

Environmental Management Tools to Improve Theory and Practice of EIA

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Focus of EIA

- The focus of EIA should be on improved long-term outcomes, specifically, improved environmental, socio-economic performance.
- Too often the focus is on process(es), paperwork, documents, and approval.

Concerns about Focus on Outcomes, Improved Performance

- Conferences on Life Cycle Assessment in Seattle and Montreal, Fall 2003
- Auditing Round Table, Phoenix 2004
- Review of Oil Sands EIAs

Going Through the Motions

- If EIA is used in isolation, the focus may shift from improved performance to documents and approval.
- EIA should not be about going through the motions of the approval process.

Environmental Management Systems and Tools

- There is a set of Environmental Management Systems and Tools that can be used in support of EIA to focus on improved performance and enhanced outcomes.

D. Thompson, 2002 *Tools for Environmental Management*, New Society Publishers

Environmental Management Systems

- Corporations using EIA for project approval must have an Environmental Management System (EMS) to assure follow up and improved performance.
- Regulators and stakeholders should assess the quality and performance of the proponent's EMS

Continual Improvement

- A strong EMS will provide continual improvement through the life of the project, so performance should exceed expectations at the time of approval.

A Set of Tools

- Environmental Strategy
- Environmental Policy
- Environmental Management Structures
- Environmental Indicators
- Environmental Auditing
- Environmental Reporting and Assurance
- Life Cycle Assessment
- Education and Training
- Environmental Communications
- Ecosystem-Based Management

Apply the Set of Tools to:

- Provide benefits to proponent over the life of the project.
- Protect the interests of communities and ENGOs.
- Assure regulators that terms and conditions of approval will be met.

Environmental Strategy

- Explicit statements of the role of EIA and other tools to assist in achieving goals and objectives.
- Does the strategy focus on improved long-term performance or on documents and approval?

Environmental Policy

- Does the policy explicitly focus the use of EIA and other tools to improve performance over the long term?

Environmental Indicators

- Does the EIA include a specific set of indicators that will be used to prove adequate, if not superior performance in environmental, social, and economic terms?

Environmental Auditing

- Will independent, third party audits be carried out on a regular basis?
- Will well qualified auditors be used?

Environmental Reporting

- Will the proponent report annually on performance on achievement of terms and conditions of approval?
- Will the proponent provide independent, third party assurance of quality of methods and data in the report?

Life Cycle Assessment

- EIA must be based on and carried out throughout the entire life cycle of the project.
- Equipment and components must be assessed on a life cycle basis.

Education and Training

- Are education programs in place for all employees and the community about the EIA and the proponent's environmental performance?
- Are training programs in place for all new employees and contractors?

Environmental Communications

- Communications strategy and policy should clearly state how the results of the EIA process and approval will be implemented and how the improved performance will be provided to stakeholders, over the life of the project.

Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM)

- Industry-oriented EMS (ISO 14001) are not well designed to manage green spaces and natural ecosystems.
- EBM is a hybrid model of ISO 14001 and Ecosystem Management specifically designed for those responsible for green spaces and ecosystems.

Conclusions

- The problems with EIA focus on documents and approvals can be solved by applying the EMS and tools to shift the focus to improved performance over the life of the project.
- Proponent, stakeholders and regulators will all benefit from improved performance.

Tools for Environmental Management

The Environmental Management Systems and environmental management tools are described in:

D. Thompson, 2002, *Tools for Environmental Management: a Practical Introduction and Guide*, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, B. C.