NRCS ILLINOIS

Resource
Planning
Guidebook

Factsheets

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Natural Resources Conservation Service

# Analyzing Resource Data

Step 4

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## What is it?

Analysis of resource data involves the review and interpretation of the resource inventories.

## Why is it important?

Resource data analysis helps technical advisors and the Planning Committee use the information to full advantage. Studying the resource data reveals how individual resources relate to each other, and identifies causes and effects. Analysis also helps technical advisors present the information in a meaningful way to the Planning Committee.

## When do we do it?

Although "conducting resource inventories" is Step 3 of the planning process, and "analyzing resource data" is Step 4, in reality these two activities usually occur at the same time. As resource data is accumulated, technical advisors are continually evaluating the results to determine if more investigation is needed for that particular resource, or if techniques for other resources need to be changed in light of the findings.

## How do we do it?

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is primarily responsible for analyzing the resource inventory data, but they seek input from the Planning Committee and if necessary, use the expertise of additional agencies and groups. Manual and automated data analysis tools are used during this step. These include but are not limited to the models, GIS analysis, and Site Specific Physical Effects Worksheet in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide, Section V. Although they are not detailed in this fact sheet, the TAC is encouraged to use such models during data analysis.

The TAC determines the type of analysis needed based on the resource concerns, opportunities and objectives of stakeholders. They also consider the planning scope, potential for adverse impacts, and the ecological and human setting of the planning area. Data analysis is comprehensive. It addresses all ecological, economic, and social factors.

The TAC uses data analysis to determine present conditions in the planning area. Working with the Planning Committee, the TAC also evaluates whether present conditions meet their objectives.

Data analysis is used to identify present and future resource trends and for ways to moderate those trends. The TAC identifies causes and effects— asking, "why is this occurring?" to identify causes and "what is occurring?" to identify effects.

The results of the analysis is communicated in a format easily understood by the Planning Committee, other local groups, and the general public.

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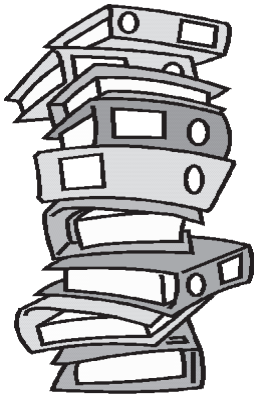

**KEY POINTS**

- **Involve the Planning Committee, other agencies and local groups in data analysis.**
- **Establish a schedule for completing resource inventories and data analysis.**
- **Consider public opinion and communicate frequently with the Planning Committee.**
- **Review existing reports and studies for relevant data and data analysis. How do the findings compare?**

## For more information

The NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) provides a list of resource analysis methods for most resources. Also contact NRCS resource specialists for assistance.

## The Next Step

After resource inventory data is collected and analyzed, the Planning Committee reviews the results of Steps 1, 2, 3 and 4 in their entirety. Review the resource concerns, opportunities, and objectives which were initially identified to see if revisions should be made given the inventory findings of the Technical Advisory Committee. New concerns may have been identified, objectives may need to be changed, or new opportunities may have been revealed.

Once the problems, opportunities and objectives are finalized, the plan moves into Phase Two. Technical advisors will formulate management alternatives that can meet the Planning Committee's objectives. Refer to "Developing Alternatives" for more information about Step 5 in Phase Two.