

What's in an Environmental Assessment

The following describes some of the key components found in an Environmental Assessment of a White Mountain National Forest Project.

Cover Sheet

Briefly identifies project name and location, responsible officials, and a contact for additional information.

Summary

This provides an executive summary of the document, including a brief description of the purpose and need, proposed action, decision to be made, alternatives considered, and the preferred alternative.

Chapter 1 - Purpose and Need for Action

Provides background information (including a location map) and describes the purpose and need for action (including the relationship to Forest Plan direction), proposed action, decisions to be made, public involvement, and issues used to develop alternatives.

Chapter 2 - Alternatives, including Proposed Action

Describes in detail the proposed action and the range of alternatives considered in the analysis (including alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed study). May also provide detailed maps and/or diagrams of the alternatives and mitigation measures common to all alternatives (these are measures prescribed to offset or rectify potential environmental effects) - or it may refer to these items in the Appendices. A table comparing key elements of the alternatives concludes Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 - Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

Discloses the expected environmental consequences and any effects on resources within the project area for each of the alternatives. Direct, indirect and cumulative effects are disclosed for soils, vegetation, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, water quality and quantity, and air. These effects are also disclosed for transportation, recreation, visual quality, cultural resources, socioeconomics, and, where applicable, roadless or Wilderness characteristics.

Chapter 4 - Preparation & Consultation

Lists the individuals who prepared the document, and a list of agencies consulted.

Appendices

May provide more specific information related to the analysis. The content of the Appendices will vary depending on the nature of the project. Most often, the Appendices provide more detailed information or analysis on topics that are of particular concern. This could include the Biological Evaluation (determination of effects on Threatened and Endangered species), Tables for Management Indicator Species or for Species Viability Concerns, transportation report or roads analysis, Forest Plan references, response to public comments, bibliography of literature cited, and a glossary of terms used in the document, or any of a number of other supporting documents.

Project Planning Record

Although not a part of the actual environmental assessment document, the project planning record is an integral part of the analysis, providing the supporting documentation, references, research, monitoring data, communication and background. These items are generally not included in the document due to technical nature or excessive length, or because they are reference materials used to develop the analysis in the document. Members of the public have access to the project planning record; and they can request the opportunity to view these files at the designated office, or they may pay to have copies of documents made and mailed.