

## Five Tips for Obtaining Timely Project Permits and Approvals

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Over the past two decades, I have been fortunate to participate in the planning of several large-scale infrastructure programs, from renewable energy to new major transit systems. Having worked for both a regulatory agency and as a consultant, I have seen all facets of infrastructure projects from start to finish.

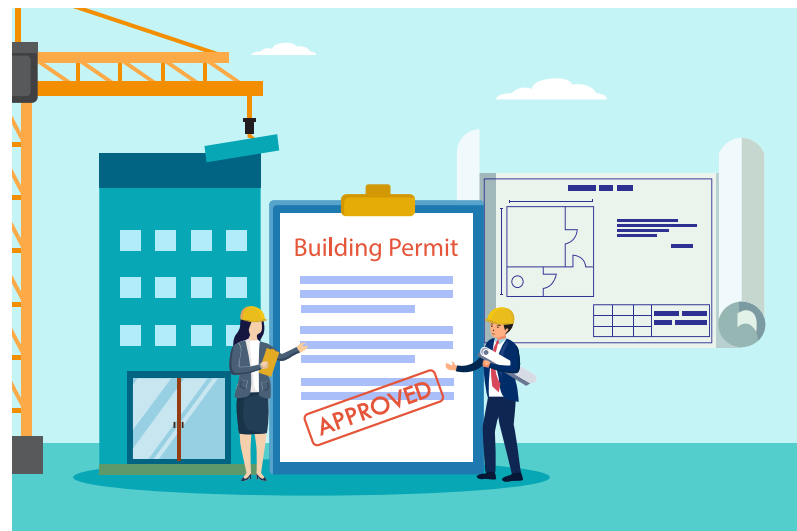
Based on this experience, I am often asked, “What is one of the most challenging aspects of large infrastructure projects?” My response is always the same: permits and approvals.

### Tips for a Successful Environmental Permit Application

Although submitting permits to a third-party regulatory agency may seem daunting, some items are within your control and can help make permitting processes smoother. Here are my top five pieces of advice to support a successful environmental permit application process.

#### 1. ACCOUNT FOR PERMIT TIMING

Every project has a schedule. Many projects have very tight and aggressive schedules. When developing the construction schedule, the number one item I recommend is accounting for permit timing (with contingency). Planning and scheduling permits with enough time within the schedule will ensure that you are not scrambling to assemble an application that could lead to errors and quality issues with the submission.



#### 2. PERFORM RESEARCH

Before starting a permit application, it is critical to understand the specific requirements, laws, and regulations governing the project and the permit. Each regulatory agency has its own set of rules and guidelines, so reviewing the official website or contacting the permitting authority directly to gather information is key. Understanding the nuances of the regulatory requirements improves the chances your application will be complete and accepted by the agency.

#### 3. REMEMBER: QUALITY MATTERS

Completing the permit application accurately and providing supporting documentation is crucial in avoiding delays. Review your permit application package to ensure you have included

the required forms, drawings, and supporting documentation. Be sure to provide accurate measurements, descriptions, and details about your project to avoid miscommunication.

#### 4. DON'T WAIT - COMMUNICATE

Maintaining clear and open lines of communication with the regulatory agency is essential throughout the permit application process. Responding promptly to requests for additional information or clarification is vital. Being proactive and cooperative can help build a positive relationship with the officials and expedite the review process. Also, consider how best to work through comments and questions with the regulatory agency. Is a written response to their remarks sufficient? Or is a meeting required to work through comments? Your open communication will significantly help your application's review and successful approval.

#### 5. BE PROACTIVE

After submitting your permit application, track, monitor, and follow up regularly on its progress. Stay informed about the status of your application and potential issues that may arise during the review process. This proactive approach allows you to address concerns promptly and make any required adjustments to the permit application.

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### How an Experienced Consultant Can Add Value to Your Permits and Approvals

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#### EXPERIENCE

You'll want a consultant with experience in working for regulatory agencies. Find a consultant who has gained hands-on experience with permits, approvals, and internal processes by doing just that. Seeing the approvals process "behind the scenes" gives knowledge and skills to support clients successfully and efficiently.

#### STRATEGY

Strategy is vital for long-lead or complicated permits. Find a consultant whose strategy involves assessing the project scope early, identifying critical permits and their timelines, and then developing a plan to shift the preparation of technical information to an earlier project phase to assist with approval timing.


#### ENGAGEMENT

Early engagement supports successful permit applications. Make sure to engage regulatory agencies as early as possible to receive their comments and feedback, which can be incorporated into the design for successful permit acquisition.

#### A ROBUST TOOLKIT

Use various permitting tools to enable progress tracking and make the process as efficient as possible. For example, you may employ a master permit register documenting the project's required types of permits and approvals, which is regularly maintained and updated as the project design progresses.

#### TRACKING AND MONITORING

Lastly, recognize the importance of tracking and managing permit applications during the review process. By closely monitoring and managing permit applications, you can ensure that a quick and thorough response is provided to the regulatory agency. 



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### About the Author

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### About the Article

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