



Resource Planning As a Learning Experience

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What is it?

Resource planning helps stakeholders become more knowledgeable about the natural resources in their communities. Stakeholder involvement in the resource planning process builds awareness of local issues, their management alternatives, and of the interrelationships between people and the natural world. This learning process is essential for the development of an effective management plan supported by the community.

When do we do it?

Education is a consequence of the entire resource planning process. Learning opportunities are especially prevalent, however, during Phase One.

How do we do it?

During the planning process, the Planning Committee will learn about:

1. The resource planning process.
2. General background information relevant to their concerns and objectives.
3. Specific conditions in the planning area, including the status of natural resources, management alternatives, and the acceptability of alternatives.

Here are some details on each of these topics:

1. The Resource Planning Process

Explaining the Nine Step, Three Phase Planning Process and introducing NRCS or other personnel who will be facilitating the project is the primary agenda item of initial Planning Committee meetings. Typically an NRCS Resource Planning Specialist or other specialist gives a formal presentation about the planning process, and answers questions. The Planning Committee may ask how much the planning effort will cost, how long the process will take, how the plan will be implemented, the extent of the committee's influence, and much more. Information about the planning process is continually reinforced throughout the project.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will also need assistance understanding the resource planning process. Technical advisors will need to understand the objective of the process, their role in conducting inventories and recommending strategies, how their findings should be conveyed to the Planning Committee, how the TAC can communicate and coordinate with the Planning Committee, and more.

2. General Background Information

Technical experts can provide information about soil, water, air, plants, animals, and human considerations to enhance the knowledge of the Planning Committee. They can do this during educational presentations, site visits, tours, or distribution of print information. This information is usually general in nature--without details

about natural resource conditions in the specific planning area. Sharing such general information helps raise awareness of natural systems, and enhances understanding of resource inventories and management alternatives when they are completed.

Consider including educational presentations as agenda items during regularly scheduled Planning Committee meetings. Guest speakers from conservation organizations, research groups, or universities can be invited to meetings to give presentations relating to resource concerns. Popular topics include:

TOPIC	POTENTIAL SPEAKER
Establishing Watershed Planning Committees	Chairs of other locally-led Planning Committees
Best Management Practices	NRCS/SWCD field staff
Stream Stabilization Techniques	NRCS Agricultural Engineers or Streambank Stabilization Specialist
Farmland Preservation	IL Dept. of Agriculture, American Farmland Trust, local land trusts
Growth Management	Regional, County, or municipal community planners
Economic Development	Community planners and other municipal officials
Regional Population Trends	Community planners and other municipal officials
Funding Opportunities	NRCS field staff, IL Dept. of Agriculture, IL Environmental Protection Agency, non-profit organizations
Effects of Urbanization on Stream Quality	IL Dept. of Natural Resources, community planners

“Rapid Resource Appraisals” (see factsheet on the same topic in the Resource Planning Guidebook) or other tours also provide an opportunity to bring in specialists to discuss topics of interest to the Planning Committee.

3. About the Planning Area

With the assistance of technical advisors, by the end of the planning project the Planning Committee will be able to answer four key questions about the planning area:

- 1) “What are current conditions?”**
- 2) “What factors have created current conditions?”**
- 3) “What are the desired future conditions (objectives)?”**
- 4) “What are optimal alternatives for achieving the desired future conditions?”**

Answering these questions may sound overwhelming at first, but Planning Committees will have help from many Partners including natural resource experts, discussion facilitators, resource planning specialists, project coordinators, and local leaders. Plus, planning specialists help the Planning Committee focus their information needs on their key concerns. Work is therefore targeted to the areas most important to stakeholders.

The Next Step

The Planning Committee often wants to share their growing knowledge of the planning area with the entire community of people who live, work and recreate there. To do this, they often include public information and education campaigns among the action items in the resource plan. They may also undertake some educational activities long before the resource plan is finalized, such as distributing a brochure or posters about the planning area. **2**