

Social and Economic Aspects of Planning Preferred Alternative Develop Preferred Alternative

PRESENTER: We're already two-thirds of the through the planning process, so what's next? Let's identify the preferred alternative and finalize the plan.

Steps 7 and 8. So here you can see the schematic that shows the relationship. We've talked about this. Just keep this in mind, you know, we've done the impact analysis, and now we're going to identify the preferred alternative. I know that's the way it works in Idaho, isn't it, Brent? Okay.

So we want to identify potential social and economic factors that help us select preferred alternative.

The objectives for this section: We want to identify those important concerns that surface during issue identification. We want to prioritize the social and economic issues, and incorporate the appropriate social and economic factors into those issues when identifying the preferred alternative.

We want to then select that preferred alternative. We need to be working with the decision maker, the Field Office manager, to ensure that there's a common understanding of the social and economic issues. They hear that from the publics. We talked about this throughout the course that many of these, if not most of these issues, really relate to social or economics, and so they've been hearing about it, but we also need to be filling them in on what we're coming up with during the impact analysis.

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You know, consider a newsletter asking people to evaluate the alternatives based on the perceptions or the effects and encourage the use of information to help craft that preferred alternative. You know, that's really kind of a nice idea of if you can package this information up for the decision maker and lay something in front of him or her so that they know what those impacts are. If you're more specific it helps them make a choice between the different alternatives they're considering.

Ensure that the social and economic concerns and likely effects are correctly incorporated into the selection process. So let's talk a little bit about selection criteria.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Going back to that newsletter asking for people's input in helping pick out preferred alternatives, when would you see doing that, while you're putting out the original draft or sometimes after that draft and you got a better idea of where the final is headed?

PRESENTER: Well, you can hear that when the draft goes out. People will express their preferences. But many of these RMP's between the scoping process and the impact analysis -- I know it's only supposed to take about three years to get through this whole process but it often takes a little longer than that. So you might have the opportunity to send out a newsletter just telling people where you're at. Okay, let's give them a status report. Here's kind of a summary

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of the issues we've heard during scoping. We're developing alternatives. And you can encourage people if they've got -- they've got ideas on alternatives or preferences to contact somebody, the project leader or another designated person or the decision maker, and they do that in the process of their normal meeting with county commissioners and interest groups anyway. They're hearing that.

Any other thoughts?

Okay. What are some social or economic criteria that should be considered when you select the preferred alternative? Remember way back in the beginning of the course we talked a little bit about this, right? Would you want to -- would you want to think about what you heard during scoping to help you maybe determine what that -- what those criteria are? That might be a good idea.

So what kind of criteria would they have in, say, New Mexico? Anybody from New Mexico here? Yeah, we've got people from New Mexico. Sabrina?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: OHV --

PRESENTER: What would the criteria be?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: So criteria -- trying to think about what we talked about

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earlier.

PRESENTER: Let me give you the scenario. OHV's, here's what we're hearing. The OHV groups are coming into us and saying that they are disproportionately being affected because the agencies, the BLM and the Forest Service and others, are not considering the overall impacts. Whereas the BLM might say, we're only closing 5% of our trails, the adjacent forest are closing 5 or 10% of their trails, and private lands no longer let people get on their lands, so they're claiming there's a cumulative effect, and so what might -- given that background, if a group comes in, or if you hear from several individuals that are all kind of saying about the same thing, they have a similar song and dance, but their message is, you know, you're really not considering the effects on us, so what are the criteria you might consider?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Consider the cumulative effects when it comes to our actions in how they affect OHV as part of the criteria.

PRESENTER: And what would the effects be? Anybody else have any thoughts?

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Erosion, bare ground, disturbance --

PRESENTER: That may not have a lot to do with social or economic, but you

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might say, is it affecting -- adversely affecting lifestyles? You know. Or opportunities for recreation. If we close maybe one of the major routes taking people up onto the forest, we may be only closing 5% of the routes on BLM, but we may be shutting off 30% of the use.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: But [inaudible] time when we might be opening up this one area as an OHV recreation area, so we're offsetting what we are closing by designating an area specifically -- special recreation management area for OHV management, and that's how --

PRESENTER: That's a great example. So now you're going to open up a new area. It's going to be open designation. There's even going to be a controlled one where the BLM is going to manage it for open OHV use, but you've got an adjacent land owner that is about half a mile from the staging area where people take their four-wheelers off their trailers and the trail comes within 200 yards of his house. So what are your thoughts about that? Is there a criteria? Would you have a criteria that maybe you'd say we're not going to adversely affect adjacent land owners? You might do that. Or you might consider in terms of rules of that designated OHV area that use will shut down at a given time at night so that there isn't the noise going on --

CLASS PARTICIPANT: And that's going to be including in stipulation for the special recreation permit.

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PRESENTER: Okay.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: So, could you somehow in all this do something with the quality of the experience? I'll give you an example with OHV stuff. Especially with the single-track riders. Their experience that they want is a loop trail. So if we were going to develop loop trails for single-track riders and close down the rest of the road -- or the trails in an area, then theoretically we're improving the experience of that single-track trail for the single-track rider because we are making it loop. So how -- how would you -- how would you do that? I mean, how do you carry that to this point?

PRESENTER: Well, you might just think about, is there an appropriate criteria relating to social and economic impacts that relate to that issue? There may not be. Okay? But if there is, you might say the criteria just being, we're not going to restrict opportunities for OHV or off-road vehicle travel beyond what the current level is today and you figure out what the level is today and you say we don't want to drop below that. You might look at another alternative that just says basically we will manage at today's use level and other alternatives may go above that but you aren't going to consider an alternative would drop below that. That might be a criteria.

PRESENTER: [inaudible] we were looking at different types of angling, motors versus non-motors and bait versus catch and release and all that. It's similar to

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this. You could do surveys of each group and see what their attachment is to the area, do they have lots of other substitutes or not. You can use economic criteria in terms of willingness to pay. Which group has the highest value in some sense for this. You know, would they substitute away at a higher cost to another area? So, as I say, in one of the cases they looked at said there were lots of other places to go bank fishing. There weren't other fishes to catch trophy trout fly fishing. So they actually did like travel cost models and contingent valuation to look at that, look at the substitution. So there may be -- if this is the only loop area, say, possible for mountain bikes and there's other places for OHV's to go, you know, the demand curve slopes downward. It also in one sense, right, as you get fewer and fewer of these OHV areas open, the remaining ones become more and more valuable. So some of this has to do -- look at your demand trends. One of the big issues is hunting has been relatively flat. So, in terms of -- you know, fishing has been relatively flat. Mountain biking and ATV is growing. So you can use economic criteria either directly, you know, we actually surveyed people, or we can do it with social, right, in terms of what is specific about this place? Does it have some particular meaning to people as to historic users? Is there something unique about this place that makes it non-substitutable? It's not just another road or a trail. It has some other specific meaning. Or you could -- as I say, in some cases just look at data on use trends and use patterns to adjust. Because obviously you can't grandfather everything in. But we've always used this for horseback riding. Well, yeah, and the number of people horseback riding is a fraction of what it was 20 years ago. The

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mountain biking wasn't around 20 years ago. So we have to allocate some land -- part of what FLPMA says, right, is that as relative values change of the land, you change your allocations over time. Hopefully in step 4 you did demand projections and you're looking at the growth and demand for some activities and the decrease in demand for other activities. So part of this is -- at this point you should have been primed to address social and economic criteria from the very beginning. Was a social and economic issue. We collected data on that. We know the relative values of the different users. We know the relative to demand. Now we can go apply the criteria.

PRESENTER: The other thing, too, is that the economic impact generated. That's thinking back to the IMPLAN use where you're looking [inaudible] good example of that is Silverton, Colorado, where they didn't want ATV's to come into Silverton or [inaudible] and the town was divided over that issue because they get inundated by people who come in on the train for those of you have been to Silverton, and those folks get off the train, go out and eat dinner or lunch usually, get back on the train and go back to Durango. And the folks who own businesses in town would like to have those ATVers come into town, park the ATV's and sort of even out or provide additional business for them during the off times when the train is not unloading passengers.

The same thing happened in Nevada, it was either Nevada or Utah, where they were creating circular routes for ATV's, and some towns said, we don't want

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ATV's in our town. Others were saying, we want to be on the route so when they go from one place to another place, have breakfast here, lunch here and have dinner back here. And they developed -- and I think it was -- I was out in Battle Mountain working on a project, and I think it was in Nevada, but don't quote me on that.

What they found out is those communities that didn't want the -- once they saw what was happening, they wanted to put themselves back on the route. And so it's -- what starts out to be something that's kind of -- you know, you're wondering whether there's any economic impacts or social impacts, you may think there aren't any but later you find out there really are.

PRESENTER: Another good example is to think back on what Roy talked about early in the class, you know, pace of development in the oil and gas field in Pinedale. How many rigs were operating at any one time. And if your manager or your sociologist or your economist has been working with the community and they say, you know what, we're not going to authorize any more new housing developments, we're maxed out, our infrastructure can't handle any more than what we've got, so you might go through and say, well, what is the appropriate number? If you're operating at 40 rigs operating within that commuting area right now, or 50 rigs, you may say, we're not going to approve more APD's than having 40 or 50 of these rigs operating at any one time. I mean, that might be your criteria that you come up with. At once. Okay.

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PRESENTER: I was just going to say, when Roy was talking I was thinking that the term we have and something that is also very applicable when I think about social criteria for identifying a preferred alternative is social acceptability, and I think any decision maker is going to take into that account when trying to identify a preferred alternative or when trying to select an alternative or develop a final alternative and so Roy was talking about social acceptability, if there's a town that want it and a town that doesn't want it, you don't try and ram it through the town that doesn't want it. And you have other constraints and other things to consider, but social acceptability of a decision is certainly going to be in the hopper.

And the other one that is a social consideration that I was thinking about is equity, because identification and development of alternatives is usually a process of compromise and of balancing, and so I think one of the other social concerns is going to usually be equity of the alternative and a balance of its effects.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: [inaudible] question I was wanting to bring up, and I guess I'm kind of looking for some feedback from the instructors. A couple of economists in the Forest Service are working on a tool to develop an economic value associated with protection of either fuels treatment and even fire protection in the wildland-urban interface and it's using real estate values at risk and then the potential -- the risk associated with various cat Graf icky vents, you know,

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how many are likely -- how many structures are likely at risk under this scenario versus another. So they're coming up with an economic value.

One of the concerns that I have is -- that I've been struggling with in thinking about this is are we -- are we kind of setting up a bias in there for the million-dollar home -- homeowners that build these multi-million dollar homes, which, yes, they generate a lot of economic activity through -- throughout the economy as far as they bring in remodeling and decorating and all the things that are associated with these large homes, but are we setting up a bias that we're going to protect these huge homes and the people who are most able to recover it if they did lose their home, in favor of those folks instead of some of these that have smaller homes, they're less economically stable, and if they lose their homes they lose everything. So are we setting up a social injustice thing there based on their economic status?

PRESENTER: Well, you know, I think you could end up there, but you don't necessarily have to be there. You could --

PRESENTER: [inaudible] did some of those studies, and I don't know if the ones you're talking about Patty [inaudible] and so forth did at the Rocky Mountain Research Station, but the ones we've looked at, we just calculate like a percent change in house price with fire, and so you can apply that to any number of expensive homes, less expensive homes, but we have documented in at least

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Colorado, California -- in fact, yes, house prices drop after the first fire. You can take that percent difference, you know, 10, 20%, and apply to that all the houses around there. I don't think the intent of the analysis is to single out, well, gee, there's Donald Trump's house and that's worth 20 million so we'll make sure we put the fire out there --

CLASS PARTICIPANT: It's a different study. This is what Mike [inaudible] and Keith Stockman have been putting together, and it has -- it's not -- it's trying to come up with values at risk, not a value impact to the houses that are left.

PRESENTER: So in terms of targeting your fuels treatment and targeting --

CLASS PARTICIPANT: Right, where are we going to invest our dollars, and to me the way they've got it structured it's going to push all our dollars for protecting those million-dollar homes and then we're leaving the folks who are least able to recover, if they do lose their homes, are at greater risk.

PRESENTER: So this is a nice example of equity versus efficiency. So the distributional is you would actually want to go to the lower income people who have less ability to replace the contents of the house and any uninsured loss as compared to the million-dollar homes. On the other hand, if you have one fire truck and one crew, you know, it would be economically inefficient to put out the \$100,000 fire and let the \$2 million house burn. But in terms of the social or equity kind of thing, you know, okay, look, we'd be much better off to help the

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\$100,000 home owner than the \$2 million. So this is sort of an equity-efficiency --

CLASS PARTICIPANT: And the political pressure is pushing us for protecting those expensive homes because those are the ones that have the political pull.

CLASS PARTICIPANT: And aren't most of those second homes? Have they considered like primary people who live there full time and depend --

CLASS PARTICIPANT: I think -- I think a lot of times it is, yes, and it's --

PRESENTER: These are the kinds of things that you need to be thinking about as you're going through your analysis. You know, if fuels -- hazardous fuels is a major Your RMP, you need to be thinking about these, talking to the publics and trying to come up with some kind of criteria to help in the selection process, because when your draft goes out, your draft RMP, the agency has to identify a preferred alternative. In order to do that our suggestions are that we summarize the significant social and economic effects by alternative, that we apply the selection criteria, we involve the public and cooperating agencies, and then we identify the preferred alternative. We issue and revise the draft RMP. So the draft goes out. Everybody gives a big sigh of relief. And then the comments start coming in. You might want to consider soliciting public comments in ways that allow for interaction. That's fairly common in BLM to have public meetings,

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briefings, meet with interest groups, industry. You have to determine what's appropriate. Your external affairs people are often real good at helping you with that.

You may want to revise the social and economic sections based on comments received, you know. That also is fairly common. It may suggest changes to the preferred alternative based on these comments. You know, that's consistent with NEPA.

If you're doing economic analysis and relying on other data, you may want to check to see if that data has been updated. An example is IMPLAN. That data is updated every year. So I'm in the process of working on the Butte RMP and the data have been updated since the draft went out, so I will be updating the final.

Encourage the decision maker to draft a record of decision that explicitly mentions social and economic concerns and impacts. Usually that isn't a problem. And, in fact, what I've seen is the draft and even the final hardly mention social or economic impacts or issues. But when that record of decision is ready to be issued, it's amazing how important that is, and sometimes you wonder where those impacts came from. They weren't in the documents. Okay. So describe how these are being addressed and the rationale for addressing them and who you contacted. It isn't just a matter of saying, you know, I

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considered the fact that employment was going to change. You want to talk about things like efforts you made to go out and talk to people. Incorporate those different methods and summarize those methods that Joan and Stuart told us about concerning social impacts. You went out and talked to certain groups. You checked to see whether or not environmental justice was going to be an issue. You want to summarize efforts made. And the rationale for the selection. Sometimes we just see -- this is where if you've done a really good job in your social and economic impact analysis it is helpful because you can -- you can indicate, you know, one alternative is going to generate more employment than another alternative and you have the numbers to rely on. Or one alternative is going to cause fewer social impacts. Whatever those are. Less change in quality of life. Or improved quality of life. Based on the impact in the impact analysis.