Environmental Analysis and Decision Making
Improve Efficiency Through Technology—Fact 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. To contribute to the goal, the Forest Service will create a new electronic tool or enhance and incorporate additional features into a suite of existing tools[1] that help the agency manage environmental analysis and decision making.

Once development or enhancements are completed, the tool will assist Forest Service employees in determining if a categorical exclusion[2] is appropriate for a proposed action on a forest or grassland and, if so, the level of environmental analysis required. A similar functionality will help employees determine if an environmental assessment[3] or environmental impact statement[4] is appropriate for a proposed action.

Other possible enhancements include milestones for meeting consultation and concurrence requirements; integration with Fish and Wildlife Service Information, Planning, and Conservation system; and incorporation of a standard environmental assessment template. The tool will also have a standard output that can be easily used to meet public disclosure requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

To enhance and incorporate additional features into the suite of tools or develop a new tool in 2018, the Forest Service will:

- Review Forest Service business process requirements, current requests and their possible integration points, and planned updates to the agency's NEPA procedures.

- Evaluate technological tools and systems used by partner agencies and determine possible integration.

- Engage developers to create mock-up applications and conduct testing.

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[1] The suite includes the Planning, Administrative Review, and Litigation System; Comment Analysis and Response application; Project Record Management application; and the Mailing List Management tool.

[2] Used when proposed actions do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment.

[3] Used when proposed actions have the potential to cause significant environmental effects.

[4] Used when proposed actions will significantly affect the quality of the human environment.