

Problem-Scoping Key for Adaptive Management

The following key can help in dissecting a particular management problem and determining whether adaptive management is an appropriate approach to decision making. If the answer to any question in the key is negative, then an approach other than adaptive management is likely to be more appropriate.

1. Is some kind of management decision to be made?
(see Sections 1.1, 2.1, 2.3, 3.1, and 5.5)
No – decision analysis and monitoring are unnecessary when no decision options exist.
Yes – go to step 2.
2. Can stakeholders be engaged?
(see Sections 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.1, and 4.2)
No – without active stakeholder involvement an adaptive management process is unlikely to be effective.
Yes – go to step 3.
3. Can management objective(s) be stated explicitly?
(see Sections 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 4.2 and 5.1)
No – adaptive management is not possible if objectives are not identified.
Yes – go to step 4.
4. Is decision making confounded by uncertainty about potential management impacts?
(see Sections 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2 and 5.2)
No – in the absence of uncertainty adaptive management is not needed.
Yes – go to step 5.
5. Can resource relationships and management impacts be represented in models?
(see Sections 1.2, 3.1, 4.2, and 5.1)
No – adaptive management cannot proceed without the predictions generated by models.
Yes – go to step 6.
6. Can monitoring be designed to inform decision making?
(see Sections 2.1, 2.3, 3.1, and 4.2)
No – in the absence of targeted monitoring it is not possible to reduce uncertainty and improve management.
Yes – go to step 7.
7. Can progress be measured in achieving management objectives?
(see Sections 1.1, 3.1, 4.1, and 4.2)
No – adaptive management is not feasible if progress in understanding and improving management is unrecognizable.
Yes – go to step 8.
8. Can management actions be adjusted in response to what has been learned?
(see Sections 1.2, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2, 5.3, and 5.4)
No – adaptive management is not possible without the flexibility to adjust management strategies.
Yes – go to step 9.
9. Does the whole process fit within the appropriate legal framework?
(see Sections 2.3, 2.4, 3.2, 4.1, and 4.2)
No – adaptive management should not proceed absent full compliance with the relevant laws, regulations, and authorities.
Yes – all of the basic conditions are met, and adaptive management is appropriate for this problem.