

## Factors Influencing Line Officers' Decisions about NEPA Project Design and Development

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### ABSTRACT

Prior to the existence of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Forest Service district rangers had considerable latitude to make resource management decisions and execute management plans with relatively little encumbrance by documentation and process requirements. Today there appears to be differences not only in the district ranger population, but in the decision making processes they use and how they adapt their management style to particular circumstances. In depth interviews were conducted with 12 district rangers to obtain their experiences with project design and development, and how project planning is influenced by considerations about the NEPA process. District rangers appear to have changed their management style to accommodate a shifting social and policy climate, and rangers often view NEPA as a risk factor and as a process to be managed. Research methods can be used to further analyze risk in terms of resource versus process risk, both of which can potentially affect the agency in terms of opportunity and monetary costs, efficiencies, and decision confidences.

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