

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning

Effects of Alternatives

Estimating Social Impacts

PRESENTER: I skipped the first slide if you're following along in your book because it's kind of repetitive. Don't compare this with Joan's matrix or anything. This is in here and it actually -- it actually reflects a couple issues that have come up in the class. So I just want to say that this example comes from some of the guidance we have at National Marine Fisheries Service on doing social impact assessments. So it's part of that document.

And on the left side here it has different factors for impact analysis, and then on the top it has kind of a structural way to think of the impact analysis, and I'll go over this quick since it relative to a couple issues that have come up here, like what constitutes the baseline analysis, what constitutes the no action alternative.

I'll give an example. I'll take the bottom row here, participation in fishery and I'll just talk about a recent example that we had in Hawaii where we did a seasonal closure on the bottom fish fishery around the main Hawaiian Islands, and so for the baseline case, profile, status quo, that's a snapshot. That's okay. What does the bottom fish fishery look like right now? You know, how many people are on the recreational side, are on the commercial side? What do we know about it? With a do we not know about it? What's -- what do we know about the catch per unit effort, you know, about -- in the fishery? What are the characteristics of the people in the fishery? And then -- and how has it gotten to be this way? You know, you kind of go back and say what trends have led us to this situation right now.

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

Then the next step is to say, okay, well, when we project those existing trends into the future without taking any additional management measures, what's this fishery going to look like in a few years? That's the baseline projections without change.

And then the baseline projections with change is, okay, suppose we close this bottom fish fishery in the summer months, and we had a couple other alternatives, too, because the goal was to lower fishing mortality to an acceptable level. You know, what do those projections look like? We take that baseline and we project into it into the future with these closures in place, and what does -- what is the fishery going to look like then?

And then the social impact assessment comes in saying, well, why did this happen? What other types of social impacts are going to result from the closure of the fishery, what other types of economic impacts are going to result from the closure of the fishery? For example, are people going to rely on imports more and then when the fishery starts up again in the fall are those alternative markets already going to be established so there won't be as big a market anymore for locally caught bottom fish? And so that's kind of a way to think about impact assessment in general.

The rest of this little session here is going to be a discussion and presentation of seven slides, each of which is going to represent one of these points here. So

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

this is an overview of the next section. They're really things that social impact assessors have found useful in the past when approaching this rather difficult task. So some of them are methods. Some of them are more kind of in the tip and trick and hint arena. But that's what I'm going to go through next.

So this is the first one. Some of these I'll deal with pretty quickly, partly because it's right after lunch and we're not -- we don't have an exercise immediately following lunch, so I know I'm on -- treading on infirm ground right from the start and I don't want to belabor any of this.

But, you know, we have talked about how even if we don't have the time or the money to go out and mount a separate data collection effort, we do have a lot of public comments, maybe responses to newsletters, our regular contacts with the public, and we can draw on that, and we said this is not ideal because this is not research, social science research per se, but it is a source of information and we can use it to inform our analysis in the absence of better data about what people are anticipating in terms of impacts, what they're afraid of, what they like, what they don't like, how different groups of people think they'll benefit or how they will suffer under various alternatives.

So in the absence of science, you know, we use whatever is available. So you can turn to that. And often by taking a fresh look at that body of information, you can learn something.

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

We talked right from the start during the prep plan about how if you do nothing else, you know, please consider developing some way of stratifying your various stakeholder and interest groups and making some systematic attempt to keep in touch with representatives of those groups all the way through the project, and Joan has been very good at saying -- at describing how this helps her structure the whole analysis, and obviously if you're structuring your analysis by group, by stakeholder group, you're going to have to maintain contact, regular contact with them, throughout the process.

So they will have provided you with a great deal of information, and when you're getting -- once you have alternatives developed, you can go to them and say, okay, what do you think about this as a range of alternatives? You know, you want to find out which one they prefer maybe, but that's not the key information, is it? The key information is why do you prefer this? And why are you opposed to this one? What do you think will happen? You know, how will this affect you? How will this affect members of your group? What types of effects will this have? Will it be economic effects? Will conflict increase or decrease? And so if we only get the positions, that doesn't get us much, but if we probe a little more and get the reasons why people are in favor or opposed to a given alternative, that's where we start to collect more useful information. And, you know, write down what they say and use some of their quotes to illustrate that particular viewpoints in your write-up of impacts. Because that really makes the impact section come alive and you're not relying on that to be your impact analysis. You're using a

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

nice quote here and there to represent a certain type of viewpoint or a certain type of impact that people are concerned about.

This is really the -- one of the most important ones, and as we've said, you know, we can't always necessarily trust what people say in terms of how they're going to be affected by a given alternative. You know, they may not know. They're guessing, too. When we talk to bottom fish fishermen, you know, oftentimes they just say, well, I'm not sure what I'll do. And you say, well, do you think you'll go trolling more? And they say, oh, well, yeah, I might do that. So, you know, in some cases we're asking people to predict their own behavior, and they may be very uncertain about that themselves.

So what we want to do is look for examples from other plans, from other actions, from other agencies. They might be similar plans, similar projects, similar populations that are being affected, and look and see what has happened, and the most useful of these cases are ones in which there has been some monitoring of the actual impacts after the plan or after the project has been implemented, because as I mentioned, people often are adaptable in ways that they don't even know about themselves. So when we get to monitoring I'll go into that aspect in a little more detail, but there's very few of those. There are painfully good examples of social and economic monitoring that has really continued for a reasonable time period after a project or plan has been implemented.

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

So, you know, a good place to look is, again, Forest Service plans and EIS's that have been done on Forest Service areas within your general area, within your state, within your region, because a lot of times they will -- you know, they won't be necessarily talking about the identical population. They won't be talking about the exact same project or so forth, but they will have -- you will get ideas from them, and you may be able to borrow some aspects of your impact analysis directly, too.

And the literature, you know, has a lot of examples, too, and it's -- I'm wary of saying that because you say, okay, well, what literature, and I want to like give you a list, but there's a different list for a lot of different types of projects and a lot of different types of plans. So I feel about it remiss in not being able to like give you the master list, but if you're a social -- if you're faced with social impact analysis, you can always call up Rob Winthrop in Washington D.C. and tell him to give you this and tell him that I suggested that he provide this to you to get you off the hook.

I mentioned this early on in the course. Information contained in state and local plans about goals, about visions about ideas that the county or the city or the village or the tribal corporation wants to pursue can be very valuable at this stage, and we can say, well, okay, what effect -- how are we going to interact with this community's written stated plans? Are any of these alternatives likely to mess it up? Are there ways we can redesign the alternatives to be more

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

consistent with the plans where it also meets our other objectives?

We had the example yesterday about the request from a community to look at possible disposal of lands that would be -- allow the community to expand. So if a community has plans to expand a certain way, you know, and you would be creating a wilderness, that would probably pretty much conflict with that community's ability to expand in the future, and so you can mention that this would foreclose this opportunity as identified in this county comprehensive plan.

And I say follow up by asking for local review of your conclusions. This is a great opportunity to go talk to that county commissioner and say, hey, I'm writing up this social impact assessment and I was looking -- I was using your -- a couple of the goals in your plan and it looks like this wouldn't have any effect. Is that true? And they'll give you their opinion. Not at all reluctantly.

Research I have already characterized as a blessing when you're doing impact assessment, and if you do have the opportunity to do some research, to do some interviews in a rather systematic manner or to contract it out, make sure that part of it occurs at least when you do have alternatives develop so you can get some kind of systematic reaction to those alternatives from your populations of interest. And you don't want to be able to say -- again I'll repeat it -- you don't want to be able to say, well, 40% of this group is opposed to alternative A, whereas 80% support alternative E, because it's -- we never like to characterize decisions as

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

popularity contests that the public votes on and we'll just go with whatever you like best, and so if -- it really requires some in-depth probing about the reasons behind that position, and then you start getting to some substance that you can use. So this is a particularly useful phase for those survey results.

Expert panels. I've been involved with these on a couple of different projects. We used these on the Interior Columbia Basin Project and we also used these on the Tongass Land Management Plan, and some of you guys may have used them on some other projects either for social and economic or for biological issues and considerations. This is kind of a neat way to help guide social impact assessment process.

And I'll tell you what we did on the Tongass, as an example. We had a group of five experts on Alaskan communities and we stuck them in a room for two days and we gave them a rather detailed information packet on the alternatives contained in the plan, the outputs from some of the other resource areas, like what would happen to the deer, what would happen to the fish, what would happen to the mill, what would happen to the level of timber harvest and where would this occur to the extent we knew about it, since it was kind of a programmatic plan. So we gave them all of the information that we thought they would need in order to make some informed judgments and, of course, since they were experts they were already pretty familiar with what makes Alaska communities tick.

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

We asked them to estimate nine types of effects on 32 communities of nine management alternatives. So we had nine alternatives and we had nine types of effects we were concerned about, and they did that rating separately for each of those communities, and I already showed you some of the lists of the factors we were concerned about, right, on the list with the guy surfing in Yakitat.

So initially the panel rated the effects on the communities as positive or negative or neutral for each of the factors and they gave individual ratings. Because of FACA considerations they were not asked to reach consensus. That would be the ideal thing. So in some cases their ratings conflicted, and so the way they ended up being reported was the number of the five who thought the impacts would kind of work one way and kind of work another, and then they were asked to explain their -- the reasons for their rating, too, so we didn't just have an up arrow or a down arrow. We had some rationale for that, too.

Have any -- has anybody ever been involved in an effort like this before? Or is this kind of new?

Well, I think you can see the appeal here, right? You are relying on a group of recognized experts. You are providing them with all of the information. And they are making an informed judgment. And this does a couple things. It relieves you of the ability to do so. You still want to draw in other sources of information and you don't just take their findings and say, here's my impact assessment, but you

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

could use it as kind of a core portion of your social impact assessment. So it's fairly efficient. It's fairly easy. It's fairly defensible. And I don't frankly know why it's not used more.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: What kind of experts -- in what fields were they?

PRESENTER: Well, one was from the Department of -- all the names changed. It was like the Department of Regional and Community Affairs, I think was the name. So it was somebody who annually updates all of the information that's available online for Alaska communities. So it was somebody who is very familiar. Another was somebody from the University of Alaska who had done a lot of research on life in southeast Alaska communities. So they were people like that.

If you put together a panel like this and they happen to be experts in a region, there's no reason you couldn't do the same thing with a couple of different plans, too, that took place on BLM areas within that region.

Another technique and another thing we should always do, because this is viewed as science, right, it falls under the -- it's information we're providing in a document and so it falls under the data quality act, and one of the key aspects of that act is having peer-reviewed science in our documents, and especially in areas that are -- where we don't have a tremendous amount of data to rely on, or

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

even if we do, for that matter, you know it is not a bad idea to get a peer review of the impact assessment coupled with the data that went into it. I'm not talking about any internal agency review that might take place. I'm talking about more a standard scientific peer review, and this will really cover you, too, because if you have your document, draft document, peer reviewed by social scientists who are qualified to do so and they give you feedback and you are able to follow that, you will be a lot more confident that what you're presenting is reasonable and is defensible and it's a way of protecting yourself, and you can do this for stuff you get from contractors, too, or you can require that they do it as part of their contract. There's a lot of different ways to do it, but I would strongly encourage you to have these peer reviewed by outside social science experts who are qualified to do so.

I have a word or two about resiliency, too. I have an example I'm going to read to you from a Powder River Basin Oil and Gas Final Environmental Impact Statement. It's talking about revenues that flow to the county from -- that would flow to the county from development, and it's talking about the time lag that occurs between when the impacts happen and when the revenues actually get to the community and are usable to address those impacts.

So it says: Counties are not often in a position to provide the necessary infrastructure and personnel associated with the development prior to receiving revenue from the stream due to a lag time that can last up to 18 months. As a

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

result of the current tax system, it is imperative that these governments work carefully with industry and the state and federal government to economically and socially plan for potential development-related effects.

So this to me was a good example of a couple different things. One is that, you know, some counties may have the capacity to deal with this lag between impacts and revenue flows better than others, and now that we know a little about resiliency we could guess at what some of those different characteristics would be. You know, richer counties, counties that have more money on hand, counties that have more capacity to address infrastructure needs, counties or communities that have had to deal with similar issues in the past, you know, might be better equipped to gear up and do it again. So that's why we want to consider at this point -- you can go to the county and usually they'll say, hey, no, we're going to be in deep kimchi if this happens, or they'll say, no, you know, we feel we've done this before, we know what to do, we know what to expect, we've talked to the other officials in these other communities, so we kind of -- we've been gearing up, we've been planning for this and we're going to be okay.

When I think about that, I think of one of the examples I have right now is I do a lot of work on Guam, and Guam right now is faced with a really big military buildup because a lot of marines who are based on Okinawa right now are going to be moving to Guam. So it's about -- when you consider them and the contractors and the dependents and all of the other people that will come

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

associated with this move, as well as some other members of the military, it's maybe about 25,000 new people in Guam, which has about 150,000 residents. So it's a pretty big influx and it's a long-term influx. So they have -- the government of Guam has set up -- so it's not like planning for a construction project because the military personnel are somewhat different from Chamorros and may not have a lot of the same beliefs and values and customs and may not be aware of Chamorro culture, Chamorrans being the indigenous people of Guam.

So the government has all these task force -- you know, 20 different task forces set up to look at every aspect of getting ready for this influx of marines, but there is kind of a wide difference of opinion on whether Guam actually has the capacity to deal with this. So you just have to kind of observe it and see, and we're monitoring this planning process from the standpoint of fishing, and we'll see if Guam has the capacity or not and do some analyses of what happened and why and how well they were able to prepare for this. That's not unlike any county or any community getting ready to deal with that level of change.

So any burning comments or questions before I go through a couple more tips and tricks here on any of that stuff? Okay.

This first one you guys know this by now, right? I think we've all mentioned it at least twice. It's better to be correct roughly on important issues than be precisely

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

correct on unimportant ones. Joan mentioned something like that. You'll kind of develop an idea pretty quickly for what the big ticket items are in terms of social impacts and so it's better to put a little more effort into those and just -- rather than to be very precise and collect a lot of data on the impacts that are just not going to be as important.

Don't try and guess. One of the bad things about doing social impacts is that we are all people and we all live in communities and we all know about quality of life and we all have our own opinions, and so -- and we think about things. We know kind of how behavior occurs and why behavior occurs. But common sense and science are kind of two different things sometimes. So I put: Always have some basis for estimating impacts. It's like when you -- if you're operating in a legal arena, you can't just kind of wing it because you don't know how the legal system operates unless you're very familiar with it and its terminology and its language, and it's kind of the same with social science.

Beware of using county-level data to describe effects on communities. We talked about scale earlier, and if you are trying to -- if county-level data are all that are available, it's better to just say that and say, you know, we're not really sure how these impacts are going to be distributed across communities. In order to describe communities at the community level, you need community-level data.

And you want to also be careful not to use too broad a region for your analysis

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

because if you use a really broad region, all your impacts are going to be totally insignificant, right? If you get down to an individual grazing allotment level, then that impact is huge. If you get to a ranching community level, it's going to be less huge but still maybe significant, and so your scale has to match kind of the level of impact, because if you get big enough, if you say, well, we could do anything we wanted and the U.S. economy probably wouldn't change at all, yeah, that's a true statement, but it's not a very helpful one. So you have to make sure the scale is appropriate, that your level of data and your level of analysis matches the level of impact.

Joan did an eloquent job of -- and others -- of making the second point. This third point just says you really see a lot of social impact assessments that say something like: Alternative 3 would be beneficial because it... That's why I liked Joan's discussion because the savvy social scientist and the savvy reader immediately say, well, beneficial to whom and why? Because people have different interests and communities have different economic structures and effects are differentially distributed across the landscape. I made that last point, too, already, so I won't dwell on that.

And I think this is the last tips and tricks slide. There's no "still, still more." So use assumptions liberally where needed and state them clearly and reveal data gaps. I just kind of call this full disclosure. I have gotten very comfortable over the years with readily being willing to admit my total ignorance about all kinds of

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Effects of Alternatives Estimating Social Impacts

things, and we need to do in that writing, and it's always better to just say, I don't know, than it is to speculate in the absence of data. So don't be afraid to be stupid. Dare to be ignorant when the situation calls for it rather than filling in some blank with words just because you feel you have to. That I think is more dangerous than just saying we realize this is an important issue but we just don't have the data available to address it, and you may not want to go much beyond there in some situations.

Then I mentioned this, too... reread each line that's in a draft social impact assessment. You can tell your contractors this, too. And ask yourself if you could defend that specific point on the witness stand when you are being grilled by lawyers who are getting paid far more than yours are. If you don't have someone qualified to do these analyses, don't worry, your appellants will take care of it for you.

So I would like to give you a computer program, and I would like to give you a checklist that will work in every situation, and I would like to give you something more to take home with you that you'd look at and you'd say, wow, it's all right here, I can go do this, I'm confident, let me at it. Who needs a contractor, you know? But we have not done that, and so we apologize. But I will say that when I was listening to you all in the last exercise analyzing the King Range thing I was thinking, oh, it's going to be hell being a social and economic contractor with people in this room as COR's now. So go get 'em.

**Social and Economic Aspects of Planning
Effects of Alternatives
Estimating Social Impacts**