



Improving Environmental Analysis and Decision Making Processes SUMMARY REPORT

Southern Regional EADM Partner Roundtable

March 20, 2018

Chattanooga, Tennessee

OVERVIEW

WHAT IS THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND DECISION MAKING CHANGE EFFORT?

The USDA Forest Service (USFS) has launched 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 National Forests and Grasslands by getting more work done on-the-ground through increases in efficiency and reductions in the cost of EADM processes. The USFS is working internally at all levels of the Agency and with its partners to thoroughly identify and consider areas of opportunity.

Internally, the Agency has identified a number of impediments to efficient and effective implementation of work on the ground, including lengthy environmental analysis processes, staff training and skill gaps, and workforce issues related to budget constraints and the increasing costs of fire response. As the USFS works to improve EADM, it will continue to follow laws, regulations, and policies and deliver high quality, science-based environmental analysis.

USFS has explored opportunities to improve EADM for over thirty years, and there are compelling reasons to act now:

- An estimated 6,000-plus special use permits await completion nation-wide, a backlog that impacts more than 7,000 businesses and 120,000 jobs.
- Over 80 million acres of National Forest System lands need cost-effective fire and disease risk mitigation.
- The non-fire workforce is at its lowest capacity in years.
- A steady increase in timelines for conducting environmental analysis, with an average of two years for an environmental assessment (EA) and four years for an environmental impact statement (EIS).



The USFS aims to decrease cost and increase the efficiency of EADM processes by 20% by 2019. In working toward this goal, actions may include:

- Training Agency subject-matter experts on contemporary approaches to implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws.
- Reforming compliance policies under NEPA and other laws by expanding use of categorical exclusions (CEs), capitalizing on process efficiencies, and enhancing coordination with other agencies.
- Standardizing approaches and electronic templates for CEs, EAs, and administrative records.

Leaders at all levels of the USFS are fully engaged in this effort and challenging USFS employees to be creative, design new ways to advance the USFS mission and embrace change while maintaining science-based, high-quality analysis that reflects USFS land management responsibilities. To this end, employees were recruited from all USFS levels to form EADM Cadres that are tasked with developing and implementing change efforts in each local USFS unit; within USFS regions, stations, and areas; and at USFS headquarters. The USFS is creating multiple collective learning opportunities to tap into the Cadres' knowledge, expertise, innovative ideas, and networks in support of these changes.

REGIONAL PARTNER ROUNDTABLES

Within the EADM change effort, USFS leadership recognized that partners and the public can offer perspectives and lessons that complement the Agency's internal experiences—leading to greater creativity, cost-savings and capture of talent/capacity. To support this recognition, the USFS asked the National Forest Foundation (NFF) to assist in hosting ten EADM Regional Partner Roundtables across the country in February and March 2018 (see Appendix A for the schedule) with the objective of collecting diverse partner feedback to inform EADM processes on local, regional and national scales.¹ The NFF and USFS worked closely together to plan, coordinate, and facilitate the Roundtables. The NFF was charged with preparing a summary report for each Roundtable as well as one national report that synthesizes themes emerging from partner input at all of the Roundtables. These reports summarize partner-identified challenges and barriers, desired outcomes, and strategies and solutions for effective and efficient EADM processes.



¹ The National Forest Foundation (NFF) is a Congressionally chartered nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving and restoring National Forests & Grasslands, and supporting Americans in their enjoyment and stewardship of those lands. NFF is non-advocacy and non-partisan, and serves as a neutral convener and facilitator of collaborative groups engaging with Forest Service and also works with local nonprofits and contractors to implement conservation and restoration projects. To learn more, go to www.nationalforests.org.

The specific purposes of the Regional Partner Roundtables were to:

- Share why changes are important for achieving the USDA Forest Service’s 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 Roundtables and from participation in the formal rulemaking process.

The Roundtables are a major piece of USFS strategy to integrate the public and partners into its EADM effort. The Agency invited representatives of highly-engaged partner organizations, Tribes, governmental entities and the business community to participate in the Roundtables. USFS also requested formal comments from all members of the public in response to an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) in January 2018 regarding the National Environmental Policy Act, and is working toward issuing a proposed rule in summer of 2018 for additional comment. The USFS may choose to issue additional ANPRs or draft rules on other aspects of EADM as a result of the EADM change effort.

This report is a summary of activities and themes emerging from the **Southern EADM Regional Partner Roundtable**, held on Tuesday, March 20, 2018.

ROUNDTABLE MEETING DESIGN

The USFS and the NFF hosted the Southern Regional EADM Partner Roundtable at the Embassy Suites by Hilton in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Southern Region developed an invitation list of partners that regularly engage with the USFS in project design; comment formally and informally on policy, process, and projects; and/or bring a depth of understanding about the laws, rules, and regulations under which the USFS operates. The Southern Region sent out 444 invitations, and 40 Partners participated. Please refer to Appendix B for a full list of participants.

Roundtable design included context-setting presentations ([click here for presentation](#)), question and answer sessions, and multiple small group discussion opportunities. Presentations were delivered by: Frank Beum, Deputy Regional Forester; Chris French, Associate Deputy Chief; Peter Gaulke, Regional Planning Director; and subject matter experts from the region’s EADM Cadre. The presentations provided participants with context to support small group discussions centered on EADM challenges and strategies for tackling them. The NFF provided neutral facilitation. Note-takers recorded examples of ineffective or inefficient EADM shared by partners and the solutions offered during these discussions, which provided the basis for the EADM Thematic Tables in this report.



The first facilitated small-group discussion focused on identifying challenges that partners face in EADM and provided participants with an opportunity to share their perceptions of the EADM reform effort.

Participants discussed and answered the following questions with others at their table:

- *What gets in way of EADM being more effective and efficient?*
- *What examples can you share about this challenge/barrier?*
- *Why does this challenge/barrier matter – what are the impacts, who and what does it effect?*
- *What obstacles prevent this challenge/barrier from being addressed?*

Participants were then asked to more deeply discuss challenges identified in the earlier small-group discussions, and responded to these prompts:

- *Do you have ideas or examples of successful strategies that respond to this challenge/barrier?*
- *What would a successful solution look like?*
- *What are some tools we could use to implement the solution?*
- *What resources are needed?*
- *What role could partners play?*

Break-out group facilitators asked participants to consider challenges, as well as the strategies, tools, and resources needed to make the change needed in EADM processes. Over the course of discussion, employee turnover and trust, inconsistency across units, accountability, collaboration, and communication arose as themes in the barriers identified by partners.



WHAT PARTNERS SHARED: THEMATIC TABLES OF EADM CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Ideas captured in main-session and small-group discussions during the Southern Regional EADM Partner Roundtable are organized below by top themes.² These are presented in the tables below: (1) USFS Culture; (2) USFS Personnel Policies and Staffing Decisions; (3) USFS Capacity and Resources; (4) Forest and Community Collaboration and Partnerships; (5) Analysis Documents and Specialist Reports; (6) Scaling Environmental Assessment and Decision Making; and (7) Science and Research.³



² The NFF organized information that emerged from all ten of the regional roundtables into major themes and the reports use a similar structure for easy comparison. The themes included in each report respond to the partner discussion at that particular roundtable.

³ Please note that blanks or incomplete information in the table mean that no ideas were mentioned for that heading during the Roundtable.

A. USFS CULTURE

The USFS was established in 1905 and since that time has developed cultural norms that guide how the Agency operates and how it relates with its public. The history of remote District Ranger outposts has led to persistent autonomy at the district and forest levels despite changes in technology and current national directives. Both USFS leadership and partners spoke to an inconsistency in practice across the country. Partners described frustration with a lack of communication from the Agency regarding decisions, and a desire to see innovation, risk-taking and effective risk management rewarded and encouraged.

USFS CULTURE CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	USFS CULTURE SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
Risk averse. Fear of litigation and defensive NEPA stance.	Length of time to complete documents. Not taking on large projects for fear of objection to one small part.	CEQ regulations are followed to shorten documents. Public comments and areas of high priority to the public are addressed.	Release project concept before scoping period. Leverage collaboratives to determine the common ground early in EADM processes.	<u>Tool:</u> CEQ recommendations.
Decentralized organizational structure and culture.	New LOs are not expected to move forward with same work as the previous LO.	USFS is accountable for delays and lack of follow through on decisions made.	Clearly communicate with partners about delays and changes in USFS DM process.	<u>Tools:</u> Communications with partners. Clear system for project prioritization and management.
Complexity of USFS mission conflicts with aspects of NEPA's core purpose.	NEPA can block efficient USFS practices. Data often missing. USFS appears to circumvent NEPA when using programmatic analyses to justify stand-level decisions.	USFS clearly communicates EADM methodologies and science used.	Rely on insights gained as the result of past decisions. Use facilitation to foster productive dialogue with state agencies and other partners.	<u>Tools:</u> State Wildlife Action Plans. State Forest Action Plans. GNA. Stewardship Agreements.



CONTINUED USFS CULTURE				
CAPACITY AND RESOURCES CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	CAPACITY AND RESOURCES SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
EADM is practiced inconsistently across ranger districts, forests, and regions.	Decentralized nature of USFS means EADM approaches and documents differ across USFS.	USFS defines content of a CE, EA, and EIS so that documents are produced consistently and with an overarching Agency identity.	Standardize how and when CEs, EAs, and EISs are used in EADM. Consider CEs for project work that is predictable and has strong public support.	<u>Tools</u> : Templates. Standardized use guidelines for CEs, EAs, and EISs.



B. USFS PERSONNEL POLICIES AND STAFFING DECISIONS

The USFS has a long history of encouraging employees to change positions and move frequently to gain breadth and depth of experience, and to move up in responsibility. Aims of this policy include adequately preparing USFS employees to advance professionally; ensuring employees are able to make unbiased and professional decisions in managing public lands; and enhanced consistency and shared culture across the agency. While moving employees to different units can support a transfer of good practices and new ideas, it also means that employees are in a frequent learning curve to understand the relevant forest conditions, ecological systems, and community interests and dynamics. Local relationships can become fractured and have to be rebuilt, taking time and efficiency from EADM processes and frustrating local partners. Another important theme emerging from discussion in this region is accountability of staff to completing project planning and implementation.

PERSONNEL POLICIES & STAFFING CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	PERSONNEL POLICIES & STAFFING SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
Staff turnover is the norm for the USFS. Staff must be move to be promoted.	Staff moves frequent, with employees “acting” in vacant positions until filled (especially LO and leadership positions). Retirements commonplace.	Continuity of collaboration relationships is maintained and withstands leadership and staff changes.	Promote from within the unit. Prioritize the Forest’s HR needs over employee advancement. Improve training of new employees; have departing staff introduce incoming staff.	<u>Tools:</u> Transition management processes. <u>Resource:</u> USFS retirees that offer institutional knowledge.
Lack of staff continuity negatively affects EADM. Loss of knowledge between staff due to lack of overlap.	Projects not only stall, but change direction with change in FS staff. In landscape project taking 7 years to develop, no DRs left on staff by end. Vacancies persist for 6 months or more. Loss of local knowledge and disruption to EADM as well as partner relationships.	Large landscape projects are developed collaboratively and continue to thrive despite leader change.	Conduct succession planning and use career ladders to ensure forest knowledge is sustained within a forest team. Include long-term, local employees in collaborative processes to help assure continuity.	<u>Tools:</u> Succession planning. Career ladders. Overlap in outgoing/ incoming positions. Transition plans. <u>Resources:</u> Longterm employees with local knowledge.



CONTINUED | PERSONNEL POLICIES AND STAFFING DECISIONS

PERSONNEL & STAFFING CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	PERSONNEL & STAFFING SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
Staff not accountable for EADM results.	Projects not seen to completion. DRs resisting a project (e.g. for fear of local politics) will delay until they change jobs.	Employee advancement tracks with EADM results. FS held accountable for project completion. Sufficient time is allowed for transition of new staff.	Monitor projects in accordance with objectives. Ensure projects are completed within budget. Require project assessment in annual reviews. Require transition process where incumbent “signs off” authority to replacement, addressing each project.	<u>Tools:</u> Process to transfer projects to incoming staff. Accountability measures for EADM in performance reviews.



C. USFS CAPACITY AND RESOURCES

Training in management, resource specializations, and EADM itself remains an unaddressed need throughout the USFS. Budget shortfalls and statutory mandates on funding for fire response combine with a shortage of trained employees in areas other than fire and/or a frequent diversion of staff to fire duty. This situation hampers the ability for the Agency to make progress on stewardship of important forest and grassland resources. Moreover, the complexity of landscape-scale approaches to ecological management of public lands demands a high level of expertise and a deep knowledge of forest conditions at the unit level.

CAPACITY AND RESOURCES CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	CAPACITY AND RESOURCES SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
No correlation between success of a project and the budget allocated.	Workforce shifted to fire from staffs that already lack capacity to fulfill the functions of their position. Volunteers commit many hours to a project, only for fire to divert staff and funding from that project.		Place enough skilled staff to meet the workforce demands and functions of a forest.	
USFS lacks the ability to make time-sensitive decisions.	In emergency situations (e.g. disease or insect outbreaks), USFS unable to act quickly enough.	Public collaboration process builds the consensus to address ongoing problems so that USFS can be proactive versus reactive.	Diversify the types and increase the amount of CEs (e.g. what to always expect in cases involving Southern Appalachian hardwoods).	<u>Tools:</u> CEs. Collaborative agreements.
Lack of workforce capacity to conduct proper EADM.	Dropping analyses after initiated.	Speeding up EADM process produces quality DM results. Partners serve as “ex-officio” advisors.	Rely on partners to identify high-priority projects/ implementation steps, and provide site data. Collaborate with state agencies.	<u>Tools:</u> Data-sharing systems. GNA. <u>Resources:</u> Partners. State agencies. Partner-supplied data.



CONTINUED FOREST SERVICE CAPACITY AND RESOURCES				
CAPACITY AND RESOURCES CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	CAPACITY AND RESOURCES SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
Lack of policy knowledge.	NEPA knowledge varies widely among USFS staff. CEQ recommendations not properly interpreted. Wildlife biologists do not realize that the bulk of their responsibilities is not in the field.	Managers have the skill set to make the best decisions.	Mentor and train new employees on policy. Use incumbent and retired staff to provide a knowledge bridge.	<u>Tool</u> : Policy training.
Budget inhibits multiple-use planning; some resource uses are better funded than others.	Projects are overly focused on vegetation management. USFS cannot conduct prescribed fire when needed. Lack of investment in roads maintenance (e.g. brushing) results in loss of infrastructure that serves certain uses (gets too costly to repair or rebuild).	Greater freedom to create more/diverse projects that respond to multiple resource interests. Increased stakeholder buy-in with more resource uses addressed.	Develop integrated projects to achieve multiple objectives that meet forest needs and are not driven by budget line items.	<u>Tools</u> : Flexible funding mechanisms in USFS budgets. Internal USFS coordination between resource areas.
Needs of fire suppression deplete budgets intended for managing resource uses.	Recreation use fees diverted to fire suppression budget.	USFS budget not burdened by costs of emergency wildfire suppression.		
Forest policy does not prioritize forest health.	Some Texas NFs are less healthy than 30 years ago.	Farm Bill and Healthy Forest Restoration Act are informed by USFS expertise.	USFS testimony to Congress notes what is working, not working, and needs to change, by citing forest-based examples.	



D. COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

In the last ten to fifteen years, the USFS has recognized the opportunities offered by the rise of collaborative groups in addressing resource management conflicts and building agreement in project design. Not all units, however, regularly welcome collaboration and partnerships, and stakeholders expressed frustration with an inconsistency in USFS transparency, skill, communications, and use of scientific and traditional knowledge contributed by the public.

COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
Collaborative processes are inefficient.	Certain stakeholders will appeal NEPA decisions regardless of the success of collaboration.	USFS invests in involving partners early producing long-term efficiency in EADM. When a widely-representative collaborative identifies areas of agreement, USFS acts on it.	Establish clear process and sideboards for partner collaboration to set expectations and wisely use time spent on collaboration. Prioritize DM on areas of strong agreement between partners.	<u>Tools:</u> “Roadmap” of how and when partners can engage on EADM.
Partners do not have confidence in EADM outcomes.	Partners sometimes have a greater knowledge of NEPA and USFS policy than USFS staff.	Employee accountability for quality EADM is imposed by national-level leadership. The data-based and narrative reasoning of a decision are captured in the public record. Both USFS and the public have confidence in that the NEPA process works.	Gather input from partners to prioritize DM areas. Monitor feedback on quality versus quantity of EAs. Clearly address issues that matter to the public, as revealed during formal public comment period.	<u>Tools:</u> Monitoring. Joint partner and Agency trainings on NEPA and policy. <u>Resources:</u> Collaborative partners.



CONTINUED COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS				
COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
Outreach communication falls short of stimulating inclusive and effective collaboration.	Local constituents are left out of collaborative processes (e.g. judges and school superintendent s not invited).	Sufficient communication instill public confidence in EADM. Social scientists are tapped for effective communication strategies.	Do not rely exclusively on formal collaboratives. Use social media to reach people where they are and outside their workdays. Commit to engaging with a diversity of community groups and their leaders.	<u>Tools:</u> Social media platforms. Simplified LMPs.
USFS lacks the capacity to conduct effective collaboration.	LOs overwhelmed by and/or dismissive of partners in coalitions.	Areas of agreement/consensus are documented and memorialized. Collaboration monitored for evidence of success.	Prioritize the staff training and accountability for successful collaboration. Seek new hires with collaborative experience.	<u>Tools:</u> Joint USFS/community training in collaboration. New USFS hiring focus includes collaboration competencies and experience.
Partners distrust USFS.	Public comments not taken seriously. Turnover produces confusion. FS selections appear aligned with dominant political attitudes of the region, which in turn affects leanings of EADM.	Open communication between USFS and partners. Staffing decisions not influenced by politics. Where partners already trust USFS, relationships are reinforced.	Proactively address questions that could arise; share answers widely. Follow up on promises to communicate. Consider planning phase and programmatic analysis as the most important times for partner collaboration.	<u>Tools:</u> Facilitation processes (that partners understand and accept). Web-based tool to share data. Regular communications between USFS and partners.

CONTINUED | FOREST AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
Public input opportunities are exclusive. Collaborative processes are unfair to some stakeholder types.	Local stakeholders have to take time off work whereas “professional stakeholder groups” go to meetings as their day jobs.	Time spent in association with collaboration is well-spent and within bounds of stakeholder availability.	Find ways to meet the public where they are and ensure the participation process is open to all. Hold collaborative meetings at night and on weekends; make information accessible online.	<u>Tools</u> : Strategic and inclusive focus on scheduling collaborative meetings.
Collaborative groups do not represent a balance of user group interests.	Collaborative groups lack cohesion. Stakeholders at extremes of the range of interests involved end up driving decisions. Recreation groups absent or under-represented.	Collaborative group acts as a team to inform USFS leadership in a balanced way.		<u>Tool</u> : Stakeholder group representation template.
Science used in DM is biased by the partner with strongest public support.	Clear-cutting cited (when none was present) by empowered group.			



E. ANALYSIS DOCUMENTS AND SPECIALIST REPORTS

Federal environmental laws require analysis of the physical, biological, social and economic effects of an action on public lands or waters. Risk aversion and a history of legal challenges to USFS decisions have led to the “bullet-proofing” of environmental analysis documents and specialist reports. Rather than being understandable by the public, documents tend to be extremely long and hard to read. Partners offered suggestions to help streamline documentation and process without sacrificing quality of analysis.

ANALYSIS DOCUMENTS AND SPECIALIST REPORTS CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	ANALYSIS DOCUMENTS AND SPECIALIST REPORTS SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
Takes too long to complete EADM documents yet documents lack sufficient analysis.	CEQ requirements and FSH are not followed. EAs that should be 15-20 pages are over 100 pages instead. EAs demonstrate a lack of survey information and site specific data. IDT lacks an archeologist.	EADM documents are slimmed down and improved as the EADM process is speeded up.	Address only the site-specific issues; omit unrelated analysis. Enact performance measures related to accountability for the quality of EAs and EISs.	<u>Tools</u> : Employee performance measures tied to EADM quality.
Duplicative EADM. NEPA process is redundant and repetitive.	EADM “do-overs.” NEPA process undertaken for forest planning is duplicated on forest projects. After forging consensus on a plan through collaboration, USFS retreats (e.g. George Washington & Jefferson NF).	USFS has the vision, confidence, partner support, and experience to conduct more EADM at a Forest scale.	Carry out NEPA process at Forest planning level, not at project level to the extent that is realistic.	<u>Tools</u> : CEs.



CONTINUED | ANALYSIS DOCUMENTS AND SPECIALIST REPORTS

ANALYSIS DOCUMENTS AND SPECIALIST REPORTS CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	ANALYSIS DOCUMENTS AND SPECIALIST REPORTS SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
Length of time to get a project underway results in irrecoverable ecological and economic loss.	Species and habitats are lost (e.g. Nantahala Pisgah NF lack of forest plan implementation over successive forest supervisors; continued aerial spraying despite science that countered the decision). USFS R&D resorts to using state land for research. Economic base of businesses deteriorates. Salvage decisions and subsequent contract sales take so long that the commercial value of resources is lost; USFS then pays for hazard removal instead of selling dead or dying trees for revenue.	USFS values the EADM impact on ecological conditions and small businesses.	Incentivize staff to meet prescribed timelines and reward for continued project successes. Delegate some authority to RAC which can force management decisions when necessary.	<u>Tools:</u> Incentives for EADM efficiency.
Specificity required by NEPA delays EADM.	LMPs are too specific to allow for adjustment without lengthening the timeline.			
	When use trends or technology change, USFS requires new analysis.			



CONTINUED ANALYSIS DOCUMENTS AND SPECIALIST REPORTS				
ANALYSIS DOCUMENTS AND SPECIALIST REPORTS CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	ANALYSIS DOCUMENTS AND SPECIALIST REPORTS SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
Inconsistency in recreation outfitter and guide special use permitting and reporting.	SUPs and funding for recreational amenities on forests continue to decline despite economic benefits from outfitter and guide operations. SUP process holds up operational plans of O&G.	Regional-level decision about what constitutes “sustainable recreation” and reallocates capacity to manage recreation.		<u>Resource:</u> Funding for EADM concerning recreation.

F. SCALING ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND DECISION MAKING

Participants identified a number of issues related to the scale of project analysis, at what level decisions are made, and how local information is or is not reflected in decisions. Partners raised questions about how forest plans and the required large-scale analysis relates to project-level decisions. The discussion also highlighted the challenges of climate change and other cross-boundary issues, and the complexity of natural resource projects.

SCALING CHALLENGE		DESIRED OUTCOMES	SCALING SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
Reluctance to consider large landscape projects.	Fear that use of multiple EADM tools on a single project will erode public support.	The quality of landscape-scale planning done collaboratively results in more work on the ground.	Landscape assessments and plans.	
Arbitrary scale set for approved actions.	Number of acres maximized for Southern Pine Beetle treatments.	Number of acres not set arbitrarily for CEs.		<u>Tools:</u> Templates. Clear national guidance.
Overly complex proposed actions; mixing of multiple issues in a single proposed action when some could be handled by CEs.	Combining thinning, NNIP, and a dam in a proposal.	USFS is able to prioritize EADM based on multiple-use mission and stakeholder interests.	Identify project activities for which there is typically consensus and set CEs for these (e.g. bathrooms, trail maintenance).	<u>Tools:</u> CEs.
Inconsistency in application of forest management practices and treatments from forest to forest.	In side-by-side comparisons of forests with the same invasive species problems, findings that report different chemicals were used.	Correct/proper treatments and forest management practices are applied consistently across forests.	Develop a decision matrix used by upper management to make final decisions. Use CEs where there is a good fit.	<u>Tools:</u> Decision matrix. CEs. <u>Resources:</u> Regional and national leadership direction.



CONTINUED SCALING ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND DECISION MAKING				
SCALING CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	SCALING SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
Inappropriate scale of EADM.	High-level decisions are passed down to less empowered district employees.	EADM is deployed at the appropriate scale for each project.	Use programmatic analyses for the routine elements of projects. Start new projects at the right scale, which might be small.	<p><u>Tools:</u> Matrix to guide who is the appropriate decision maker and level of decision.</p> <p><u>Resource:</u> Partner data for landscape analyses.</p>
Decisions appear to circumvent NEPA.	Programmatic decisions made when a stand analysis is more appropriate (e.g. Chattahoochee Foothills landscape project).	USFS is not perceived as circumventing NEPA when stand-specific decisions are made.	Gather stand-specific details necessary to make decisions more appropriate to project scale.	<p><u>Tools:</u> Clear guidance on when/where/how to apply NEPA instruments.</p>

F. RESEARCH AND SCIENCE

Participants discussed the important role of science and data in EADM processes, and the relationship between research, monitoring and open discussion of science with partners as critical to decision making.

RESEARCH AND SCIENCE CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	RESEARCH AND SCIENCE SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
Site-specific information inadequate (or not used) for quality EADM.	Forest plans are only focusing on a few species (Longleaf/shortleaf restoration focuses on same pines/oaks).	Large landscape projects consider the need to both restoring pine forests and providing for recreation.	Step back from stand-only decisions to look at the whole landscape. Utilize state plans.	<u>Resources:</u> State forest action plans. State wildlife action plans.
Lack of goals defined by measurable outcomes.		Quality data produces stakeholder confidence, achieving consensus.	Collect high-quality data upfront reducing stakeholder dissention.	<u>Tools:</u> Data sharing systems.
Poor data management.	Data comes from surveys conducted by contractors who have never been to the forest.		Provide proper survey oversight and tighten contract terms. Hire surveyors qualified to extrapolate data to project outcomes.	<u>Tools:</u> Contract terms.
Ecological management lacks the scientific baseline and monitoring data to make good decisions.	Inaccurate data. Science and research are not applied. Conflicting priorities of staff influence decisions (not made on the basis of science).	Data needed for project management is collected routinely and is accurate; projects are monitored and research findings are applied. New projects benefit from prior lessons learned.	Monitor projects to increase effectiveness, using accurate scientific data and applying research findings.	<u>Tools:</u> Monitoring data. Lessons learned evaluations. Adaptive management techniques. <u>Resources:</u> University partners conducting biological and archeological surveys.



CONTINUED RESEARCH AND SCIENCE				
RESEARCH & SCIENCE CHALLENGES		DESIRED OUTCOMES	RESEARCH & SCIENCE SOLUTIONS	
Barriers	Evidence		Strategies	Tools and Needed Resources
Forest and regional planning is not integrated using the best available science.	Models for southern Appalachian region showing lack of early successional habitat and old growth forest not used in DM.	Best available science addresses need for retaining old growth and establishing early successional habitat, achieving ideal variation on a forested landscape.	Integrate wildlife species-driven proposals (e.g. for wild turkey, grouse, and quail) into a broader forest restoration strategy.	<u>Resources:</u> Best available science.



THE EADM CHANGE EFFORT

EADM Partner Roundtables were held in each USFS region and in Washington, D.C. Information in this regional report, as well as the national report, will be used by USFS leadership to refine business practices, information sharing, policy, and direction toward improved efficiencies. As they are developed, the NFF will post summary reports from all of the Roundtables and a national report that synthesizes the themes heard around the country regarding EADM challenges and solutions ([click here](#)).

The NFF will present information generated at the Roundtables to USFS leadership and the staff teams working nationally and regionally on the EADM change effort.

The USFS will consider the input from the Roundtables as it develops its proposed rule regarding NEPA. The Agency will also review the input received at the Roundtables as it considers other priorities and actions to improve EADM processes, which may involve changes in practices, improved training, altered staffing structures, and/or steps toward improved rulemaking.

RESOURCES

SOUTHERN REGIONAL EADM CADRE

- Frank Beum, Deputy Regional Forester for Natural Resources, Regional Office
- Caren Briscoe, District Ranger, Holly Springs & Tombigbee National Forest
- Mike Brod, Fire and Natural Resources Staff Officer, Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest
- Kimpton Cooper, District Ranger, Angelina & Sabine National Forests
- Paula Cote, Environmental Coordinator, Regional Office
- Peter Gaulke, Regional Planning Director, Regional Office
- Cherie Hamilton, Forest Supervisor, Ozark-St. Francis National Forest
- Rick Lint, Forest Supervisor, Fran Marion & Sumter National Forests
- Heather Luczak, Assistant Forest Planner, Southern Research Station
- Vaughan Marable, Deputy Forest Supervisor, National Forests in Mississippi
- Michael Murphy, Forest Legacy Program Manager, Regional Office
- Carin Vadala, Environmental Coordinator, Daniel Boone National Forest

RESOURCES

- USDA Forest Service EADM webpage – www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/eadm
- National Forest Foundation EADM Webpage – www.nationalforests.org/EADM
- USDA Forest Service Directives – www.fs.fed.us/im/directives/
- Environmental Policy Act Compliance – www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/01/03/2017-28298/national-environmental-policy-act-compliance



APPENDIX A

Regional Environmental Analysis and Decision Making Partner Roundtable Dates		
Region	Date	Location
1 - Northern	March 14, 2018	Missoula, MT
2 - Rocky Mountain	March 19, 2018	Lakewood, CO (and by video teleconference in Cody, WY; Pagosa Springs, CO; and Rapid City, SD)
3 - Southwestern	March 21, 2018	Albuquerque, NM
4 - Intermountain	March 29, 2018	Salt Lake City, UT
5 - Pacific Southwest	March 27, 2018	Rancho Cordova, CA
6 - Pacific Northwest	February 22-23, 2018	Portland, OR
8 - Southern	March 20, 2018	Chattanooga, TN
9 - Eastern	March 12, 2018	Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, IL (and 14 Forest Unit locations by Adobe Connect)
10 - Alaska	March 22, 2018	Juneau, AK and teleconference
Washington, D.C.	March 14, 2018	Washington, DC



APPENDIX B

SOUTHERN REGIONAL EADM PARTNER ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT LIST

SUMMARY: Approximately 444 partner representatives were invited by the Regional Forester to participate in the Roundtable. Of these, 40 participated in the Roundtable in person. The participants represented a broad range of regional forest interests and revealed strong experience with USFS EADM processes.

PARTNER PARTICIPANTS

Derek	Alkire	National Wild Turkey Federation
Ben	Benton	Chattanooga Times Free Press
Mike	Black	Shortleaf Pine Initiative
Danny	Blount	Norbord Georgia
Aubrey	Bolen	The Indian Creek Studio
John	Bowers	Georgia Wildlife Resources
Andy	Brown	Trout Unlimited - Southern Appalachian Region
John A	Brubaker	Bulls Bay Chamber of Commerce
David	Clark	Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Tom	Culkett	Georgia Forest Watch
Todd	Engstrom	Friends of the Apalachicola National Forest
Sam	Evans	Southern Environmental Law Center
Steven	Foy	Nantahala Outdoor Center
Jim	Gray	Ruffed Grouse Society
Deanna	Greco	National Park Service
Scott	Griffin	Georgia Forestry Commission
Sue	Harmon	Georgia Forest Watch
Robin	Hitner	Georgia Forest Watch
Mark	Hutchings	Arkansas Game & Fish Commission
Hugh	Irwin	The Wilderness Society
Joshua	Kaywood	Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Jean	Lorber	The Nature Conservancy
John	McLellan	West Fraser, Inc.
Katherine	Medlock	The Nature Conservancy
Mark	Miller	Virginia Wilderness Committee
Jessica	Morehead	The Sierra Club
Davis	Mounger	Tennessee Heartwood
Bill	Oates	Texas A&M Forest Service
Robert	Petrie	Pollard Lumbar Company
Robert	Pollard	Pollard Lumbar Company
Kenny	Ribbeck	Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Jess	Riddle	Georgia Forest Watch
Frank	Riley	Chestatee/Chattahoochee Resource Conservation &



		Development Council
Buford	Sanders	Georgia Forestry Commission
Mary	Topa	Georgia ForestWatch
Alex	Varnier	The Nature Conservancy
Melinda	Wagner	Back Country Horsemen of North Georgia
Robert W.	Wagner	Back Country Horsemen of Georgia
Jack	Wise	Wildwater Ltd.
Tiffany	Woods	National Wildlife Federation

USDA FOREST SERVICE STAFF

Chris	French	Director, Ecosystem Management Coordination
Frank	Beum	Deputy Regional Forester for Natural Resources
Mike	Brod	Fire and Natural Resources Staff Officer
Paula	Cote	Regional Environmental Planner
Clay	Davis	District Planner
Peter	Gaulke	Regional Planning Director
Anna	Greis	Invasive Species Specialist
Heather	Luczak	Forest Environmental Coordinator
Stephanie	Medlin	Forest Environmental Coordinator
Crystal	Merica	Planning Specialist
Helen	Mohr	Forester
Judy	Toppins	Staff Officer-Public Affairs, GIS, Environmental Coordination
Erica	Wadl	Natural Resource Specialist
James	Billups	Resource Specialist (Timber Information Manager)

ROUNDTABLE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Kayla	Barr	National Forest Foundation
James	Billups	Resource Specialist (Timber Information Manager)
Mike	Brod	Fire and Natural Resources Staff Officer
Paula	Cote	Regional Environmental Planner
Clay	Davis	District Planner
Peter	Gaulke	Regional Planning Director
Anna	Greis	Invasive Species Specialist
Marcia	Hogan	National Forest Foundation
Ben	Irey	National Forest Foundation
Heather	Lucsak	Forest Environmental Coordinator
Stephanie	Medlin	Forest Environmental Coordinator
Crystal	Merica	Planning Specialist
Joe	Smith	National Partnership Coordinator



APPENDIX C

SOUTHERN EADM REGIONAL PARTNER ROUNDTABLE AGENDA

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

- 8:30 a.m. Check in and meet-and-greet
- 9:00 a.m. Welcome and Meeting Overview – Deputy Regional Forester Frank Beum
- 9:15 a.m. Meeting Orientation and Logistics – Marcia Hogan, National Forest Foundation Facilitator
- 9:45 a.m. National Overview and Introduction of EADM Effort – Chris French, Associate Deputy Chief for the National Forest System
- 10:45 a.m. Icebreaker at Table Followed by Break
- 11:15 a.m. Regional Overview and Perspectives on EADM Effort – Peter Gaulke, Regional Planning Director
- NOON LUNCH
- 1:00 p.m. Breakout Session #1 – Challenges Partners Face in EADM
- 2:00 p.m. Quick look at Challenges and Barriers from Breakout Session #1
- 2:30 p.m. BREAK
- 2:45 p.m. Breakout Session #2 – Generating Solutions to Overcome EADM Challenges
- 3:45 p.m. Quick Look at Solutions and Strategies from Breakout Sessions
- 4:15 p.m. Closing Remarks
- 4:30 p.m. ADJOURN



APPENDIX D

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANPR	Advance Notice of Proposed Rule-making
CE	Categorical Exclusion
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
DM	Decision Making
DR	District Ranger
EADM	Environmental Analysis and Decision Making
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FMO	Fire Management Officer
FSH	Forest Service Handbook
HR	Human Resources
IDT	Interdisciplinary Team
LMP	Land Management Plan
LO	Line Officer
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NF	National Forest
NFF	National Forest Foundation
NNIP	Non-Native Invasive Plant
O&G	Outfitters and Guides
R&D	Research and Development
RAC	Resource Advisory Committee
RO	Regional Office
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SUP	Special Use Permit
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFS	United States Forest Service
WO	Washington Office

