

Adaptive Management Encyclopedia Article

Adaptive Management

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Adaptive Management

Adaptive management is a systematic process for continually improving management policies and practices by learning from the outcomes of operational programs. Traditionally, management plans for addressing the impacts of pollution, and addressing the risks of exposure of toxics to humans and ecosystems were strictly followed as written. If the plan needed to be changed, a complex policy process needed to be engaged to change it. However, managers have increasingly acknowledged the scientific uncertainty about what policy or practice is "best" for a particular management issue. A good example is restoring a polluted river system's water quality and fisheries. New understandings about ecosystems, human health, and the impacts of pollution and toxic exposure have led to management practices that can adapt along the way. Hence, adaptive management is being increasingly incorporated into agreements and decisions that mandate managers to address a problem using the best available science rather than an inflexible set of directives. Rather than being static, this repeating management cycle consists of 1) assessing the problem, 2) designing a management program designed to address the problem and reveal gaps in knowledge, 3) implementing the program, 4) monitoring the effects of it according to key indicators, 5) evaluating the program based on these indicators, and 6) adjusting the program in light of this. Often, this is done through a collaborative process that considers all the interests who have a stake in the resource.

Bibliography

Internet Resource

AdaptiveManagement Practitioners' Network Web site. Available from <http://www.iatp.org/AEAM>.