

Idaho Freedom of Information Act Processing Checklist

Commonly Used Terms:

State FOIA Coordinator (SFC)

Field FOIA Coordinator (FFC)

Subject Matter Expert (SME)

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Worksheet Form ID-1278-2 (ID-1278-2) {Form used for both search estimates and actual search}

FOIA No Records Certification Form ID-1278-3 (ID-1278-3)

FOIA Attorney – Field Solicitors Office (SOL)

STEP 1: Receiving a FOIA Request

- A. FFC: Date stamp request letter on day received and within 1 business day submit via scanned email to the SFC at blm_id_foia@blm.gov (or fax (208) 373-3915)

STEP 2: Notification of Request

- A. SFC staff: Date stamp request letter on day received at the Idaho State Office (ISO).
- B. SFC staff: Enter FOIA request into the Department of the Interior (DOI) Electronic FOIA Tracking System (EFTS) and assign a local Idaho FOIA number.
- C. SFC staff: Set up FOIA case file, prepare an acknowledgement letter to the requester on the day received or next business day (discuss with SFC if the request is unclear).
- D. SFC staff: Scan the request (with EFTS and Idaho FOIA number) and e-mail (same day received or next business day) to affected FFCs and/or State Office SMEs (when applicable), and the SOL.
- E. FFC: Open field FOIA file and notify District or Field Manager if mandated by local requirements.

STEP 3: Scoping the Request

- A. FFC: Provide SME(s) with a copy of the FOIA request upon receipt.
- B. SME: Determine if the request needs clarification in any of the following areas:
 1. Description of desired records;
 2. Scope of request (date range, overly board, other quantifying factors).
- C. FFC: Notify SFC, or their acting, same day (or next business day) when SME requires additional clarification.
 1. The SFC (or acting), FFC, and SME(s) will collaborate (via conference call, as needed) to develop a clarified letter (or e-mail) asking for specific questions to, or clarification from the requester when request is not clear. If a conference call is necessary, the SFC will coordinate one. A copy of the clarification letter or email will be placed in the FOIA file.
 2. SFC staff: Update EFTS same day or next business day with the date the letter was sent to the requester.
 3. SME and FFC: Do not provide ID-1278-2, search for, or copy any records if there are clarification issues. Wait until issues are resolved.
 4. The SFC (or staff): Provide the FFC (and SME) with a copy of the requester's response to the clarification request and notify them to continue searching.
- D. SFC (or acting): As appropriate, review justification for "Expedited Processing" and/or "Fee Waiver," if received as part of the request. If expedited processing is approved, notify FFC, SME(s) and SOL immediately (same day) and the requester within 10

calendar days that the request will have priority over other requests within its track. If expedited processing is denied, ensure Solicitor review and concurrence. Notify requester by letter within 10 calendar days. If fee waiver is approved (or denied), notify the requester by letter within 20 workdays from the date of receipt at the State Office. Ensure SOL review for fee waiver denials. State Director's signature is required for denials for both expedited processing and fee waiver requests.

STEP 4: Estimating Search Time and Number of Pages

- A. FFC with SME: If no additional clarification is required, and without written direction from SFC staff, prepare an "initial" ID-1278-2. Ensure estimated time reflects only that time expected to locate responsive records and the number of estimated pages. Do not include the time it will take to photocopy or scan responsive documents. Do not inflate the numbers, as this can be a cause for an appeal.
- B. FFC: Ensure ID-1278-2 forms are completed properly and submit to SFC at blm_id_FOIA@blm.gov or Fax (208) 373-3915 within 3 business days from receipt of request (if request is clear) or from day SFC forwards requester's clarification.
- C. FFC: If multiple SMEs the FFC will combine names/pay grades/search hours and the number and size(s) of pages (types of media), etc., onto one ID-1278-2 per office (site). If FFC is unable to complete ID-1278-2 within 3 business days, contact the SFC (or acting) with the date the ID-1278-2 will be submitted.
- D. SFC (or acting): Review ID-1278-2(s) to determine if request can be completed within 20 workdays or if it needs to be placed in another processing track.
- E. SFC (or acting): Work with FFC(s) and SME(s) to determine an installment schedule and a target completion date if the request is placed in the Complex or Exceptional/Voluminous Track.
- F. SFC staff: Notify the requester within 20 workdays if BLM will comply with the FOIA request, what processing track it's placed in and any additional fee, scoping issues.
- G. SFC staff: After all issues resolved (fee, clarification, etc.) formally notify the FFC via e-mail to begin pulling and scanning or copying responsive records. Provide a date to the FFC as to when the documents are due in the State Office.
- H. FFC and SME: Proceed to Step 5 when notified to begin search.

STEP 5: Collecting Responsive Records

- A. FFC: Advise SME(s) to search for responsive records.
- B. FFC: Remind SME(s) and their staff to review "FOIA Adequate Search Tips" and to search all sources within the location/office likely to contain responsive records.
 - a. Determine if responsive records are stored at the Federal Records Center (FRC) and recall any applicable records for scanning/uploading as appropriate.
 - b. Take into consideration people who are detailed or retired.
- C. FFC: Provide all responsive records that pertain to the request, even if they are going to be withheld in full (i.e., attorney-client or proprietary).
- D. SME: If no records are found, complete ID-1278-3 indicating "no records" were found and where the search was conducted (or why we have no records as in *polar bears are not within the scope of Bureau of Land Management Idaho jurisdiction*).
- E. FFC and SME: If responsive records are located, proceed to Step 6.

STEP 6: Preparing Responsive Records

- A. FFC: Scanning is preferred, but not required. When scanning or photocopying, ensure that fronts and backs are scanned or copied, to include, but not limited to photos with writing on the back. Ensure all scanned pages are clean and clear of any post-it notes and no information is cut off the edges of the page(s).
 - a. FFC and/or SME: Make one copy of all responsive records and upload to the Q drive at (pub\admin\FOIA\assigned FOIA number) – or send hard copy records to the ISO FOIA Office.
- B. Prior to uploading to the Q drive, the SME should review the records being provided and notate the file path of any Deliberative, Attorney Client, confidential or sensitive records that would cause foreseeable harm if released. Any records not notated in this manner will be considered available for release in full.
- C. FFC and/or SME: Ensure colored photographs are reproduced in color.
- D. FFC and SME: Ensure all Geographic Information System (GIS) information is viewable by the SFC staff and Field Solicitor’s FOIA Attorney/Advisor, as well as the requester.
- E. Any shapefiles, GIS map metadata or other formats requiring ArcMap or other programs to view, must be converted to Portable Document Format (PDF) and must include a written narrative/description stating what type of information is in the files. (This conversion to PDF is required even if the requester asked for the information in a different format or in any of the above listed formats such as shapefiles.)
- F. All Excel spreadsheets should be converted into PDF. However, there are times when the size of a spreadsheets makes it extremely difficult to convert into a readable PDF document. In those instances an Excel Spreadsheet can be accepted for release. However employees are advised, that if not converted the spreadsheet will be released in it’s Excel format.
- G. SME: Provide all responsive records even if a document will be withheld in its entirety. Final redactions and denials can only be made by the SFC (or FOIA staff) in consultation with the SOL.

STEP 7: Completing the Process

- A. SME and FFC: Complete the “actual” portion of the ID-1278-2 with actual hours for the search (only) and the actual number of pages.
- B. FFC: Review the completed ID-1278-2 to ensure it makes sense and question the SME if the hours for the search or number of pages are out of the ordinary.
- C. FFC: Ensure that the “actual” version of the ID-1278-2 accompanies the responsive documents, CD(s) or DVD(s) when mailed, delivered, or uploaded to the ISO.
- D. FFC: Ensure documents are provided to the SFC on or before the deadline.
- E. FFC: Review the completed ID-1278-3 (No Records Response) to ensure it details the search and is signed.

STEP 8: Final Response

- A. SFC staff: Scan paper copies (or download from Q drive) and prepare for electronic redacting.
- B. SFC staff: Review all responsive documents and apply redactions (if applicable).
- C. SFC staff: Prepare response letter for review by SFC (or acting) prior to review by the SOL.
- D. SFC staff: Provide redacted PDF documents and response letter to SOL for attorney review and surname.

- E. SFC staff: Prepare response letter for surname and issuance include the following individuals in the surnaming process: State Lead FOIA Coordinator, State Management Analyst; Chief External Affairs, State Director Executive Secretary; Associate State Director; and the State Director (signature). Occasionally, additional surnames will be required, depending on the subject matter.
- F. SFC staff: Send signed letter, with responsive documents (redactions applied) contained on a CD or DVD, to the requester via certified mail (or email with return receipt), adding a billing invoice if applicable.
- G. SFC staff: Calculate fees for EFTS purposes, update the State FOIA Log.
- H. SFC staff: Send copy of final response letter and “office copy” CDs or DVDs to applicable FFC(s) for their case file. The FFCs can opt out of receiving copies of CDs or DVDs if they wish by contacting the SFC.
- I. SFC (or acting): Close case in EFTS and in official FOIA file.