using the **Upload Letters** option. CARA will automatically populate the author's name and email information for reporting purposes. Contact information is no longer published to the reading room.
2. Note which letter numbers the upload generated so you know which letters to review for PII. You can also run a custom report on **Delivery Type** for a list of all letters that did not come in through the CARA web form, so that you will know which letters require review. Go to CARA->**Custom Reports**, fill in the project details, and use **Filter by Letter->Delivery Type** to run the report.
3. Go to the Letter Inbox and select the letter to review.
4. Click on the orange **Edit** button at the top left of the letter.

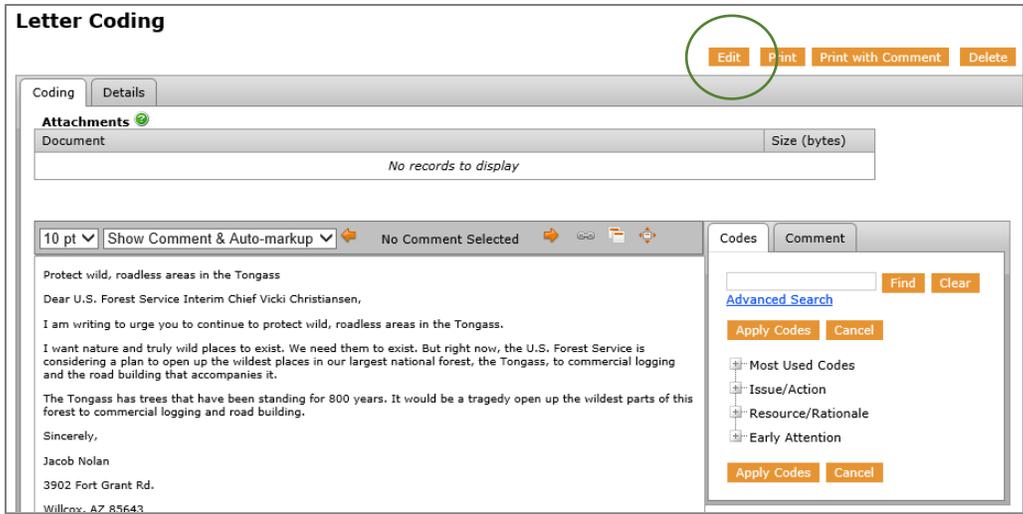


Figure 2. Remove PII from Email. Step 4

- 5. Highlight the PII, right click, and select **Delete**.

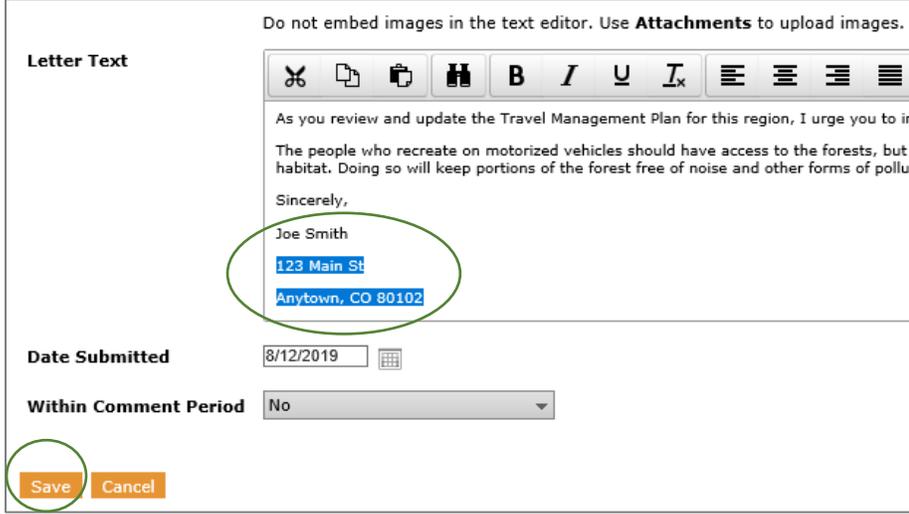


Figure 3. Remove PII from Email. Steps 5 and 6

- 6. Scroll down and **Save**.

Note: Comments that have already been coded cannot be edited. The letter must be un-published if it contains PII.

C. Remove PII from Email Attachments

1. Go to the Letter Inbox and select the letter to review.
2. Click on the orange **Edit** button at the top left of the letter.
3. Under the Attachments table, use the orange **Delete** button to remove any attachments that contain PII.

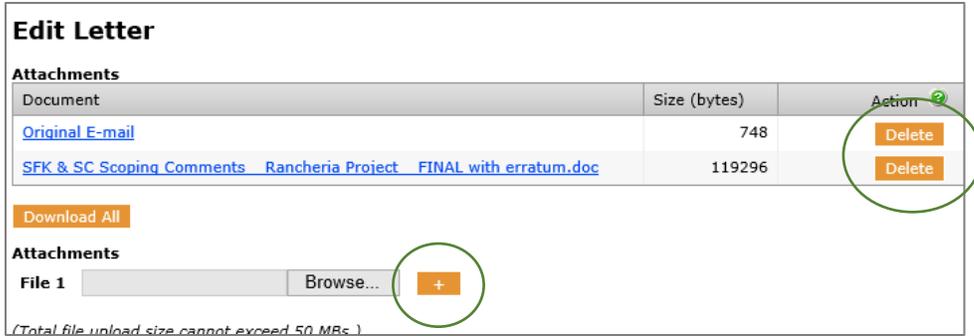


Figure 4. Remove PII from Email Attachment

4. Go to the original copy of the email. Open the attachment.
5. Follow the instructions below for either deleting or redacting PII from hardcopy letters.
6. Upload the newly edited web version of the attachment.

Remove PII from Hardcopy Letters

1. Scan all hardcopy letters and save them to the project record.
2. If you choose to upload scans of hardcopy letters, ensure you redact or delete PII prior to uploading.

To delete PII from hardcopy:

1. Open the document. Click on the Tools menu and select Edit Text in the right-hand tool pane. This should automatically run the OCR text recognition feature in Adobe Acrobat DC. If it does not, please ensure that the box for recognizing text is checked.
2. Highlight and delete the PII.

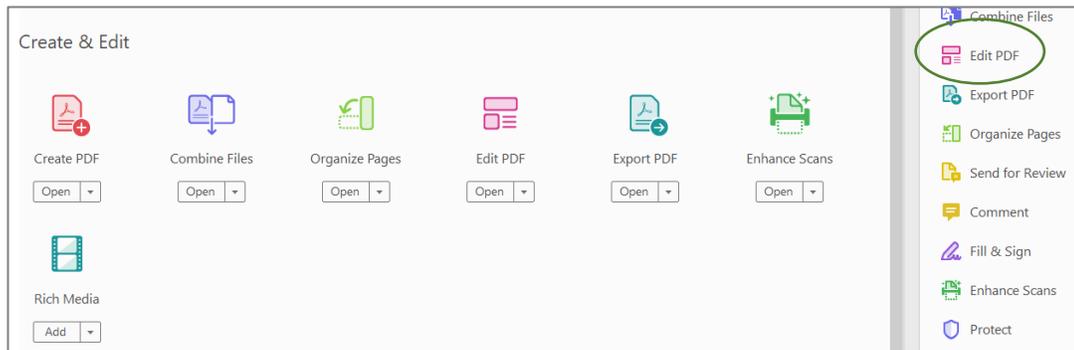


Figure 5. Edit/delete information from a pdf

3. Save the document with a unique file name that will not be confused with the original (e.g. if the original scan was titled, "SmithComment20190725," title the redacted version "SmithComment20190725web" or something similar to indicate that the file is suitable for web publishing.)
4. Upload the web version of the comment as an attachment.

To redact PII from hardcopy:

1. Run the text recognition software in Adobe to convert the image of the letter to editable text.

2. Open the document and click on the Tools menu. Scroll down to Protect and Standardize.

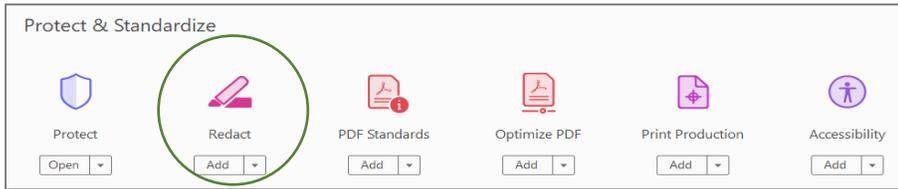


Figure 6. Open the Redact tool

3. Select the **Redact** tool > **Mark for Redaction** > **Text and Images**

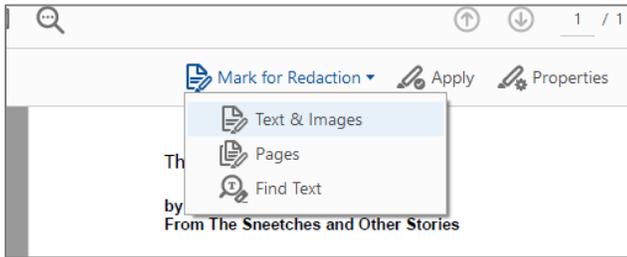


Figure 7. Open the Redact tool (2)

4. Highlight the text to redact.
5. Select **Apply**.

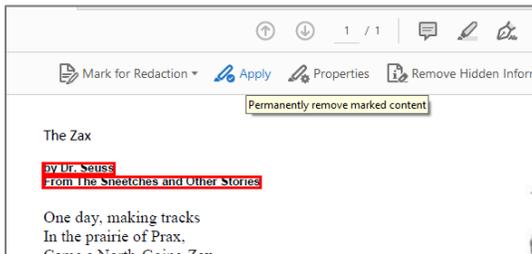


Figure 8. Mark text for redaction

6. You will receive a notice indicating that you are about to permanently remove all content that has been marked for redaction. Select **OK**.

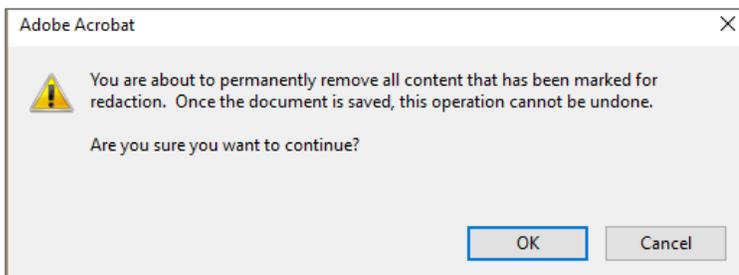


Figure 9. Permanent text removal warning

7. You will receive a notice asking if you would like to find and remove hidden information in the document. Select Yes. This removes additional hyperlinks and email addresses in the document metadata.
8. Save the document with a unique file name that will not be confused with the original. For example, if the original scan was titled, "SmithComment20190725," name the

redacted version “SmithComment20190725_web” or something similar to indicate that the file is suitable for web publishing.

9. If the letter was not previously in CARA, use the **Enter New Letter** feature in CARA to enter the available author information in the fields above the Letter Text field. This information will be available for reporting but will not appear in the reading room.
10. Upload the web version of the comment as an attachment. If the letter already exists in CARA (e.g. a letter from an old project), use the orange **Edit** button to browse for and attach your web version of the attachment.
11. Do NOT enter any PII into the Letter Text field.
12. If you are using CARA to code letters, make sure you exclude any PII in the Letter Text field.

Remove PII from Author Information

Contact information entered in the web form fields before 7/1/19 appears in the reading room. To remove PII entered into the web form via the Enter New Letter or Upload Letters functions before 7/1/19:

1. Download the project mailing list via Standard Reports to retain the contact information for your project record and mailing list.
2. Open the letter.
3. Click the orange **Edit** button.
4. Go to Authors -> Action and click the orange **Edit** button.
5. Remove all address, phone number and email information.
6. Click **Save**.

4. Create a Second Comment Period with an Inactive Reading Room

You can create a second comment period in CARA for a single public comment period when you want to make comments publicly available, but do not have the resources to remove PII from email and hardcopy comment submissions. This method allows you to utilize all of CARA’s comment coding and analysis features for all comments.

1. Create a comment period with an active reading room for all comments submitted via the web form. These comments will appear in the reading room. You still have the option to remove PII and upload individual letters to this reading room.
2. Create a second comment period with an inactive reading room. Give it a name that helps identify it, such as “Scoping-emails” or “Other-no reading room.” Batch upload pst files of emails received to a group mailbox, and upload scanned hardcopy letters and other submissions to this comment period.

5. Remove PII from Archived Comment Periods

A. Turn off the Reading Room

You may choose to turn off the comment period reading room for projects that are no longer active. This option requires the least amount of effort. Units can make the comments available to the public upon request.

Archived comment periods cannot be edited, and they can be viewed in CARA only by system administrators and users with an assigned role on that comment period. A user with an

assigned role can turn off the reading room by reactivating the comment period, deactivating the reading room and then deactivating/archiving the project.

1. Go to the project, and open the archived comment period. The Reading Room status is read-only.
2. Click the Comment Analysis Status: orange **Activate** button.
3. Click the Reading Room Status: **Deactivate** button.
4. Click the Comment Period Status: **Archive** button to return the comment period to archived status.

Other Comment Period	
Date:	03/14/2019 (Thu) - 03/19/2019 (Tue)
Time Zone:	(UTC-11:00) Coordinated Universal Time-11 
Description:	Other (test)
Comment Analysis Status:	Archived Activate
Viewing Status:	All CARA Users
Reading Room Status:	Active
Public Comment Form Status:	Inactive
Download All Letters:	Download

Figure 10. Close Reading Room in Archived Comment Period

B. Redact PII on all Letters Received Prior to July 2019

Units must review all letters posted prior to July 1, 2019, and remove any PII, if you wish to make the letter(s) available in the CARA reading room.

Note: Prior to removing PII, ensure that you have a complete copy of the original letters for the project record, including PII. Then follow the instructions above for removing PII from the letter text field and attachments.

6. Remove PII from Documents in PRM

- Follow the instruction in 3.C. above to remove personal addresses or phone numbers from other documents, such as allotment management plans, before uploading to PRM.
- Do NOT upload public comment letters to PRM. Upload all public comment letters to CARA for publishing to the web.
- If public comments have been uploaded to PRM, you should delete them and re-upload them via CARA in order to publish the letters to the web. Follow the instructions above for removing PII.
- If your unit has pre-CARA comment periods in PRM (i.e., before 2012), submit an [eMNEPA Help Desk ticket](#) to unpublish the documents from the web. End users cannot unpublish these folders.

7. Remove PII from Objection Response Pages

1. Save a copy of all objection response letters received via Mercury into the project record to ensure that no information is lost during removal procedures.
2. If the response letter contains an objector's personally identifiable information, follow the removal instructions above before uploading the response letter into CARA.