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Title

'Learning by doing': adaptive planning as a strategy to address uncertainty in planning

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Publication Date

7-2008

Comments

Published in *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* , Vol. 51, No. 4, July 2008, 543-559.
DOI: 10.1080/09640560802117028

Abstract

Adaptive management, an established method in natural resource and ecosystem management, has not been widely applied to landscape planning due to the lack of an operational method that addresses the role of uncertainty and standardized monitoring protocols and methods. A review of adaptive management literature and practices reveals several key concepts and principles for adaptive planning: (1) management actions are best understood and practiced as experiments; (2) several plans/experiments can be implemented simultaneously; (3) monitoring of management actions are key; and (4) adaptive management can be understood as 'learning by doing'. The paper identifies various uncertainties in landscape planning as the major obstacles for the adoption of an adaptive approach. To address the uncertainty in landscape planning, an adaptive planning method is proposed where monitoring plays an integral role to reduce uncertainty. The proposed method is then applied to a conceptual test in water resource planning addressing abiotic-biotic-cultural resources. To operationalize adaptive planning, it is argued that professionals, stakeholders and researchers need to function in a genuinely transdisciplinary mode where all contribute to, and benefit from, decision making and the continuous generation of new knowledge.

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