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ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT IN THE NORTHWEST FOREST PLAN FROM A RESEARCHER’S PERSPECTIVE

Bernard Bormann

Considered the cornerstone of the Plan strategy, adaptive management was intended to speed learning—by experimenting, monitoring, and interpreting inside and outside adaptive management areas—and to provide mechanisms to adapt to new knowledge. Keeping in mind that the Plan tried an ambitious form of adaptive management not tried at this scale before, some met and unmet expectations were observed.

Adaptive management areas promoted new manager, researcher, and citizen collaboration and facilitated numerous small-scale studies, but failed to implement—with several exceptions—large-scale management experiments contrasting different strategies. A variety of factors probably contributed, including inadequately defined goals, limited latitude, risk-averse decisions, inadequate funding, and limited organization as core business. In contrast, regional monitoring and interpretation successfully demonstrated how to systematize tracking of status and trends (a passive form of adaptive management), and how periodic synthesis and interpretation can help decisionmakers consider mid-course corrections.

These findings need to be put in the context of adaptive management experiences elsewhere. What happened in adaptive management areas is well within the range of other national and international experience—land allocation is not sufficient to make adaptive management work. The regional monitoring and interpretation experience leads the way for others to follow. Lastly, we offer some suggestions to begin preparing for the next interpretive report.

SYNTHESIS REPORT- Adaptive Management & Monitoring

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