

Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

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Series: Environmental Quality Programs

Part 522: Adaptive Management

Chapter 1: Adaptive Management Implementation Policy

Originating Office: Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance

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1.1 **Purpose.** The purpose of this chapter is to provide implementation policy guidance for Department of the Interior bureaus and offices to incorporate adaptive management strategies into their land and resource management decisions.

1.2 **Scope.** This chapter applies to all DOI bureau and office activities involving the management of Federal lands and resources under the jurisdiction of DOI.

1.3 **Definition.** Building on the definition developed by the National Research Council, adaptive management is operationally defined in The Technical Guide as follows:

Adaptive Management - Adaptive Management is a decision process that promotes flexible decision making that can be adjusted in the face of uncertainties as outcomes from management actions and other events become better understood. Careful monitoring of these outcomes both advances scientific understanding and helps adjust policies or operations as part of an iterative learning process. Adaptive management also recognizes the importance of natural variability in contributing to ecological resilience and productivity. It is not a ‘trial and error’ process, but rather emphasizes learning while doing. Adaptive management does not represent an end in itself, but rather a means to more effective decisions and enhanced benefits. Its true measure is in how well it helps meet environmental, social, and economic goals; increases scientific knowledge; and reduces tensions among stakeholders.

1.4 **Policy.** The Department’s policy is to encourage the use of adaptive management as appropriate as a tool in managing lands and resources.

1.5 **Implementation:** *Adaptive Management: The U.S. Department of the Interior Technical Guide* is the technical basis for adaptive decision making for the Department and bureaus. Bureaus should incorporate the operational components identified in the Technical Guide – including the evaluation of success – into internal programmatic guidance as needed to assure appropriate application. Bureaus may achieve better resource management outcomes through cost-effective cooperative conservation based on adaptive management. Bureaus and offices are required to:

A. Conduct all adaptive management activities in full compliance with applicable laws and other authorities.

B. Conduct appropriate and applicable environmental monitoring to determine resource status, promote learning, and evaluate progress toward achieving objectives whenever using adaptive management.

C. Incorporate adaptive management principles, as appropriate, into policies, plans, guidance, agreements, and other instruments for the management of resources under the Department's jurisdiction.

1.6 Responsibilities.

A. The Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget is responsible for overseeing the Department's compliance with this policy and designating a chair for the Adaptive Management Working Group (AMWG).

B. The Program Assistant Secretaries are responsible for ensuring that their subordinate bureaus and offices comply with the policy in this chapter.

C. The Heads of Bureaus and Offices are responsible for:

(1) Ensuring that their organizations comply with this policy.

(2) Developing appropriate bureau or office policy and guidance to address adaptive management as it relates to bureau-specific missions and legislation. The policy and guidance should be consistent with the conditions for use identified in the technical guide.

(3) Incorporating and applying adaptive management as appropriate.

(4) Providing technical support for Departmental reviews of adaptive management activities and associated policies when requested.

(5) Appointing an employee with appropriate technical expertise to represent the bureau or office on the AMWG. Representatives are required for the following bureaus and offices: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance, U.S. Geological Survey, Minerals Management Service, and Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. Heads of other bureaus and offices are encouraged, but not required, to appoint a representative to the AMWG.

(6) Ensuring that persons conducting adaptive management activities have the appropriate training necessary to ensure their understanding of adaptive management, so as to conform to this policy.

D. The Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance is responsible for:

(1) Serving as the lead Office for revising this policy when warranted by changes in technical information, Federal statutes, regulations, or other conditions. Any bureau or office can initiate changes by contacting the Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance.

(2) Soliciting and considering the views of all interested Departmental offices and bureaus when the Department contemplates changes in this policy.

(3) When requested, providing technical assistance and guidance to Departmental offices and bureaus in understanding and implementing adaptive management.

E. The Adaptive Management Working Group is responsible for:

(1) Developing a charter to direct the operations of the AMWG.

(2) Providing communication, coordination and oversight of training, research, and technical assistance to bureaus on adaptive management.

(3) Updating the Adaptive Management Technical Guide when necessary, and providing supplemental guidance as needed.

(4) The AMWG will be led by a Departmental executive designated by the Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget.

1.7 **Guidance.** Guidance is published in *Adaptive Management: The U.S. Department of the Interior Technical Guide*, available at <http://www.doi.gov>. The Technical Guide is a key component of the Department's adaptive management training program and Web site. The Technical Guide indicates that adaptive management is not applicable to all resource management situations. The guide identifies conditions under which adaptive management may be warranted. These conditions include an opportunity to apply learning, clear management objectives, and monitoring systems with a reasonable expectation of reducing uncertainty.