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## Frequently Asked Questions About EADM

### The Why, What and How of the Regional Partner Roundtables

*As of February 15, 2018\**

#### What is EADM?

The Forest Service is launching an Agency-wide effort to improve processes related to Environmental Analysis and Decision Making (EADM). The goal of the EADM change effort is to increase the health, diversity, resilience, and productivity of our national forests and grasslands by getting more work done on-the-ground by increasing our efficiency and reducing the cost of environmental analysis and decision making processes. We are working at all levels of the Agency and with our partners to thoroughly identify and consider areas of opportunity.

EADM is expansive in scope, and includes:

- **Agency Policies** - Examine all policies and procedures that support Forest Service work. Reform the agency's implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) through expanding the use of categorical exclusions, improving efficiency in moving through the NEPA process, and improving coordination with other agencies on multi-agency projects.
- **Agency-wide Training** - Enhance training efforts to increase the capacity of Forest Service subject matter experts as they perform work with NEPA.
- **Using Technological Tools to Improve Efficiency** - Reform, streamline, and develop standard approaches and electronic templates for categorical exclusions, environmental assessments, and administrative records.
- **Performance Measures** - Develop measures that reflect the Forest Service's commitment to change by strengthening accountability and ensuring a focus on change implementation.
- **Identify Challenges and Make Recommendations about Consultation** - Form National Task Forces to review and make recommendations on processes associated with consultation requirements under the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.
- **Cultural Change** - Improve efficiency by strengthening project design and implementation, focusing environmental analysis, more effectively integrating public engagement, incorporating innovation, and working closely with our partners and agency staff to identify new ways to accomplish our mission.

#### Why is the EADM change effort important?

Currently, the Forest Service is spending more than \$1 million every day on environmental analysis, yet eighty million acres of National Forest System lands are still at severe risk from insect, disease, and wildfire. The agency has examined and learned from the past, and is now at a place where changes to improve environmental analysis and decision making processes and procedures are critical to the mission of sustaining the health and diversity of the forests and grasslands we steward and the viability of communities we serve.

*\*This document will be updated as more information becomes available.*

## **Why is the Forest Service hosting Regional Partner Roundtables?**

The Forest Service's partners have creative ideas, and have a different vantage point to the issues surrounding EADM. In order to effectively define our challenges and begin to develop creative solutions to the culture, process and practice of EADM, the Agency needs to transparently share and learn with the public and ask them for their ideas and their help.

The objective of the Regional Partner Roundtables is to collect diverse partner feedback to inform EADM processes on local, regional and national scales.

The purposes of the Roundtables are to:

- Share why changes are important for achieving the USDA Forest Service mission
- Identify, discuss, and capture partner perceptions on barriers and solutions
- Explore what roles partners can play moving forward
- Support dialogue to strengthen relationships between partners and the USDA Forest Service
- Explain how partner inputs will be incorporated from the Roundtable and from participation in the formal rulemaking process

## **How do the Regional Partner Roundtables connect to the regulatory reform efforts for the National Environmental Policy?**

The substance of the Regional Partner Roundtables is broader than the current rulemaking process (NEPA regulations and policy), but not mutually exclusive. *The Forest Service will follow applicable public engagement requirements in the rulemaking process. The Roundtables are information sharing opportunities and NOT intended to supplant formal Tribal Consultation with Tribal Governments. Nor are these Roundtables being designed to replace formal public comment as part of rulemaking. The Regional Partner Roundtables are broader and designed to create space for all sorts of ideas to be shared and discussed as the Forest Service explores ways in which to improve its business, behavior and communication tactics.*

The National Forest Foundation is assisting the Forest Service in collecting input, ideas and suggestions shared at each Regional Partner Roundtable and will document themes in individual regional reports. The regional reports will be further synthesized into a National Roundtable Report. Information in the reports will be used by Forest Service leadership to refine business practices, information sharing, policy and direction towards improved efficiencies.

The Regional and National Reports will be made available to the Forest Service teams working on the different elements of the EADM change effort. The Forest Service published an "[Advance Notice of Public Rulemaking](#)" on January 3, 2018 (FS-2018-0004) seeking comments from the public on ways it can achieve the goals of increased efficiency of environmental analysis by February 2, 2018. While the Regional and National EADM Roundtable reports will be shared with the staff working on rulemaking, the reports do NOT constitute an official comment for the record. Members of the public wishing to make a comment for the record must submit them when comment periods are open through [the public participation portal](#) or in writing via NEPA Services Group, c/o Amy Barker; USDA Forest Service, Geospatial Technology and Applications Center, 2222 West 2300 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84119 by the deadline.

### **What is the general format of the Regional Partner Roundtables?**

The Regional Partner Roundtables will be one to one and a half days in length and will have presentations, panels, and breakout sessions to encourage a variety of ways to engage over the course of the meeting. Because the Roundtables are part of a national effort, template agendas are being prepared to ensure some level of consistency between regions. However, it is anticipated that each Regional Partner Roundtable will tailor final format to reflect stakeholder perspectives and needs within that region.

### **Where are the Regional Partner Roundtables being held?**

Regional Partner Roundtables are being scheduled in the following locations:

- Region 1 (Northern): Missoula, MT
- Region 2 (Rocky Mountain): TBD
- Region 3 (Southwestern): Albuquerque, NM
- Region 4 (Intermountain): Salt Lake City, UT
- Region 5 (Pacific Southwest): Sacramento, CA
- Region 6 (Pacific Northwest): Portland, OR
- Region 8 (Southern): TBD
- Region 9 (Eastern): Milwaukee, WI and web
- Region 10 (Alaska): Juneau, AK
- Washington, D.C.

### **Who should attend the Regional Partner Roundtable?**

The intent of the Roundtables is to support learning and dialogue with Forest Service partners representing a cross section of interests. Participants in the Roundtables may include: individuals currently engaged in project design; individuals who comment formally and informally on policy, process and projects; individuals who have an understanding of and interest in the laws, rules, and regulations under which the Forest Service operates; and individuals who have recommendations about how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Forest Service processes in order to get more work done on the ground. Each Regional Office will develop an initial invitation list but recognize that others they don't know of may be interested in participating.

### **What is the Forest Service doing internally with regard to the EADM change effort?**

Employees were recruited from all levels of the agency in August 2017 to investigate challenges and identify solutions around EADM. Subsequently formed employee groups, referred to as cadres, are advising, informing, and engaging at the unit-, regional- and staff-levels. Cadres are also networking with each other to help identify successful ideas, innovations, and opportunities that could be adopted nationally. It is anticipated that cadre members will participate in these Roundtables, as necessary.