

# DEVELOPING AND EVALUATING

*"Whatever befalls the earth  
befalls the sons of the earth.  
Man did not weave the web of life;  
he is merely a strand of it.  
Whatever he does to the web,  
he does to himself."*

*Chief Seattle*



ALTERNATIVES

## Developing and Evaluating Alternatives

This unit will focus on developing alternatives to fulfill NEPA requirements to consider the full range of reasonable alternatives. Determining the environmental consequences associated with each alternative will also be discussed.

### Objectives

1. Participants can define what makes up an alternative for program level wilderness management direction.
2. Participants can describe the “no action” alternative.
3. Participants can describe at least one alternative to the proposed management direction that will respond to the significant issues.
4. Participants can identify at least three potential effects each alternative may have on the resource, the visitors’ experience, or on management.

### Key points

- Alternatives are developed to the proposed management direction in a manner that responds to issues and meets the purpose and need.
- Alternatives represent different visions for the Wilderness.
- Develop a full range of reasonable alternatives. Don't fall into the Goldilocks Syndrome.
- If the effects of alternatives are the same, then the alternatives are not different enough to analyze separately.
- The purpose of evaluating alternatives is to disclose effects relative to the significant issues—no surprises.

### Activity

What can it be used for? The possible uses for a strange looking object (refer to pp. 11-13).

## Developing Alternatives

**Alternative contents** The proposed management direction contains one way that zones would be allocated across the Wilderness along with the description of desired conditions, standards, and monitoring indicators for each zone. Alternatives to the proposed management direction need to display different ways that zones would be allocated to respond to the significant issues and fulfill the purpose and need. Alternatives can also be viewed as different “visions” for the future of the Wilderness. The no action alternative needs to be displayed. For developing program level wilderness management direction, the no action alternative is defined as continuing current management direction (i.e. not adopting new management direction). It does not mean “doing nothing in the Wilderness.”

For example, the proposed management direction may identify a portion of the Wilderness to be managed as a zone I area with a objective of no system trails. An issue may be raised that there is currently a system trail within the proposed zone and eliminating maintenance would result in greater resource damage. Thus, one of the alternatives might map this area as zone II with a objective of maintaining system trails to some desired condition.

**Purpose** The alternatives section of a NEPA document is considered the “heart of the document.” There is rarely only one way to meet the purpose and need for change. Developing and evaluating alternatives allows you to show that you have heard issues associated with the proposed management direction and have seriously considered various ways to respond to the issues. The “no action” alternative serves as a baseline for comparing the effects of alternative management direction. It allows readers to clearly understand the effects of new management direction.

**NEPA requirements**

1. Describe and evaluate all reasonable alternatives and explain the reasons for eliminating some alternatives from detailed study.
2. Give substantial treatment to all alternatives considered in detail.
3. Include the no-action alternative.
4. Include mitigation.

**Key points**

- Before alternatives are developed, you must have well-defined proposed management direction. In the past, there has been a tendency to skip over the analysis phase to develop proposed management direction. Instead, managers have jumped right into the NEPA phase stating that the proposed action is to “develop new management direction for the Blankity-blank Wilderness” with no information on what the new management direction would contain. This creates immediate problems in developing alternatives and begs the question—alternatives to what? Alternatives are developed to the proposed action, thus you must have some kind of detailed proposed management direction to develop any kind of meaningful alternatives.

- The goal is to develop a range of reasonable alternatives, NOT to produce a reasonable range of alternatives—e.g. one maximum development, one minimum development, one moderate. Don't fall into the Goldilocks syndrome—one hot, one cold, one just right. For an alternative to be considered reasonable, it must meet the purpose and need (i.e. need for change) and address significant issues.
- Alternatives may be eliminated from detailed study because they are illegal, technologically infeasible, clearly unreasonable, or fall outside legal mandates (e.g. doesn't meet sideboards set by the Wilderness Act).
- The line officer's role in alternative development is critical. Alternatives should be reviewed to ensure they meet the purpose and need, and address issues. The line officer should approve alternatives before the analysis of effects begins.
- If you can't really distinguish among alternatives in terms of effects, then you have too many alternatives.
- It is critical to analyze each alternative thoroughly and give substantial treatment to each alternative. This means describing each alternative with equal depth.
- Mitigation is included as part of each alternative. Mitigation is what you would do above and beyond normal operating procedures. For example, one alternative may include managing an area as a trailless zone. Mitigation may require education of visitors in this area to insure minimum impact use. There may also be mitigation that is common to all alternatives. Instead of identifying trailheads to sign, a mitigation may be to sign all trailheads advising users they may encounter a variety of wilderness uses including livestock grazing, packstock and llamas.
- Don't label alternatives (e.g. the maximum recreation alternative, the wildlife protection alternative). The alternatives should all represent different ways of responding to significant issues.
- The public can participate in developing alternatives. You could hold a workshop where you explain the proposed management direction, present the purpose and need and significant issues relative to this direction, then break people into small groups with a map and markers at each group and let each group develop a way to respond to the issues.

## Suggested activity

Perhaps the best way to begin work on the Alternatives section of the analysis is to do some creativity exercises. This may encourage the interdisciplinary team to expand their ideas which could lead to more successful creation of alternatives. Two publications that may offer some ideas for expanding creative thinking are *A Whack On The Side Of The Head* and *A Kick In The Seat Of The Pants*, both by Roger von Oeck.

Place an easily seen strange-looking object on a table at the front of the training room. Have half of the participants work in small groups. The other half of the participants work individually. Give folks about 3 minutes to write down all the possible uses for the object. Compare number of items that people working in groups came up with versus number of items that people working individually developed. Lesson is power of group thinking to develop alternatives.

## Evaluating Alternatives

### Purpose

The purpose of the “environmental consequences” section of a NEPA document is to disclose the effects that each alternative may have so that the decision-maker can make an informed choice. This section forms the scientific and analytic basis for comparing alternatives. This section also serves to inform people about the possible effects from a decision so there are no surprises.

### Key points

- The document must disclose the environmental effects of alternatives including the proposed action considering direct, indirect, and cumulative effects. Brainstorm a flow chart—what will be the immediate effects from implementing an alternative for new management direction? What will be the effects “down the road” from each of the immediate effects?
- When interpreting effects, identify the direction of the effect (e.g. will campsite conditions improve or get worse), the magnitude of the effect (e.g. how much will campsite conditions improve or get worse), and the duration of the effect (i.e. how long will campsites be in an improved condition or in a worse condition). Interpretation doesn’t mean opinions (e.g. this effect will be good).
- Use the significant issues identified during scoping of the proposed management direction as the basis for evaluating alternatives. Describe exactly how each alternative will respond to the issues. Consider effects on resource conditions, the visitors’ experience, and management (cost, work load, etc.).
- When evaluating alternatives, define the “zone of influence” for each issue you are analyzing. The zone of influence may go beyond the planning boundaries and will be different for each issue. It is helpful to use maps to show the “zone of influence” for each issue analyzed.
- Tables that succinctly display the effects of different alternatives are useful but don’t use a numbering system or +/- system to compare effects from alternatives. Just display the effects of each alternative in qualitative or quantitative terms. Avoid relying on numbers exclusively.
- The no action alternative should be used as a baseline to show how the effects of the other alternatives compare.
- Display your finding on effects in a clear, understandable format. Avoid technical jargon. Use graphic displays where possible (e.g. maybe pictures can convey what the Wilderness might be like under different alternatives).
- Don't get paralyzed by playing the “what if” game. Analyze the reasonable foreseeable effects. If the effects will be analyzed in a project level analysis, then don't do a lot of analysis in the program level NEPA analysis. If effect won't be analyzed in the future analysis, then go ahead and do it.

# DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVES

## What Do Alternatives Consist of?

Each alternative displays a particular way that zones would be allocated across the Wilderness to address the significant issues and fulfill the purpose and need.

### Example:

#### No action Alternative

No change in current management

#### Alternative A

Intent is to manage the Wilderness to accommodate a slight increase inhuman activity without degrading the overall condition of the Wilderness

#### Alternative B

Intent is to strongly emphasize the trail corridor concept and allow only minimum human activity in grizzly bear habitat

#### Alternative C

Intent is to reduce human influence to maximize extent possible by restoring conditions in areas which currently have high human activity

## Alternative Comparison

Alternatives	Class I	Class II	Class III
No Action	58%	7%	35%
Alt A	63%	26%	11%
Alt B	73%	17%	10%
Alt C	85%	15%	—

# 11

## Developing and Evaluating Alternatives

blank

## ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

- ☞ Alternatives are developed to the proposed management direction. Different visions for the Wilderness
  
- ☞ Alternatives must fulfill purpose and need and respond to significant issues
  
- ☞ Include the no-action alternative
  
- ☞ Develop a full range of reasonable alternatives.  
The Goldilock Syndrome
  
- ☞ Describe alternatives eliminated from detailed study and explain why
  
- ☞ Describe action alternatives in equal depth ("substantial treatment")
  
- ☞ If the effects are the same, then combine the alternatives

# 11

## Developing and Evaluating Alternatives

blank

## EVALUATING ALTERNATIVES

**Purpose is to disclose effects  
No surprises**

- Describe how each alternative responds to significant issues
- Disclose effects of:
  - Resource conditions
  - Visitor's experience
  - Management—needs and costs
- Address direct, indirect and cumulative effects

**Display results in clear, understandable form**

- Differences among alternatives must be apparent

# 11

## Developing and Evaluating Alternatives

blank

# WORKSHEET

## DEVELOPING AND EVALUATING ALTERNATIVES

List three significant issues (from previous worksheet):

---



---



---



---

Identify two different ways you could meet the proposed need and respond to at least 2 of the significant issues. Briefly describe each or draw them on your wilderness maps.

Alt. C: \_\_\_\_\_

Alt. D: \_\_\_\_\_

---



---

Briefly describe what the potential effects of implementing each alternative might be.

	No Action Alt	Proposed Action	Alt C	Alt D
Issue 1				
Issue 2				