

Visitor Use Impact and Decision Framework

March 2019

Background

To make transparent and methodical decisions, the Natural Areas Department (NAD) developed the Visitor Use Impact and Decision Framework (IDF). The IDF is adapted from [the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council's tool](#) to help land conservation managers understand what recreation opportunities are appropriate for conserved lands. The results of the IDF are carefully researched and used to guide the Department's recommendations on management issues. The Department designed the IDF to ensure transparency around visitor use and to systematically explain complex decisions.

What the Framework Does

- Analyzes four categories of considerations for new visitor use opportunities
 - ecological impacts
 - cultural resource impacts
 - social consideration
 - natural areas (administrative) considerations
- Facilitates a flexible analysis of impacts via a High/Mod/Low and Yes/No/Maybe scale
- Contains a comprehensive project summary that lays out all the issues for the reader - how it came about, information about the site, stakeholder interest etc.
- The ecological impacts table can be leveraged to deny the opportunity if the result of the analysis is "High"
- Documents best management practices (BMPs) associated with each question
- Broadens the lens of consideration to the landscape level by focusing more on landscape integrity and function - helps NAD define what rare and sensitive means.
- Incorporates the eco-tool, community and public engagement considerations
- Considers cultural resource impacts - progressive and inclusive
- Can be used for any visitor use decision, existing or new

The Framework Process

- A new visitor use opportunity is proposed
- Approval to proceed from senior leadership
- Assigned Planner leads, fills in project information
- Subject matter experts fill in rationale for each table according to their area of expertise
- Subject matter experts meet and discuss questions and rate together
- Majority rating is documented at the end of each category
- Planner fills in summary table with majority rating from each category with supporting rationale
- Assigned Planner writes staff recommendation including supporting conclusions and BMPs
- Planner presents staff recommendation to senior leadership
- Senior leadership confirms or repudiates staff recommendation

Visitor Use Impact and Decision Framework

Name of Project:

Project Summary

Summarize scope of project in one or two paragraphs

Site Description (see Ecological Impacts Table)

Summary

High level site description

Wildlife

What is known about the wildlife found at the site. Also, human/wildlife interaction, e.g. lots of snakes

Soils and Slopes

Detail major soil types and range of slopes

Floristic Quality

Range of floristic quality and interpretation of scale

Habitat Zones

Major habitat zones/management units

Geology

Geology of the site

Physical and Human Land Use

Conditions of built environment including infrastructure, zoning and any planned development

Cultural

Detail understanding of cultural/historical artifacts on the site including if there has been a cultural survey done.

Other site considerations

Any other considerations not detailed above

Existing Trails and Visitor Amenities

Detail all amenities including miles of trails and type (loop, paved, etc.), permitted uses, vault toilets, parking spaces, picnic tables etc.

Site Visits

Detail staff site visits and areas of expertise (trails, wildlife etc.). List major observations.

Project Details

What does the visitor use proposal entail?

Detail entire scope of proposed use.

Who is proposing the use?

If a potentially affected interest group proposed the use, detail it here.

Who will be the primary beneficiary of the use?

Detail if the proposed use is for a select group, e.g. people with disabilities, families, mountain bikers etc.

Why is the use being proposed?

Detail if use was part of a management plan process, community feedback, potentially affected interest group etc. or internal staff.

When is the proposal to be implemented if approved?

Proposed year(s) of implementation.

How much will the trail cost?

List out major itemized construction costs and total along with how accurate the estimate is.

How will Natural Areas Maintain the trail?

Maintenance cost and staff required.

Which Plans and Policies apply to this proposal?

List out any management plans and existing policies that speak to proposal. Cut and paste key passages to explain scope.

Maps and Ecological Tool Review

Reference path where maps of site and eco-tool analysis reside.

Literature Review on impacts (3-5 citations)

List out references and summary of each abstract.

Public Outreach

Section is for any other public outreach not already cited within a management plan.

Visitor Use Impact and Decision Framework

A. Ecological Impacts			
Project or Use:			
Reason for proposal:			
Rating Questions	High/Moderate/Low	Rationale	BMP
1. What is the likelihood that the management action involves sensitive, rare, or irreplaceable natural resources and wildlife?			
2. What is the change in the eco-score?		<i>Question is a placeholder only. Holding on the finalization of the eco-tool.</i>	
3. What is the likelihood of imminent and significant changes to the natural resources?			
4. How will the management action affect other aspects of ecological land management in the area or surrounding area?			
5. What is the geographic extent of the management action's impacts? Scales of impacts include: project, portion of site, property, local, regional, or global			
6. Is the impact of the management action temporary (low) or long lasting (high)?			

Majority rating =

B. Cultural Resource Impacts

Project or Use:			
Reason for proposal:			
Rating Questions	High/Moderate/Low	Rationale	BMP
7. What is the likelihood that the management action involves sensitive, rare, or irreplaceable cultural resources?			
8. What is the likelihood of imminent and significant changes to the cultural resources?			
9. What is the geographic extent of the management action's impacts? Scales of impacts include: project, portion of site, property, local, or regional			
10. Is the impact temporary (low) or long lasting (high)?			

Majority rating =

C. Social Considerations

Project or Use:			
Reason for proposal:			
Rating Questions	Yes/No/Maybe	Rationale	BMP
11. Can NAD implement the opportunity without negative changes to the visitor experience?			
12. Are potentially affected interests supportive of the management action? Potentially affected interests could include: local user groups, organized groups, educational users etc.			
13. Are adjacent residential neighborhoods generally supportive (if applicable)?			
14. Is the community supportive (e.g. general public)?			
15. If implemented, is there a high education potential for conservation stewardship (e.g. would the opportunity advance NAD mission of education and outreach)?			
16. Does this provide an uncommon opportunity? e.g. not found or minimally offered else-where within the NOCO system.			

Majority rating =

D. Administrative Considerations

Project or Use:			
Reason for proposal:			
Rating Questions	Yes/No/ Maybe	Rationale	BMP
17. Would this management action be consistent with current code? Does it align with current management plans, mission, or the NAD strategic plan?			
18. Does NAD have the resources to support the proposal? Resources include: outreach and education, enforcement, staff time, installation, maintenance and "clean-up" dollars.			
19. Do the physical conditions of the site (soils, slopes, drainage) support the management action?			
20. Does NAD have the resources to mitigate any safety or hazard issues related to the management action?			
21. Is the opportunity cost of the management action acceptable? e.g. If NAD implements the proposal it will not postpone or cancel higher priorities.			

Majority rating =

Summary Table

Project or Use:

Reason for proposal:

Criteria	Rating	Rationale
A. What is the scale of Ecological Impacts?		
B. What is the scale of Cultural Resource impacts?		
C. Are there generally favorable Social considerations?		
D. Does this generally align with Administrative Considerations?		

Staff Recommendation

- Recommend proceeding
- Recommend denial/postponement
- Date

Best Management Practices

- e.g. limit use to just hiking, prohibit dogs etc.

Leadership Decision