

Offshore petroleum environmental approvals

November 2018

The National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) is the regulator for health and safety, well integrity and environmental management for offshore oil and gas activities in Commonwealth waters and in coastal waters where regulatory powers and functions have been conferred.





What environmental approvals are required for offshore petroleum activities?

There are two main types of environmental approval documents that may be required before an offshore petroleum activity can commence. The type of activity proposed will determine if one or both are required.

Offshore project proposal (OPP)

An OPP is required for offshore development projects where one or more offshore activities are planned for the recovery of petroleum. This may include the construction, commissioning and operations of facilities and pipelines as well as production drilling. This would not include drilling for exploration or appraisal activities, or other exploration activities such as seismic surveys.

The OPP is a whole-of-project document that provides a detailed environmental impact and risk assessment of multiple activities and explains how those impacts and risks will be managed to a level that is acceptable for the life of the project.

The acceptance of an OPP does not provide approval for offshore activities to commence; rather, it provides approval for the submission of the environment plans for each activity within the project.

Environment plan (EP)

By law, an offshore petroleum activity may not commence in Commonwealth waters before NOPSEMA has assessed and accepted an EP for that activity.

The EP is an activity-specific document that provides a detailed environmental impact and risk assessment and explains how those impacts and risks will be managed to a level that is acceptable and as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) for the life of the activity.

Requirements for an EP include a robust oil pollution emergency plan and demonstration that the company holds sufficient financial assurance to meet the costs, expenses and liabilities associated with initiating and maintaining a response to a potential oil pollution incident.

How does NOPSEMA assess proposals and plans?

NOPSEMA's dedicated assessment teams comprised of highly qualified and skilled technical experts with extensive practical industry experience, assess each OPP and EP against the requirements of the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Regulations 2009.

NOPSEMA's assessment explicitly takes into consideration impacts on matters protected under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

NOPSEMA will only accept an OPP or EP when it meets all the requirements of the Environment Regulations and demonstrates that all environmental impacts and risks will be managed to an acceptable level.

How can I get involved so that my concerns are heard?

OPPs are published on NOPSEMA's website and are open for public comment for a minimum of four weeks. Full text copies of all public comments and an explanation as to how the oil and gas company has addressed those comments are submitted to NOPSEMA and are taken into account in our decision making.

For EPs, companies must consult with all *relevant* persons who may be affected by the proposed activity during the preparation of the EP and throughout the life of the activity. Full text copies of all correspondence, an explanation as to how the company addressed any objections or claims raised, and strategies to ensure ongoing consultation are provided to NOPSEMA to take into account in our decision-making.

The best way to ensure that your concerns are taken into account is to contact the oil and gas company directly. A nominated liaison person for each OPP and EP submission is published on NOPSEMA's website at nopsema.gov.au. Stakeholders are encouraged to subscribe to receive email notifications.

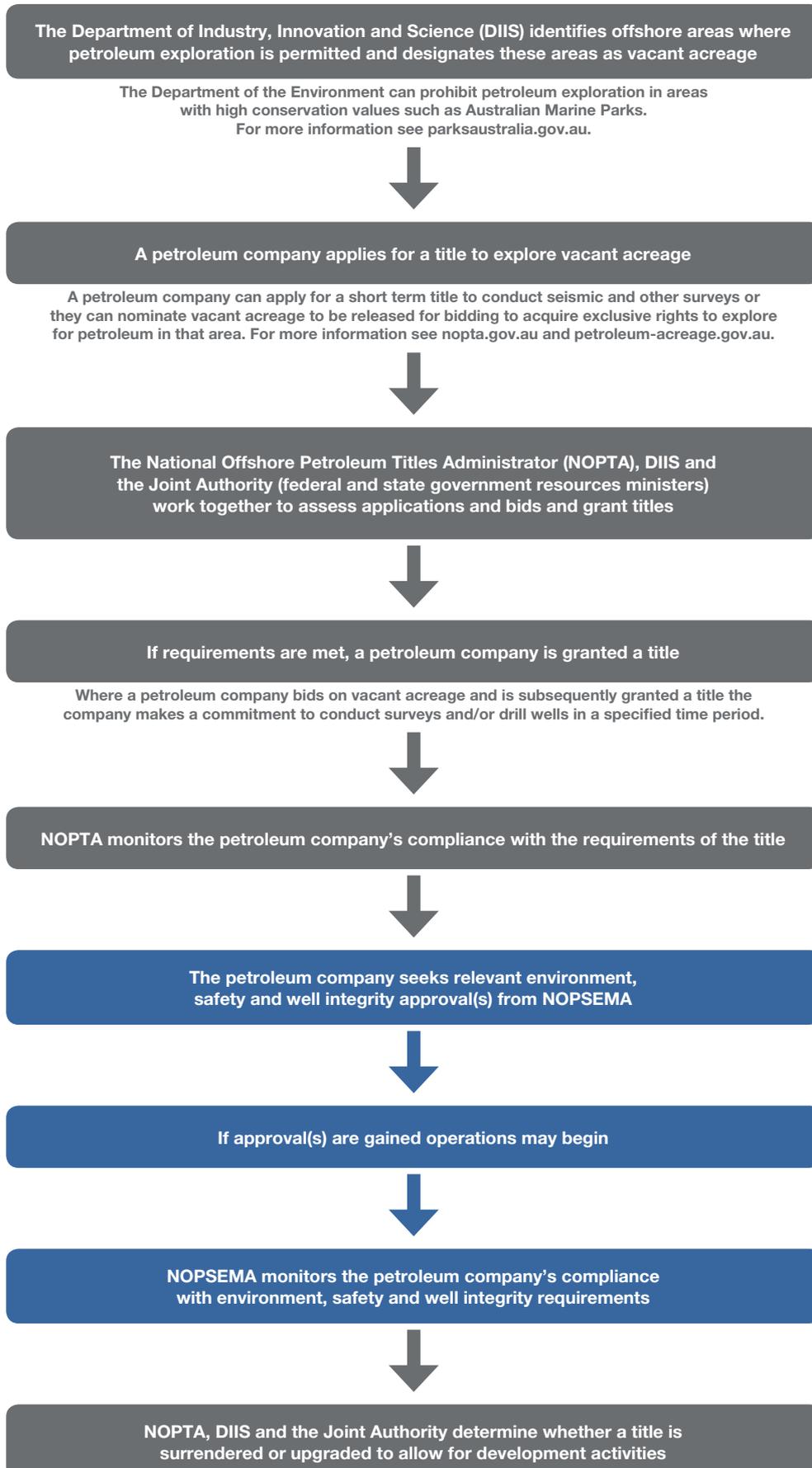


The offshore petroleum exploration approval process

The infographic below provides a broad overview of the approval process for all offshore petroleum exploration activities in Commonwealth waters.

Legend

- NOPSEMA's remit
- Outside of NOPSEMA's remit

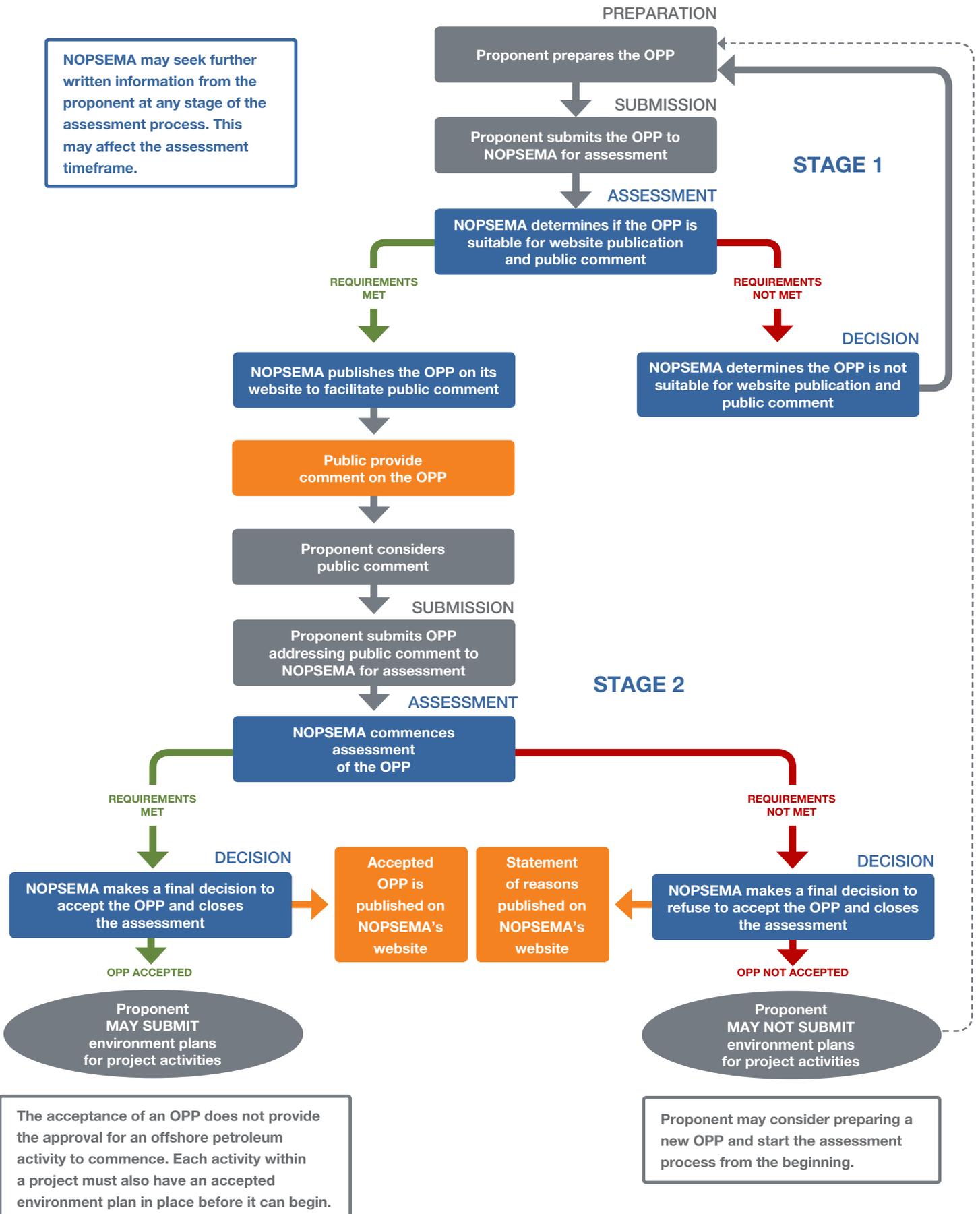


Assessment process for offshore project proposals

The infographic below provides a broad overview of the offshore project proposal (OPP) assessment process. Proposals are assessed against the requirements of the Environment Regulations. Proposals vary in their complexity and scope, as such assessment timeframes will vary. For more information, visit nopsema.gov.au.

Legend

- NOPSEMA
- Proponent
- Public comment / publication

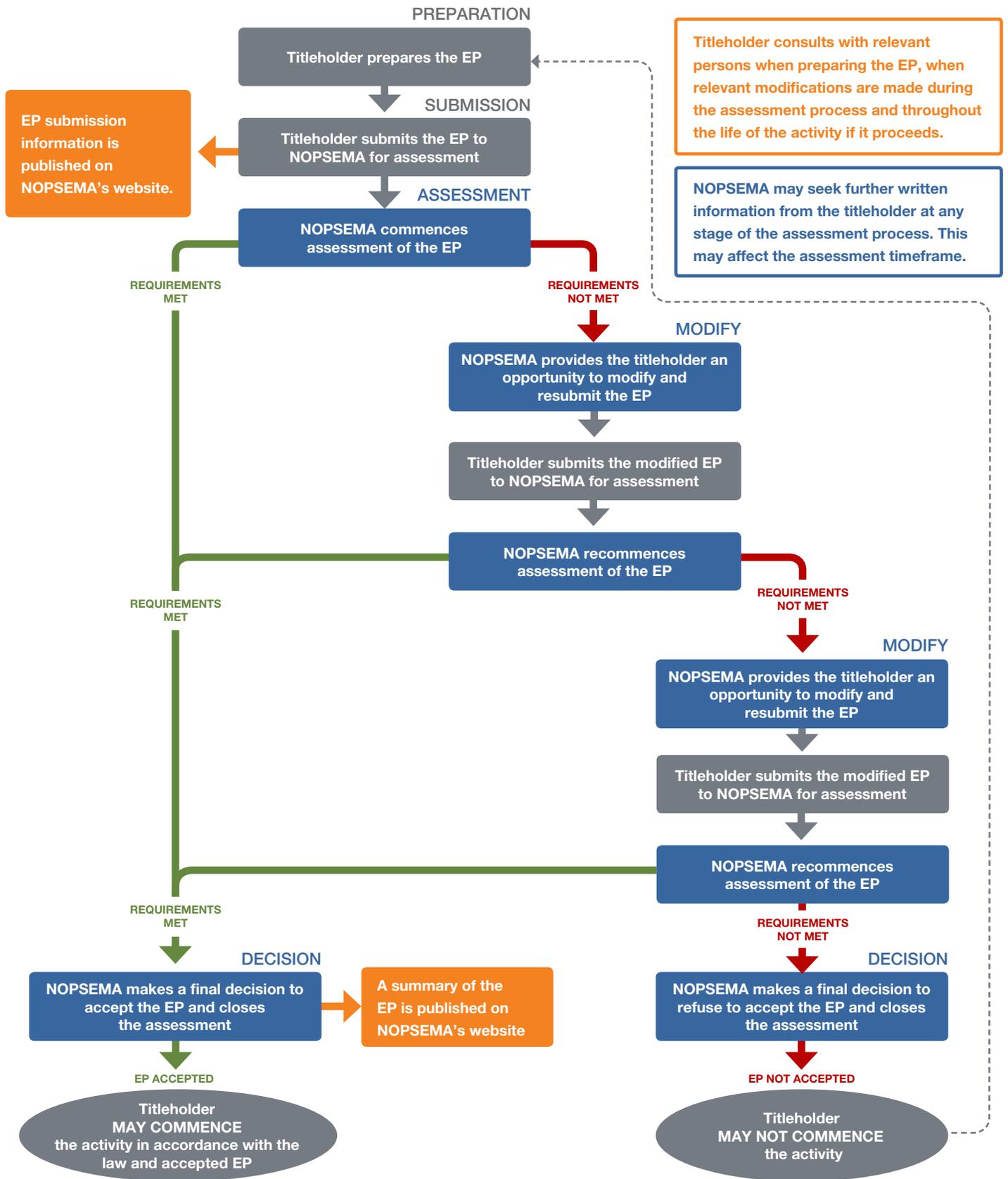


Assessment process for environment plans

The infographic below provides a broad overview of the environment plan (EP) assessment process. Plans are assessed against the requirements of the Environment Regulations. Plans vary in their complexity and scope, as such assessment timeframes will vary. For more information, visit nopsema.gov.au.

Legend

- NOPSEMA's remit
- Outside of NOPSEMA's remit
- Consultation



Titleholder consults with relevant persons when preparing the EP, when relevant modifications are made during the assessment process and throughout the life of the activity if it proceeds.

NOPSEMA may seek further written information from the titleholder at any stage of the assessment process. This may affect the assessment timeframe.

EP submission information is published on NOPSEMA's website.

A summary of the EP is published on NOPSEMA's website

New information can trigger a revision of the accepted EP. An EP revision must be submitted to NOPSEMA for assessment.

NOPSEMA undertakes inspection, investigation and enforcement activities to monitor and secure compliance with the law and accepted EP.

For the activity to commence, the titleholder must prepare a new EP and start the assessment process from the beginning.



NOPSEMA

Further information

NOPSEMA publishes policies, guidance notes, guidelines, and information papers at nopsema.gov.au.

The Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006, subsidiary regulations and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* are available in full at comlaw.gov.au.

Legislative requirements not administered by NOPSEMA can be obtained from:

- The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science at industry.gov.au
- State/Northern Territory department at directory.gov.au
- The National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator at nopta.gov.au.

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