



Forest Service National Forest System Briefing Paper

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Topic: NEPA Communities of Practice

Issue: Develop a virtual environment that encourages commitment to consistent communication, information sharing and continuous learning within the NEPA community.

Background: NEPA practitioners have, in several surveys and questionnaires, repeatedly told management about issues that must be addressed if NEPA implementation is to run efficiently and effectively.

Key Points: Problematic perceptions and related challenges include:

- Working on NEPA is not valued, prioritized, or rewarded.
- Inefficiencies in current NEPA processes directly affect morale and stress levels.
- Decentralization and fragmentation of work adversely impact a learning and communicative environment.
- Because of these factors, and the approach we take in implementing NEPA, it is very difficult to professionalize the workforce both from a structural and an attitudinal perspective.

Practitioners and decision makers in the NEPA community need the resources and support to take on these challenges and improve our approach. We need to improve knowledge transfer of NEPA-related research to practitioners and encourage application of that knowledge. We need to formalize the existing NEPA community and encourage practitioners to interact and learn using the best available technologies. For example, to connect the NEPA community, we could deliberately and strategically use social networking tools to encourage practitioners to share resources, learning moments, and reference material. This would also provide practitioners a safe environment for open dialogue.

Recommendations:

- Connect the NEPA community of practitioners to each other and to proven resources by using:
 - Portals
 - Searchable and dynamic databases
 - Expertise locator
- Apply trusted and available technology.
- Establish a guidance group to develop and initiate a structure for NEPA resources.
- Develop a recognition and rewards system that supports successful outcomes and a learning environment.

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