

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Inventory Data Data Sources

PRESENTER: Local and regional universities, and I put CESU, Cooperative Ecosystem Study Units, which the BLM is a signee to, right, and you guys may already take advantage of that relationship in many instances, but this is a real good outlet where you can get some fairly focused work done relatively cheaply. And I put "focused literature reviews" and "meta-analyses." You know, I think one of the things Charise should have her social scientists and economists do is prepare some focused literature reviews so when you have an issue you can go and you can find all of the literature, or a lot of it, anyway, that's relevant, in one report. You know, and you could do a survey of information needs across planning efforts to develop priority issues that were present in a lot of places and this could be done, or it can be done on an individual basis, too.

So I want to say just a slide or two here about indicators, and I put a definition up here just to scare you because we aren't really going to ask you to do this, but just so you'd know kind of the -- one of the proper theoretical definitions of indicators. Yogi Berra had a good line about theory, by the way. Are

you familiar with that? I'll see if I can get it right. "In theory there's no difference between theory and practice. In practice, there is." So this is one of those differences in practice.

I just want to -- I'm going to pop these all up at once. You know, we can't describe everything, right? When we're using social variables and social

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information to describe a study setting, you know, that might be fairly consistent across issues and across areas. You want to know who's living there and what they do for a living and is it a huge population, is it urban, rural? Is it mostly rural? You know, what drives the economy? What are the social issues? You can get a lot of -- that's fairly common. What's the land base? What's the use of BLM lands by local residents, by regional residents, by national residents?

So describing that social setting is not really that hard, although we have a couple tips on how to go about doing it in step four, AMS. But what's difficult is isolating the variables that you know you're going to want to say something about later in the document, not just to describe the social setting but to asset the facts, and so I can't say what those are going to be because they're going to vary by project.

Roy had some great indicators for Pinedale. You know if you were facing rapid development, you could go to that Pinedale example, you know, from whether it's uranium or oil and gas or some other big hydroelectric project or something. You could go to that example and you could say, "Well, I probably want to measure -- I probably want to say something about crime rate and what it is now, because we're going to have this huge influx of population and we're going to expect it's going to be these type of people, we're going to expect an increase in crime rate." So you'll make sure you talk about what crime rates are in that Affected Environment Section. And then you can talk about how those might change under various development scenarios, which are maybe your alternatives, right?

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So I can't say too much specific, although I will -- in the impact section we will talk more about what indicator variables have been used by what different types of projects. But they're tied to the issues. Some of them, if you're measuring changes in quality of life, you're going to have to go out and collect some information, right? So we'll talk about that in the new data section later on.

There's going to be agency constraints on what you can measure and what you can actually monitor. That's in here because, ideally, what you do is you have information that describes the current condition, and then you're going to say how that's expected to change, and then hopefully you or somebody else will monitor that to see if the changes that were predicted actually happened and why or why not.

So you're going to want to pick a few good indicator variables that are relevant to the issues and to the analysis that you have to do, and what's a good indicator? I mean, probably a lot of you have had this discussion in planning teams a lot. So I'm really not going to go into it here. I'm assuming this is an audience that kind of has -- knows a good indicator is measurable and reliable and cost effective and relevant and responsive to the changes and so forth. But I'll give you some specific examples of good social and good economic indicators later in addition to the ones we've already heard.

And just to kind of -- but I don't want to leave you with that vague an ending to

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this indicator discussion. So what I would like to do is just -- earlier we talked about quality of life, and quality of life is popping up as an important effect that we want to be concerned about, and that people are going to be concerned about regardless of the action that's being proposed and regardless of the planning issues. It's always going to be kind of a bottom-line issue.

So let's spend just a couple minutes, and I'm going to move over here, and let's just jot some stuff down, and what I would like you to toss out is just some of the factors that affect the quality of life where you live. Let's just see what this list looks like.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Open space.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Air and water quality.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Traffic.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Safety.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Education.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Crime rate.

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CLASS PARTICIPANT: Sense of community.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Schools.

PRESENTER: Schools? Did I miss one? Traffic, right? That's salient to me, let me tell you.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Safety or -- oh, yeah.

PRESENTER: Safety, yeah.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Trails nearby.

PRESENTER: Nearby trails.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Local reservoirs.

PRESENTER: And I'll put "rec ops."

What was that last one?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Nearby Metro --

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PRESENTER: Metro.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Economy.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Scenic vistas.

PRESENTER: Scenic vistas.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Cost of living.

PRESENTER: Cost of living.

I missed one. There was one --

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Well, what the weather is, because

the only way to get to my home is by plane. Sometimes you don't go home for two days.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Local visitors to historic sites.

PRESENTER: Historic sites. History. Yeah.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Economy.

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PRESENTER: Economy, yeah. I'll put "jobs" there because that's typically -- and "income potential."

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Crime rate.

PRESENTER: Crime rate. Okay. I'll lump that with --

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Taxes.

PRESENTER: We already know you don't want to live in Phoenix from Elvin's, you know [LAUGHTER]

CLASS PARTICIPANT: There will be no one on the streets tonight.

PRESENTER: What was the last one?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Someone said "taxes."

PRESENTER: Taxes.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Recreation.

PRESENTER: Recreation.

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CLASS PARTICIPANT: Amenities [inaudible]

PRESENTER: What?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Culture.

PRESENTER: That's not necessarily history thing. Yeah, living in a culture that's, you know, maybe shares your values somehow or...

Okay. Well, let's -- you know, this is not an uncommon list, is it? I mean, these are all things that pretty much everyone is concerned about. Which one of these -- or which set of these has potential to be affected by activities that we might propose undertaking or allocate or otherwise address in our RMP's?

Open space, yes. Air and water. Safety. We just heard. Although, it may be an off-site impact. Education and schools. So -- yeah. Yeah. And some of these are obviously positive and some are negative and some can be either.

Sense of community? Seems like it changes in Pinedale.

Traffic? Yeah.

Nearby trails and recreation opportunities is kind of a slam dunk, huh?

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Metro nearby. Okay, well, there's something. We won't check that.

Scenic vistas, yeah.

Cost of living, yeah. Weather?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Yes!

PRESENTER: Pretty indirectly, yeah. We'll put a --

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Not according to some our public.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: You got a better tan.

PRESENTER: Okay, we'll put "kind of weather," although I don't see impacts on weather in too many --

CLASS PARTICIPANT: But up north where a lot of the weather -- they stop a lot of stuff [inaudible]

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Global warming, I guess, indirectly they're saying, and that's something they're saying we're going to need to address in our RMP's.

So --

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PRESENTER: Okay. So we'll just -- change it to a full-on dash here.

Historic sites, history, yeah.

Economy, yeah. Taxes, yeah. Yeah.

Restaurants and amenities, yeah. Okay. So, you know, what we're hypothesizing here, I guess, is that BLM actions have the potential to have an effect on a lot of -- a wide range of aspects of people's quality of life. Now, some of these it may be tiny, right? The effect may be really small, positive or negative, and in that case you kind of don't have to worry about it. The threshold here is significance, and that's not for impact assessment, anyway, and we'll talk more about that threshold in step six.

But this is -- you know, this is insightful. We did this last year, and you know, not as many aspects of this were checked. So this is something that's dynamic and can kind of change over time.

So what we're saying here is that we do have an influence on the quality of people's lives by the actions we take and the people are aware of that, right?

So when we pick indicators, we're not going to pick weather. We're not going to

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try and measure the effects of our actions on weather. We might say something about it, like this could, you know, result in a minor increase in this or that. But some of these are going to leap out based on the issue and based on the action. You know, if it's a major oil and gas leasing activity, then, you know, the alternatives could make -- which alternative is adopted, the pace of development, the density of development and the corresponding changes in workers and infrastructure and the corresponding changes to the quality of people's lives could be fairly significant.

These are things that you can -- that your cooperators can help you with, too. And it let's you know what you're going to have to collect information about if you do this early, and you'll want to pick a few of these that you might -- that are most important to people or that you might have the most potential to change and then say, "Well, how can I measure this? If this is a topic of concern, what is a good indicator can I use to represent it?" And we can look at law and policy. We can look at the biological -- what biologists are using as indicators and then turn those into corresponding social indicators, like if a biologist is measuring change by amount of change in winter habitat for a species, you know, maybe we develop a social indicator that's tied to that indicator. We piggyback onto it. And maybe it's a change in wildlife viewing opportunity or in hunting opportunity.

As I said, your public involvement process will make some of these indicators quite clear -- or some of the concerns quite clear for which indicators can be developed. And, EPS, as we'll learn about in just a minute here -- you know,

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EPS doesn't necessarily tell the whole story, but it's very useful in the social arena for generating hypotheses and generating discussions about alternative futures with stakeholders in a community.

And so that's kind of a quick overview of some social data sources that are kind of useful.

Does anybody have something to add before we proceed to Economic Profile System? Are there -- is there some

great source of information that you found for social data --

CLASS PARTICIPANT: There's a new website, and I've only played around with it a little about it, and I think it's still being developed, called hd.gov, and it's human dimensions, and there's a lot -- it's supposed to be a clearing house they're going to put all that information that various agencies have collected and all that.

PRESENTER: And that's one of the ones we're going to highlight at the end as a possible information source. You bet. It's not quite ready for prime time, but it will get there. So we'll show you how to get to that and where it is and everything.

Anything else?

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CLASS PARTICIPANT:

PRESENTER: I would just like to reiterate that the reason that we talk about indicators is that we've seen a lot of environmental analyses and plans where when you read the impacts, they say there will be greater economic impacts, and that's what they say, or less economic impacts. But you don't know what those are. So we said we have to somehow give people an idea of what ought to be discussed more than just broad generalizations like the quality of life will change. How do we define that? Or what causes that? So that's why we spent some time on this. And if you have been reviewing these RMP's, we see that often. And it isn't just limited to the social analysis or the economic analysis. We find the same thing for other program areas.