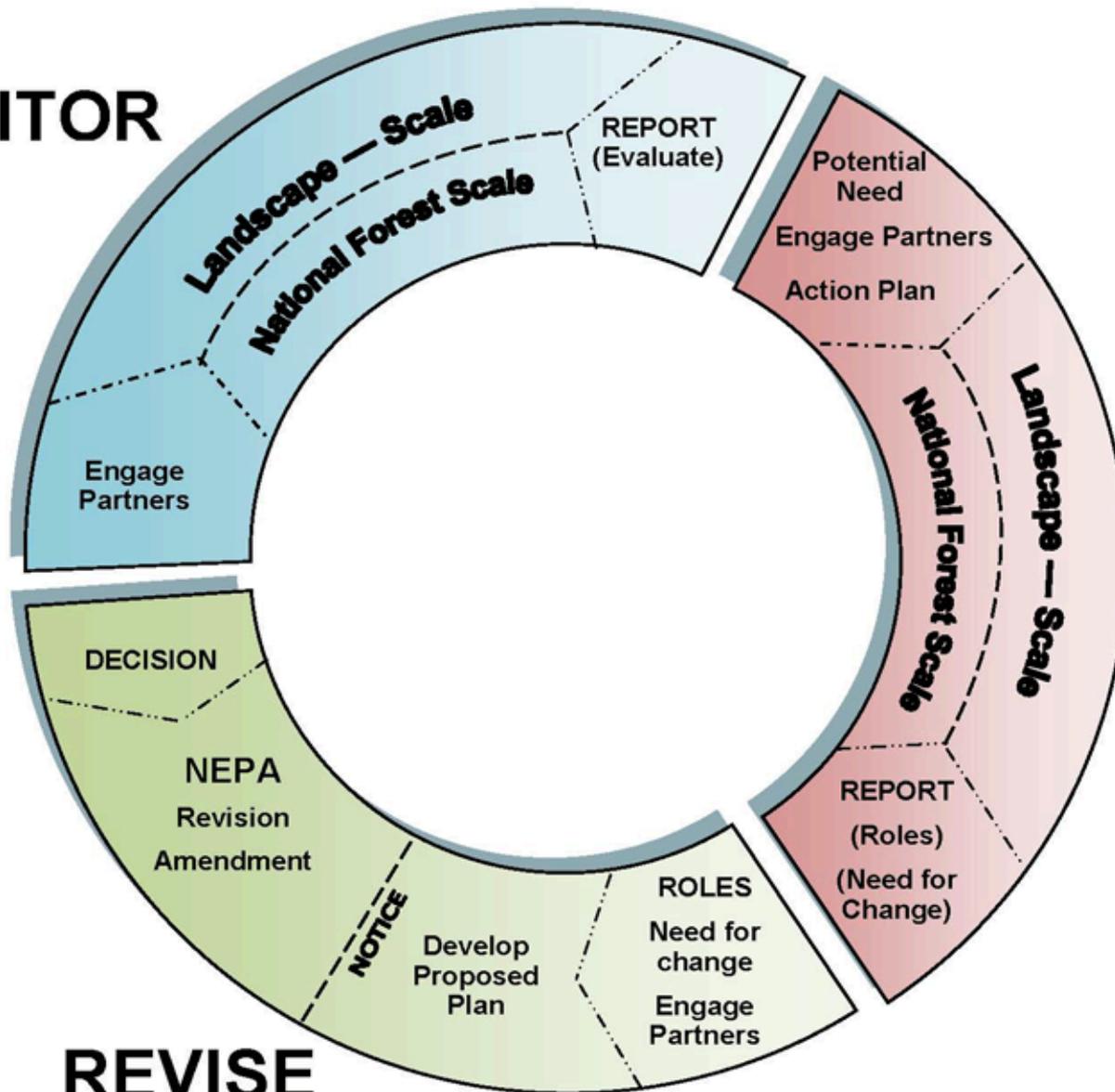
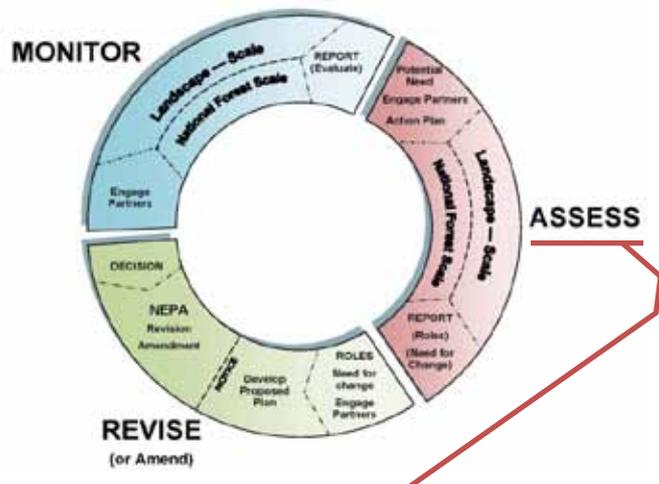


MONITOR



ASSESS

REVISE
(or Amend)

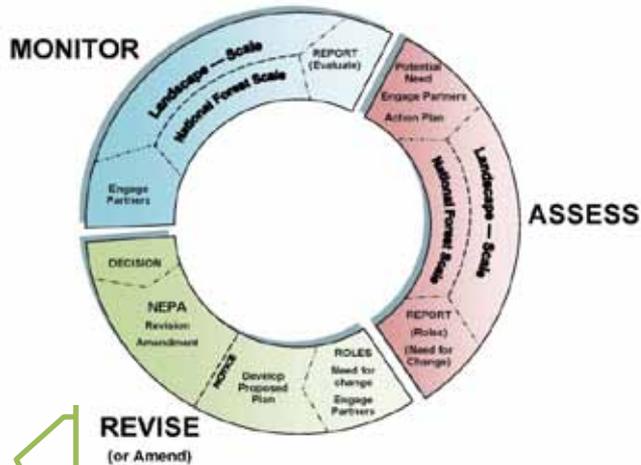


In the assess phase, the responsible official would conduct a review of conditions on the ground and in the context of the broader landscape, using available ecological, social and economic data to the extent possible.

The purpose of assessments would be fourfold: (1) to develop upfront collaborative relationships among government entities, tribes, private landowners, and other partners and interested parties; (2) to develop an understanding of existing and predicted conditions and management needs on the ground; (3) to develop a mutual understanding of the complex issues across landscapes as well as roles and needs of various stakeholders; and (4) to enable each NFS unit to identify distinctive contributions or niches within the landscape and determine the need to change land management plans. The desired result is a shared vision of how to proceed with management actions within the broader landscape context. The scale of assessments would vary depending on the landscape and issues of concern. When critical gaps exist, the responsible official could work with partners and other interested parties to collaboratively prepare new assessments, some of which might encompass areas beyond NFS unit boundaries.

The assessment phase would build in collaboration and dialogue with partners and interested parties. This responds to stated desires for early collaboration—well before a proposed action—so that stakeholders can engage in joint fact-finding and develop a mutual understanding of the interconnections among social, economic, and ecological communities and systems.

****Please note:** Brief examples are available on the Planning Rule blog. Those examples are just snippets to spark your thinking and build understanding of how the framework would incorporate specific issue topics; later posts will focus on the major issues discussed at the roundtables.

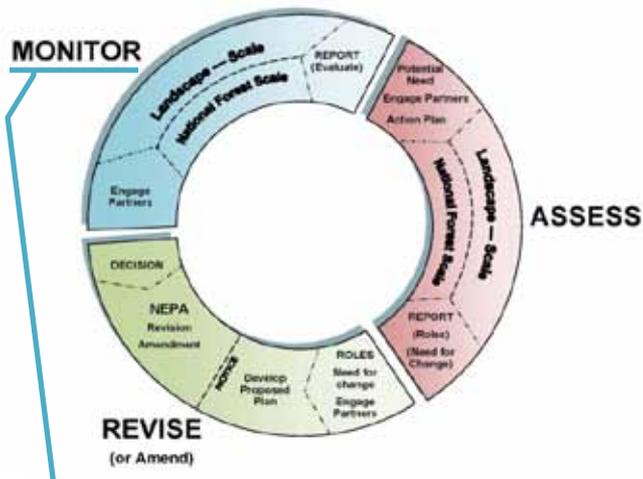


In the revise or amend phase, the responsible official would work with government agencies, tribes, and the public to use the information gathered in the assessment phase, including partnership roles and the need for change within a landscape context, to shape a proposed action that responds to the need for change on the NFS units. The responsible official would continue to work with the public through this phase, within NEPA requirements. This approach encourages the development of a proposal that has fully engaged the public. As part of the formal revision/amendment process, the responsible official would initiate the notice to begin the NEPA process. Alternatives to the proposed action and environmental effects would be included in the NEPA document, and a decision document would approve revisions or changes to the plan. Plans would continue to include components required by NFMA, as well as requirements identified in the new planning rule.

The revise/amend component of the framework responds to the public desire to help develop proposals for land management plans. Additionally, this approach could make the NEPA process more efficient by using information developed during the upfront collaborative assessment.

Example 1 All-lands: Building on what was learned about habitat conditions and trends in the assess phase, land management plans could include desired conditions and objectives for how management actions on the NFS unit could contribute to reconnecting corridors for wide ranging species.

Example 2: Water Resources and Watershed Health: Building on what was learned in the assess phase about the conditions and trends for water, land management plans could include desired conditions and objectives for watershed health and public water supplies. A specific example of this might be riparian area restoration.



In the monitoring phase, the responsible official would implement a monitoring plan to determine the level and effectiveness of implementation on the unit and changes across the broader landscape. This will give managers data to evaluate management actions and make adjustments to both projects and to the land management plan, where needed.

The planning rule would recommend that each planning unit develop a land management plan monitoring strategy using a two-tiered approach: (1) monitoring at the planning unit level, and (2) monitoring at the broader landscape scale. Unit-level monitoring would be focused on detecting changes on the unit and determining how well the land management plan is being implemented and how effective management actions are in achieving objectives and moving toward desired conditions. Each NFS unit would be responsible for creating and implementing the unit-level monitoring plan, in conjunction with partners and scientists. NFS unit supervisors would participate in landscape-scale monitoring plans and strategies developed collaboratively by one or more regional foresters, Forest Service research station directors, other government entities, private landowners, and others, and would be designed to detect changes caused by stressors outside the control of an individual NFS units. Landscape level and unit level monitoring would compliment each other and would be focused on questions related to land management plan implementation. The monitoring component of the framework responds to stakeholders' desire for a systematic, unified, monitoring approach rather than "random acts of monitoring." They want a system that will track issues that transcend national NFS unit, such as wide-ranging wildlife species at risk. Both stakeholders and the agency recognize the potential efficiencies of a unified monitoring approach and hope to increase information sharing and learning opportunities.

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