

119TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 4503

To improve environmental reviews and authorizations through the use of interactive, digital, and cloud-based platforms, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 17, 2025

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota (for himself and Mr. PETERS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

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## A BILL

To improve environmental reviews and authorizations through the use of interactive, digital, and cloud-based platforms, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “ePermit Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

6 The Congress finds that—

7 (1) coordination between Federal, State, and  
8 local agencies and project sponsors is critical to en-  
9 suring the timely and effective completion of envi-  
10 ronmental reviews and authorizations, including

1 through the sharing of relevant information, align-  
2 ment of environmental review timelines, and integra-  
3 tion of authorizations, while maintaining compliance  
4 with applicable statutory and regulatory require-  
5 ments;

6 (2) digital strategies for environmental reviews  
7 have proven to make the community engagement  
8 process more accessible, available, and transparent  
9 to all stakeholders, especially the communities in  
10 which new projects are built;

11 (3) establishing robust data architectures will  
12 ensure data integrity, improve transparency, reduce  
13 costs, and enhance the ability of the Federal Govern-  
14 ment to serve the public;

15 (4) Federal agency use of modern software that  
16 can track the full lifecycle of environmental reviews  
17 and authorizations is critical for—

18 (A) effective project management and  
19 process improvement;

20 (B) enabling workflow automation, trans-  
21 parency, and tracking; and

22 (C) simplifying reporting requirements;

23 (5) modern business process management sys-  
24 tems that track Federal agency workflows and  
25 produce interoperable event, task, and other mile-

1 stone data that can be shared with other Federal  
2 agency systems can reduce costs and improve per-  
3 formance for Federal agencies responsible for envi-  
4 ronmental reviews and authorizations;

5 (6) case management systems—

6 (A) are essential tools for managing the  
7 tasks and activities associated with environ-  
8 mental reviews and authorizations; and

9 (B) provide Federal agencies more data  
10 and insight into such environmental reviews  
11 and authorizations;

12 (7) well-defined business rules can enable proc-  
13 ess automation that allows Federal agencies respon-  
14 sible for environmental reviews or authorizations to  
15 expedite routine tasks and workflows, and improve  
16 transparency and accuracy of project timeline esti-  
17 mates, which in turn can help project sponsors bet-  
18 ter plan for application preparation and project de-  
19 livery milestones;

20 (8) taking a standardized, digital-first perspec-  
21 tive to environmental reviews and authorizations at  
22 Federal agencies responsible for environmental re-  
23 views or authorizations will improve document qual-  
24 ity, lead to more concise reports, enable the reuse  
25 and accessibility of the data underpinning Federal

1 agency analyses and decisions, and enable objective,  
2 technology-assisted evaluation of environmental im-  
3 pacts, analysis, and documentation, and accelerate  
4 future environmental reviews and authorizations;

5 (9) Federal agencies responsible for environ-  
6 mental reviews or authorizations, project sponsors,  
7 and the public should have access to up-to-date in-  
8 formation on accurate timelines and the status of  
9 environmental reviews and authorizations; and

10 (10) allowing for seamless information exchange  
11 among Federal agencies and between Federal agen-  
12 cies and project sponsors will increase predictability  
13 and efficiency of environmental review and author-  
14 ization schedules for project sponsors.

15 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF DATA STANDARDS.**

16 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the  
17 date of enactment of this Act, the Chair of the Council  
18 on Environmental Quality, in consultation with the Fed-  
19 eral Permitting Improvement Steering Council, the Chief  
20 Information Officers Council, the Office of Management  
21 and Budget, and other relevant stakeholders and Federal  
22 agencies, shall develop, publish, and iteratively update  
23 data standards for the collection and curation of author-  
24 ization data by Federal agencies, which shall be used to—

1           (1) assist with environmental reviews and au-  
2       thorizations;

3           (2) organize, define, and standardize various  
4       concepts, formats, and protocols that are included in  
5       environmental reviews and authorizations; and

6           (3) reduce the need for redundant environ-  
7       mental reviews by creating a shared vocabulary and  
8       software systems that will support data interoper-  
9       ability and automatic data exchange between Fed-  
10      eral agencies.

11      (b) INCLUSIONS.—The data standards developed,  
12      published, and iteratively updated under subsection (a)  
13      shall include the following:

14           (1) A standardized taxonomy that allows Fed-  
15      eral agencies to identify and track data types, rela-  
16      tionships, and values.

17           (2) Comprehensive categories for data, such  
18      as—

19                   (A) projects;

20                   (B) processes;

21                   (C) environmental documents;

22                   (D) public comments;

23                   (E) geospatial information;

24                   (F) public engagement events, as applica-  
25      ble by process or Federal agency;

- 1 (G) case events; and
- 2 (H) milestones to ensure clarity and uni-
- 3 formity.

#### 4 **SEC. 4. DEVELOPMENT OF PROTOTYPE TOOLS.**

5 The Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality,  
6 in consultation with the Administrator of General Serv-  
7 ices, the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Coun-  
8 cil, the Chief Information Officers Council, the Director  
9 of the Office of Management and Budget, and other rel-  
10 evant stakeholders and Federal agencies, shall design,  
11 test, and build prototype tools for environmental reviews  
12 and authorizations that will assist Federal agencies in im-  
13 plementing the minimum functional requirements de-  
14 scribed in section 5. The Chair of the Council on Environ-  
15 mental Quality shall prioritize designing, testing, and  
16 building tools under this section that—

- 17 (1) support authorization case management sys-
- 18 tems that manage tasks, milestones, and activities
- 19 associated with environmental reviews and author-
- 20 izations, and provide Federal agencies more data
- 21 and insight into such reviews and authorizations;
- 22 (2) enable application submission and tracking
- 23 portals used by project sponsors, enabling greater
- 24 transparency;

1           (3) facilitate automated applications, environ-  
2           mental reviews. and authorizations;

3           (4) allow data exchange between Federal agen-  
4           cy systems; and

5           (5) accelerate complex environmental reviews.

6 **SEC. 5. PUBLICATION OF GUIDANCE FOR IMPLEMENTA-**  
7 **TION OF DATA STANDARDS AND MINIMUM**  
8 **FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS.**

9           (a) PUBLICATION.—Not later than 30 days after the  
10          date of enactment of this Act, the Chair of the Council  
11          on Environmental Quality shall publish guidance for how  
12          each Federal agency responsible for environmental reviews  
13          or authorizations implements—

14                (1) the data standards published under section  
15                3; and

16                (2) the following minimum functional require-  
17                ments:

18                    (A) Application data sharing that enables  
19                    automated transfer of relevant environmental  
20                    review and authorization data among Federal  
21                    agencies.

22                    (B) Automated project screening to assist  
23                    frontline staff with reviewing project sponsor  
24                    provided information for completeness and ac-  
25                    curacy and determining if a categorical exclu-

1 sion or other general authorization applies to an  
2 action. Automated project screening may not be  
3 used by the Council on Environmental Quality  
4 or a Federal agency to unlawfully restrict any  
5 activities on Federal lands.

6 (C) Public availability of screening criteria  
7 and related decision models.

8 (D) Automated case management tools  
9 which include a repository of relevant data and  
10 metadata that enable advanced tracking, report-  
11 ing, and optimization to aid workflows.

12 (E) Integrated geographic information sys-  
13 tem analysis tools which incorporate geospatial  
14 data layers and models for each resource ana-  
15 lyzed as part of an environmental review or au-  
16 thorization for a given study area.

17 (F) Document management tools that pre-  
18 serve metadata associated with geospatial anal-  
19 ysis, modeling, and other analytic processes  
20 conducted during an environmental review or  
21 authorization, to support future reviews and en-  
22 able Artificial Intelligence-assisted analysis of  
23 past decisions.

24 (G) Automated comment compilation and  
25 analysis tools, including services for comment

1 categorization and response that handle the  
2 lifecycle of comment submission, analysis, cat-  
3 egorization and response with Artificial Intel-  
4 ligence support where appropriate.

5 (H) Administrative record management  
6 tools that maintain both portable document for-  
7 mats and data-rich repositories accessible to  
8 both machine and human users.

9 (I) Common or interoperable Federal agen-  
10 cy services that integrate shared services,  
11 shared applications, and common user experi-  
12 ences for Federal agency staff, project sponsors,  
13 and the public.

14 (b) INCLUSIONS.—The guidance published under this  
15 section shall include the following:

16 (1) Guidelines for cloud-based storage, data  
17 sharing protocols, and application programming  
18 interfaces to enable the Council on Environmental  
19 Quality to work with Federal agencies to use author-  
20 ization data to aid Federal agencies in modernizing  
21 their environmental reviews and authorizations and  
22 for iterative development of the authorization portal.

23 (2) Provisions that support scalability and  
24 adaptability of the minimum requirements to emerg-  
25 ing technologies.

1 **SEC. 6. IMPLEMENTATION OF DATA STANDARDS AND MIN-**  
2 **IMUM FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS.**

3 (a) IMPLEMENTATION.—The head of each Federal  
4 agency responsible for environmental reviews or authoriza-  
5 tions shall—

6 (1) not later than 90 days after the date of en-  
7 actment of this Act—

8 (A) compare existing Federal agency sys-  
9 tems for environmental reviews and authoriza-  
10 tions with the data standards published under  
11 section 3 and the minimum functional require-  
12 ments described in section 5(a)(2) and report  
13 findings from such comparison to the Council  
14 on Environmental Quality;

15 (B) assess whether existing Federal agency  
16 technological capabilities are consistent with the  
17 data standards published under section 3 and  
18 the minimum functional requirements described  
19 in section 5(a)(2);

20 (C) submit to the Council on Environ-  
21 mental Quality a report that estimates the com-  
22 pletion dates for implementing the data stand-  
23 ards published under section 3 and the min-  
24 imum functional requirements described in sec-  
25 tion 5(a)(2); and

1 (D) submit to the Council on Environ-  
2 mental Quality, in consultation with the Council  
3 on Environmental Quality, an implementation  
4 plan that—

5 (i) describes how the Federal agency  
6 will implement the data standards pub-  
7 lished under section 3 and the minimum  
8 functional requirements described in sec-  
9 tion 5(a)(2); and

10 (ii) describes how, to the extent the  
11 Federal agency determines necessary to  
12 meet relevant statutory requirements, the  
13 Federal agency will adopt or implement  
14 the prototype tools tested, designed, and  
15 built under section 4; and

16 (2) not later than 180 days after the date of  
17 enactment of this Act, begin implementing the data  
18 standards published under section 3 and the min-  
19 imum functional requirements described in section  
20 5(a)(2).

21 (b) REPORT.—Not less frequently than twice each  
22 year, the Chief Information Officer of each Federal agen-  
23 cy, in consultation with the Chief Environmental Review  
24 and Permitting Officer of each Federal agency, shall sub-  
25 mit to the Council on Environmental Quality and the Di-

1 rector of the Office of Management and Budget a report  
2 on the progress of the Federal agency towards meeting  
3 the requirements of subsection (a).

4 **SEC. 7. UNIFIED INTERAGENCY DATA SYSTEM.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—

6 (1) UNIFIED INTERAGENCY DATA SYSTEM.—To  
7 the maximum extent practicable, the Chair of the  
8 Council of Environmental Quality and the head of  
9 each Federal agency responsible for environmental  
10 reviews or authorizations shall iteratively develop  
11 and maintain a unified interagency data system con-  
12 sisting of interconnected Federal agency systems  
13 and shared services for environmental reviews and  
14 authorizations.

15 (2) AUTHORIZATION PORTAL.—

16 (A) IN GENERAL.—The shared services de-  
17 veloped and maintained under paragraph (1)  
18 shall include a common interactive, digital,  
19 cloud-based authorization portal, which shall—

20 (i) be designed in a manner consistent  
21 with—

22 (I) the recommendations of the  
23 Council on Environmental Quality in-  
24 cluded in the study submitted pursu-  
25 ant to section 110 of the National En-

1                    vironmental Policy Act of 1969 (42  
2                    U.S.C. 4336d) titled “Council on En-  
3                    vironmental Quality Report to Con-  
4                    gress on the Potential for Online and  
5                    Digital Technologies to Address  
6                    Delays in Reviews and Improve Public  
7                    Accessibility and Transparency under  
8                    42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(C)”;

9                    (II) the minimum functional re-  
10                  quirements described in section  
11                  5(a)(2);

12                  (ii) serve as a centralized platform for  
13                  tracking and displaying real-time data on  
14                  environmental reviews and authorizations  
15                  made available through application pro-  
16                  gramming interfaces or other reporting  
17                  mechanisms from Federal agency systems  
18                  that are compliant with the data standards  
19                  and data architecture described in this Act;

20                  (iii) include a mechanism for the dis-  
21                  semination of relevant information (such  
22                  as a notice of intent for public comment,  
23                  public meetings, project statuses, or a no-  
24                  tice of intent to begin an environmental re-  
25                  view) to local communities, as applicable;

1 (iv) allow a project sponsor to submit  
2 all necessary documentation for environ-  
3 mental reviews and authorizations in one  
4 unified and secure portal;

5 (v) support interactive, digital, and  
6 cloud-based tools enabling applicants to  
7 edit documents and collaborate with rel-  
8 evant Federal agencies in real time;

9 (vi) support visual features, including  
10 video, animation, geographic information  
11 system displays, interactive maps, and  
12 three-dimensional renderings;

13 (vii) provide for the exchange of infor-  
14 mation to and from Federal agency data  
15 systems via an application programming  
16 interface or another reporting mechanisms;

17 (viii) allow for the submission of  
18 geospatial data associated with project lo-  
19 cation, footprint, and impact;

20 (ix) support automatic documentation  
21 of submission and process timelines; and

22 (x) allow the following metrics to be  
23 tracked over time—

24 (I) estimates of achieved effi-  
25 ciencies, such as reductions in the

1 time between receipt of applications  
2 and final authorization decisions;

3 (II) comparisons of authorization  
4 timelines before and after the imple-  
5 mentation of this Act;

6 (III) usage of the authorization  
7 portal and other statistics from the  
8 Digital Analytics Program;

9 (IV) metrics on the number of  
10 public comments received, responses  
11 provided, and community meetings  
12 held;

13 (V) the number of projects sub-  
14 ject to litigation based on authoriza-  
15 tion deficiencies or inefficiencies;

16 (VI) a list of Federal agencies  
17 that are not yet fully compliant with  
18 the data standards published under  
19 section 3 and the minimum functional  
20 requirements described in section  
21 5(a)(2), along with their progress to-  
22 ward compliance; and

23 (VII) examples or repositories of  
24 Federal agency-developed digital  
25 workflows enabled by the implementa-

1                   tion of this Act, including visualiza-  
2                   tions of data sharing, authorizations  
3                   and decision logic, and environmental  
4                   reviews.

5                   (B) ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT.—The Ad-  
6                   ministrator of General Services shall host the  
7                   authorization portal as a shared service for  
8                   Congress, Federal agencies, and the public.

9                   (C) ACCESSABILITY.—The authorization  
10                  portal shall be accessible to Congress, Federal  
11                  agencies, and the public, with appropriate safe-  
12                  guards to protect sensitive or classified informa-  
13                  tion and information restricted by user type as  
14                  appropriate.

15                  (D) PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY.—To the ex-  
16                  tent practicable and consistent with other law,  
17                  the authorization portal shall provide public ac-  
18                  cess to non-sensitive data, including authoriza-  
19                  tion timelines, location, project type, environ-  
20                  mental reviews, and mitigation measures.

21                  (E) CONGRESSIONAL ACCESS AND OVER-  
22                  SIGHT.—

23                  (i) IN GENERAL.—The authorization  
24                  portal shall provide Congress with direct  
25                  access to aggregated performance data and

1 other analytics to enable real-time over-  
2 sight of Federal agencies.

3 (ii) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The  
4 Council on Environmental Quality shall  
5 provide to Congress technical assistance  
6 upon request to ensure effective use of the  
7 authorization portal for oversight purposes.

8 (3) CYBERSECURITY AND COMPLIANCE CONSID-  
9 ERATIONS.—The authorization portal shall be de-  
10 signed to promote interoperability, reduce redun-  
11 dancy, and ensure compliance and coordination with  
12 other laws, including—

13 (A) section 552a of title 5, United States  
14 Code (commonly referred to as the Privacy Act  
15 of 1974), and subchapter II of chapter 35 of  
16 title 44, United States Code;

17 (B) the Federal Risk and Authorization  
18 Management Program established under section  
19 3608 of title 44, United States Code; and

20 (C) the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure  
21 Security Agency of the Department of Home-  
22 land Security, for a case in which the project is  
23 in coordination with a Federal agency with  
24 stringent security requirements.

25 (b) DEADLINES.—

1           (1) SHARED SERVICES PILOT.—Not later than  
2           one year after the date of enactment of this Act, the  
3           Council on Environmental Quality shall oversee pi-  
4           loting of shared services for environmental reviews  
5           and authorizations, including the authorization por-  
6           tal under subsection (a)(2).

7           (2) UNIFIED SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT AND IM-  
8           PLEMENTATION.—To the maximum extent prac-  
9           ticable, not later than December 1, 2027, the Chair  
10          of the Council on Environmental Quality shall de-  
11          velop and implement the unified interagency data  
12          system required under subsection (a)(1).

13          (c) REPORT.—Not less frequently than annually, the  
14          Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality, in con-  
15          sultation with the Federal Permitting Improvement Steer-  
16          ing Council, the Chief Information Officers Council, and  
17          other relevant stakeholders and Federal agencies, shall  
18          submit to the Committee on Natural Resources of the  
19          House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy  
20          and Natural Resources of the Senate a report on the  
21          Council on Environmental Quality’s progress on devel-  
22          oping a unified interagency data system under subsection  
23          (a).

24          (d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
25          authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section

1 \$1,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2032,  
2 to remain available until expended.

3 **SEC. 8. AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO CONTRACTS.**

4 The Council on Environmental Quality may enter  
5 into contracts and other arrangements for analyses, serv-  
6 ices, and products with Federal agencies, private organiza-  
7 tions, and businesses, and make such payments as deter-  
8 mined necessary by the Council on Environmental Quality  
9 to carry out the provisions of this Act.

10 **SEC. 9. CLARIFYING RULEMAKING AUTHORITY.**

11 Nothing in this Act shall be construed to authorize  
12 the Council on Environmental Quality or a Federal agency  
13 to impose additional regulatory processes or requirements  
14 beyond those expressly stipulated under the National En-  
15 vironmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.)  
16 or any other law.

17 **SEC. 10. DEFINITIONS.**

18 In this Act:

19 (1) **AUTHORIZATION.**—The term “authoriza-  
20 tion” means any license, permit, approval, finding,  
21 determination, or other administrative decision  
22 issued by an agency and any interagency consulta-  
23 tion that is required or authorized under Federal  
24 law in order to site, construct, reconstruct, or com-

1 mence operations of a project administered by a  
2 Federal agency.

3 (2) AUTHORIZATION DATA.—The term “author-  
4 ization data” means—

5 (A) any data relevant for a Federal agency  
6 to—

7 (i) determine the effect on the envi-  
8 ronment of an action for which an author-  
9 ization is required by the Federal agency;  
10 and

11 (ii) determine whether to issue such  
12 authorization; and

13 (B) any community input or public com-  
14 ment on such determinations.

15 (3) DATA ARCHITECTURE.—The term “data ar-  
16 chitecture” means the design and organization of  
17 data systems, including frameworks for data storage,  
18 processing, and exchange.

19 (4) DATA STANDARDS.—The term “data stand-  
20 ards” means agreed-upon specifications for data for-  
21 mats, structures, and definitions to ensure consist-  
22 ency and interoperability.

23 (5) ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW.—The term “en-  
24 vironmental review” means any Federal agency pro-  
25 cedures or processes for—

1 (A) applying a categorical exclusion; or

2 (B) preparing an environmental assess-  
3 ment, an environmental impact statement, or  
4 another document required under the National  
5 Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C.  
6 4321 et seq.).

7 (6) FEDERAL AGENCY.—The term “Federal  
8 agency” has the meaning given the term “agency”  
9 in section 551 of title 5, United States Code.

10 (7) FEDERAL PERMITTING IMPROVEMENT  
11 STEERING COUNCIL.—The term “Federal Permitting  
12 Improvement Steering Council” has the meaning  
13 given the term “Council” in section 41001 of the  
14 FAST Act (42 U.S.C. 4370m).

○