

Comments from Craig Foss, Chief, Bureau of Forestry Assistance, Idaho Department of Lands.

Question A.3.

One of the functions of the Idaho Department of Land's Cumulative Watershed Effects (CWE) analysis is to maintain and update a geographically referenced database of environmental parameters used to analyze the extent of adverse conditions related to forest practices and water quality within a particular watershed. For the time being, this information is considered to be project specific. However, information gathered regarding roads, stream crossings, culverts, canopy cover, and streams will likely have practical uses in the development of future projects.

As land managers and consultants to private landowners, the Department of Lands is dealing with a lot of the same environmental issues as the Forest Service. We feel that both agencies could benefit from sharing information. Thus, there may be a real need to standardize data collection and storage formats with regard to specific environmental parameters.

Question A.4.

The Department of Lands utilizes ESRI software, specifically ArcGIS and ArcView, for storage and to aid in reporting on environmental data. We rely on the Microsoft Office suite of software to further manipulate and prepare this data in written form. The use of Microsoft Office allows us to link applications and professionally prepare a final product in the form of a written report containing figures, tables, and charts. With the sheer volume of data already being stored, and more to come in the future, we are considering the idea of pulling all this information together under one database structure such as Standard Query Language (SQL).

Question B.2.

Two challenges our agency has experienced in partnering with the USDA-Forest Service on NEPA related activities are time and money. It has been our experience that federal agencies are seldom able to respond to natural resource crisis in a timely manner due to NEPA requirements. For example, we recently experienced two consecutive years of Douglas Fir Tussock Moth outbreak. Our agency was able to respond to the outbreak in the form of a spray treatment programs within months of determining the severity of the outbreak. The adjacent FS lands were "monitored" to determine the degree of infestation. Had the monitoring turned up the level of infestation experienced on state lands, the FS would then begin the NEPA process, with no hopes of spraying for at least another year. FS staff knew that by the time the necessary federal paperwork was complete, the infestation would have cycled out and the damage already incurred.

The money factor was a component of the second year of the spray project. State natural resource agencies receive federal funds each year to assist with monitoring for insect and disease outbreaks.

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However, to receive federal funds to treat detected outbreaks, states must comply with the NEPA process. Fortunately, our agency was able to receive special programmatic insect suppression funds through the FS to assist our spray treatment efforts in the second consecutive year of the tussock moth infestation. We were only able to do this through the "programmatic" agreement, whereby funds received would be used for our overall pest control program rather than for a specific project.

Federal and State agencies could effectively "co-lead" program or project efforts if each is allowed to operate by the rules and regulations of the lands in question. If the issue is state lands, with potential impact to federal lands, then state land rules should be followed regardless of the funding source.