Environmental Analysis and Decision Making

Train Our Employees—Fact Sheet

The goal of the Environmental Analysis and Decision Making effort in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service 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 get more work done 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. In the Forest Service, environmental analysis, which is complex and challenging, happens under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The agency is investing in new training courses to increase the capacity of its subject-matter experts as they perform work under NEPA.

The Forest Service is developing four new NEPA training courses:

- Legal Foundation for Efficient Analysis and Decision Making is designed to provide an overview and demonstrate the boundaries of the laws, regulations, and policies related to Forest Service project-level environmental analysis. The online course will be a prerequisite for the other three courses.

- Line Officer NEPA Leadership examines the role that line officers play in effectively and efficiently leading the NEPA process. The course addresses the roles and responsibilities of the responsible official and provides participants with an understanding of how leadership sets the tone, expectations, vision, and motivation for project planning and decision-making processes.

- Advanced Effects Analysis is designed to increase the ability of Forest Service employees to complete rational, methodical, and clear analysis for informed decision making. Participants will learn to consistently and concisely determine and disclose science-based methods and assumptions, measurement indicators of sustainability, and the scale of analysis.

- Core NEPA Concepts is an umbrella course designed to enhance the experienced practitioner's understanding of key concepts to improve agency efficiency in environmental analysis. The course will include several different units on various NEPA topics including project proposal development, issue development and tracking, monitoring, adaptive management, and preparing administrative records.

The courses were tested in late 2017 and early 2018. Rollout is scheduled to begin in spring 2018.