



The role and content of the Assessment in plan revision

What is the assessment?

The 2012 Planning Rule requires that assessments rapidly evaluate existing information about relevant ecological, economic, and social conditions, trends, and sustainability and their relationship to the land management plan within the context of the broader landscape. The responsible official shall consider and evaluate existing and possible future conditions and trends of the plan area, and assess the sustainability of social, economic, and ecological systems within the plan area, in the context of the broader landscape (§ 219.6). (36 CFR 219.5(a)(1)).

What is the purpose of the assessment?

The assessment is the first phase of the three-phase adaptive planning process. The assessment's purpose is to rapidly identify and evaluate existing, available, and relevant information.

What are the objectives of the assessment?

There are several objectives of the assessment:

1. Identify and assess a solid base of available information relevant to the plan development or plan revision.
2. Build an understanding of relevant information with the public and other interested parties before starting plan development or plan revision.
3. Develop relationships with interested parties to facilitate public and government participation among government entities, Indian Tribes, private landowners, and other partners and interested parties.
4. Develop readiness of both the Agency and the public to focus on topics appropriate to a plan or plan revision.

What topics areas are included?

The following fifteen topic areas should be considered when developing the assessment:

- Terrestrial ecosystems, aquatic ecosystems, and watersheds.
- Air, soil, and water resources and quality.
- System drivers, including dominant ecological processes, disturbance regimes, and stressors, such as natural succession, wildland fire, invasive species, and climate change; and the ability of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems to adapt to change.
- Baseline assessment of carbon stock.
- Threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, and potential species of conservation concern.
- Social, cultural, and economic conditions.
- Benefits people obtain from the National Forest System in the planning area (ecosystem services).
- Multiple uses and their contributions to local, regional, and national economies.
- Recreation settings, opportunities and access, and scenic character.
- Renewable and nonrenewable energy and mineral resources.
- Infrastructure, such as recreational facilities and transportation and utility corridors.
- Areas of tribal importance.
- Cultural and historical resources and uses.
- Land status and ownership, use, and access patterns.
- Existing designated areas located in the plan area including wilderness and wild and scenic rivers and potential need and opportunity for additional designated areas.