

# Scoping the Planning Process

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## What is it?

Scoping is used to determine what is important to investigate during the planning process. It involves identifying which concerns, actions, and impacts will be addressed in the Resource Plan.

## Why is it important?

Scoping allows stakeholders and technical experts to put their limited financial and technical resources towards investigating the most critical issues in the planning area.

## When do we do it?

Scoping occurs throughout Phase One and Phase Two.

## How do we do it?

Scoping comes into play during

1. identification of resource concerns, and
2. evaluation of impacts and effects of alternatives.

### Identifying Resource Concerns

The number of concerns in a planning area is potentially unlimited. During the brainstorming sessions, the Planning Committee identifies all their concerns. (See fact sheet, "Identifying Resource Concerns"). They group the concerns in a way that provides a logical framework for problem definition, and for the analysis and comparison of alternatives later on. For example, similar concerns may be combined as "Water Quality", "Residential Development", "Forest Management", and "Farmland Preservation".

Each concern is rated for its importance to the local people. The Planning Committee might use the Nominal Group Process to rank their concerns in order of priority, or they can rate the significance of each concern as high, moderate, low or none.

Regardless of how they do it, the scoping process means technical advisors base their inventory and evaluation work on the concerns that are most significant to stakeholders. The final resource plan explains why certain resource issues are most significant to stakeholders.

### Evaluating Alternatives

Scoping is the process that is used to identify all the resource issues that need to be investigated in order to assess the effects/impacts of alternative solutions. Each management alternative will have effects and impacts on the resources in the planning area. In addition to affecting the targeted resource problem, a management alternative may affect related resources. For example, installing a flood-control dam on a river can reduce the targeted flooding problem. In addition,

this alternative will affect water quality, threatened and endangered species, and adjacent land use. At a minimum, inventory information will be needed for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (see factsheet on this same topic), other environmental laws, and state or federal program requirements. Agencies which provide financial support to the Planning Committee may also require information. For most management alternatives, the following issues are usually critical:

- Cultural resources
- Threatened and endangered species
- Water quality
- Erosion
- Wetlands
- Human health and safety
- Environmental justice or equity

Those concerns that were considered, but found to not require detailed discussion in the plan are also identified. The relative insignificance of these issues should be agreed upon by all parties involved in the planning.

Here's an example outcome of the scoping process:

Resource Concerns	Significance to Stakeholders	Significance to Decision-Making	Remarks
<b>Soil</b> Sedimentation	High	High	Filling in lake
<b>Water</b> Water quality	Moderate	Moderate	
<b>Air</b> No identified concerns			
<b>Plant</b> State-designated Natural Areas	High	Moderate	Posen Woods
<b>Animal</b> Threatened and Endangered species	Moderate	High	Indiana Bat habitat <sup>1</sup>
<b>Human</b> Cultural resources	Moderate	Moderate	

<sup>1</sup> Early in the planning, stakeholders ranked the importance of threatened and endangered species as a "moderate" concern. However, during inventorying technical advisors discovered that the project area included habitat for the endangered Indiana Bat. National and state requirements therefore dictated a full accounting of this resource issue.