



Making Decisions

Step 7

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What is it?

Making decisions involves the Planning Committee selecting the preferred management alternatives among those identified by technical advisors. The preferred strategies will be documented in the resource plan.

When do we do it?

Decisions about alternatives are made during Step 7 of Phase Two of the Resource Planning Process. Decision-making occurs after each alternative is evaluated for the ecological, economic and social effects and impacts as well as for their acceptability to the community.

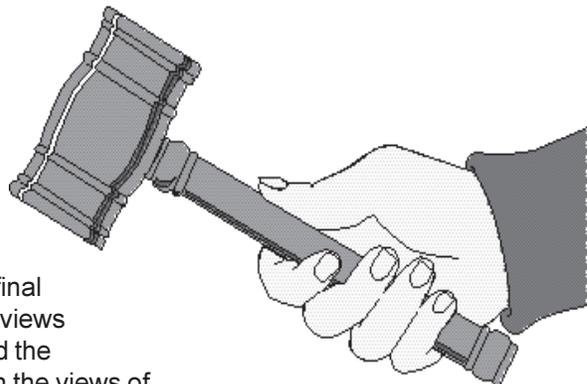
How do we do it?

Making decisions involves using information generated during the “evaluation step” about the economic viability, social and political acceptability, and environmental integrity of each alternative.

The Planning Committee— assisted by a facilitator— reviews the evaluation information for each alternative. During this review, there should be a lot of discussion among Planning Committee members about the pros and cons of the strategies, how each member views the alternatives, how achievable the alternatives may be, and whether the alternatives can be supported by the community. This discussion is the primary opportunity for the Planning Committee to assess the acceptability and feasibility of the various management strategies.

During the decision-making discussion, the various differences among committee members in values, objectives or concerns may come to a head. Conversations may become heated as members take a stand for or against a strategy. Effective ground rules for discussions and a skilled facilitator is therefore crucial at this step. Technical advisors should be present to answer questions, clarify information, and provide feedback.

Occasionally the Planning Committee contracts with a technical writer to draft the resource plan. At a minimum, the technical writer will want to be present during discussions about alternatives.



It is important to note that the final resource plan must reflect the views of the Planning Committee (and the community at large) rather than the views of the technical writer.

It is often useful to make decisions about the whole range of alternatives in a single meeting. This may entail an entire day devoted to this task, because oftentimes the Technical Advisory Committee recommends many management strategies. Stopping discussions and starting again a week or two later may inhibit the decision-making process. It is harder for people to remember all the strategies, keep in mind their various interrelationships, and account for concerns and comments during the discussions.

Remember Public Input!

Public input is critical during both evaluation of alternatives (Step 6) and during decision-making (Step 7). Public participation reveals information about socio-economic impacts, effects and acceptability which is critical for the Planning Committee to make sound decisions. Public input can be obtained in a variety of ways. Another fact sheet in the Resource Planning Guidebook gives suggestions about how to conduct public input during the planning process. If the Planning Committee makes decisions in isolation from the community, it risks the plan being rejected or never implemented. Therefore, no matter how it's done, public input is most useful during the evaluation and decision-making steps rather than only after the plan is drafted. One outcome of this public review process may be a need to modify concerns, revise objectives, or restate effects. Giving adequate time and attention to this stakeholder review process will pay off in a better resource plan that is more likely to stand the test of time.

Tips for Decision-Making

- Making good decisions requires understanding the economic, social and environmental advantages and disadvantages of each alternative.
- Stakeholders, through a facilitated process, should be given the opportunity to review the proposed alternatives. Technical advisors should be available during discussions.
- The results of public input and review should be documented in the resource management plan.

The Next Step

Decisions will be documented in a “draft” resource plan, along with a description of the planning process, inventory data, implementation strategies and other information deemed important by the Planning Committee. This draft resource plan will be reviewed by the local agencies and interest groups, and their comments incorporated into the final plan. Refer to “Resource Plan Format and Content.”

Once decisions are reached, implementation strategies for achieving the alternatives are devised. This means that the resource plan will include implementation information indicating who, what, when, and how the actions will be applied to the planning area. See factsheet “Implementing the Resource Plan” for advice on how to implement the resource plan.