

We're going to debrief for Exercise 3 where we went through these various resource disciplines and identified impact significance thresholds. This is a little more challenging than just coming up with resource indicators because we have to have a rationale as why that particular threshold really implied significance. And as I stated in the instruction on impact analysis, the best ones to rely on are ones that are regulatory levels or regulations or management guidelines for agencies with jurisdiction over that resource. Those are the most defensible.

So with that in mind, let's go through -- these are just examples, and, again, you could have different examples depending on your project, how much data you have, et cetera. So just keep that in mind. This is just to help get an idea of things that might work.

Transportation. Indicated level of service is a good resource impact indicator, and most transportation projects strive to have level of service better than D, and so with that in mind, if that's the agency standard, a level of service that is D or lower could be an impact significance threshold that would be supported by what's the standard in the industry.

Socioeconomics. This one is a little more squeaky, but you may do some research and get the idea that anything more than a 10% drop in, say, tax revenue, or else if we exceed existing infrastructure abilities, that is a significance threshold.

For air quality, violation of national ambient air quality standards is obviously a very good one and easy one for assessing whether you're going into significance.

Noise. If you're exceeding any sort of regulatory limit for decibels, that's a very good impact indicator of threshold as well.

Cultural resources. The best one is any sort of adverse impact to either historic

or prehistoric sites that are eligible for the National Register. It's a great significance threshold.

Visual resources. Violation of VRM standard. If something is -- and maybe "violation" is the wrong term, but not meeting of VRM standard. If you have a VRM management standard, not meeting that VRM standard could be seen as a significant adverse impact. So that would be a very good one for that.

Land use. Violation of zoning ordinances or land use designations.

Disturbance of any highly erodible soil might be a good significance threshold for soils and geology. Another one for soils is disturbing soil that has poor reclamation potential. That's the kind of information you can get from soil surveys.

Water resources. Violation of state water quality standards, of course, is a good one if you have the data to be able to figure out potential impacts to water quality at that level.

For fisheries an example might be a violation of Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for Preservation of Aquatic Habitat. Or a violation of guidelines for preservation in a habitat conservation plan for an endangered species.

Vegetation. A certain proportional loss of any vegetation type. Obviously that proportional loss could depend on the particular vegetation type, but establishing that a certain percentage of loss would make it hard to maintain, for example, the population, viability or community stability, that would be a good significance threshold.

Wetlands. Any irreversible loss of any wetland functional value is an example of good significant threshold.

Any impact to a jurisdictional water of the U.S. that's not mitigatable would also be a good significance threshold.

Any loss of AUMs in a grazing allotment where AUMs are a limiting factor might be a good significance threshold.

Proportional loss of either habitat or proportion increase or decrease in habitat fragmentation. That's a sliding scale that could be used as a significance threshold if you have data or information in the area that allows you to establish a certain proportion of that. That can be difficult, but, again, the idea is we don't need to be a crystal ball. We just need to have a good rationale why we're using that and it needs to be reasonable.

Recreation. Loss of values associated with visitor satisfaction is a good significance threshold because basically if the visitor satisfaction isn't there, then the recreation, in a way, doesn't really exist. People are not going to want to do that.

So those are all significance thresholds that can be used and, of course, you need to document your rationale as to why you're picking these. And remember that those -- again, those that tier to existing planning or regulatory processes are the most defensible. And as always, documentation of everything is key.