Join us for the Forest Resources Monthly Seminar

Our faculty and researchers will share their latest research, ideas for future research and collaboration with the audience. We will have one to two presentations per seminar date.

Investigating variation in NEPA processes across USFS offices: Decision Characteristics and the Use of Science

presented by

Dr. Forrest Fleischman
Assistant Professor
Forest Resources Department

Monday, April 22, 2019
3:00-4:00 p.m.
203 Green Hall
St. Paul Campus

If you cannot join us, watch remotely at: http://z.umn.edu/FRsem

Although we all strive to make our science relevant to policy-makers and the public, there is little systematic evidence about how science is utilized in public decision-making. In order to understand how science plays into public decision-making, we are working on assembling the largest database ever created of scientific input into public decision-making, focusing on the US Forest Service. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that every major federal action be accompanied by an evaluation of the potential environmental impacts of that action (i.e. an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)). These documents contain extensive documentation of how scientific information is being used in a wide variety of public decisions, and the US Forest Service is consistently the agency that conducts the most EAs and EISs throughout the federal government. We have pieced together a fairly complete dataset of USFS EAs and EISs from a variety of public archives, and are developing computational tools to extract information on the scientific citations they contain. This presentation will give an early view of the data we have assembled, focusing on the variation between regions and national forests in the kinds of environmental analysis conducted, as well as our preliminary views of how science is being used. A major focus of work going forward will be on understanding what the patterns in the use of science mean, and thus we are interested in partnering with scientific specialists (maybe including you?) to understand the content of the scientific information that the Forest Service is using and what the implications are for decision-making and on-the-ground management.

Light refreshments will be available