

Multi-Agency Transparency: Costs for Forest Service National Environmental Policy Act Analyses

We understand the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) costs are of significant interest to both Congress and our stakeholders. NEPA costs are embedded in project costs, and the Forest Service does not track NEPA expenses separately from other planning and environmental review costs.

However, the Forest Service has modeled total costs of complying with all statutes that require planning or environmental reviews of projects. These costs include personnel expenses, overhead/administrative costs, contracting expenses, and others. Our best estimate is that it costs approximately \$365 million per year for the Forest Service to comply with all relevant statutes requiring planning and environmental reviews of projects, including: NEPA, the National Forest Management Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the General Mining Law of 1872, the Weeks Act (specifically related to mineral resources), the Mineral Leasing Act, the Geothermal Steam Act, the Noxious Weed Act, the Public Rangelands Improvement Act, the Wetlands Conservation Act, and Executive Orders related to Environmental Justice, Flood Plains, Tribal Consultation, Sacred Sites, and others.

The Forest Service is working to right-size the time it takes to conduct planning and environmental reviews, both to improve our customer service and to expedite our forest improvement projects. In late 2017, the Forest Service began an agency-wide reform effort known as Environmental Analysis and Decision-Making (EADM). This effort will reduce the time and cost required to comply with NEPA and other statutes requiring project consultations. Through EADM, we will reform regulations, modernize our processes and systems, and streamline our consultations. These reforms will increase the pace and scale of all activities on the forest that depend on environmental analysis.

When completed, the reform will reduce the time and costs required to comply with NEPA and other relevant statutes by about 20 percent. Through our EADM efforts, we have already begun to reduce the time it takes us to complete this work: our efforts have saved about 13,500 days of work in the first two quarters of 2018.