



Environmental Analysis and Decision Making Examine and Reform Forest Service Policy—Activity Sheet

The goal of the Environmental Analysis and Decision Making effort is to improve the health, diversity, resilience, and productivity of national forests and grasslands by increasing the efficiency of environmental analysis and decision-making procedures to accomplish more work on the ground. All Forest Service branches—the National Forest System, State and Private Forestry, Research and Development, and Business Operations—are fully engaged and committed to improving processes and policies that guide environmental analysis and decision making as well as working to affect change in the culture that drives it. Reform of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service’s National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) policies and procedures is a key activity within the Environmental Analysis and Decision Making effort.

The Forest Service will improve its NEPA policies and procedures to make them more efficient, while fully honoring its environmental stewardship responsibilities. The reforms will identify ways to improve or eliminate inefficient or redundant processes, while maintaining a commitment to high-quality environmental analysis based on the best available science. Increasing the pace and scale of the work accomplished on the ground, an intended result of improving the agency’s NEPA policies and procedures, will help to ensure the diversity, health, resilience, and productivity of America’s national forests and grasslands.

Some specific goals include:

- Establish new categories of actions, such as vegetation management projects, construction of administrative facilities and infrastructure, road construction, and special use authorizations that may be excluded from analysis in either an environmental impact statement or assessment.
- Expand and enhance coordination of environmental review and authorization of decisions with other Federal agencies as well as State, Tribal, and local entities.
- Develop approaches to landscape-scale analysis and decision making that would help restore National Forest System lands.
- Ensure consistency with terminology in the 2012 Planning Rule, which provides a framework to guide the collaborative and science-based development, amendment, and revision of land management plans.
- The Forest Service has established a group of internal experts from the national, regional, and field offices and external experts from the Counsel on Environmental Quality and USDA Office of General Council to identify opportunities to improve its NEPA policies and procedures. The agency will engage its partners, stakeholders, other agencies, and Tribes throughout the review of all proposed policies and procedures.

The Forest Service published an [Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) in the Federal Register on January 3, 2018, which began a 30-day public comment period. The comment period closed on February 2, 2018. The anticipated publication date for a proposed rule is early summer 2018, which will initiate a 60-day public comment period. The public can [submit comments through the public participation portal](#) at <https://cara.ecosystemmanagement.org/Public/CommentInput?project=ORMS-1797>. A final rule will be developed and published after considering of and addressing public comments on the proposed rule, the results of Tribal consultation, and other input.

