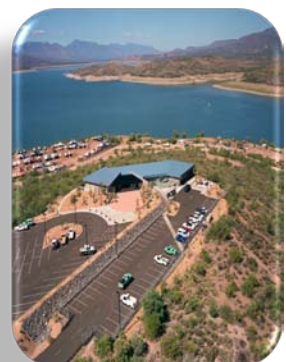
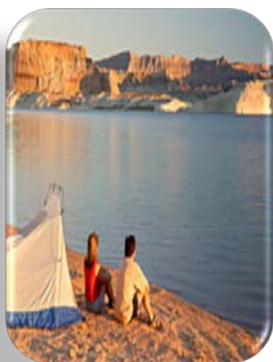


RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Site-Specific Supplemental Resource Management Planning Handbook



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Policy and Administration, Land Resources Division
Denver, Colorado

June 2012

Mission Statements

The mission of the Department of the Interior is to protect and provide access to our Nation's natural and cultural heritage and honor our trust responsibilities to Indian Tribes and our commitments to island communities.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

Site-Specific Supplemental Resource Management Planning Handbook

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

2003 Guidebook	2003 Resource Management Plan Guidebook
CE	Categorical Exclusion
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
Department	Department of Interior
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EO	Executive Order
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FACA	Federal Advisory Committee Act
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FWCA	Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act
FWS	Fish and Wildlife Service
Handbook	Site-Specific Supplemental Resource Management Planning Handbook
ITA	Indian Trust Assets
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
P&Gs	The Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies
Pub. L.	Public Law
Pub. L. 89-72	Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965
Pub. L. 102-575	Reclamation Recreation Management Act of 1992
Reclamation	Bureau of Reclamation
Resource Plan	Resource Management Plan and Site-Specific Resource Plan

RMP

Resource Management Plan

Step-Down Plan

A Type of Site-Specific Resource Plan

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Chapter 1

Purpose, Legal Basis for Planning, and Scope

Introduction

This *Site-Specific Supplemental Resource Management Planning Handbook* (Handbook) supplements the information contained in the Bureau of Reclamation's *2003 Resource Management Plan Guidebook* (2003 Guidebook). Please refer to Reclamation's recreation publications website at <http://www.usbr.gov/recreation/> for a pdf version of the 2003 Guidebook that describes the detailed process for preparing Resource Management Plans (RMP). The guidance provided in the 2003 Guidebook was intended to be flexible enough to adapt to, among other things, changes in environmental laws and regulations, recreation supply and demand, natural resource conditions, changes in natural resource information and data, management objectives, recreation technologies, and Reclamation's internal policies, directives and standards, and published handbooks. This Handbook will compliment the 2003 Guidebook by providing valuable assistance for Reclamation's natural resource planning efforts.

It has become apparent in recent years that budgets for some Federal agencies are decreasing at the same time the demand for use of Federal land and waterbodies is increasing. On Reclamation land, the increased demand for use can come from a variety of sources including, but not limited to:

1. Requests by the general public for additional recreation facilities or different types of recreation opportunities and experiences (e.g., more developed campgrounds or more opportunities for back country camping).
2. Commercial businesses or corporations that want increased access to and across Reclamation land (e.g., exploration and extraction of oil, gas, sand, and gravel).
3. Requests by organizations for short-term use of Federal land for special events (e.g., fishing tournaments or sailboat regattas).
4. Requests by special interest groups for the use of land for specific uses and purposes (e.g., providing a specific area for off-road vehicle use).
5. Individuals that want access to Reclamation land as a result of urbanization of land adjacent to Reclamation projects (e.g., increased

opportunities for use of canal rights-of-way for hiking, jogging, and bicycling).

6. Increased demands for long-term use of water surface (e.g., use of a reservoir cove for a slalom course for a private water-ski association).
7. Implementation of Federal laws and regulations protecting threatened and endangered species and associated critical habitat (e.g., restricting motorized vehicles in certain areas for protection of Flat-tailed Horned Lizard and associated critical habitat).

The primary focus of this Handbook is to provide a planning process for preparing and updating Site-Specific Resource Plans and preparing amendments and revisions to existing RMPs.

The increased demands for use of Reclamation land will create individual issues and concerns that should be addressed and resolved through the preparation of an appropriate type of resource planning document. This scenario makes resource planning a valuable tool in protecting the integrity of the Federal estate for future generations. The primary focus of this Handbook is to provide a planning process for preparing and updating Site-Specific Resource

Plans and preparing amendments and revisions to existing RMPs. Unless otherwise noted, reference to an RMP and a Site-Specific Resource Plan are hereafter collectively referred to as a Resource Plan.

In addition to reduced budgets and perhaps a shift in agency priorities, the number of staff dedicated to resource planning and land management activities may become limited in the future. In order to prepare for this possibility, it is essential that Reclamation develop a resource planning process that will produce more limited and focused planning documents. Consequently, less personnel, money, and time will be required. Even though a planning process generally follows established procedures and necessary steps, it should be possible to reduce the amount of time spent on each step. On a limited basis, this Handbook explores possible opportunities to reduce time and funding in natural resource planning. Although the preparation of comprehensive RMPs covering acceptable single management units would be the preferred planning mechanism, site-specific resource planning is a legitimate option that should be considered for smaller land areas of a more focused scope. However, these types of planning documents must still adequately address the external public and internal agency resource issues and concerns, comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), other statutory requirements, and allow managers to make informed decisions about a specific geographic area that are sound and acceptable to the public.

In some instances, there may be area-wide issues and concerns of a larger scale that should only be addressed through the preparation of a comprehensive RMP.

Further, if a comprehensive RMP has never been done before and adequate funding and agency staff are available, it is recommended that one be prepared following the guidance in the 2003 Guidebook and this Handbook. In other instances where a Resource Plan has already been prepared, it is important to identify and understand what may trigger an amendment or revision and then determine the scope of the planning effort that is required. Monitoring and evaluation actions are important steps in identifying the need to amend or revise a Resource Plan. If an amendment or revision is required, it would be prudent to follow the guidance provided in this Handbook and the 2003 Guidebook.

The resource planning mechanisms provided in this Handbook can be used by Reclamation personnel who may have varied levels of planning experience or who might not have any formal training in resource planning, management, and administration. However, certain management actions that apply to implementing the provisions of existing laws and regulations are not discretionary (e.g., management actions for developing or rehabilitating recreation facilities require that public entities provide access for persons with disabilities). When used, this Handbook will provide consistency in the way Reclamation prepares and updates site-specific resource planning documents as well as revises and amends existing RMPs. For clarification and convenient reference, some of the information and guidance provided in the 2003 Guidebook is incorporated into this Handbook.

Please note that whenever a planning document is prepared, Reclamation must determine if a NEPA compliance document should be prepared and at what level [i.e., Categorical Exclusion (CE), Environmental Assessment (EA), or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)]. Reclamation must also determine if a NHPA compliance document should be prepared through involvement with Reclamation's cultural resources management staff. If a planning document requires NEPA and/or NHPA compliance, then all documents should be prepared concurrently whenever possible. Refer to Chapter 6 of this Handbook for further NEPA compliance actions associated with resource planning activities.

Purpose

The primary purposes for preparing this Handbook are to:

- provide a brief description of Reclamation's water-related and land-based planning studies;
- provide an overview of Reclamation's different levels of decision-making;
- provide guidance for preparing sound and principled natural resource planning documents that may be necessary to accomplish different planning outcomes and/or goals and objectives;

- provide guidance on preparing and updating Site-Specific Resource Plans in a cost-effective and timely manner;
- supplement the 2003 Guidebook to include detailed guidance on amending and revising RMPs in a cost-effective and timely manner;
- provide important guidance related to the monitoring of natural resource planning documents;
- establish procedures and tools that will allow Reclamation to identify focused issues through both internal and external scoping and public involvement; and
- discuss the level of NEPA and other statutory compliance that might be necessary for the different levels of resource planning.

Legal Basis for Planning

The management of Federally-owned land is governed by a multitude of laws, regulations, Executive Orders (EO), and agency policies. Reclamation has specific congressional authority to conduct resource planning activities for land and waterbodies under its jurisdiction. When preparing its Resource Plans, Reclamation must also adhere to a variety of applicable laws and regulations dealing with:

- Public land and recreation (e.g., *Occupancy of Cabin Sites on Public Conservation and Recreation Areas*, 43 CFR part 21; and *Off-Road Vehicle Use*, 43 CFR part 420).
- Wildlife (e.g., *Endangered Species Act (ESA)*, Public Law (Pub. L.) 93-205; and *Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA)*, Pub. L. 85-624).
- Cultural resources (e.g., *National Historic Preservation Act*, Pub. L. 89-665; *American Indian Religious Freedom Act*, Pub. L. 95-341; *Archaeological Resources Protection and Repatriation Act*, Pub. L. 96-95; and *Paleontological Resources Preservation Act*, Pub. L. 111-11).
- Environmental quality (e.g., *National Environmental Policy Act*, Pub. L. 91-190; and *Clean Water Act*, Pub. L. 95-217).

This Handbook primarily deals with land-related resource planning documents; however, a brief discussion of water-related planning activities is also provided

for the benefit of Reclamation staff that may not be familiar with all of its planning programs.

The specific legal basis for inventorying the natural resources on Reclamation land and preparing RMPs are contained in the Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965, Pub. L. 89-72 (Pub. L. 89-72); Reclamation Recreation Management Act of 1992, Pub. L. 102-575, Title XXVIII (Pub. L. 102-575); and project-specific authority, if appropriate. These laws authorize Reclamation to prepare and revise RMPs. RMPs provide a strategy for developing, using, conserving, protecting, enhancing, and managing Reclamation land. Reclamation’s broad authority for preparing resource plans is contained in the Reclamation Act of 1902 and the Reclamation Project Act of 1939. **Note:** The preparation of Site-Specific Resource Plans is also authorized pursuant to the laws mentioned above, as an integral component of resource management planning.

Some of the Federal laws that apply to Reclamation planning studies are more water-related rather than land-based. The specific legal basis for completing these water-related planning studies is contained in the Reclamation Act of 1902, Pub. L. 89-72, as amended by Pub. L. 102-575, Title XVI¹, and the Water Resources Planning Act of 1965, Pub. L. 89-90. Specific guidance for preparing water-related planning studies is not covered in this Handbook. Refer to Attachment A of this Handbook for a list of related information sources (i.e., Reclamation publications, policies, and public laws).

Scope and Structure of Handbook

Following is a brief description of the scope and content of the Handbook:

Chapter 1 - Purpose, Legal Basis for Planning, and Scope

Chapter 1 describes the need, intent, legal basis for planning, and purpose for preparing this Handbook.

Chapter 2 - Decision-Making Levels of Planning

Chapter 2 describes a variety of land-based and water-related Reclamation planning studies and their legal authorities.

¹ Reclamation is granted general authority under Title XVI to investigate opportunities for wastewater reclamation and reuse. Because of the unique provisions of projects authorized and funded under Title XVI, feasibility studies for these projects will follow the *Guidelines for Preparing, Reviewing, and Processing Proposals Under Title XVI of Public Law 102-575, as Amended*.

Chapter 2 also discusses three levels of Reclamation resource planning for decision-making purposes.

Chapter 3 - *Preparing Site-Specific Resource Plans*

Chapter 3 describes the planning process for preparing Site-Specific Resource Plans and subsequent step-down planning documents.

Chapter 4 - *Amending and Revising Resource Plans*

Chapter 4 describes the importance of following an established process for amending and revising Resource Plans; the importance of a good monitoring program that can identify needed changes; factors leading to amendments and revisions; and a discussion of the planning process to follow for amendments and revisions.

Chapter 5 - *Internal and External Scoping and Public Involvement*

Chapter 5 describes a scoping and public involvement process that will assist Reclamation personnel in identifying focused issues and concerns.

Chapter 6 - *National Environmental Policy Act Compliance*

Chapter 6 outlines what level of NEPA compliance is required for preparing, amending, and revising Resource Plans.

Bibliography

A bibliography showing the sources of pertinent information used in this Handbook and two attachments have been provided to assist resource planners in preparing and revising Resource Plans.

Chapter 2

Decision-Making Levels of Planning

Introduction

Resource planning documents prepared using the guidance contained in this Handbook are geared towards analyzing the land resources at existing Reclamation projects². For clarification purposes, following is a very brief description of the types of planning documents that are generally prepared for water-related studies. Whatever type of planning document is being prepared, the office NEPA and NHPA practitioner should be consulted to ensure that the planning team conducts the appropriate level of NEPA and NHPA compliance.

Appraisal Level Studies

Appraisal level studies are preliminary planning studies that document whether there is a potentially viable alternative that warrants Federal involvement in developing a water resource project. These types of studies rely on existing data and are the basis for requesting congressional authorization to conduct feasibility studies, or moving to feasibility planning under a program with prior authorization. For additional information on this type of planning study, refer to Reclamation Manual, Directives and Standards, *Water and Related Resources Feasibility Studies*, CMP 09-02³ at <http://www.usbr.gov/recman>.

Feasibility Studies

Feasibility studies are a form of planning study that analyzes the overall conditions of an area to determine if a feasible water resource alternative can be developed and implemented. Feasibility studies are submitted to Congress through the Office of Management and Budget. If Congress approves the concept of a feasibility study, Reclamation will receive congressional authority to

² A Bureau of Reclamation project means any land, facilities and waterbodies used for water supply, water delivery, flood control, hydropower, or other authorized purposes including fish, wildlife, and recreation administered by Reclamation under Federal laws.

³ These designations refer to the numbering system of the Reclamation Manual that describes the mandatory actions that outline the basic strategy for managing Reclamation-wide programs. For example, CMP 09-02 is *Water and Related Resources Feasibility Studies*.

implement the recommended alternative. To assist in the completion of feasibility studies, *The Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies* (P&Gs) are used by Reclamation and other water management agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Tennessee Valley Authority to assist in formulating and evaluating water and related land resources implementation studies. An iterative process is used to refine feasibility study alternatives to arrive at a plan that maximizes the economic benefits with acceptable impacts to the ecosystem and human environment.⁴ For additional information on this type of planning study, refer to CMP 09-02 at <http://www.usbr.gov/recman>.

Special Studies

Special studies, considered as technical planning studies, are prepared to assist in making informed and responsible management decisions that do not lead directly to Federal actions requiring congressional authorization. Special studies can be used to collect and analyze data; collect information about a resource; and address a problem or need.

Plan of Study

A plan of study is a planning document that outlines a strategy for accomplishing the activities that have been identified in a larger more comprehensive planning document. A plan of study can also be referred to as a statement of work or action plan. Although plans of study (i.e., action plan) have been completed for resource planning documents, they are most often completed for comprehensive water-related planning studies that are accompanied by an appropriate NEPA compliance document. Refer to Attachment E of the 2003 Guidebook for an example of work plan questions that can assist the planning team in their preparation of a Resource Plan. Reference can also be made to Attachment F of the 2003 Guidebook for an example of an RMP work plan schedule that outlines the important work activities and the timeframes required to complete each activity.

Refer to Figure 2.1 of this Handbook for a schematic showing Reclamation's land-based and water-related resource planning studies.

⁴ Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations 40 CFR 1508.14, the human environment shall be interpreted comprehensively to include the natural and physical environment and the relationship of people with that environment.

Reclamation Planning Studies

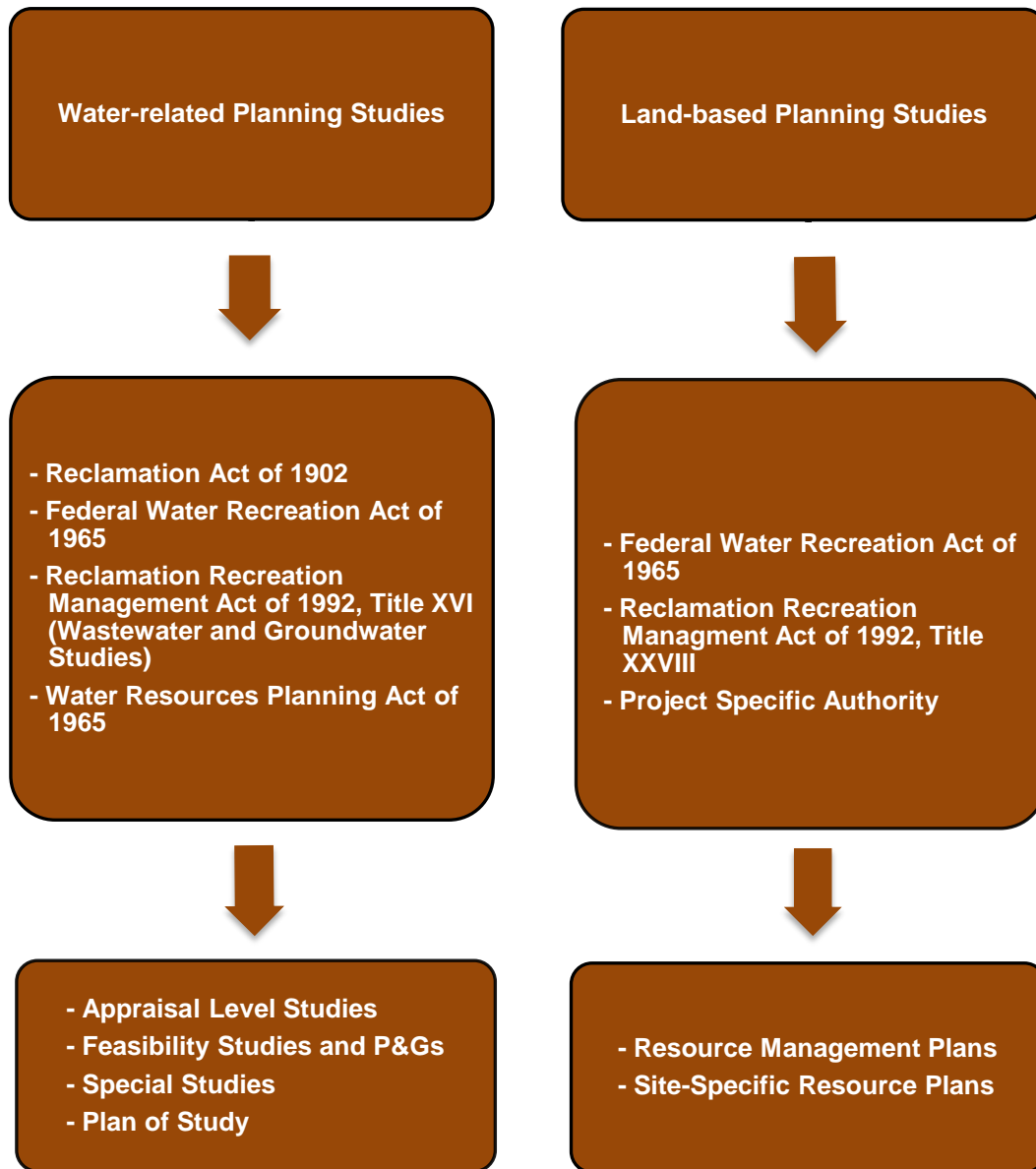


Figure 2.1—Reclamation Planning Studies

Decision-Making Planning Levels

Many Reclamation multi-purpose water-related projects cover large geographic areas that may consist of many acres of land, reservoirs, canals, and diversion dams (e.g., projects developed for agriculture, municipal, industrial, hydropower, flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife purposes). Other projects may be

single purpose projects that cover much smaller areas (e.g., projects developed solely for agriculture purposes).

Typically, land-based projects cover geographic areas that can be effectively managed as relatively independent units within a Reclamation project (e.g., a management unit where an RMP has been prepared following the guidance in the 2003 Guidebook). In most cases, management units consist primarily of a reservoir and adjacent land. In some instances, RMPs have been prepared for an entire canal, several appurtenant structures, and the land within the canal rights-of-way. In most cases, the geographic area was viewed by the public as one management unit. To include other Reclamation project land, waterbodies, and facilities covering a much larger Reclamation water project would likely confuse the public. Following are some of the areas that could be viewed by the public as a single management unit where a Resource Plan could be prepared:

- certain reaches of canals;
- wildlife management areas within the jurisdictional boundaries of a Reclamation project (e.g., those lands that are typically managed by another entity such as a state wildlife agency);
- wildlife mitigation land that may be separated from Reclamation project land and are being developed pursuant to the FWCA or project-specific legislation; however, primary jurisdiction has not yet been transferred to a state wildlife agency or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS);
- recreation management areas within the jurisdictional boundaries of a Reclamation project that are managed by a state recreation agency pursuant to the Pub. L. 89-72, as amended by Pub. L. 102-575;
- areas with similar management issues, concerns, or problems;
- small drainage basins;
- conservation and recreation areas where private cabin permits are located pursuant to 43 CFR part 21;
- natural resource areas such as cultural sites, similar flora or fauna sites, watchable wildlife areas, or areas of critical environmental concern;
- special use areas that may be closed to public access or open to public access with certain restrictions pursuant to 43 CFR part 423, *Public Conduct on Bureau of Reclamation Facilities, Lands, and Waterbodies*;
- remote buildings or structures;

- areas that have seasonal closures for certain reasons (e.g., temporarily restricting access to an area that has an active eagle, osprey, or heron nesting site); and
- specific areas where Reclamation has authorized private exclusive recreational and residential use pursuant to 43 CFR part 429, *Use of Bureau of Reclamation Land, Facilities, and Waterbodies*.

The level of the planning effort and associated scoping for an area mentioned above, ultimately depends on, among other things, the size of the area, the resource significance, and the number and complexity of the issues and concerns that arise within that specific area (e.g., for a small area that has a limited number of issues and concerns, the preparation of a Site-Specific Resource Plan may be the appropriate resource planning document).

Reclamation's resource planning efforts include basically three levels of decision-making.

For the purposes of this Handbook, Reclamation's resource planning efforts include basically three levels of decision-making (i.e., decisions reached through the preparation of Reclamation project level, RMP level, and site-specific level planning documents). As stated earlier, this Handbook primarily focuses on what is required to prepare and update Site-Specific Resource Plans and prepare revisions to existing RMPs. However,

Reclamation project level decision-making is briefly discussed below for comparison purposes. In general, management decisions become progressively more specific at each lower level of planning.

A resource planning document can be prepared for a variety of management units that vary in size. One can assume that the smaller the area covered by a planning document the more likely it is the area that is managed for a single purpose (e.g., cultural resources) and not managed for multiple purposes (e.g., undeveloped recreation⁵, developed recreation, wildlife, grazing, and mineral extraction). It can also be assumed that the number of personnel required to complete a planning document at the site-specific level would be much less than the number required to complete either a Reclamation project level or RMP level plan (e.g., a multidisciplinary team consisting of many individuals would be needed to complete a Reclamation project or RMP level plan while a recreation planner with the assistance of a limited number of staff, such as a NEPA

⁵ Undeveloped recreation is defined as the recreation activities that occur in a natural setting that require minimal development or facilities. The importance and appreciation of the environment or setting for the activities is greater than in developed recreation settings.

compliance specialist and editorial assistant, might be the only individuals needed to complete a recreation master plan).

It should be noted that planning is continuous throughout the decision-making planning levels (i.e., continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment through amendment and revision of each type of plan is recommended). All activities outlined at each planning level remain subject to site-specific evaluation and compliance with Federal environmental laws (e.g., NEPA, ESA, NHPA, Clean Water Act, and FWCA).

Reclamation Project Level Planning

The decisions made at the Reclamation project level primarily deal with the management and development of water and related resources in the 17 Western states. The decisions likely cover actions that have long-term implications (i.e., 50-100 years). The decisions made at this level typically cover a variety of water resource issues for a large geographic area (e.g., decisions to resolve issues and concerns dealing with the increased demands for a limited supply of water). In other cases, decisions at the Reclamation project level may deal with issues that cover a smaller geographic area (e.g., resolve issues dealing with the availability of surface water and groundwater). In both cases, the decisions involve water-related issues. The planning mechanism or tool for addressing these issues and concerns and providing long-term management actions is through the preparation of water-related planning documents discussed previously (i.e., Appraisal and Feasibility Level Studies, Special Studies, and Plans of Study).

Although this level of planning will address the impacts to natural resources in a geographically defined area, the focus of a planning study is to provide managers with relevant information to make informed decisions about the management of the water resource. For example, a planning study that evaluates alternatives for the construction or reoperation of a dam might also address instream flows and the potential impacts to endangered species. In addition, this study might further address public use of the river for recreational purposes.

Resource Management Plan Level Planning

The decisions made at the RMP level typically deal with long-term (i.e., 10 years) management and development of a defined geographic area that is typically part of a larger Reclamation project. The decisions made at this planning level provide decision-makers with a strategy for managing the natural resources, resource related programs, and the many uses that may occur within the area covered by an RMP. An RMP usually provides broad, programmatic direction that identifies the future biological, physical, and social conditions that

Reclamation wishes to achieve within the area. Guidance for preparing a comprehensive RMP is contained in the 2003 Guidebook. Refer to Chapter 4 of this Handbook for guidance on preparing revisions and amendments to an existing RMP.

Typically, an RMP provides a general outline for future land use management, establishes resource priorities, and documents the current condition of all of the natural resources and environmental factors⁶ within a specific planning area. By collecting pertinent technical data for all of the resources and environmental factors, planners and resource specialists can establish a base-line condition that can be used in the future when, or if, additional planning studies are conducted. Baseline information can be used to assist in identifying trends in resource condition and public use. However, the actual amount of resource data and information collected will depend on the project scope, available staff, and the level of information required for managers to make informed decisions.

When preparing an RMP level planning document, the planning team should avoid collecting an over-abundance of detailed data and information describing in detail which facilities will be built and where they may be located. RMPs are not typically implementation-level planning documents; therefore, the planning team should focus their efforts on area-wide planning concepts and existing conditions of resources and programs rather than the site-specific details that are likely to change over the life of an RMP. However, it should be noted that RMPs may include both area-wide and site-specific information that facilitates the project implementation without further planning documentation.

Site-Specific Level Planning

The decisions made at the site-specific level deal with the development and management of a defined geographic area that is typically smaller in size than the area covered by an RMP. Site-specific level decisions can pertain to a specific area within a management unit covered by an RMP or outside an RMP covered management unit. A Site-Specific Resource Plan that is prepared for an area already covered by an RMP is also referred to as a Step-Down Plan in this Handbook. The planning decisions made at this level are typically long-term commitments (e.g., the decision to plan, develop, and manage a wetland is likely a long-term commitment). However, some planning decisions made at this level could be considered short-term (e.g., decision to plan, develop, and manage

⁶ For the purposes of this Handbook, natural resources refer to soils, groundwater, vegetation, wildlife, special status species, recreation, cultural resources, Indian sacred sites, and Indian Trust Assets (ITA). Environmental factors include climate, air quality, noise, topography, geology, land use, transportation, economics, and environmental justice.

a concession operation would be considered a relatively short-term decision since the concession contract will expire and have to be re-evaluated to determine what facilities, goods, and services would be provided in the future, if any).

The decisions that result from this level of planning will likely deal with:

- localized area and associated issues and concerns (e.g., protection and enhancement of natural resources in a specific area that are being degraded by public use);
- implementing a program for a specific area (e.g., developing and managing a watchable wildlife program);
- developing a resource management program for a specific area (e.g., developing and managing a cultural resource site);
- constructing, developing, and managing public use facilities (e.g., development of a campground and support facilities and components such as restrooms, fire pits, picnic tables, water hydrants, and boat ramp);
- providing a service to the public (e.g., development of a concession operation); and
- implementing management action(s) for a variety of programs and resources that have been documented in a larger planning document (e.g., management actions detailed in an RMP level planning document).

At the most specific level, a Site-Specific Resource Plan may include drawings and specifications (e.g., drawings and specifications to construct a trail system and support facilities).

Refer to Figure 2.2 for an overview of the key aspects of Reclamation’s typical decision-making planning levels.

Typical Decision-Making Planning Levels

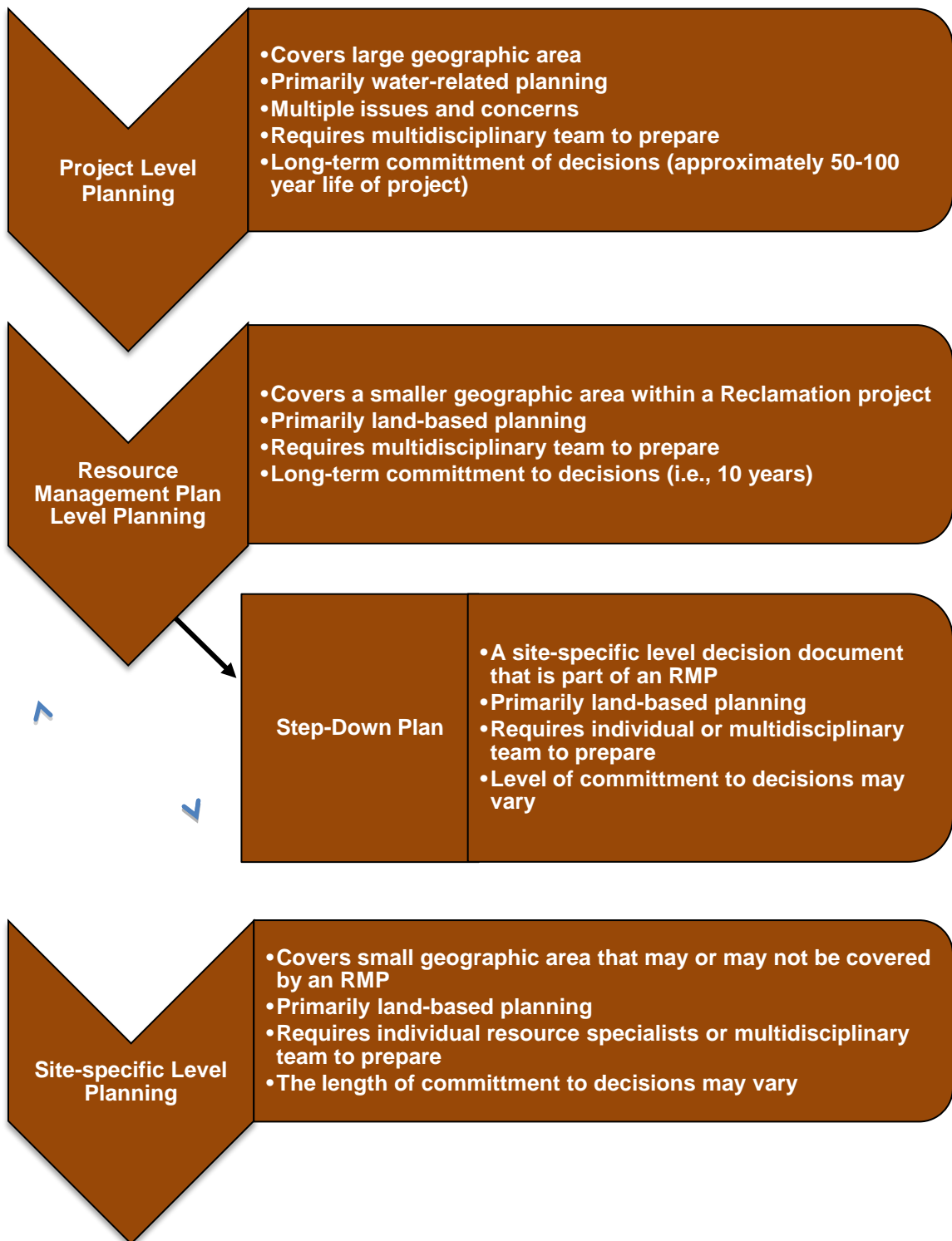


Figure 2.2 — Typical Decision-Making Planning Levels

Chapter 3

Preparing Site-Specific Resource Plans

Introduction

As stated in Chapter 2, the decisions made at the site-specific level deal with the development and management of defined geographic areas that are generally smaller in size than areas covered by RMPs. These decisions (e.g., management actions, obligations, and commitments) should be documented in a Site-Specific Resource Plan. There are a variety of variables that will determine the scope of a Site-Specific Resource Plan (e.g., size of area, issues, schedule, budget, staffing, types of resources or programs being planned for, previous NEPA compliance activities, and management priorities).

For the purposes of this Handbook, there are two types of Site-Specific Resource Plans:

1. Site-Specific Resource Plans that are prepared as stand-alone documents for an area that is not covered by an existing RMP.
2. Site-Specific Resource Plans that are prepared for an area within a management unit already covered by an applicable RMP. These types of Site-Specific Resource Plans are referred to as Step-Down Plans. Additionally, there are two possible types of Step-Down Plans:
 - a. Step-Down Plans that are conceptually referenced in applicable RMPs but prepared sometime during the RMP's planning life.
 - b. Step-Down Plans that are comprehensively included in RMPs with the intention of implementing the plan upon approval of the overriding RMP.

There may be situations where an existing RMP does not address a Step-Down Plan in any form; however, subsequent scoping of the issues and concerns or monitoring dictate that one should be prepared for a site-specific action. In this instance, the responsible official⁷ should first determine if the new Step-Down

⁷ A responsible official can be defined as the Bureau of Reclamation individual who has been delegated the authority to carry out specific planning actions. This official may or may not have ultimate signatory authority for approving a specific planning document.

Plan is consistent with the management strategy prescribed in the comprehensive RMP. If it is not consistent, then a decision should be made to:

- modify the proposed Step-Down Plan so that it is consistent with the management strategy in the applicable RMP;
- initiate an amendment or revision to the applicable RMP so that the Step-Down Plan can be implemented without further modification; or
- reject the proposed Step-Down plan in its entirety.

A Site-Specific Resource Plan can be prepared as a stand-alone planning document or as a Step-Down Plan and titled under various headings such as:

- Vegetation Management Plan
- Habitat Improvement Plan
- Invasive Plant Management Plan
- Trail Management Plan
- Fishery Management Plan
- Shoreline Management Plan
- Erosion Control Plan
- Wetlands Plan
- Interpretive Plan
- Commercial Services Plan (also known as a Concession Plan)
- Business Plan
- Recreation Management/Master Plan
- Cultural Resources Management Plan
- Fire Management Plan
- Landscape Restoration Plan
- Transportation Plan
- Operation and Maintenance Plan
- Watchable Wildlife Plan
- Special Use Plan (e.g., a plan for an area that will or has been closed for a certain reason or closed with certain restrictions pursuant to 43 CFR part 429)
- Annual Work Plan
- Off-road Vehicle Plan
- Grazing Plan

There are also a variety of resource studies or assessments that Reclamation might prepare that could also be considered as a Site-Specific Resource Plan and could be included with the above list. Some examples would include studies related to

instream flows, Water and Land Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, recreation demand, and carrying capacity.

Following are five examples of proposed land use strategies that could benefit from the preparation of a Site-Specific Resource Plan:

1. Managing for wildlife values and general public use for a relatively small area (e.g., 500-acre block of land to be managed primarily for wildlife, with limited day use, seasonal and area closures to protect wildlife values, and few, if any, recreational facilities provided).
2. Detailed specifications of how a resource and site might be managed (e.g., maintain 20 acres of potential southwest willow flycatcher habitat with a mature cottonwood overstory of at least 50 percent crown closure and a shrubby, willow-dominated understory with at least 75 percent crown closure; no livestock grazing or public use allowed within 200 feet of the site).
3. Strategy for developing and managing a wildlife viewing area to include: (1) actual site location; (2) facility designs for parking area, restroom, interpretive panels; (3) designs for signs and barriers that would be used for zoning human activity and possibly restricting access to certain areas at certain times of the year; and (4) a monitoring program that would adequately identify impacts to wildlife resources over time.
4. Detailed strategy on how to protect a specific shoreline at a reservoir with the intent of: (1) selecting the most appropriate erosion control measure that addresses soil type and slope (e.g., non-structural stabilization or stone rip-rap); (2) protecting health and safety of recreation users; and (3) protecting the natural conditions of shoreline for its aesthetic appeal, as much as possible.
5. Detailed development process for constructing a hiking, biking, and jogging trail within the rights-of-way of a water conveyance canal in an urban area to identify: (1) issues and concerns of adjacent land owners and the managing water user association; (2) design criteria; (3) who has liability for trail users; (4) security measures; (5) trail construction costs; and (6) possible increased cost to water users for operation and maintenance.

Why Follow a Planning Process?

Planning is defined as nothing more than structured problem solving (Loomis, 1993) or a structured, rational approach to solving problems (U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers, 1997). A planning process is simply the approach that an agency takes to identify and resolve a problem.

When preparing Site-Specific Resource Plans, Reclamation should follow an established planning process to reach the most appropriate planning decision(s). Pursuant to the guidance provided in the 2003 Guidebook, Reclamation follows a 10-step process when completing a planning study. Refer to Figure 3.1 that outlines the land-based 10-step planning process. When conducting a water-related study such as a Feasibility Study, Reclamation follows a 6-step planning process pursuant to the guidance outlined in the P&Gs. The decisions that are reached following an approved and tested planning process are going to be superior to the decisions made without a logical and well thought out process. When following an established planning process, a resource planning team⁸ should consider all the factors that could reduce the cost and save valuable time.

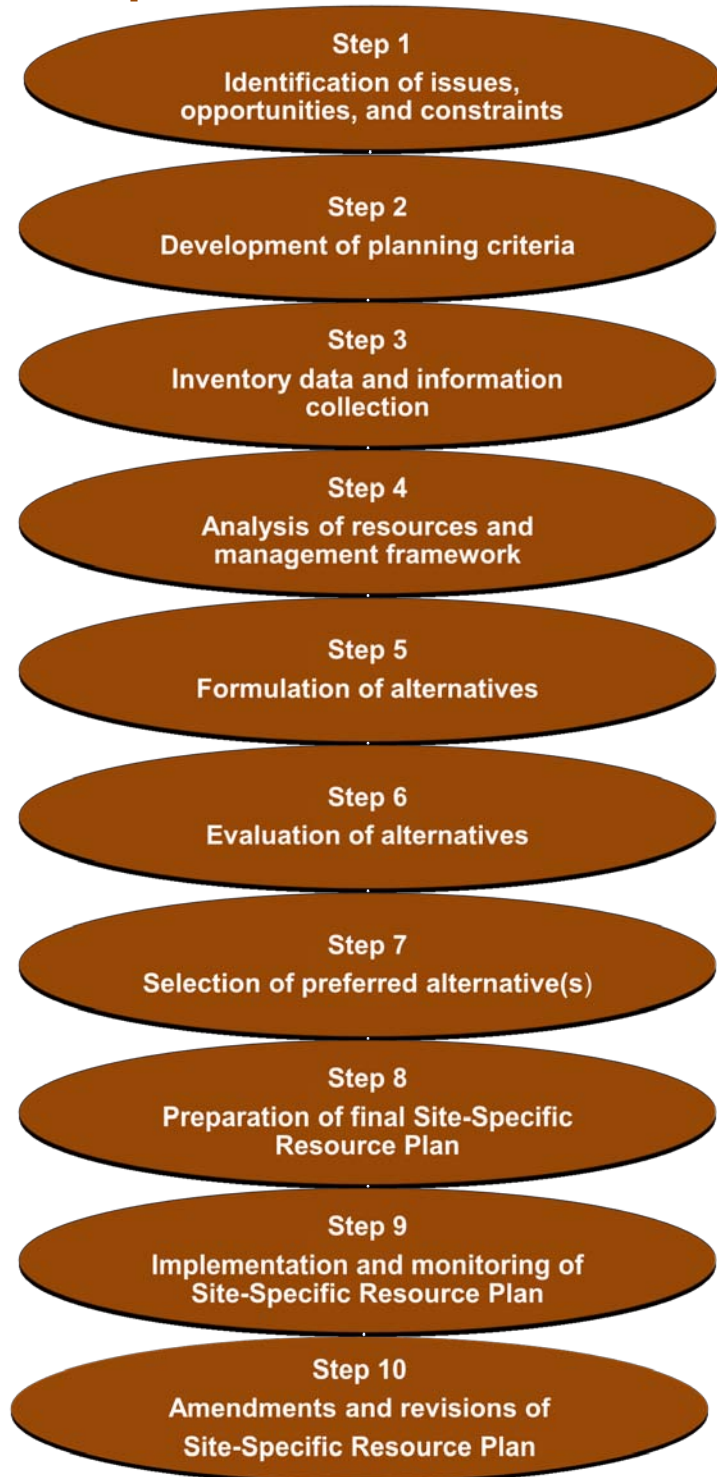
Following an established planning process will result in a planning document that is:

- prepared consistently throughout the agency;
- based on a thoroughly analyzed and evaluated management strategy that addresses identified issues and concerns;
- detailed enough to allow managers to make informed decisions;
- flexible enough to allow managers to address local issues and concerns;
- acceptable to the general public and interested entities;
- based on a combination of the best available science, data, and professional judgment⁹;

⁸ A planning team is defined as the group of individuals required to complete a planning document. The planning team can also be referred to as a multidisciplinary team consisting of two or more individuals with the required skills, abilities, and expertise necessary to complete a quality resource planning document.

⁹ Professional judgment is defined as a reasonable decision that has given full and fair consideration to all of the appropriate information, that is based on principled and reasonable analysis and the best available science and expertise, and that complies with applicable laws (Bureau of Reclamation, 2012).

Site-Specific Resource Planning Steps



Site-Specific Resource Plans should be re-evaluated when needed and revised or amended “if necessary” in cooperation with all involved entities to reflect changing conditions and management objectives. If changes in the Site-Specific Resource Plan have the potential to negatively affect the resources and the human environment, NEPA including a public involvement process should be initiated.

Note: NEPA compliance activities should occur during the planning process.
Figure 3.1 — Site-Specific Resource Planning Steps

- based on management actions that follow agency policies, directives and standards, guidebooks, handbooks, Federal laws, regulations, and EOs; and
- based on the establishment of management actions that, for the most part, can be monitored to determine their effectiveness.

Site-Specific Resource Plans

A Site-Specific Resource Plan can be programmatic in nature or site-specific management actions that require immediate implementation. If a Site-Specific Resource Plan is to be implemented upon completion, it should provide more specificity on how certain programs or natural and cultural resources are to be developed, managed, and protected.

Throughout the planning process, Reclamation personnel should keep in mind that an individual Site-Specific Resource Plan may have impacts to a variety of resources; therefore, special care should be taken to not plan in a vacuum. The planning team should look at the possible cumulative impacts to the natural and cultural resources and environmental factors within and adjacent to the planning area. This is especially true when several individual Site-Specific Resource Plans are prepared within a certain management unit. The cumulative impact that a single Site-Specific Resource Plan may have might be insignificant while the preparation of several Site-Specific Resource Plans may have a cumulative effect and result in the degradation of resources and the human environment over time. William Odum (1982) succinctly described environmental degradation from cumulative effects as the "tyranny of small decisions."

Step-Down Plans

The first type of Step-Down Plan is a site-specific resource planning document that is referenced in an existing RMP but will be prepared sometime during the RMP's planning life. For example, in response to an issue or concern identified during scoping for the applicable RMP, several *conceptual* management actions might have been developed that relate to the construction of a trail system around a reservoir. One of the trail-related management actions may state that a Trail Management Plan (i.e., a type of Step-Down Plan) would be prepared sometime within the 10-year planning period. When the Trail Management Plan is prepared, it should outline in detail the implementation strategy and actions that would result in a completed and usable trail (e.g., the plan would include the final site location, construction specifications, design criteria, construction costs, and monitoring strategy). The preparation of this type of Step-Down Plan should follow the planning steps listed in the section below entitled *Planning Process for Site-Specific Resource Plans*, as appropriate.

Whenever this type of Step-Down Plan is prepared, the management strategy and associated management actions should be implemented as soon as funding is available.

The second type of Step-Down Plan is a Site-Specific Resource Plan that is completed in its entirety and is ready for implementation once the RMP is approved (i.e., the plan has all the specifics required to develop, implement, and administer the management actions). Appropriate site-specific NEPA and NHPA compliance analysis of the management actions associated with a Step-Down Plan should have been completed concurrently with the applicable RMP. Therefore, the actions in a Step-Down Plan can be implemented upon approval of the applicable RMP and associated NEPA and NHPA compliance document. However, as stated earlier, it is rare that this type of Step-Down Plan would be prepared as part of a programmatic RMP.

Planning Process for Site-Specific Resource Plans

Following is a discussion of Reclamation’s land-based resource planning process for preparing a Site-Specific Resource Plan. The discussion includes key aspects related to each planning step for the preparation of an RMP included in the 2003 Guidebook plus additional information that is tailored to the development of a Site-Specific Resource Plan.

Step 1: Identification of Issues, Opportunities, and Constraints

Land use planning should focus on resolving issues that arise over the use and management of Reclamation’s land and associated resources according to Reclamation policies and existing project authorities. An issue can come from a variety of sources including, but not limited to, internal or external scoping, public involvement, field reviews, monitoring, inventories, new regulations and policies, and trends in public use and resource conditions. Issues can be added, modified, shelved for later consideration, or deleted throughout the planning process based on analysis and at the discretion of the responsible official. In certain situations, the identification of issues should correspond with the scoping process under NEPA. Refer to Chapter 5 for more detailed information for identifying focused issues and concerns through the use of internal and external scoping and public involvement. Chapter 5 also discusses the importance of establishing a well thought out and

Land use planning should focus on resolving issues that arise over the use and management of Reclamations land and associated resources according to Reclamation policies and existing project authorities.

articulated planning proposal and formulating appropriate goals and objectives early in the planning process.

Issues should be limited to those within a defined planning area. Preparers of a Site-Specific Resource Plan should filter out any issues raised by the public that do not pertain to the planning area. The strategy for addressing identified issues within the planning area will typically deal with the development and management of a single program or resource (e.g., off-road vehicles or wetlands). Any preliminary goals¹⁰ and objectives¹¹ that are developed to address the identified issues should be narrow in scope and deal only with the program or resource.

At this point in the planning process, it may be beneficial for the planning team to attempt to define and establish the desired future condition of the defined geographic area based on the identified internal and external issues. The desired future condition component is a short narrative of what the future of the defined area should be as a result of implementing the Site-Specific Resource Plan. Refer to Attachment U in the 2003 Guidebook for an example of a desired future condition statement.

As part of planning step 1, the planning team should identify the opportunities for resolving the identified issues. There are many opportunities that are available to planners that can adequately address the issues. This is especially true for established programs such as a watchable wildlife or interpretation and education program. There are multiple sources of information available for the successful implementation and management of these programs or resources in a variety of physical settings. Refer to Attachment N of the 2003 Guidebook for several examples of funding and managing opportunities available for managing Reclamation land and waterbodies.

Constraints are inherent with all land managing agencies (i.e., budgets, staffing, priorities, politics, environmental limitations,¹² policies, environmental laws, regulations, and EOs). These constraints may determine how Reclamation resolves certain planning issues.

The opportunities and constraints identified during the planning process help the planning team establish the management strategies for developing and managing

¹⁰ A goal is a general statement that describes the desired future condition that is expected to be achieved once a planning document is fully implemented.

¹¹ An objective is a brief statement that describes a broad-based strategy that will result in accomplishing the goal and resolving the identified issues and concerns.

¹² Environmental limitations are defined as factors that would limit or prevent the implementation of a management action (e.g., slope, soils, wetlands, critical habitat, hazardous geologic conditions, and lack of adequate land base).

the program or resource (i.e., it keeps the team focused on doing only what the opportunities and constraints will allow them to accomplish).

Step 2: Development of Planning Criteria

Planning criteria are short and concise statements that help establish the sideboards and parameters for development of a Site-Specific Resource Plan and

Planning criteria can be changed or deleted at any time during the planning process.

help highlight major areas of concern. Planning criteria are typically based on existing law, agency guidance, public input, environmental limitations, and input from cooperating agencies (e.g., recreation and wildlife managing partners). Refer to Attachment O of the 2003 Guidebook for examples of planning criteria.

Planning criteria can be changed or deleted at any time during the planning process if it is determined through analysis and evaluation that the criteria or portions thereof are not applicable.

Once the planning criteria are established, the planning team can refine and finalize a variety of pertinent goals and objectives that guide the development of a Site-Specific Resource Plan. More specifically, the planning criteria and the goals and objectives can be used to formulate a reasonable range of planning alternatives.

Some agencies, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Reclamation, conduct studies to determine if plan alternatives will meet a set of planning criteria, sometimes referred to as screening criteria (National Association of Recreation Resource Planners, 2011). One of the most obvious planning criteria that would be part of any Reclamation resource planning document would be that "resource management actions contemplated in any alternative would not interfere with the primary congressionally-approved Reclamation project purpose." There is a direct relationship in the development of planning criteria in this planning step and issue identification in planning step 1 (i.e., planning criteria or screening criteria can be used to determine what issues should be carried forward in the planning process). Refer to Chapter 5 of this Handbook for additional information on screening criteria.

The planning criteria established for a Site-Specific Resource Plan, as well as other types of resource related plans, will be similar for any Reclamation management unit because many of the factors that influence the formation of the criteria are essentially the same (e.g., existing laws and agency guidance are consistently applied to all land under an agency's jurisdiction). Following are several tasks that could be accomplished by the planning team to help in development of the planning criteria:

- identify any long-term resource or administrative programs that may influence or limit the implementation of certain management decisions or actions;
- collect pertinent professional planning principles, methodologies, or guidelines (e.g., ecosystem management, visitor capacity decision-making, concession management, NEPA, NHPA, mapping capabilities, wetlands management, and recreation management);
- collect pertinent laws, regulations, policies, and resource commitments that apply to the management unit (e.g., existing land use authorizations);¹³ and
- collect information about the management unit that can be successfully used to evaluate alternatives and the selection of the best Site-Specific Resource Plan management strategy.

Step 3: Inventory Data and Information Collection

During planning step 3, the social, cultural, economic, environmental, and natural resources should be inventoried within the planning area. For the most part, the information and data collected for a Resource Plan describes the existing condition of all the physical and biological resources within the planning area. This is especially true when preparing a large scale RMP level planning document but not

The planning team will have to verify early in the process that the information and data that was collected is the best available and whether it is reliable.

necessarily a Site-Specific Resource Plan. The collection of data and information should be less of a burden. The information and data need only be enough to address the issues and concerns, and adequate enough to formulate a preferred management alternative that will allow for successful development and management of the program or resource. For example, when preparing a commercial services plan for a specific site, you can confine your data search to information that will allow you to: (1) decide what commercial facilities and opportunities should be provided based on trends in outdoor recreation, (2) prepare a financial feasibility evaluation, (3) be compliant with existing law and Reclamation concession policy and directives and standards, and (4) provide adequate data to assess the potential impacts to a limited number of resources.

¹³ A land use authorization is defined as a document that defines the terms and conditions under which the Bureau of Reclamation will allow the use of its land, facilities, and waterbodies.

Note: Under NEPA and NHPA, sufficient data must be collected to assess impacts to affected resources.

The important resources and environmental factors within the planning area should be described. This description will establish a good baseline condition that can be used to measure the progress and success of the management actions and identify trends in public use and resource condition.

The planning team will have to verify early in the process that the information and data collected is the best available and whether it is reliable. If it is determined there are data gaps in the information that would prevent the planning team from formulating a quality management alternative or assess potential impacts to affected resources, then additional data should be collected from existing sources or through the generation of new data. However, focus should always be on the best available data that pertains directly to the primary goals and objectives.

There are multiple sources available where inventory data can be obtained for most of the resources in the planning area without much effort. The collected data can be used to describe the existing condition within your planning area (e.g., information on population, soils, climate, air quality, geology, economy, wildlife species, hydrology, and vegetation are readily available from a variety of sources).

Step 4: Analysis of Resources and Management Framework

The collected social, economic, biological, and physical data and other information will have to be analyzed to determine if the resource area can support the potential management actions. This step is a precursor and basis for forming a reasonable range of alternatives and identifying the individual management decisions and requirements for development and protection of resources.

The existing resources should be analyzed and evaluated in terms of who may have primary responsibility.

During this planning step, the planning team should begin to analyze: (1) what types of resource uses and development strategies are actually authorized by Federal laws, regulations, and Reclamation policy, (2) how the issues and opportunities identified in planning step 1 can be resolved or achieved, and (3) how the constraints identified in planning step 1 will affect the development of alternatives and associated management actions.

Since this planning process deals with the preparation of a Site-Specific Resource Plan and the collection of data that relates directly to a specific program or

resource, the planning team should not focus their time on analyzing the resources that will likely not be affected by the proposed management actions (e.g., it is doubtful that the preparation of an Interpretive Plan will negatively affect the geology, hydrology, soils, climate, or air quality within the planning area).

Note: If the proposed plan has the potential to positively affect resources, then the planning team should include that information in the plan (e.g., a Landscape Restoration Plan will have a positive effect on the soils and vegetation in the planning area).

In addition, the existing resources should be analyzed and evaluated in terms of who may have primary responsibility (e.g., Bureau of Land Management may have responsibility for wildland fire management, oil and gas activities, or grazing; a state game and fish department may have management responsibility for enforcing fish and wildlife regulations; and a state parks department may have responsibility for enforcing boating activities on the water surface).

Step 5: Formulation of Alternatives

The basic goal of formulating alternatives is to identify various combinations of land uses and resource management practices that respond to the issues identified during the planning process. In addition, formulating alternatives should require the planning team to consider a combination of:

- issues, concerns, opportunities, and constraints identified in planning step 1;
- planning criteria, goals, and objectives identified in planning step 2;
- social, economic, biological, and physical resource data and information collected in planning step 3; and
- analysis of the resources and management framework conducted in planning step 4.

Considering all the information collected in the first 4 planning process steps, will keep the planning team focused on developing a reasonable number of alternatives for further consideration and analysis. Any alternatives that were formulated but eliminated from further consideration should be documented in the planning document. The reasons for elimination should be included.

When preparing a Site-specific Resource Plan, it may be appropriate that only one action alternative be considered.

When preparing a Site-Specific Resource Plan, it may be appropriate that only one action alternative be considered (e.g., prepare a Special Use Plan for a small planning area). Typically, a Site-Specific Resource Plan like a Special Use Plan

for a specific area would require only a few management actions and would follow a strict process to close an area to public use or restrict use (i.e., there would only be one well thought out action alternative formulated that would be implemented). The alternative would contain the management actions that directly address the established issues, concerns, goals, and objectives.

If there is more than one action alternative, every effort should be made by the planning team to make sure that the differences between the alternatives can be easily recognized by those individuals and entities who might have to review the Site-Specific Resource Plan. This is especially important if you are conducting public involvement activities.

Step 6: Evaluation of Alternatives

In order to get to step 7, *Selection of Preferred Alternative*, a thorough evaluation and comparison of the alternatives is required (i.e., compare the best combinations of land uses and management actions). The CEQ and Department of the Interior (Department) regulations for implementing the procedures of NEPA provide a framework for achieving this. The planning team should conduct an appropriate level of evaluation and analysis that will provide them with enough information to eventually select a final alternative.

Ultimately, the final decision of the potential effects to the resources is based on professional judgment, experience of the planning team, discussions with other professionals, literature review, and field reviews of the planning area.

While a quantitative analysis, evaluation, and comparison of alternatives is preferred, a qualitative analysis may be appropriate. The depth of analysis should correspond to what is required to meet the planning goals and objectives, and the scope and significance of the potential effects the alternative(s) may have on the resources in the planning area. Ultimately, the findings of the potential effects to the resources is based on professional judgment, experience of the planning team, discussions with other professionals, literature review, and field reviews of the planning area. If appropriate, the planning

team should solicit input from a variety of other sources such as the general public, managers, advisory groups, and cooperating entities (e.g., managing recreation and wildlife partners).

Step 7: Selection of Preferred Alternative

As with the evaluation of alternatives and to assist in selecting the preferred alternative, the planning team should consider and evaluate the input received from all sources (i.e., general public, special interest groups, public entities,¹⁴ managing partners, managers within the organization/agency, and other professionals). The input may be obtained following an internal and external scoping and public involvement process.

Reclamation should select those combinations of land uses and management actions that are: (1) consistent with existing policy, laws, and project purposes; (2) consistent with the goals and objectives that were developed to resolve identified issues and concerns; (3) implementable within the specified planning period without serious conflicts; (4) within the environmental resource limitations; and (5) widely accepted by the general public and public entities.

Sometimes a decision to pick one alternative over another is based on intangible factors rather than explicitly defined evaluation criteria. Intangible factors may include items such as the current funding level, next year's budget, long-term funding prospects for a particular alternative, or a manager's sense of political implications about selecting a certain alternative (National Association of Recreation Resource Planners, 2011).

Sometimes a decision to pick one alternative over another is based on intangible factors rather than explicitly defined evaluation criteria.

The planning team should document the reasons or rationale for selecting the preferred alternative using the planning criteria as a guide, and ensure that everyone involved in the planning process has an opportunity to review and comment on the draft preferred alternative.

Step 8: Preparation of Final Site-Specific Resource Plans

Once the planning team has considered the input from all sources, they should make the appropriate modifications and finalize the document for approval by the appropriate supervisory manager(s) and responsible official. If a NEPA compliance document is required, the planning team should ensure that it is also

¹⁴ In this case, public entities include those entities such as Indian tribes, FWS, Bureau of Indian Affairs, State Historic Preservation Officer, local and state governments, and other Federal agencies and organizations that the responsible official feels should review draft documents.

made available. To prevent duplication of data and information, a Site-Specific Resource Plan and NEPA compliance document may be combined. Upon approval of the Site-Specific Resource Plan and associated NEPA compliance document if one is required, they should be published and distributed.

Note: Approval and processing of NEPA documentation (i.e., CEs, EAs, or EISs) must follow the direction provided in Reclamation’s 2012 NEPA Handbook. In addition, reference should be made to Chapter 6 of this Handbook for further guidance on NEPA requirements. Once a Site-Specific Resource Plan is approved by the responsible official, Reclamation should provide written notification to concerned Federal, state, tribal, and local agencies as well as other entities and individuals. Copies of the final Site-Specific Resource Plan should accompany written notification.

Step 9: Implementation and Monitoring of Site-Specific Resource Plans

The area office should have primary responsibility for implementing and monitoring a Site-Specific Resource Plan. However, in many instances, implementation and monitoring will be shared by variety of other entities that may have some level of shared responsibility. This is especially true for Reclamation because of its partner relationship with state recreation and wildlife agencies and other non-Federal public entities. When other entities are involved, there should be a shared commitment to seek financial, program, and staffing resources necessary to implement and monitor the management actions.

The monitoring program should be documented in the Site-specific Resource Plan and include measureable standards and an appropriate schedule.

Monitoring is the mechanism that tracks the success or failure of the management strategy outlined in a Site-Specific Resource Plan. The monitoring program should be documented in the Site-Specific Resource Plan and include measureable standards and an appropriate schedule. The schedule should reflect a timeframe that is commensurate with the potential impacts that the management actions may have on resources within the planning area (i.e., the more

sensitive the resource, the more it should be monitored). If it is found that the monitoring program is inadequate, it should be modified accordingly without a plan amendment or revision unless otherwise stipulated.

If a NEPA compliance document is being prepared, the planning team should consider monitoring measures that will track the success or failure of the mitigation and environmental commitments made in the NEPA compliance document.

Step 10: Amendments and Revisions of Site-Specific Resource Plans

A Site-Specific Resource Plan should be considered as a dynamic planning document that may be amended and revised as necessary. A Site-Specific Resource Plan should be amended to modify one or more of the management decisions; it should be revised to modify the overall management strategy for the planning area.

There are certain factors that resource specialists can look for during scheduled monitoring and evaluation of the planning area that might lead to an amendment or revision. When amending and revising a Site-Specific Resource Plan, Reclamation offices should follow the same guiding principles required for amending and revising an RMP. However, it is expected that the time, funding, and staffing requirements to amend or revise a Site-Specific Resource Plan will be much less than what is needed for an RMP that covers a much larger area with many issues and program activities. It is assumed that most of the planning team's time will be spent on evaluating new data and information.

When amending and revising a Site-specific Resource Plan, Reclamation offices should follow the same guiding principles required for amending and revising an RMP.

Chapter 4

Amending and Revising Resource Plans

Introduction

Amendments and revisions are the key to keeping a Resource Plan current. As with any type of planning document, it is appropriate to follow an established process when preparing an amendment or revision. An amendment should be completed as the need arises at any time during the life of the Resource Plan. If conditions within the area covered by a Resource Plan have changed significantly at any time, Reclamation offices should consider a total revision. As a general guideline, it is customary to completely review a Resource Plan at least every 10 years to determine if it needs to be revised or updated. The actions ultimately taken at the end of the planning life of a Resource Plan are dependent on the significance of the changes that might be needed and available time, funding, and staff.

In addition to an amendment and revision, a Resource Plan can be changed through routine maintenance that requires much less time and effort when compared to an amendment or revision. Reclamation offices need to determine if a Resource Plan requires routine maintenance before venturing into the amendment and revision planning process. Routine maintenance may include posting new information, refining an analysis, or making minor changes to a management action that will not have additional impacts to area resources. Routine maintenance should not expand the scope of resource use or limitations contemplated in the existing Resource Plan or change any decisions or terms. Routine maintenance should not require official documentation or notification. However, written notification to concerned Federal, state, tribal, and local agencies as well as other entities and individuals may be provided at the discretion of the responsible official.

Monitoring and evaluation of a Resource Plan's management actions is the primary method of identifying the need to modify the Resource Plan through an amendment or revision.

Monitoring and evaluation of a Resource Plan's management actions is the primary method of identifying the need to modify the Resource Plan through an amendment or revision. During monitoring and evaluation, it is necessary to understand some of the primary factors that would lead to an amendment or revision. Once the need to amend or revise a Resource Plan has been identified, the responsible official should determine the scope and significance of the proposed changes that are required. This should determine the level of planning

and analysis, level of NEPA compliance, and public involvement that may be required.

It is recommended that Reclamation offices follow this Handbook’s process for amending and revising Resource Plans. In addition, offices should consider the opportunities or factors that are provided in this Handbook to reduce the overall cost, staff time, and preparation time. Refer to Attachment B of this Handbook for a list of possible factors to consider when preparing and updating a Resource Plan.

Factors Leading to Amendments or Revisions of Resource Plans

There are certain factors and reasons that resource specialists should look for that may lead to an amendment and revision. Following are examples of several factors or reasons that could trigger an amendment or revision to a Resource Plan:

1. Need to close an area or provide certain restrictions for public safety purposes.
2. Need to protect Reclamation project features from public use for security purposes.
3. Need to modify management action(s) to prevent user conflicts.
4. Need to modify management actions to ensure proper adherence to environmental commitments.
5. Need to modify management actions to comply with new laws, regulations, EOs, Reclamation policies and directives and standards.
6. Need to remove outdated language or management actions that are no longer required (i.e., most of the management actions and resource strategies have been completed and a new management strategy with updated goals and objectives are in order).
7. Change in land use or zoning designations for certain areas.
8. Public issues and concerns about Reclamation’s management of land covered by a Resource Plan.
9. Renewal of certain types of use authorizations on Reclamation land (e.g., pursuant to 43 CFR part 429, renewal of existing private exclusive recreational or residential use on Reclamation land will only be allowed following a public process, which will be part of the RMP development

and completion of recreation demand analysis and project feasibility studies). **Note:** For the purpose of this Handbook, it is assumed that renewal of these types of use authorizations can also be approved through an amendment and revision to any type of existing Resource Plan including a localized Site-Specific Resource Plan.

10. Need to prepare a Step-Down Plan for a management unit covered by an existing RMP.
11. Changes in available science and data that would lead to a significant alteration of a management action so that the desired future condition of a natural resource or program could be realized.
12. Change in status of Federally-listed species, species of concern, and species of interest.
13. A recommendation of an office manager at any administrative office level.
14. Request from a cooperating managing partner (e.g., state park or wildlife agency).
15. A new proposed action that has the potential to negatively affect the resources of the area covered by a Resource Plan.
16. Changes in the social, environmental, physical, or economic conditions.
17. Unforeseen uses of Reclamation land that require authorization of permits, contracts, or agreements that were not addressed in a Resource Plan.
18. Needed changes to the Resource Plan to correct planning errors.

The responsible official with the assistance from the planning team and other resource experts should determine the scope and significance of the factors or reasons for modifying a Resource Plan. The responsible official should then determine if an amendment or revision is required. Depending on the changes required, the planning team should also consider routine maintenance as an option for modifying a Resource Plan. Once the determination is made to initiate an amendment, revision, or routine maintenance planning process, a framework or planning strategy for addressing the factor(s) that triggered the change should be established. For example, relevant management actions will have to be established that effectively address new goals and objectives. In addition, the level of internal and external scoping and NEPA compliance including public involvement will have to be decided.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Resource Plans

Most land managing agencies have an established planning process; however, guidance for their monitoring and evaluation planning step seems to be lacking when compared to the detailed direction provided in other planning steps. In some agencies, monitoring and evaluation occur infrequently, or simply do not occur (National Association of Recreation Resource Planners, 2011). As with an RMP, a good monitoring program is also essential in tracking the progress of the management actions of the selected planning alternative in any Site-Specific Resource Plan. This section of this Handbook is intended to supplement the monitoring and evaluation information contained in the 2003 Guidebook. More importantly, this section highlights the value of a monitoring program in identifying the need for amending and revising a Resource Plan.

Monitoring should occur over the life of a Resource Plan to evaluate, observe, enforce, comply, or document the implementation and success of the final management actions. Monitoring and evaluation of a Resource Plan should occur at regularly scheduled times. However, they can occur randomly in conjunction with other reviews and monitoring efforts (e.g., Land Use Authorization Reviews, Recreation Compliance Reviews, Accessibility Reviews, Facility Condition Assessments, Water Quality Monitoring, Monitoring of Pest Management, and Resource Protection Plans). Regardless of who is conducting the monitoring and evaluation activities, individuals should be given an established evaluation form to document appropriate information. Offices should tailor the evaluation form to fit their monitoring needs; however, offices should ensure that they establish certain monitoring indicators that are measurable variables that can be used to evaluate whether the desired conditions are actually being achieved (National Park Service, 2008). Refer to Attachment W of the 2003 Guidebook for an example of a Monitoring Worksheet/Evaluation Form.

A good monitoring program should be able to:

1. Track the effectiveness of the overall management philosophy and strategy (e.g., is the general public satisfied with the agencies overall management strategy within the planning area?).
2. Track progress for achieving and/or maintaining a desired condition of a natural or cultural resource or program (e.g., does the information collected from monitoring the biological conditions indicate that the management action(s) have effectively protected the water quality within the planning area?).
3. Detect unacceptable effects of certain management decisions (e.g., water quality testing has indicated that water quality is decreasing as a result of increased public use).

4. Flag inadequacies (e.g., monitoring has indicated that the management actions associated with protecting a cultural resources site are inadequate).
5. Ensure a good working relationship with cooperating agencies and the public (e.g., the management action(s) that established a watchable wildlife viewing area have increased visitor use and user fees without negatively affecting the wildlife species in the area that is managed by a wildlife agency partner).
6. Identify trends in visitor use and resource condition that would require additional management actions that are outside the scope of an original Resource Plan (e.g., increased day use in a specific area has caused a decrease in vegetative cover from foot and vehicular traffic; human health and safety problems from the accumulation of human waste; and bank erosion from continued foot traffic to the reservoir). This scenario would require a new set of goals, objectives, and management actions that would deal with rehabilitation and closure of the area, or rehabilitation and intensive development of the area to accommodate increased use.
7. Determine if adjustments need to be made to the monitoring program to ensure that all of the management actions are effectively reviewed (e.g., the existing monitoring program cannot adequately track the success of some of the more important management actions associated with the goal of controlling pests and the objective of minimizing the invasion of noxious weeds within the planning area).
8. Ensure environmental commitments and mitigation are appropriately funded and completed.

Even though a monitoring and evaluation program is likely the primary means to collect adequate information to make informed decisions about the needed changes to a planning document, Reclamation personnel should also rely on:

1. New data and technologies (e.g., new census data).
2. Professional judgment (e.g., professional judgment is necessary to interpret and draw conclusions from certain types of analyses such as determining if an environmentally sensitive area should be immediately protected by closure or if additional studies should be taken to determine potential impacts).
3. Results of new natural resource inventories conducted in the planning area (e.g., vegetation inventory that might identify a rare plant species).

4. Input provided by other agencies, individuals, and special interest groups (e.g., input from a special interest group such as Trout Unlimited concerning fish habitat improvements to a stream).
5. New resource studies and reports (e.g., National Survey on Recreation and the Environment).

Whatever type of monitoring effort is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the management strategies of a Resource Plan, an evaluation framework should be established that will allow Reclamation to continually adapt its management to changing environmental, social, and economic conditions. Refer to Chapter 5 of this Handbook for information on how internal and external scoping and public involvement can help in identifying current and meaningful issues so that timely amendments and revisions can be made to an existing Resource Plan.

Adaptive Management

Reclamation and many Federal agencies have embraced the concept of adaptive management as a means to identify the changes or adjustments that are needed to improve established management actions over time. Adaptive management is defined as a systematic process for continually improving management policies and practices by learning from the outcomes of previously employed policies and practices (Green Facts, 2011). Reclamation has used adaptive management on a limited basis for several years primarily to address the impacts to downstream ecosystems resulting from the ongoing operation of certain dams. Following is an example of how Reclamation has used adaptive management:

"The Adaptive Management Program was developed to provide an organization and process for cooperative integration of dam operations, downstream resource protection and management, and monitoring and research information, as well as to improve the values for which Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Grand Canyon National Park were established. Adaptive management is a dynamic process where people of many talents and disciplines come together to make the right decision in the best interests of the resources (Reclamation, 2011)."

When insufficient data is available to make accurate decisions about future conditions of the social, economic, and ecological impacts of an alternative, an adaptive management program should be developed to monitor the results of the management decision (43 CFR part 46, *Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act*).

Adaptive management is an iterative process that essentially accumulates sufficient information that results in changes to the management decisions made in existing planning documents. It is recommended that Reclamation offices use

the basic concepts of adaptive management in conducting its monitoring and evaluating activities for a Resource Plan. Figure 4.1 shows the iterative process that should be followed if a Reclamation office chooses to adopt the concepts and principles of adaptive management.

The key components of adaptive management are a good monitoring and evaluation program and an effective process to amend or revise an existing planning document to adequately address required adjustments. If Reclamation offices implement a good monitoring and evaluation program in conjunction with the preparation of a Resource Plan, it will allow decision-makers to modify existing actions over time for the benefit and enhancement of the natural resources and programs within the planning area. The monitoring and evaluation program must be able to adequately measure the success of a management action and collect meaningful information throughout the life of the plan. In the simplest of terms, if Reclamation follows its established planning process and has successfully implemented a well thought out monitoring and evaluation program and made appropriate changes during the life of a Resource Plan, it has essentially embraced the adaptive management concept.

Adaptive management is both the recognition of these sources (i.e., collected information from a variety of sources obtained as part of the monitoring and evaluation program) as potential signals for change, and the willingness, through environmental analysis and Resource Plan amendment and revision process, to positively respond to these signals. Adaptive management also recognizes that a final plan will never be a complete and perfect document but proper and conscientious planning can minimize uncertainty by providing the decision-makers with enough flexibility to make necessary adjustments over the life of the plan (U.S. Forest Service, 2008).

Adaptive Management Iterative Process

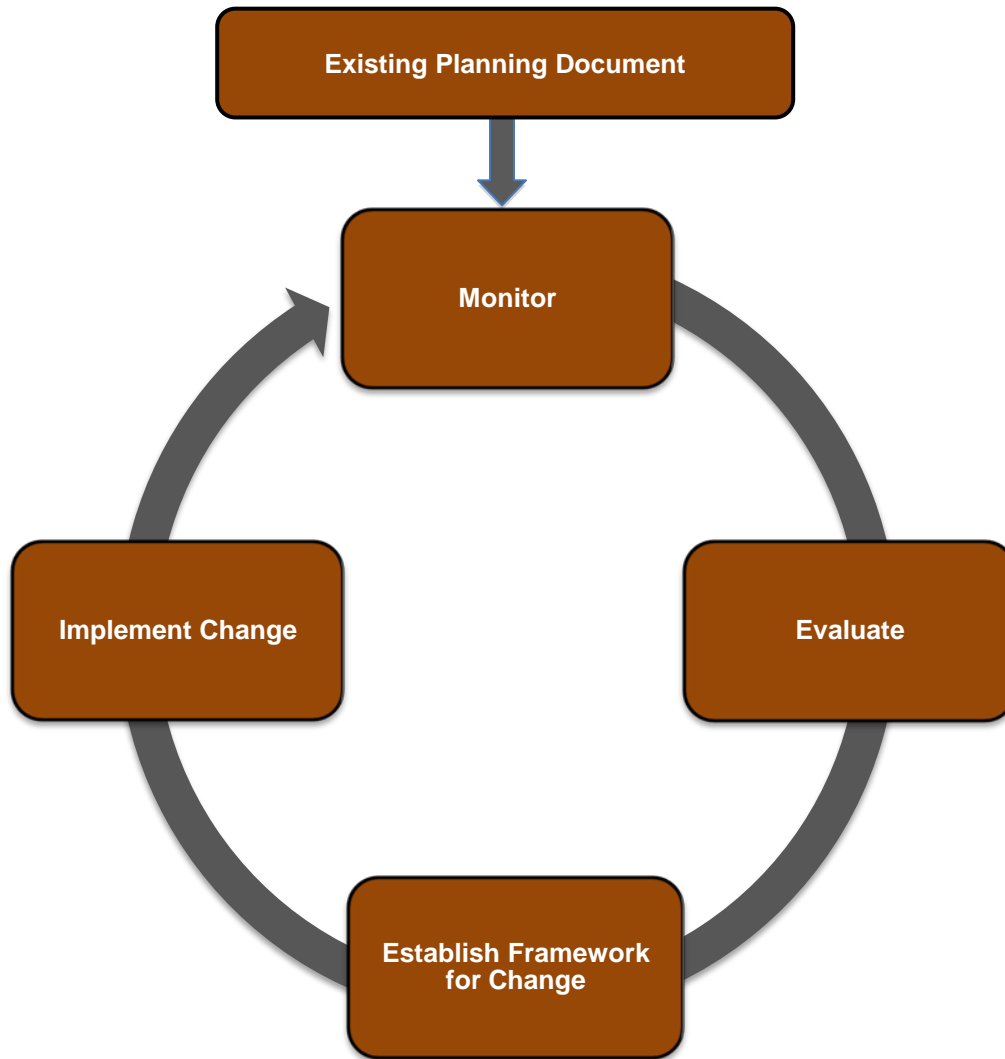


Figure 4.1 — Adaptive Management Iterative Process

Amendment Planning Process

An amendment to a Resource Plan should only involve needed changes to one or two management strategy components that have been identified through monitoring, evaluating, or reviewing a Resource Plan. An amendment would be needed, if implementation of proposed changes would not conform to the management direction, strategy, or philosophy documented in the existing Resource Plan.

Reclamation should follow the applicable guidance provided in Chapter 3 of this Handbook concerning Reclamation’s land-based planning process when completing amendments. In addition to the step-by-step guidance provided in Chapter 3, following are several factors to consider when preparing a Resource Plan amendment:

1. The effort in completing an amendment to an existing Resource Plan should be substantially less than the effort required to complete the original plan or a subsequent revision.
2. The issues and concerns that precipitated the needed amendment should have been identified through monitoring and other sources as highlighted earlier in this chapter.
3. The planning team should formulate a planning strategy that would identify existing opportunities or constraints to making the necessary modifications.
4. There may be circumstances where a responsible official may reject the preparation of an amendment due to the constraints that are identified.
5. The planning team should focus on developing planning criteria that pertains to what is necessary to assist in formulating the specific goals, objectives, and management actions that would be required to successfully make the appropriate changes to a Resource Plan.
6. The planning team should avoid unnecessary data collection by limiting the data collection to information that deals only with the implementation of amendment actions. All that may be needed is a cursory review of existing resource data that was collected for preparation of the existing Resource Plan. For example, if an amendment to an RMP is needed to prepare a Site-Specific Resource Plan for designation of an off-road vehicle use area, the planning team should limit their data search and collection to, among other things, determine: (1) the reliability of existing data for the resources that are present within the proposed off-road vehicle use area; (2) potential conflicts with other authorized uses through review of existing land use authorizations in the planning area; (3) if existing resource data is sufficient enough to allow for adequate monitoring and evaluating of management actions; and (4) if the development of the off-road vehicle use area follows the procedures in 43 CFR part 420, and applicable off-road vehicle EOs (i.e., *Off-Road Vehicles on Public Lands* EOs 11644 of 1972 and 11989 of 1977).

7. The planning team in cooperation with other involved entities should only analyze new data collected to determine: (1) the validity of data; (2) the potential for the resources to accommodate the amendment actions; and (3) the potential impact to Reclamation, its managing partners, and resources.
8. The planning team should only formulate a reasonable range of alternatives that would be relevant to addressing the components of an existing Resource Plan that needs to be altered. Each of the amendment alternatives should contain a limited number of management actions that are required to address the one or two components of the Resource Plan that need to be changed or modified.
9. The planning team should evaluate the potential environmental effects of implementing each of the new alternatives. Further, the evaluation of one alternative over another should be based on the planning criteria, goals, and objectives that were created.
10. The ultimate selection and approval of the final amended plan should remain with the responsible official after it is reviewed by the appropriate parties and individuals.
11. Reclamation should provide written notification and copies of the amended Resource Plan to concerned Federal, state, tribal, and local public agencies. If appropriate and at the discretion of the responsible official, notification and copies of the amended Resource Plan can also be made available to individuals, special interest groups, and other entities.
12. The Reclamation office with administrative jurisdiction over the area to be covered by the amended Resource Plan should have the responsibility for implementation and monitoring. **Note:** The planning team should identify additional monitoring strategies and schedule for the new actions that are contained in the amendment. These should be placed as an addendum to the existing monitoring program strategies.

Revision Planning Process

If changes are significant and it has been determined that a Resource Plan is outdated or obsolete and a total revision is required, the planning team should follow Reclamation's established land-based planning process and guidance outlined in the 2003 Guidebook and this Handbook.

Once revisions are approved by the responsible official, Reclamation should provide written notification to concerned Federal, state, tribal, and local agencies as well as other entities and individuals. Copies of the final revised Resource

Plan should accompany the written notification. Additional information concerning specific guidance for each planning step is not provided since it would be redundant with what has already been provided.

Chapter 5

Internal and External Scoping and Public Involvement

Introduction

One of the primary purposes for preparing this Handbook was to establish an appropriate process to identify focused planning issues.¹⁵ In addition to a good monitoring program, internal and external scoping and robust public involvement are the primary ways to identify relevant planning issues. Although scoping is typically associated with the NEPA process, it also applies to any resource planning process. Therefore, due to the importance of scoping and public involvement to Reclamation's resource planning process, they are covered specifically in this chapter.

Reclamation's land use planning should focus on resolving issues that arise over the use of its land and associated resources according to existing policies and project authorities. The established process to identify issues should allow Reclamation to, among other things, identify changes in public recreation trends and satisfaction levels, environmental resource issues, local and national issues, and concerns such as continuing authorized private exclusive recreation use on Reclamation land.

The scoping information and guidance provided in this chapter is based on the NEPA requirements for an EIS. Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), scoping is "an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action." The level of public interest and complexity of the issues being addressed determine the amount, timing, and level of public involvement. Reclamation staff should make a concerted effort to conduct both internal and external scoping and public involvement when conducting resource planning and NEPA compliance activities. In addition, these practices satisfy NEPA requirements for an EIS and may be advisable for EAs. The planning team

¹⁵ A planning issue can be defined as an unrealized opportunity, an unresolved conflict or problem, an effort to implement a new management program as a result of new initiatives or laws and regulations, or a value being lost.

should keep in mind that documents and actions required by NEPA can be valuable tools for problem solving even when not required under NEPA.

Scoping should include information and data collection from sources other than what can be obtained from conducting public meetings. Internal and external scoping should be considered as a tool that can assist the team in designing a planning strategy that will identify the most important issues that need to be addressed and the management actions that should be implemented to resolve the issues.

Although Reclamation considers the input received from the public and other entities, the final decisions reached within each planning step are the responsibility of Reclamation. Scoping occurs in most of the planning steps described in Chapter 3, but more specifically in the following steps:

- Planning Step 1, *Identification of Issues, Opportunities, and Constraints*, when external public scoping and internal scoping can be used initially to identify pertinent planning issues, concerns, opportunities, and constraints. Step 1 may involve public scoping meetings depending on the level of NEPA compliance that is required.
- Planning Step 2, *Develop Planning Criteria*, when the planning team develops specific screening criteria that will assist in identifying the most important issues to carry forward in the planning process.
- Planning Step 5, *Formulation of Alternatives*, which involves primarily internal meetings and workshops to assist the planning team in their effort to formulate a reasonable number of management alternatives.
- Planning Step 7, *Selection of the Preferred Alternative*, where the planning team may conduct external and internal scoping to collect input from a variety of sources including agency staff specialists, managers, advisory groups, general public, local government entities, and managing partners in soliciting comment on the agencies selection of the preferred management alternative. This step may involve public meetings or workshops to discuss the draft of the final planning document.
- Planning Step 10, *Amendments and Revisions*, when Reclamation initiates a new planning process to prepare an amendment and revision to a Resource Plan. Once the decision has been made to prepare an amendment or revision as described in Chapter 4, the planning process starts at the beginning and should include an appropriate level of internal and external scoping and public involvement.

The issues that the planning team needs to focus on resolving ultimately depends on the level of decision-making that is planned. As described by the National Park Service:

"The purpose of a general management plan is not to resolve all the park's specific issues, but to provide a rationale for decision-making over a relatively long-term. If a general management plan addresses only existing issues, it will become prematurely outdated and irrelevant if another issue, which was not anticipated during the planning process, comes into play 10 years down the road. Again, there is tension between addressing existing pressing issues and providing the general direction and guidance that will be needed to address future issues that haven't been thought of yet" (National Park Service, 2008).

Although a Site-Specific Resource Plan could be a programmatic planning document, it will most often deal with site-specific and current issues that will be resolved immediately through the implementation of the management actions.

The planning team should limit its data collection to that which is vital to create management actions or formulate decisions that resolve the issues or concerns. Simply put, the question is "What is the most useful information I can provide the decision-maker, technical team, and affected publics within the time, funding, and resource constraints of this project?" (Reclamation, 2001). The planning team should immediately eliminate from further study the issues and concerns that are not relevant.

Internal Scoping

Internal scoping means the collection of data and information by the planning team from a variety of sources within the agency. Within Reclamation, internal scoping would include soliciting input from in-house resource specialists, supervisory managers, literature review from all sources, as well as a thorough review of Federal laws and regulations and Reclamation policies, directives and standards, procedures, and handbooks.

Depending on a person's professional background and role within an organization, he or she will bring a different set of issues into the planning process. A major reason that we engage in interdisciplinary planning is to bring a diversity of views into the process, and to ensure that all facets of planning are considered (National Association of Recreation Resource Planners, 2011). For example, if an Accessibility Coordinator was part of the planning team, he or she would ensure that all management actions associated with proposed construction of facilities and/or implementation of resource programs (e.g., interpretive program) would comply with the American's with Disabilities Act of 1990 and other accessibility laws and regulations.

External Scoping

External scoping means the collection of data and information from the public, other agencies, and tribal governments. Effort should be made to involve appropriate Federal, state, and local government entities as well as private organizations and individuals with an interest in the proposal. The planning team should be aware that external scoping cannot be useful until an agency knows enough about the proposed action to identify most of the affected parties, and to present a coherent proposal and a suggested initial list of environmental issues and alternatives (CEQ, 1981). When a proposed action (i.e., preparation of a Resource Plan) is likely to have a high level of public interest or requires an EIS, formal public scoping meetings should be considered. External scoping can be conducted by:

- a formal public process as described in NEPA and the associated CEQ regulations (i.e., public meetings, open house scoping sessions, or hearings if preparing an EIS);
- the collection of current, specific, and focused data from a variety of onsite visitor intercept surveys or questionnaires using Reclamation’s Recreation Visitor Use Surveys approved through the Office of Management and Budget;
- direct mailings to interested entities, organizations, and individuals (e.g., State Historic Preservation Officer, FWS, and Bureau of Indian Affairs);
- soliciting input from a advisory committee¹⁶ (e.g., adaptive management advisory committee);

¹⁶ Reclamation offices should be aware that the formation of an advisory committee may be governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). FACA provides the public with the opportunity to render advice and assistance to the Federal Government through advisory committees. Refer to Reclamation Manual, Directive and Standard, *Committee Management – Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)*, ADM 01-01 for further guidance on advisory committees. Offices should contact Reclamation’s Committee Management Officer prior to forming an advisory committee.

- soliciting comments from the public through various medias (i.e., in addition to posting draft planning documents on an office internet home page to solicit public comments, use as many sources of social media as possible such as Reclamation’s Twitter, Facebook, and Really Simple Syndication feed);¹⁷
- soliciting comments using a hotline telephone number that the public can use to leave comments;
- management unit working groups (e.g., a working group that was formed as a result of the preparation of a Resource Plan that meet on a periodic basis to discuss management issues, budgets, and work related activities); and
- friends groups (i.e., a local volunteer organization that is interested in the overall management and well-being of a particular management unit that they frequent).

Scoping Process

The planning team should first determine scoping needs. For smaller scale planning efforts, internal scoping may be the only scoping that may be necessary. For larger management units, an extensive external scoping process including public involvement may be necessary. Ideally, the resource planning team will use a combination of both internal and external scoping and public involvement to identify all of the planning issues for the management unit. Scoping occurs throughout Reclamation’s resource planning process. Following are several suggested steps that could be taken to collect, evaluate, and identify the pertinent issues that should be addressed in a Resource Plan:

1. As stated earlier, the planning team should first establish a well articulated plan or proposal that the public can understand and provide meaningful comments. Having a well thought out preliminary plan also helps when soliciting input and comments from agency personnel.
2. The planning team should conduct a pre-planning evaluation to identify as many planning issues as possible. If you are preparing an amendment or revision to an existing Resource Plan, the planning issues identified during this step could be issues that were identified during monitoring.

¹⁷ RSS (Really Simple Syndication) are different web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works such as blog entries, news headlines, audio, and video in a standardized format.

3. Develop a preliminary set of planning criteria to address the planning issues. **Note:** The planning criteria may need to be modified throughout the scoping process to deal with any new issues and concerns.
4. Identify all stakeholders that may have a vested interest in the management unit and develop a plan for collaboration.
5. Early in the planning process, identify specific areas within the management unit that may have certain restrictions on public use (e.g., land immediately surrounding a dam and primary outlet works or critical habitat for an endangered species).
6. Consider conducting public scoping meetings and open houses to identify additional issues. This also includes input from all other external sources such as advisory groups or committees, special interest groups, and public entities.
7. Develop a simple methodology or filtering system that can assist the planning team in identifying which issues are important and should be addressed in the Resource Plan (e.g., issues dealing with Federal laws and regulations; protecting the health and safety of visitors; protecting endangered species and critical habitat; and protecting Reclamation project facilities are important issues that could be addressed in any Resource Plan). In addition, if the planning team prepared certain Desired Future Condition Statements, they could eliminate certain issues from further consideration (i.e., resolving the issues through creation of specific management actions would not lead to the desired future condition). Refer to Table 5.1 for an example of a simple planning issue screening matrix that could be used to screen identified planning issues.
8. Eliminate issues that are not important or that have already been addressed in an existing planning or NEPA compliance document (e.g., an issue could have already been addressed in an adjacent land owners planning document such as a County Land Use Plan).
9. Consolidate the most important and relevant issues into issue categories that can help the planning team define the scope of the issues that need to be resolved, develop goals and objectives to address the issues, and formulate management actions to accomplish the goals and objectives. Refer to Attachment M of the 2003 Guidebook for examples of issue categories and the goals and objectives that can be established to resolve specific issues.

Table 5.1—Example of Planning Issue Screening Matrix.

Planning Issue	Screening Question	Response	Is Additional Analysis Required?
Should new recreation facilities and upgrades and rehabilitation of existing facilities be provided?	Will action meet public demand based on identified trends in outdoor recreation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	Yes
	Will the action interfere with Reclamation project purposes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
	Will action comply with existing laws?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
	Is there sufficient funding and staffing available to construct and maintain facilities?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
	Is the issue too broad to be useful during evaluation and analysis?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
	Will action authorize any private exclusive use of Reclamation land?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
	Can facilities be constructed and maintained by a private concessionaire as opposed to the Federal government?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
	Will action have a cumulative effect on existing resources?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	Yes
	Will action enhance and protect endangered species and habitat?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	Yes
	If action was not implemented, would there likely be a backlash from the public?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
	Can the action be mitigated if it was addressed in the Resource Plan?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
	Has the issue already been addressed in another planning document?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	
	Will resolving the planning issue help in meeting the proposed desired future condition statement?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	

10. Prioritize, evaluate, and analyze the remaining significant issues. As part of the evaluation and analysis, the planning team should review existing and long-term budgets and political atmosphere to determine when or if an issue can be properly addressed or resolved in a Resource Plan. This should be accomplished in cooperation with office managers.
11. Use the issue categories to assist the planning team in formulating a reasonable number of management actions or combination of land uses (i.e., management alternatives) that address the goals and objectives established for each issue category.
12. Select the preferred management strategy that best addresses the issue(s). This becomes your Resource Plan or an amendment or revision to an existing plan.

Table 5.1 is a simple example of a matrix that could be created to assess whether a planning issue should be carried forward for further consideration. Some of the questions mentioned above could be used when the planning team is screening the issues for any Reclamation planning effort (e.g., Will the action interfere with Reclamation project purposes and will action comply with existing laws?). A screening matrix should be tailored to the circumstances and issues that exist in the planning area and should be modified throughout the planning process. Using the example above, the planning team should probably carry this planning issue (e.g., should new recreation facilities and upgrades and rehabilitation to existing facilities be provided?) forward for further evaluation and analysis since there was not enough information to make an informed decision at this point in the planning process.

There are two planning exercises that should be performed before the planning team begins to evaluate and screen any of the internal or external issues. First, it is recommended that the planning team develop a preliminary set of planning criteria. Similar to the screening matrix, the planning team will likely have to modify the planning criteria to address new issues and concerns. Second, the planning team should use the purpose and need statement to assist in forming pertinent screening questions. Essentially, this will keep the planning team focused on addressing those issues that meet the purpose and need and planning criteria. Ultimately, input from Reclamation management and professional judgment will be used to decide if an issue can or should be addressed in a Resource Plan.

It should be noted that an issue can arise at any time during a land-based planning process. If a new issue is identified internally or externally, it should immediately be evaluated for its significance to the overall planning process. If the new issue is determined to be significant and can be addressed in the Resource Plan, it will likely result in additional goals, objectives, and associated management actions that will have to be implemented to resolve the issue. It is important to remember that a single issue raised by one individual is as important to the planning process

as a single issue that is raised by multiple individuals (i.e., each issue should have equal value in the planning process).

It is recommended that the planning team document in the Resource Plan and associated NEPA compliance document why an issue was not addressed. For example, a comment letter was received from an individual requesting that a Resource Plan include the development of a wildlife guzzler¹⁸ in a specified location. After review of this comment, the planning team eliminated this planning issue from further consideration because the suggested location was outside Reclamation’s jurisdictional boundary.

¹⁸ A wildlife guzzler is a human built structure that is constructed in suitable habitats to provide an additional water source for a variety of wildlife species. The water that is trapped and stored in guzzlers is available to wildlife throughout the year, but it is especially valuable during the hot summer months.

Chapter 6

National Environmental Policy Act Compliance

Introduction

The NEPA process discloses potential impacts of major Federal actions and accompanying alternatives, impacts, and mitigation to the public and to agency decision-makers. Reclamation's NEPA Handbook can be found at www.usbr.gov/nepa. It is intended for use as guidance for Reclamation's NEPA practitioners and other staff, as appropriate. It provides a quick reference for existing laws, regulations, policies, and other guidance (Reclamation, 2012). The NEPA Handbook tiers off of CEQ regulations.

Actions not resulting in significant impacts may be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis. Reclamation's list of categorically excluded actions, also known as, "CEs" can be found in the Departmental Manual, Part 516, Chapter 14, *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Managing the NEPA Process-Bureau of Reclamation*. Major Federal actions that may result in significant impacts require preparation of an EIS. A record of decision documents the decision in an EIS. The purpose of an EA is to allow the decision-maker to determine whether to prepare an EIS or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Reclamation has used all three levels of NEPA compliance to complete RMPs in the past (e.g., a CE was used to prepare the Heart Butte Reservoir RMP; an EA was used to prepare the Coachella Canal RMP; and an EIS was used to prepare the Millerton Lake RMP).

NEPA applies to all Resource Plans. If a specific resource planning document triggers NEPA compliance, Reclamation offices **must** follow certain CEQ procedural steps when preparing the appropriate level of NEPA compliance document. The Federal action contemplated in this Handbook would be the preparation of a Resource Plan and any future amendments and revisions that may be required.

The planning team should be aware of the CEQ and Department NEPA regulations and should coordinate with their appropriate environmental offices and/or NEPA practitioners. Considerable time and expense will be saved in solving problems if the following questions are asked, "How does NEPA fit here?" or "Will this section (or data) also help fulfill NEPA requirements?" (Reclamation, 2012). For example, during Step 3: Inventory Data and Information Collection, the planning team should collect applicable data that can

be used to fulfill the NEPA requirement of analyzing the impacts to affected resources and the human environment.

Tiering and Transferred Analyses

CEQ regulations encourage agencies to use a tiering process whenever possible to eliminate repetitive discussions of the same issues and to focus on the actual issues ripe for decision at each level of environmental review. Therefore, when certain broadly stated management actions that were previously analyzed in a programmatic Resource Plan are ready for implementation, Reclamation offices should consider tiering off of the existing NEPA compliance document.

CEQ regulations refer to tiering as the coverage of general matters in broader EISs (such as national program or policy statements) with subsequent narrower statements or environmental analyses. Either an EIS or EA may be used for tiered documents.

Tiering off of a previously completed NEPA compliance document will not only reduce duplication of effort but will save valuable staff time and funding. Therefore, the use of tiered NEPA compliance documents should be considered when: (1) preparing Site-Specific Resource Plans that are ready for implementation once they are completed, (2) preparing Step-Down Plans that will be implemented once they are completed, and (3) preparing amendments and revisions to all types of Resource Plans.

Before the tiering process is used, the planning team should first determine whether all of the environmental information collected and analyzed in a previous NEPA compliance document is still valid and reliable. For example, a programmatic decision of developing a campground, that was made in a Resource Plan and previously analyzed in a NEPA compliance document, would have to be reanalyzed if an endangered species was suddenly discovered in the approximate area where the campground was to be located.

In addition, Reclamation staff are encouraged to utilize the practice of “transferred analyses”¹⁹ when conducting environmental evaluation on actions that have been previously analyzed. When appropriate, Reclamation personnel are encouraged to use environmental information, data, and analyses that has been used in previous NEPA compliance documents for the preparation of a new NEPA compliance document that is being completed for a similar action. With the creation of electronic repositories of NEPA compliance documents in

¹⁹ Transferred analyses is a process or strategy where environmental information developed in previous environmental documents is used in the preparation of new documents that address similar actions.

the regions, Denver offices, and other agencies, the ability to access documents is now available and preparers should take advantage of the stored data (Reclamation, 2012). As with using previous NEPA data and information for preparing tiered NEPA compliance documents, the planning team should confirm that the data and information is reliable and applicable to the current action.

NEPA and Preparation of Resource Plans and Amendments and Revisions

The proposed management actions and strategies for most Resource Plans are likely outside the historic range of the way the management unit and associated land has been managed in the past; therefore the planning documents will likely trigger some level of NEPA analysis.

The only difference between preparing a Resource Plan and an amendment and revision is likely the degree of data collection, formulation of alternatives, analysis of potential new resource impacts, scoping, and public involvement that may be required to address the needed changes.

Whenever a NEPA compliance document is being prepared, the planning team should:

1. Consult with their NEPA specialists early in the planning process to determine the level and scope of NEPA compliance that is required for preparation of a Resource Plan and any amendments and revisions.
2. Follow all NEPA and CEQ requirements.
3. If possible, tier off existing NEPA compliance documents.
4. Consider utilizing the concept of “transferred analyses” whenever a NEPA compliance document is being prepared.
5. Pay particular attention to the possible cumulative effects on the environmental resources and human environment within the management unit and adjacent public and private land. This is especially true for the preparation of Site-Specific Resource Plans that might be prepared within the same management unit.
6. Ensure that there is sufficient time and funding to prepare both the planning and NEPA compliance document concurrently. There is a significant difference in the time and money required to prepare the different levels of NEPA compliance. In addition, the separate processes associated with the NHPA, ESA, FWCA, ITA, and other consultation

requirements can significantly affect the timeframes. These factors should be taken into consideration when developing timelines.

7. Combine the NEPA compliance document and Resource Plan and updates into one report to reduce cost and duplication of information.

The proposed action may qualify as a CE if it can be demonstrated that it has not in the past caused (and is not likely to ever cause) any significant effects on the environment (Reclamation, 2012). If a CE is the required level of NEPA compliance, it would be sensible as part of the overall planning process to establish a strategy that would address:

1. The appropriate level of internal and external scoping including public involvement necessary when preparing, amending, and revising a Resource Plan?
2. How to assess the possible cumulative effects of implementing the management actions in a Resource Plan and any future amendments and revisions.
3. The preparation of very limited, focused, and viable planning alternatives that could be presented for review by the appropriate parties. **Note:** If the public will be provided the opportunity to participate in the planning process, it would be wise to give the public more than one alternative option on which to review and comment.
4. How the agency would conduct coordination and consultation with appropriate Federal and non-Federal government entities, if appropriate.

If an EA is the required level of NEPA compliance and is being prepared separately from the planning document, it should be short and concise (i.e., less than 30 pages). If an EA is being prepared for an amendment or revision, it should only address the specific proposal(s) that are new to the Resource Plan. If there are no significant impacts identified in the findings, a FONSI would be signed. Notice is required for EAs and FONSI's but the format, content, and distribution are at the discretion of the responsible official.

If an EIS is determined to be the appropriate level of NEPA compliance, the planning team must follow the formal EIS process that requires specific procedural steps.

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- National Park Service. 2008. *General Management Planning Dynamic Source Book, Version 2.1*. Park Planning and Special Studies, 1201 Eye Street, NW, Washington DC 20005.

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Attachment A

Directory of Related Information Sources

Following are information sources from Bureau of Reclamation publications and Manuals that should be referred to when preparing Resource Plans. Also included is a summary of the more important environmental laws, Code of Federal Regulations citations, and Executive Orders.

Bureau of Reclamation Publications :

Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies, March 10, 1983. **Note:** This publication applies to the major Federal water resources development agencies.

General Investigations Planning Guidebook, 1994.

Social Analysis Manual, Volume 2: Social Analysis Guide to Doing Social Analysis, 2001.

<http://www.usbr.gov/pmts/economics/reports/SAManV2.pdf>

Decision Process Guidebook, How to Get Things Done, 2002.

<http://www.usbr.gov/pmts/economics/guide/index.html>

Recreation Facilities Design Guidebook, 2002.

<http://www.usbr.gov/recreation/publications/RecFacDesGuide.pdf>

Resource Management Plan Guidebook, Planning for the Future, 2003.

<http://www.usbr.gov/recreation/publications/RMPG.pdf>

Planning Guide 101, A Basic Guide to Water Resource Planning in Reclamation, 2004.

Estimating Future Recreation Demand: A Decision Guide for the Practitioner, 2007.

<http://www.usbr.gov/recreation/publications/recreationdemand.pdf>

Outdoor Recreation Business Plan Guidebook, 2008.

<http://www.usbr.gov/recreation/publications/BusPlanGuide.pdf>

Creating More Meaningful Visitor Experiences: Planning for Interpretation and Education, 2009.

<http://www.usbr.gov/recreation/publications/Interpretation-Education.pdf>

Public Law 89-72 Handbook, Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965, as Amended, 2009.

http://www.usbr.gov/recreation/publications/PL89_72Handbook/Guidebook_Contents.pdf

Wildland Fire Management Guidelines, 2010.

http://www.usbr.gov/lands/WFM_Guidelines.pdf

Water and Land Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Users' Handbook, Second Edition, 2011.

http://www.usbr.gov/recreation/publications/WALROS_Handbook_2011.pdf

Reclamation's NEPA Handbook, 2012. <http://www.usbr.gov/nepa>

Bureau of Reclamation Manual, Directives and Standards (<http://www.usbr.gov/recman/>)

Committee Management —Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), Directive and Standard, ADM 01-01, 1999.

Floodplain Management, Directive and Standard, CMP 01-01, 1995.

Public Involvement in Reclamation Activities, Directive and Standard, CMP 04-01, 2000.

Water and Related Resources Feasibility Studies, Directive and Standard, CMP 09-02, 2012.

Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in Federally Conducted Programs, Activities, and Services, Directive and Standard, CRM 03-01, 2008.

Pest Management/Resource Protection (Integrated Pest Management Program), Directive and Standard, ENV 01-01, 1996.

Management of Shooting Ranges on Reclamation Lands, Directive and Standard, ENV 02-07, 1996.

Implementing Cost Sharing Authorities for Recreation and Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Facilities, Directive and Standard, LND 01-01, 2011.

Recreation Program Management, Directive and Standard, LND 01-03, 2009.

Cultural Resources Management, Directive and Standard, LND 02-01, 2012.

Administration of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) on Bureau of Reclamation Land, Directive and Standard, LND 02-04, 2012.

Land Use Authorizations, Directive and Standard, LND 08-01, 2002.

Wildland Fire Management, Directive and Standard, LND 14-01, 2012.

Federal Laws, Code of Federal Regulations, and Executive Orders:

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1958 (Pub. L. 85-624), as amended.

Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965 (Pub. L. 89-72), as amended.

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Pub. L. 89-665), as amended.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (Pub. L. 90-542).

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Pub. L. 91-190).

Clean Air Amendments of 1970 (Pub. L. 91-604).

Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Pub. L. 93-202).

Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974 (Pub. L. 93-291).

Clean Water Act of 1977 (Pub. L. 95-217), as amended.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (Pub. L. 96-95).

American's with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Pub. L. 101-336), as amended.

Scenic Byways Program authorized by Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (Pub. L. 102-240), as amended.

Reclamation Recreation Management Act of 1992 (Pub. L. 102-575, Title XXVIII).

40 CFR parts 1500-1508, *Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA*.

43 CFR part 21, *Occupancy of Cabin Sites on Public Conservation and Recreation Areas*.

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43 CFR part 420, *Off-Road Vehicles Use*.

43 CFR 422, *Law Enforcement Authority at Bureau of Reclamation Projects*.

43 CFR part 423, *Public Conduct on Bureau of Reclamation Land, Facilities and Waterbodies*.

43 CFR part 429, *Use of Bureau of Reclamation Land, Facilities, and Waterbodies*.

Executive Order 11988 of 1977, *Floodplain Management*.

Executive Order 11990 of 1977, *Protection of Wetlands*.

Departmental Manual, Part 516, Chapter 14, *National Environmental Policy Act, Managing the NEPA Process-Bureau of Reclamation*.

Attachment B

Summary of Factors to Consider When Preparing, Amending, and Revising Resource Plans

Following are several factors to consider when preparing, amending, or revising Resource Plans. Many of the factors have been excerpted from this Handbook and 2003 Guidebook for the readers convenience. Some of the factors mentioned below could result in a reduced level of planning effort, time, and staffing.

1. Do only what is necessary or required by law, regulations, or policy to address the issues or concerns for your planning area.
2. Do not spend a lot of excess time collecting and analyzing data that does not directly address the issues and concerns that precipitated the preparation of a Resource Plan or an amendment or revision.
3. Do not spend a lot of time developing and analyzing a multitude of alternatives when one or two well thought out action alternatives will suffice (e.g., when developing a Site-Specific Resource Plan to deal with a single issue, resource, or program, one action alternative might be sufficient).
4. Be aware of the cumulative impacts that management actions will have on resources and environmental factors. This is especially true when preparing a variety of Site-Specific Resource Plans within proximity of one another.
5. If a planning document requires NEPA and NHPA compliance, then the planning team should ensure that there is sufficient time and funding to prepare both the planning document and the NEPA and NHPA compliance documents concurrently. There is a significant difference in the time and money required to prepare the different levels of NEPA and NHPA compliance documents.
6. Tiering off of previous NEPA compliance documents is an important consideration when preparing certain Resource Plans.
7. When preparing an RMP level planning document, the planning team should avoid collecting an over abundance of data and information describing in detail what facilities will be built, where they may be

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- located etc. (i.e., RMPs are not typically an implementation level planning document).
8. Ensure that the planning document is accompanied by the appropriate NEPA and NHPA compliance document, if any. For example, a site-specific planning document such as a Recreation Needs Assessment that is very programmatic in nature may not require detailed NEPA compliance (i.e., EA or EIS). If at some point, a recommendation or management action contained in the needs assessment were to be implemented, then site-specific analysis to meet NEPA and NHPA compliance requirements would be required.
 9. It is not difficult to tailor the planning effort to fit funding, staffing, and time limitations remembering that a planning document containing some level of planning information is better than no planning document.
 10. No formal public review of an EA is required, only public notice. However, public review is commonly included in the process and is often helpful (40 CFR part 1506, 40 CFR 1501.4(e), and 43 CFR 46.305).
 11. You do not have to generate new data to complete a Resource Plan and assist in NEPA and NHPA compliance analysis. However, if data gaps exist for affected resources which would prevent managers from making informed decisions, it is up to the responsible official to determine if there is enough time, staff, and funding to obtain the needed resource data.
 12. Combining a planning document and NEPA compliance document into one document saves money by reducing document redundancy and printing costs. Pursuant to CEQ regulations 40 CFR 1506.4 "Any environmental document in compliance with NEPA may be combined with any other agency document to reduce duplication and paperwork." However, it should be clear to everyone which sections of the combined document comprise the NEPA portion and the planning sections.
 13. Geographic Information System generated resource maps are nice but other map options may be available (e.g., a conceptual drawing of a soil association map or geological map prepared by a landscape architect or graphic specialist may be adequate).
 14. Color maps, graphs, tables, and pictures are beneficial but not necessary.
 15. Investigate the possibility of cost-sharing the preparation of a Resource Plan with a partner. This is especially true for Reclamation since it typically has a state or Federal entity who is the recreation and/or a wildlife managing partner.

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16. Resource inventories can be kept to a minimum (e.g., wetlands and bird surveys are beneficial but can be completed at a later date as funds are available).
17. Although a few hard copies of completed planning documents may be necessary, posting a pdf copy of the document to an office's internet home page for public use can save printing costs.
18. Establish a good monitoring program and evaluation process that can effectively measure the prescribed management actions.