

Ecoregional Direction

Developing Strategies

The BLM plans to use the information from the Rapid Ecoregional Assessments (REAs), along with input from partner agencies, stakeholders, and American Indian Tribes, to develop landscape-level management strategies for BLM-managed lands. These landscape-level management strategies are called *ecoregional direction*.

The purpose of ecoregional direction is to focus and coordinate the BLM's local management efforts so they work together to achieve vital resource management goals that span field office jurisdictions. To accomplish this, ecoregional direction will identify focal areas on BLM-managed lands for conservation and development, including focal areas for conserving wildlife habitats and migration corridors, and focal areas for potential energy development and urban growth. Ecoregional direction will also provide a blueprint for implementing this integrated resource conservation and development strategy through the BLM's national and field-level organization.

The BLM is currently working to formulate guidance for developing ecoregional direction that will fulfill these needs. With the assistance of the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, the BLM is discussing ways to develop ecoregional direction with management partners and developing *lessons learned* from past landscape-level management efforts. In October 2010 the U.S. Institute completed a "Lessons Learned Report", which will be used to help craft guidance for ecoregional direction that complements local management processes and fosters effective management actions on-the-ground.

The Lessons Learned Report

This Lessons Learned Report will inform the development of ecoregional direction guidance and the BLM's overall landscape management approach. It is the result of a series of seven interviews and a literature review process. The interviews and literature review were specifically intended to test BLM's assumptions about key factors to success in implementing an ecoregional approach.

Lessons Learned - Key Recommendations

The results of the Lessons Learned Report validate the appropriateness of a landscape-scale approach to understanding the conditions, trends, and opportunities across the landscape and the value in considering these trends in managing smaller, local land areas. Recommendations for the BLM as it seeks to further describe and refine its process, include:

1. Continue to seek to build within the agency an internal commitment to the landscape approach, using internal experience to help guide the development of the refined process.
2. Continue to work with stakeholders at landscape-scale and local levels to generate a shared understanding of the landscape approach.

3. Within the context of the ecoregional assessment and direction process, ensure that:
 - a. Assessments are appropriately scaled for specific issues, and hierarchically scaled at different levels to address multiple, interrelated issues.
 - b. A systematic framework includes clearly articulated goals and objectives, accompanied by clearly delineated targets, threats, and potential mitigation actions. This can be done by relying on existing data and expert opinion.
 - c. Use the latest technology and research for conservation planning and management. Management choices should be presented using best science for potential outcomes.
 - d. Management direction occurs from the top-down and bottom-up to secure coordinated management that is relevant at the appropriate scales.
 - e. Assessment and planning processes are built on principles of engagement and nested collaboration.
 - f. Budgets and resources follow the national or regional-level strategies.
 - g. Agencies revise their planning processes to integrate large, ecoregional-level assessments and the associated management direction.
 - h. Make adaptive management intentional; plans should be flexible to change based on evolving research and monitoring. A monitoring component ensures that the objectives of the plan are being achieved, while management practices should allow change based on the evolving research.
 - i. Continue the practice of synthesizing existing data and expert opinion to finish the initial assessment. Subsequent data and adaptive management processes can fill gaps identified in the initial work.
4. Invest in effective internal and external communications. By providing a common basis for understanding, a systematic framework can help improve communication among scientists, land managers, policy makers, and others involved in the process. This is especially important for successful implementation across jurisdictional lines. The plan should seek to contribute to a greater understanding of the bioregion, increased coordination of strategic efforts, and measurable results on the ground.