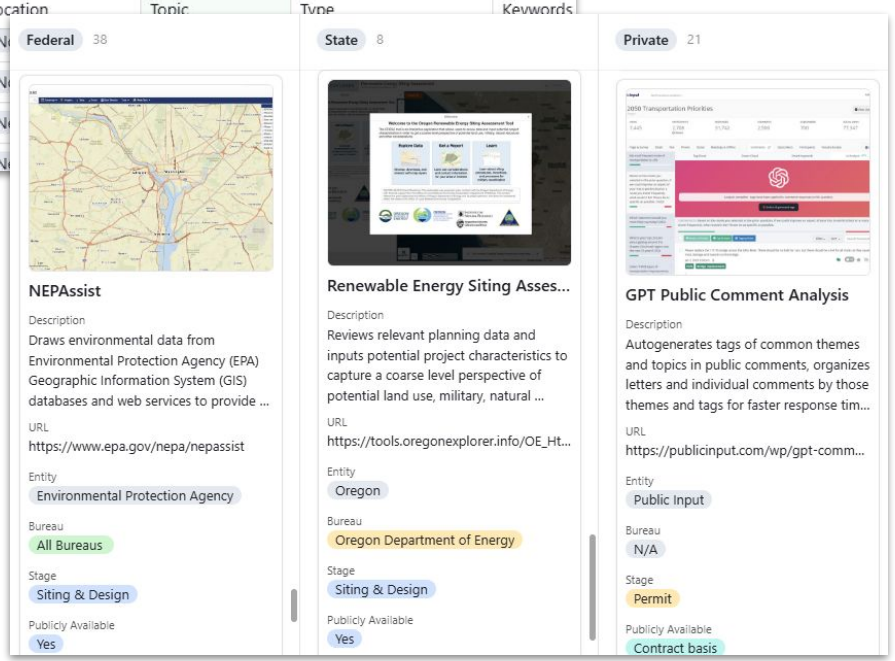
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY INNOVATION CENTER

More Nature, Less Paperwork

Pathways to Speed and Scale Environmental Restoration

Local Government Advisory Committee
Thursday, September 4, 2025
Becca Madsen | becca@policyinnovation.org | 940.231.4359

EPIC Permitting Work



Restoration streamlining and Pay for Success [database](#) (filter Topic = Permitting)

[Permitting tech inventory](#)

Existing Pathways in the Chesapeake Bay

General permits for federal permits
US Army Corps Nationwide Permits

MD Dept of Environment's dedicated stream team
Meets goal of reviewing restoration projects in 90 days 96% of the time

SolarApp+
Grants available in Maryland, 2 VA localities

VA's Permitting Enhancement and Evaluation Platform (PEEP)
Transparency & accountability

Ideas to Consider Adopting

General permits, exemptions for state permits
CEQA Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects, proposal in Massachusetts

Regional interagency coordination
Puget Sound 'MART' (Multi-Agency Restoration Team)

New permits specifically for restoration
Washington's Habitat Recovery Pilot Program

Find more info for all in our database

What You May Not be Considering

Self-certification, automatic approval
Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act General Permits, California's 'OpLaw' for state wetland/stream permitting

e-Permitting, including use of AI
VA DEQ proof of concept

Leadership
Governor, agency initiatives, performance metrics

Find more info for all in our database and permit tech inventory

SOURCES OF PERMITTING ISSUES

While staffing constraints are frequently cited as a source of application backlogs, addressing permitting delays requires tackling multiple interconnected challenges. Key sources of permitting issues include: organizational cultures resistant to change, outdated systems lacking standardization and transparency, agency coordination issues, and burdensome requirements treating restoration like development.

- Staffing Issues
- Expertise
- App. Issues

Resource shortages (staffing, workloads, expertise, turnover) cause delays, while applicant deficiencies lead to poor incoming applications.

- Leadership
- Accountability
- Risk Tolerance

Organizational **culture** can lack leadership prioritization, urgency of deadlines, accountability, or overemphasize risk avoidance.

- Inefficiency
- Inconsistency
- Outdated Tech

Permitting **systems** may be inefficient, outdated, and ripe with inconsistency when there is a shortage of guidance, standardization / rubrics of review or tools and technology.

- Lack of Coord.
- Poor Processes
- 'Black Hole'

Multi-agency reviews exacerbate process issues, such as a lack of coordination, duplication, and no transparency for the applicant.

- Burdensome Req.

Restoration projects use the same permits as development, causing a mismatch in requirements and burden of proof for these beneficial efforts.

TYPES OF PERMITTING REFORMS

To address foundational issues in permitting reform, leadership directives and adoption of technology are two key places to start. Other key reforms include: executive orders that drive cultural change through prioritization and accountability; templates and review rubrics that create consistency; e-permitting systems that boost efficiency and agency coordination; and streamlined pathways like general permits and categorical exclusions that reduce the permitting burden.

Leadership directives like executive orders catalyze cultural change by introducing permit timeliness goals and performance metrics. Leaders can also advocate for sufficient staffing and workload allocation ('regulators without borders'), subject matter and project management training. Guidance memos improve risk tolerance by emphasizing outcomes over processes.

- Leadership
- Accountability
- Staffing
- Expertise
- Guidance
- Risk Tolerance

Standardization through templates, checklists, and review rubrics create consistent requirements while applicant training reduces incomplete applications.

- Templates
- Review Rubric
- Training

Tech adoption boosts staff efficiency, provides transparency, automates processes, improves project management and agency coordination.

- e-Permitting
- Transparency
- Coordination

Categorical exclusions and fast-track pathways like general permits and programmatic reviews reduce permit burdens for restoration projects.

- CATEX
- General Permit
- Programmatics

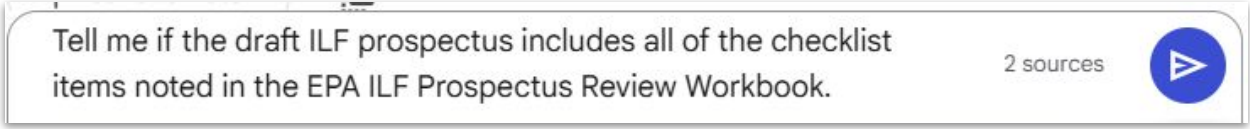
Thank You!

Becca Madsen
becca@policyinnovation.org
940.231.4359

Additional Examples and Resources

Try Out AI Tools for Yourself

NotebookLM [link]



How Should I Be Using A.I. Right Now?

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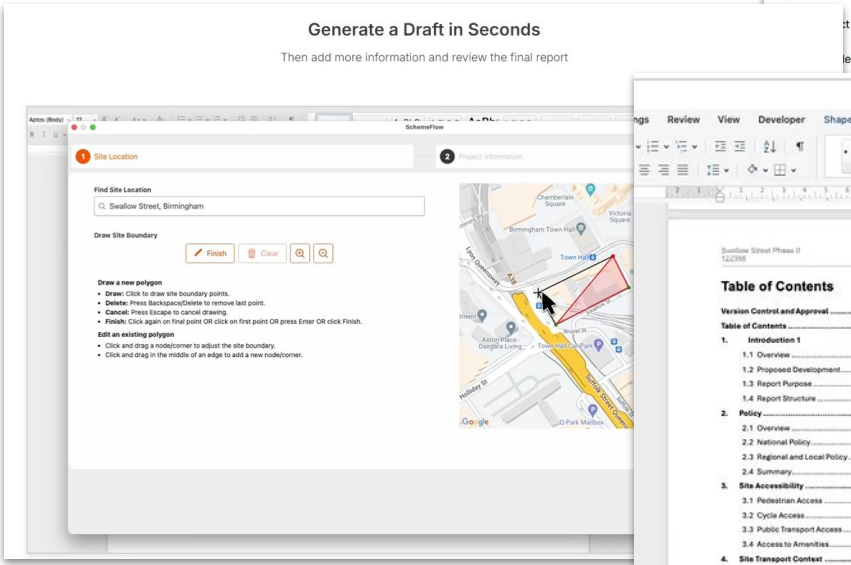
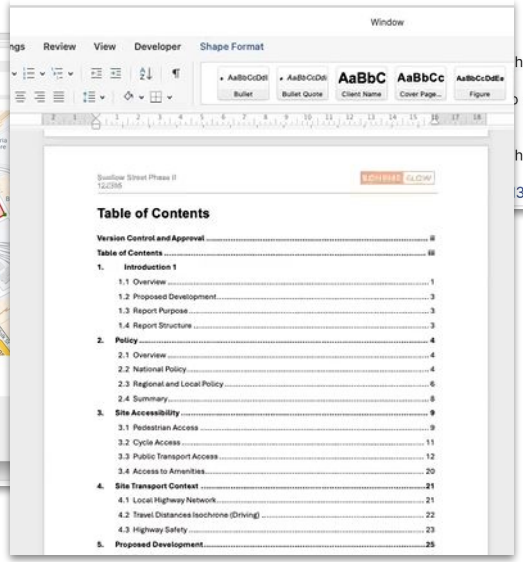
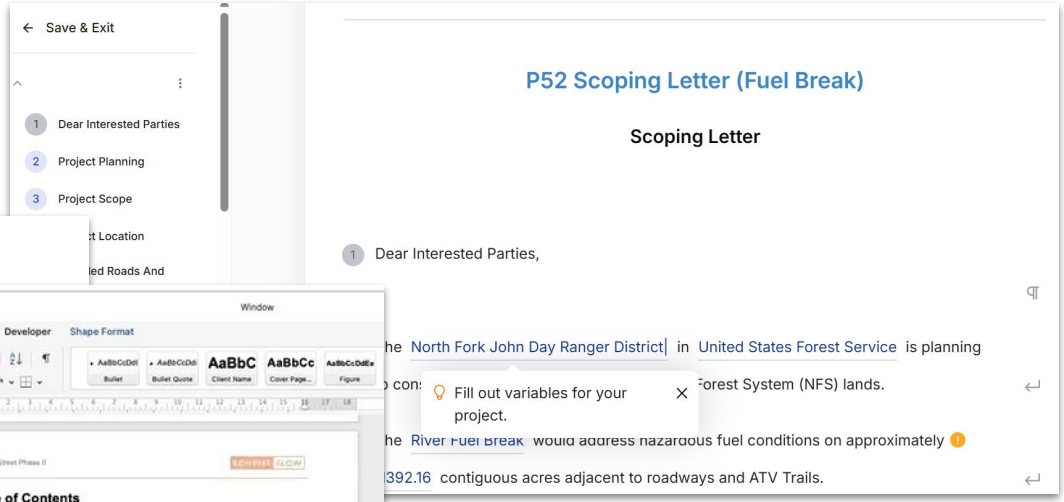
Permitting Tech - Future

- **Helping draft documents**
  - Templates
  - 🤖 AI drafting



Schemeflow

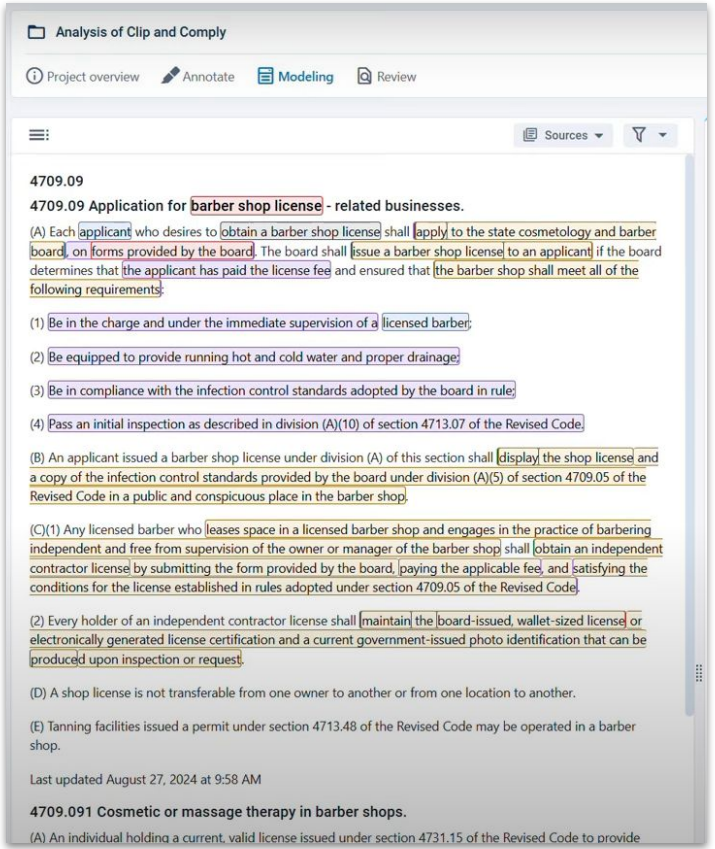




Turboplan

Permitting Tech - Future

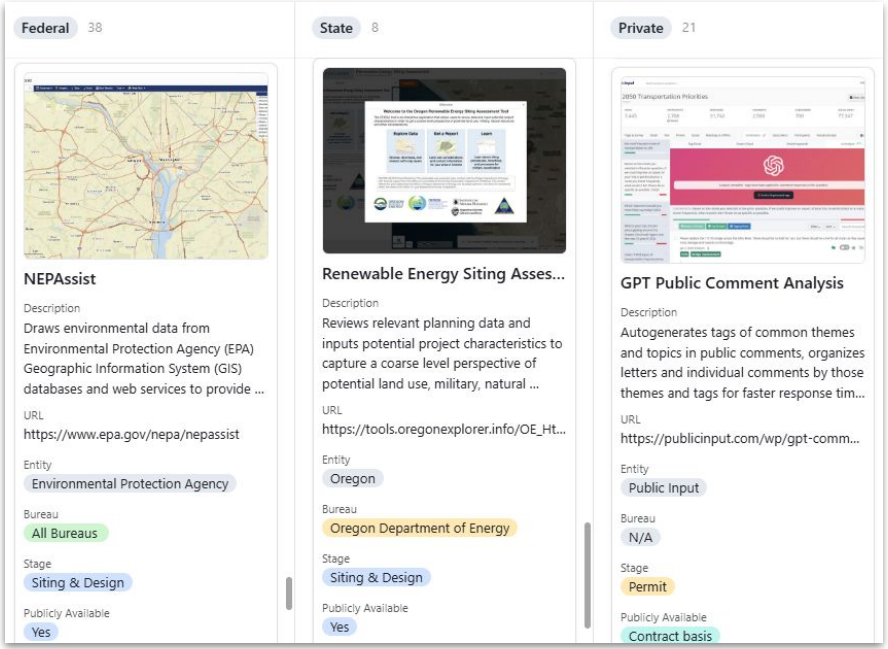
- **Assisting with permit review / management**
  - Internal permit management
  - 🤖 “Norm engineering” / “computational law”
  - 🤖 Automated checks of completeness / eligibility
  - 🤖 Automated permit approval / assisted application review
  - Permit timelines



BeInformed

EPIC Permitting Tech Work

- Permitting tech inventory
- VA PEEP case study
- Wetland Impact Tracker tool
- Analysis of Trump's Permit Tech Memo (4/15)
- Many more resources on
  - Permitting tech and
  - Smart permitting in general



Reduced requirements for voluntary projects

Proposed revision to NWP 27 (2025)

"**Reporting**. The permittee must submit a report containing information on the proposed aquatic ecosystem restoration, enhancement, and establishment activity to the district engineer at least 30 days prior to commencing activities in waters of the United States authorized by this NWP. The report must include the following information: …
(3) Information on baseline ecological conditions at the project site, including a general description and map of aquatic and terrestrial habitat types on that site. The map of existing aquatic and terrestrial habitat types and their approximate boundaries on the project site should be based on recent aerial imagery or similar information, and verified with photo points or other field- based data points for each mapped habitat type;
(4) A sketch of the proposed project elements of the NWP 27 activity drawn over a copy of the map of existing aquatic and terrestrial habitat types on the project site;
…"