

Forest Service Web-based tool helps manage environmental risk

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The U.S. Forest Service Eastern Forest Environmental Threat Assessment Center (EFETAC) recently launched the Comparative Risk Assessment Framework and Tools (CRAFT), a user-friendly, Web-based support system that helps natural resource managers address uncertainties inherent in land management decisions. CRAFT offers a structured, simplified approach to determine objectives and calculates risks and tradeoffs associated with different management scenarios.

EFETAC soon will offer training workshops on CRAFT, which is available on-line at <http://CRAFT.forestthreats.org>.

According to Danny C. Lee, EFETAC Director, "Uncertainty is unavoidable in all types of management decisions, whether we're talking about climatic, ecological, or social factors. CRAFT allows planning teams to explore the implications of that uncertainty on the consequences of their decisions using a versatile and customizable framework that is amenable to a wide range of [land management](#) issues and venues."

CRAFT builds on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) framework for managing public lands and approaches forest issues comprehensively. The tool incorporates decision making techniques that allow teams of managers and diverse stakeholders to outline their management objectives, design alternatives, consider effects of these alternatives, and synthesize this information to arrive at the best possible decision. Each step of the CRAFT process can be published in a Web-

based format to ensure documentation and transparency.

"CRAFT emphasizes comparative risk assessment," explains Steve Norman, EFETAC research ecologist and CRAFT developer. "Users are empowered to focus on their measurable values, be more inclusive of tradeoffs, and understand associated uncertainties. With CRAFT, a more thorough consideration of stakeholder viewpoints, better vetted problem solutions, a broader understanding of consequences, and ultimately, more successful resource management are all possible."

EFETAC partnered with the University of North Carolina Asheville's National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center (NEMAC) to develop CRAFT. The tool features a wealth of online resources created by NEMAC, including a tutorial and CRAFTiPedia—a "wiki" style reference database and glossary. For team projects, CRAFT has the capability to store and share diagrams, text, tables, data, and models created during the decision making process. NEMAC is available to provide assistance and team training.

Source: USDA Forest Service ([news](#) : [web](#))

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