

Planning Nuts and Bolts: Course Introduction

Hi, my name is Cathy Humphrey. I'm the Planning NEPA Training Coordinator here at the Bureau of Land Management's National Training Center in Phoenix, Arizona. I'm here with Ken Bogdan and Bobby Tuttle, our instructors, to welcome you to the Planning Nuts & Bolts course to provide an overview and to give you some tips that should make your learning experience much more enjoyable and more effective.

This course is presented in two parts. Part one is this online course and part two, it's a classroom course that we will bring to your BLM office when you start your plan. The online course, as you know, is available to anyone whether you're in the BLM or not. It's a prerequisite to the classroom course and BLM employees need to pass the post-test with at least 80% before you attend the classroom course. But, non-BLMers don't have to take a test or don't have to pass.

Before I tell you anymore about the online portion, I'd like to give you a little bit more information about the classroom portion. It will mostly be activity based. What that means, is you'll be doing some exercises, lots of exercises rather than just sitting and listening to power point heavy lectures. The exercises are intended to help you make progress on your plan; you won't be just doing them just for the sake of doing exercises. And your instructors will help you story-board your plan, identify issues, and then develop a range of alternatives. If you'd like more information, go ahead and go to the DOI Learn website and search for course #1610-10.

Now this online course you're about ready to take, it includes quite a few video tapes segments and several exercises. And what's going to happen, is your instructors will set the stage by they'll talk about the legal framework for BLM planning and the importance of setting up an administrative record. Then they'll go through the planning process from developing a preparation plan, an analysis management situation through scoping, identifying issues, what an alternative is, including a vision, goals, objectives, and management actions.

They'll talk about how important data is in a plan, how to evaluate and compare alternatives, preparing a draft plan Environmental Impact Statement, and then sending that plan out for public comment. And they'll talk about how to evaluate comments on the draft and then making modifications which will result in the proposed plan and final Environmental Impact Statement. Followed by the protest period and then finally, a record of decision and approved plan. They'll end the course with the implementation phase and that includes implementing decisions in the plan, conducting monitoring, and doing a plan evaluation.

Okay, now that you know what this course consists of, let's talk a little bit about how to effectively take an online course. Now, obviously participating in an online course is quite a bit different than participating in a classroom course. You know, primarily you can interact with the instructor, so you have to put forth a

Planning Nuts and Bolts: Course Introduction

little bit more effort to learn the concepts, but don't you worry. I'm going to give you some tips to enhance your online learning experience.

First, I'd like to talk about your learning environment. Since this course is about developing a resource management plan, which requires a team, I recommend that you take this course as a team rather than just sitting alone at your desk. If you must take it alone, be sure to do it when you're at your best, when you can concentrate without interruptions. For example, you could forward your phone and disable that audible incoming email alert some of you have. Put up a do not disturb sign, corny as it sounds; use headphones and remember to take breaks when you need to.

Now, if you decide to participate with a team, then you need to think about do you want the team to be just your field office interdisciplinary team or do you want to have a little bit more of a challenge and add some benefits by asking your partners, your collaborators and some other interested parties to come in and join you while you watch through this course. You know, it could be a great opportunity for you to begin a relationship or to strengthen your existing relationships with all those folks who are going to be instrumental in developing your successful plan.

So now that you know who you're taking the course with and when, let's talk about gathering your course materials. You want to go to the resources tab to find your power points and the referenced documents like the handbooks and regulations. You might want to print the power points out so you can take notes on them and you could go back to your desk and grab your CEQ regulations, your BLM planning handbook, your NEPA handbook, but if you don't have them at your desk you can always print them off from the resources tab. We've also included a list of acronyms for non-BLMers or for those who aren't familiar with the acronyms that we use.

Now as you might know, by now, you'll learn and retain these concepts better if you don't do the entire course in one sitting. Why don't you, you could set up a schedule to watch the videos and do the exercises. You could do some every day or do some every week and don't forget to reserve your conference room so you'll have the same location to participate in this course. And then, of course, if you need to think about or talk about what you just heard, don't hesitate to pause the video.

After each section, what we recommend is to stop the video; talk about it with your group. What did you like, what didn't you like, what did you disagree with, what are you going to do differently as a result of what you just learned. I recommend that you complete the exercises as they come up and discuss them with your team. Come on, it'll be fun; they're good exercises. We've got quite a few exercises for the first several sections and then towards the end there's not quite as many. So don't forget to take breaks whenever you need them and

Planning Nuts and Bolts: Course Introduction

remember most of all, you will get out of this course what you put into it. And as a bonus, you can return to any part of this course at any time and that means you could complete the entire course, well not once, you know, over time. And then, as you get to a certain step of the planning process, you can re-watch just that section before you start that step of the planning process that way you can refresh your memory on how to do it.

So now that you know how to get the most out of the online course, you've got to be eager to get started. But, before we start, I am pleased to introduce to you our instructors. You saw them a little bit ago. Both Ken and Bobby, they're from ICF Jones & Stokes. And the BLM developed this Planning Nuts & Bolts course with Jones & Stokes back in 2001. A cadre of instructors from Jones & Stokes and the BLM, including these distinguished gentlemen, they taught the classroom version of the course on a state by state basis and then on a field office by field office basis and now we're going to this online classroom combination basis.

So, Ken is an environmental planner and attorney. He's from Sacramento and Bobby is a NEPA planner and biologist from Salt Lake City. Ken, tell us a little bit about yourself.

Well thanks, Cathy. As you said, I'm an environmental planner and attorney. I've been working at Jones & Stokes for over 19 years and my job is, basically, working with federal agencies to help them navigate through the NEPA process, the planning process, working through some of the other legal challenges and compliance requirements related to endangered species, clean water, clean air. And I've had the pleasure of, of course, doing this course for many, many years and also lead our environmental education program and enjoy speaking and getting out talking to people and really will be enjoying doing these videos and answering any questions as a follow-up.

Ken's been one of our most fun instructors that we've had so far. And how about Bobby, tell us a little bit about yourself.

Well thanks, Cathy. As Cathy mentioned, I'm an environmental planner with ICF Jones & Stokes. I also do biological resource analysis. I've had 16 years of experience. I work out of the Salt Lake City office. I've been working in participating in R&Ps and several states, including Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana. I also work on implementation projects throughout the west; EISs, EAs for things like rights of way analyses, land tenure adjustments, projects that cross multiple BLM jurisdictions in multiple states. And I've been teaching this course for about five years.

And Bobby, I think, knows maybe about BLM plans across the west then many of us BLMers, so he's been a great asset to our courses as well.

Planning Nuts and Bolts: Course Introduction

So, if you'd like to know a little bit more about them, their bio-sketches and their contact information can be found under the points of contact tab. Don't hesitate to contact either one of them if you have any questions or comments. So, good luck with the course and you'll be starting out with a couple of exercises. Have a great time.