



Standard Data Management (SDM) Project: Fact Sheet

The SDM project is a cross-deputy effort to create guidance to implement policies in FSM 1940 "Inventory, Monitoring, and Assessment Activities" and provide the field with relevant tools.

The Chief Information Officer (CIO) and the Director of Ecosystem Management Coordination (EMC) chartered this project in 2008. The Information Resources Board (IRB) approved the project scope, schedule, and budget. The project manager has convened a small core team and continues to add team members to represent field and program offices across deputy areas and administrative levels.

This project has three focus areas.

The SDM project focuses on the following three policies for Forest Service inventory, monitoring, and assessment activities:

1. Be coordinated through a national integrated program planning process that addresses information needs related to all agency business requirements;
2. Use a standards-based approach and framework for information management and related business operations; and
3. Foster and realize opportunities for collaboration, cooperation, and coordination across Forest Service deputy area programs and with agency partners, including the public; local, state, and other federal agencies; and non-governmental organizations.

The SDM project team will formulate recommendations for guidance and tools to enable the agency to implement these policies based on findings from a series of interviews with representatives across all deputy and administrative areas of the agency.

Because "what ultimately counts is what happens on the ground,"¹ the Forest Service expects national projects to support field operations by leveraging existing resources (e.g. guidance, teams, and systems) while transparently contributing to efficient program management.

¹ 2007, Dale Bosworth, Chief; in USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan FY2003-2008; FS-880



The project demonstrates agency commitment to efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.

A core objective of the project is to put essential resource information in the hands of the user. The project will pursue this objective with the following actions:

1. Develop efficient processes to identify resource information needs, estimate costs, and justify funding requests;
2. Author inventory, monitoring, and assessment directives and guidance that apply to all administrative levels and that have the support of all deputy areas; and
3. Integrate tools for planning, budgeting, data collecting, and reporting.

The project team coordinates work with other Forest Service programs, projects, and initiatives.

The Forest Service is committed to collaborating both internally and with other land management partners to provide highly credible resource information. Furthermore, FSM 1940 establishes the need for an information management framework for all Forest Service IM&A activities, including those under the direct authority and responsibility of each Deputy Chief. Coordination is essential to ensure this framework supports resource information management across deputy areas, resource programs, and budget processes.

The project team will coordinate with other agency programs, projects, and initiatives by inviting people from a variety of activities to participate as team members, getting advice through an advisory group composed of program managers and directors responsible for other projects and initiatives, and engaging people familiar with other activities in dialog about interdependencies and opportunities that should be leveraged throughout the duration of the SDM project.

Through our coordination with other agency projects and staffs, the team expects to develop recommendations for improvements to the following:

1. Performance expectations and output targets;
2. Standard activities identified in the budget process;
3. Processes for identifying business-driven information needs; and
4. Tools to audit the status and quality of data and identify what actions should be taken to reduce duplication, fill gaps, and improve information.



The project will deliver proposed solutions identified through interviews with agency personnel.

In 2008, the Forest Service completed a line of business study examining opportunities to improve inventory, monitoring, and assessment work across the agency. Based on that study, our executive sponsors—EMC Director and CIO—directed the SDM project to work across deputy areas and complete the following types of deliverables:

1. Recommendations for guidance to implement agency resource information policy;
2. Analysis of requirements for tools to improve effectiveness and efficiency of resource information to support the work of the Forest Service;
3. Pilot tests of tools and validation requirements; and
4. Completed guidance and tools with implementation plans as approved by executive sponsors.

The recommendations and requirements will be identified through a cycle of interviews, proposals, and pilot tests. The project will ensure that the agency evaluates the effectiveness and impact of proposed guidance and tools. Each step will be subject to review and approval by executive sponsors. The initial topic areas for interviews are:

1. Inventory, monitoring and assessment cataloging and tracking;
2. Task cost estimation tools;
3. Standard data access/integration methods;
4. Assessment tools to help ensure alignment of “plans” with information and inventory, monitoring, and assessment tasks;
5. National inventory and monitoring guidance;
6. Information quality standards; and
7. Processes that enable creation of inventory, monitoring, and assessment metrics, targets, and appraisals.

For additional information, contact the project manager, Jim Keys,

via phone (202) 205-1580 or e-mail jkeys01@fs.fed.us