

Ecological Appreciation: Concepts for Motorized Travel Planning

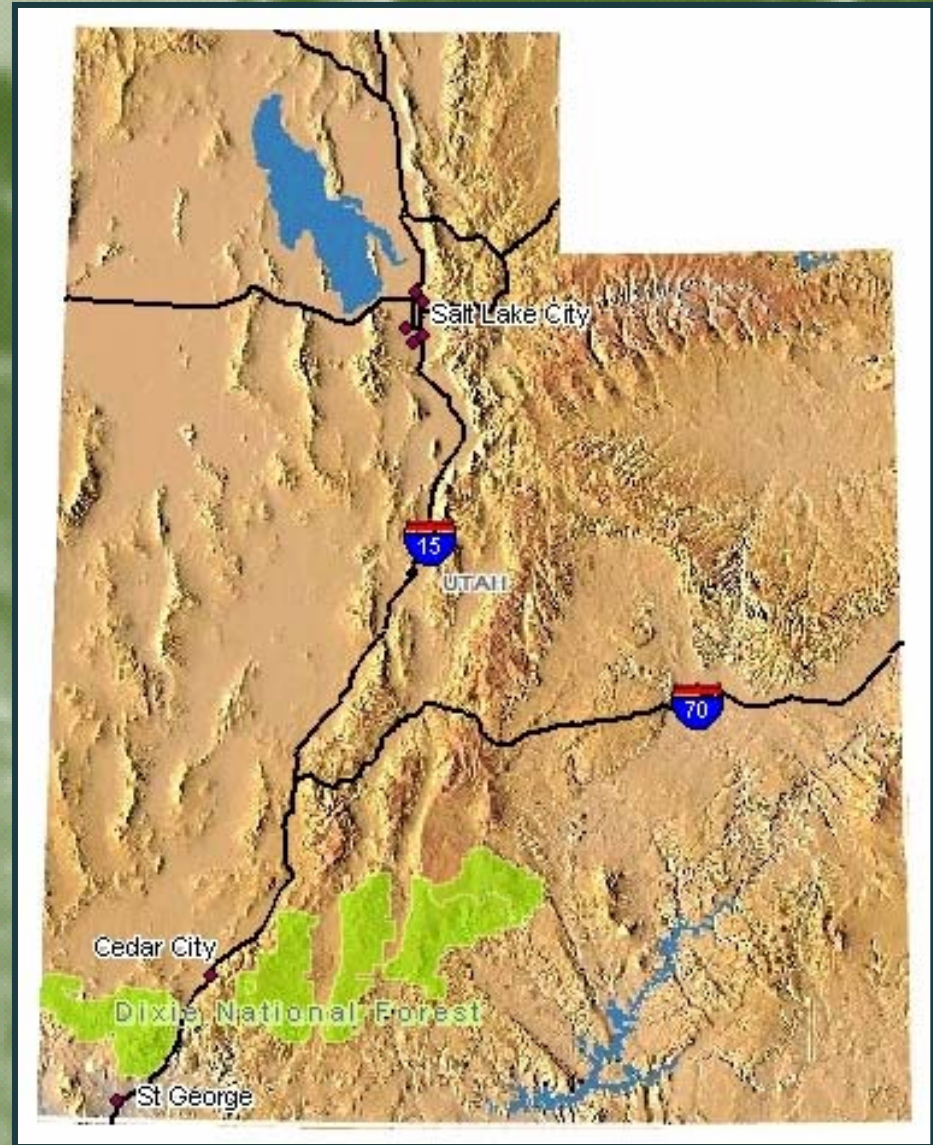
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Presented to the *Transportation Systems on Public Lands Workshop, USGS
Ft. Collins Science Center, February 21, 2006*

Presentation Overview

- **Introduction: Aesthetic philosophy connections to travel planning**
- **Travel Planning Project Drivers: Ecology and Humans**
- **Exercises in Collaboration: Applications in Scale and Formality**
- **Dixie Forest-Wide Motorized Travel Planning (MTP)**



Landscape Aesthetics

International Union of Forestry Research Organizations
(IUFRO)

Forests and Landscapes: Linking Ecology, Sustainability and
Aesthetics (Sheppard and Harshaw, 2001)

- Scenic model of landscape management. (Nature-as-scenery, dramatic, romantic, visual, protection from management activities). Scenic management based on emotion.

- Ecological aesthetic (beauty lies in each landscape, ecological integrity guides interpretation of beauty). Scenic management based on ecologic science.

- Ecologic appreciation (knowledge, experience and learning about sustainable ecosystems). Integrates science and values.

The Concept of Visible Stewardship

We find **aesthetic [appreciate]** those things that clearly show people's **care for and attachment** to a particular landscape; in otherwords, that we like man-modified landscapes that clearly demonstrate respect for nature in a certain place and context. (Sheppard)

Emphasizes not whether the landscape looks natural, orderly or culturally appropriate but **looks as though real individuals care for the land and place**; people who are linked to it, rooted in it, invested in it, working in it in a symbiotic and continuously vigilant manner, perhaps from generation to generation. (Sheppard)

Forest management activities will not be perceived as good if they fail to demonstrate an **obvious and sustained commitment of people to the places under their control.**

Appreciation Development as a Multi-Value Framework for Sustainability

People's views on forest management are diverse and not always **compatible**.

Instead of arguing whose ideas are better, perhaps a more constructive way to proceed is to **respect the legitimacy** of these **multiple values** and work together to **integrate** them to achieve the shared goal of a sustainable future for nature and people.

(Gobster)

Sustainable forest management as a social and political concept requires **public dialogue to define what should be sustained** and what **tradeoffs** will be made to achieve sustainability.

Sustainability itself cannot be easily measured but improvements, but **progress toward it can be seen**. (Kruger)

For appreciation to occur, we need a deliberative process for management at the local level.



OHV Management on the Dixie NF Project Drivers

Ecologic issues

(resource goals and problems)

+

Human activities

(values, politics and conflict)

=

Need for change

Demographics

Acknowledging Permanent Change

The Dixie NF is a destination area for recreation use:

- ***Multiple subdivisions, esp. Duck Creek Village***
- ***Adjacent to high-growth urban areas***
- ***3 hours from Las Vegas, 4 hours from Salt Lake City***

Travel Management on the Dixie NF

Multiple attempts to improve travel management through smaller projects:

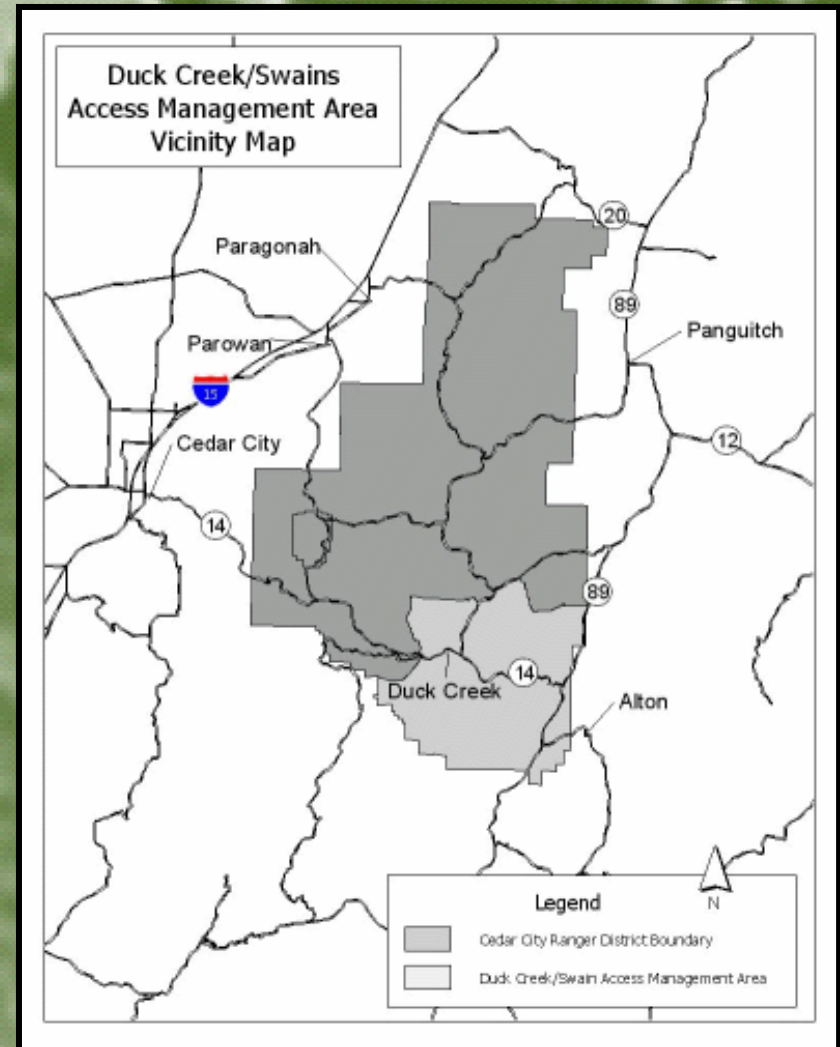
- ***Timber harvesting/ vegetation management projects***
- ***Watershed and fisheries restoration projects***
- ***Wildlife habitat restoration projects***

Law and Policy requires:

- ***Correspondence to interested parties***
- ***Scoping meetings***
- ***Legalized procedures***

(“Traditional” Methods of Public Involvement)

***Duck Creek /
Swains Access
Management
Project
1997-2002***



Duck Creek Characteristics

High Road Density: Approx. 6 mi./sq. mi.

- Numerous old logging roads
- “User-created” routes, particularly by owners of private residences

Highest OHV use of any area on the Forest

- Proximate to Cedar City, St. George
- 3 hours from Las Vegas
- Subdivisions within the Forest boundaries
- Hundreds of building permits issued each year

Ecologic Concerns and OHVs In the Duck Creek Area



***Concern over obvious
proliferation of unplanned
routes***

- ***Soil erosion***
- ***Watershed and vegetation damage***
- ***Wildlife harassment***
- ***Habitat degradation***
- ***Impacts to cultural sites***
- ***Conflicts/ confusion among users***

Project Beginnings

Proposed Action: Eliminate cross-country travel and reduce road densities from 6 miles per square mile to 2. (The proposed action would close approximately 60% of the motorized routes in the project area).

First presentations to the public were very contentious.

- ***Public believed that the decision was already made.***
- ***Information was originally felt to not be site-specific enough.***
- ***Threats of appeals and litigation by both environmental *and* motorized access interests.***



Adaptive Collaboration – Mix of Scale and Formality

Public Comments

- 45% wanted extensive road closures
- 45% wanted increased motorized opportunities

Adaptive Efforts During Planning

Project specialists and District Ranger cooperated with a variety of interests in an attempt to develop an alternative that better met the objectives of access, recreation as well as resource protection.

- County commissioners
- Interest/ activist groups
- General public

These efforts included *field trips and map work* with the public. This effort better illustrated *actual uses and values* related to roads, and *mutual understanding* emerged.

Cooperative Outcomes

An alternative was developed and selected that addressed concerns pertaining to connectivity of access, while retaining the necessary actions that provide better wildlife and resource protection.

While not deemed perfect, this alternative was not appealed or litigated.

Because of improved community relationships, over \$250,000 in cooperative funding (State and County) was contributed to the OHV management in the Duck Creek area in 2003-2004. Additional funding and implementation continues.

Implementation

- 60% of the motorized routes were still closed, reducing density to 2.3 miles per square mile
- Hydrological improvements were implemented
- A designated ATV trail system was developed, recreation opportunity improved
- A new ATV map was produced and the Forest Travel map was revised and improved, entire area was signed according new maps
- Informational kiosks were installed to educate and inform visitors



How to Define Success?

Concerns remain about the effectiveness of this project and some people disagree about its success in terms of impacts to ecology.

While no one knows if the decision is forever sustainable, it is an obvious and adaptable step toward improvement. It provided a forum to begin serious, ongoing collaborative management.

The truth is, visitor confusion has been diminished, expectations for trail etiquette are clearer, riders seem to be experiencing greater enjoyment. Overall, the land shows better evidence of care and the foundation is in place for continued improvement. Managers believe that visitors are more *informed* and *attentive* than before implementation.

Travel Planning Issues Tend to be Diverse and Value-Laden

Issues:

- Protection of species, habitat, forest health**
- Public lands: right to access, individualized pursuit of happiness**
- Conflict between types of use and values**
- Polarized interests; viewing themselves as alienated publics**

Highly formal, traditional methods of public involvement may not be solely sufficient to handle the controversy and may lead to continued problems in compliance and conflict.



***Dixie NF
Forest-Wide
Motorized Travel Planning***

2004-2006

Identified Need for Change

The Dixie NF doesn't have just an OHV management issue, the transportation system is in need of better planning and design.

MTP is an Opportunity to:

- **Comprehensively improve management of all wheeled motor vehicle use (public and administrative)**
- **Better protect species and resources, and rehabilitate damaged areas**
- **Enhance both motorized and non-motorized recreation experiences**

Do Not start NEPA right away

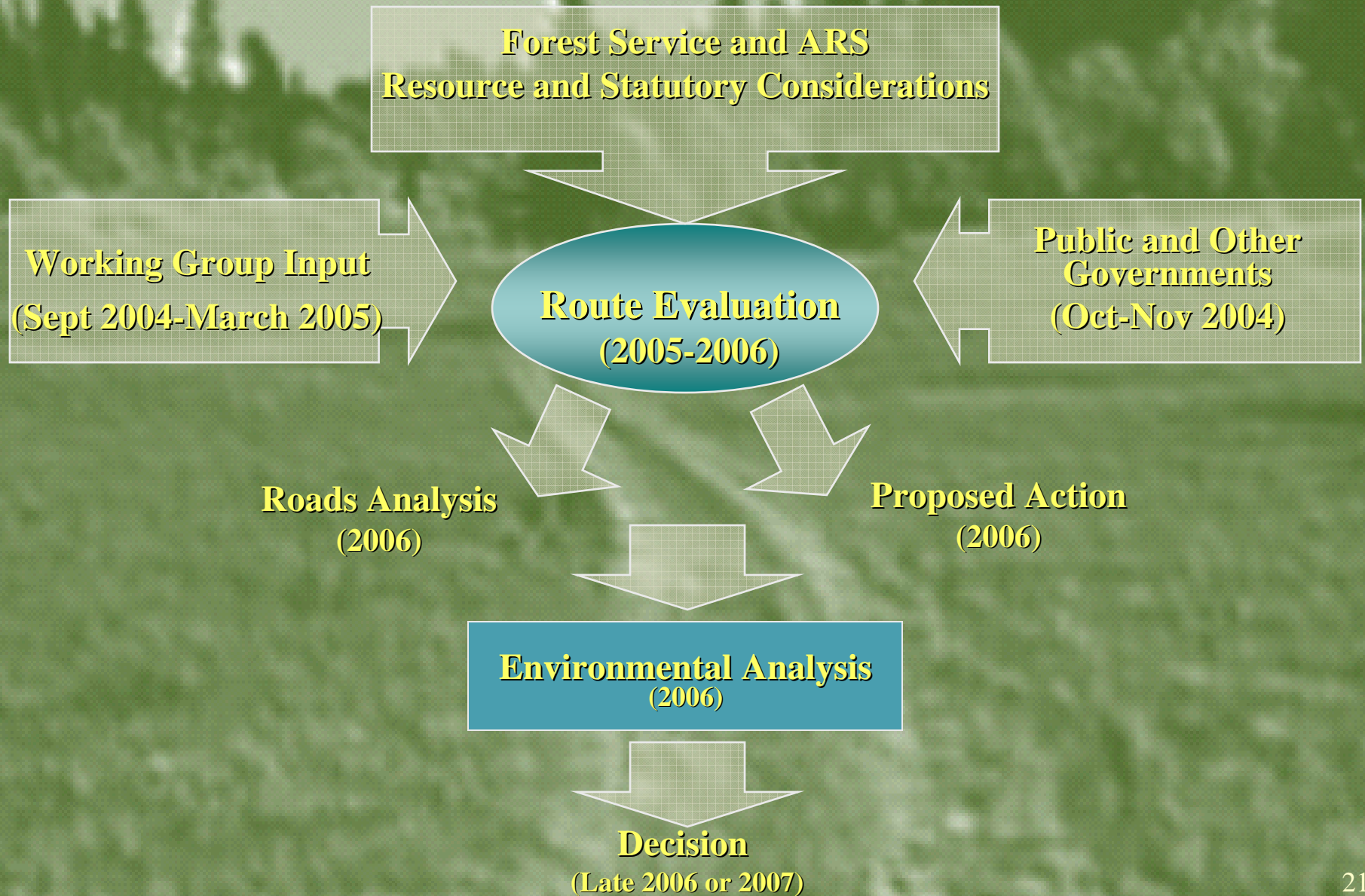
- **Take time to prepare well - know the ground, know the stakeholders**
- **Think ahead (anticipate impacts, incompatibilities of uses)**
- **Communicate early and often with concerned citizens and other governments (multiple scales and formalities of collaboration)**

Step 1. Inventory the Existing Condition



- If possible, begin with a comprehensive, inventory to complete roads analysis (stakeholders must agree upon the analysis inventory)
- Dixie NF Forest-wide Inventory (1996 to 2005)
- Approx. 6,000 miles of motorized routes/ 1,500 miles non-system “undefined”
- Assess both system and non-system routes carefully, but separately
- Integrate existing plans and projects
- Utilize site-specific and landscape scale data
- Use data from FS resource specialists *and the public*

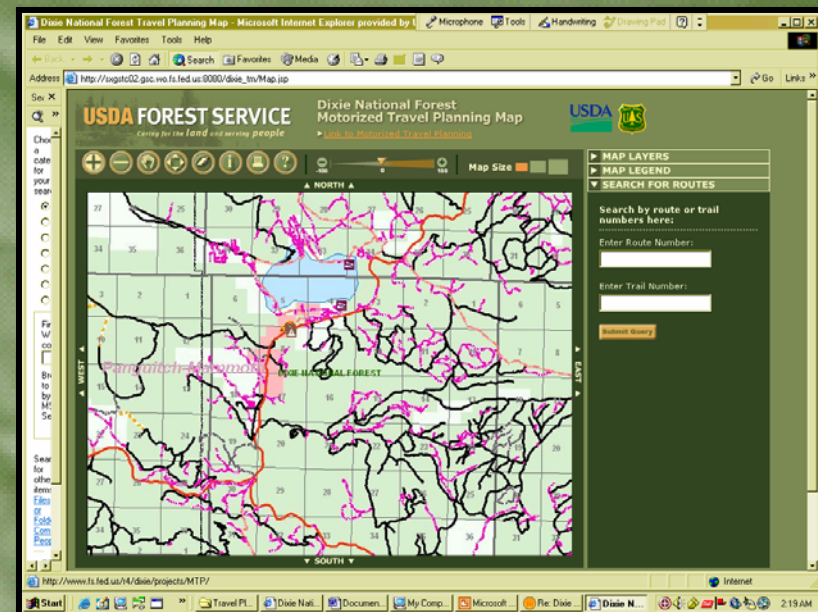
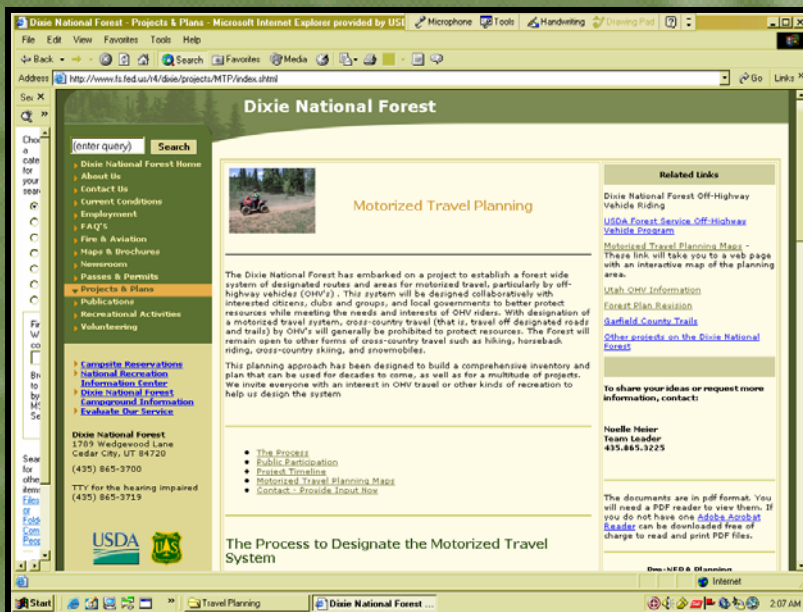
Step 2. Develop a Collaborative Feedback-Oriented Process



Seek Opportunities for Feedback

Keep people in the loop

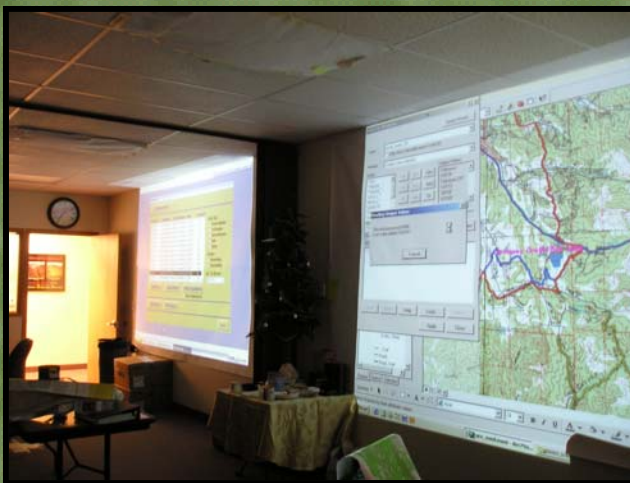
- Use websites and correspondence
- Provide maps/ data to all interested
- Go to meetings
- Make phone calls and visits—check in periodically



Step 3. Perform a Systematic Route Evaluation

- Evaluate all routes; integrate law and science with stakeholders' values
- District/ Forest staff answer a set of route evaluation questions
- Systematically organize data and develop a range of alternatives

The Dixie NF has employed Advanced Resource Solutions, Inc. (ARS) to help the Forest accomplish this work.



Public Input-MTP Work Group

- **Reenlisted assistance of Forest Plan Revision Topical Work Group members (specifically dispersed camping and OHV groups)**
- **MTP Work Group is multi-stakeholder (governments, interest groups, grazing, timber)**
- **Dixie NF presented and discussed the project approach and route questions, ultimately asking the Work Group:**
 - **Are we adequately considering the public's issues and concerns?**
 - **Are our processes thorough, trackable and logical?**
 - **Do they adequately allow for collaboration between the public and the Forest Service?**
 - **And if not...how do we improve?**

Work Group Feedback

These were not easy questions for the Work Group to answer. Value-laden opinions over forest use philosophy, distrust among stakeholders and government surfaced, especially focusing on:

- Demand for transparency in the MTP process
- Need to understand use of technology as a tool in route evaluation
- Clarification of how NEPA requirements are met through this process

As a result of three meetings and a hands-on workshop with Dixie NF and ARS, the Group expressed comfort with MTP process, and:

- *improved appreciation of diverse values*
- *recognized complexity of problems*
- *prepared the Dixie to move forward with public involvement*



Lessons Learned from Community Collaboration Efforts

Because of lack-of-trust issues, organizations may position themselves early to fight land managers on process. Don't let this stop a good collaborative effort, because:

- Biophysical science can't answer social and political problems**
- Law and policy only provide sideboards for action**
- People need to work together to find the best solutions**

Collaboration provides the best opportunity for interested people to influence planning and decisions. But be aware:

- Polarized, alienated publics fear loss, makes cooperation difficult**
- Collaboration efforts can be complicated, expensive and require energy and fortitude**
- Organizational positions and personal agendas can derail effective communication at the local level**
- Deeper public involvement can make managers professionally and even personally vulnerable, but you get to know people better...*which makes a BIG difference in the end.***

Stakeholder Collaboration is Necessary to Building Appreciation of Ecosystems

- Goes beyond legal requirements to **find more compatible solutions**
- Develops a **shared land ethic and shared ownership**, shared sense of responsibility, partnerships for future maintenance and monitoring
- Improves **trust, respect and understanding** between public and land managers
- Looks honestly at **sustainability** of human uses, discloses trade-offs
- Uses **comprehensive planning** to protection sensitive resources, while providing for a range of public and administrative needs
- Provides **early awareness of connected issues** across administrative boundaries; consistency of **statutory** guidelines and requirements
- Addresses effects on **local economies**, including timber, range and tourism
- Takes a perspective that **conflict can be an opportunity to improve planning**

Adaptive Management is Part of Planning, Not Just Implementation

Use **best information** available to improve process, make changes

- **Seek to understand values** (not just positions, but “why”) and consider that as real data
- **Be responsive** - Clear up confusion as soon as it occurs
- **Consult with collaborators** - fill in agency gaps and create better analysis through constant feedback
- **Formal and informal communications:** As you get to know people your best tools are live informal meetings and frequent phone calls. Stay connected!
- Participants become **appreciative, invested** in the forest, help maintain or restore to a special, healthy place.

It is not always possible to determine the **sustainability** of singular decisions- strive toward cumulatively **positive, measurable steps**

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