Colorado Decision Support Tool

Discussion Guide to the Colorado Decision Support Tool

Use this guide to help your community discuss what's important and make your voices heard

How to use this Guide

This guide explains how community members might use the Colorado Decision Support Tool to answer questions and discuss concerns about the development of carbon management in Colorado. For example, you could use the Tool to develop guidance for carbon management policies; state, county, or municipal planning; or local zoning. Or, you could use it to give feedback on a proposed carbon management project or a specific issue you care about.

What is carbon management?

Carbon dioxide (CO_2) is a clear gas that occurs naturally in small amounts in the Earth's atmosphere. Humans and animals breathe out CO_2 every day, and plants need it to survive. CO_2 also comes from burning fossil fuels like petroleum, coal, and natural gas. We use fossil fuels for transportation, manufacturing, construction, and generating electricity. These human activities have released too much CO_2 into the atmosphere. Reducing or removing these emissions is necessary for meeting our climate objectives.

"Carbon management" includes capturing, transporting, reusing, and storing CO_2 emissions. Carbon management is one tool to reduce the amount of CO_2 emissions in our atmosphere.

Learn more about carbon management: https://carbonactionalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/CM101.pdf

The Colorado Decision Support Tool

The Colorado Decision Support Tool is a set of online interactive maps. The Great Plains Institute (GPI) created this Tool.

Purpose of the Tool

The purpose of the Tool is to help decision-makers and communities with carbon management decisions. The maps give everyone in Colorado a consistent set of information to reference. The Colorado Decision Support Tool will *not* grant approval for project development.

What the Tool shows

Carbon management activities can affect people (social factors) and the environment (environmental factors). The maps in the Tool point out areas with more social and environmental factors to consider. The next page lists social and environmental factors included in the Tool. For more information about the data in the Tool, see the Methodology section at the link below.

Explore the Tool: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/df8fa9215ccc4d61b75bb30a18266229

Social Factors

Demographics
Includes: Less than high school education, limited English speaking, low income, over age 64, people of color, under age 5, unemployment rate

Exposure to climate changes
Includes: 100-year flood plain, drought, extreme heat days, wildfire risk

Health
Includes: Heart disease, asthma, low life expectancy, cancer, persons with disabilities, mental health indicator, low birth weight, diabetes prevalence

Environmental hazards
Includes: Hazardous waste proximity lead paint, air toxics cancer risk, air toxics respiratory hazard index, diesel particulate matter (2.5), RMP facility proximity, superfund proximity, traffic proximity and volume, toxic releases to air, underground storage tanks, wastewater discharge, violations of drinking water regulations, noise, other air pollutants, proximity to mining locations, proximity to oil and gas

Public service gaps
Includes: Broadband gaps, food deserts, lack of health insurance, housing burden, transportation access

Environmental Factors

Landscape
Includes: Agricultural land, conservation easements, landscape condition, National Historic Trails, protected areas of the United States, roadless areas

Wildlife
Includes: Federally listed species of concern, important bird areas, critical habitat, sage-grouse habitat

Water Resources
Includes: National Wetlands Inventory, Wild and Scenic Rivers

Built Environment
Includes: Linear corridors, scenic highways, urban areas, industrial and power facilities

Discussion Guide

The guide provides prep tasks, planning notes, and a meeting agenda template. The agenda template includes discussion prompts to use in meetings with community groups. The guide also includes links to step-by-step instructions to generate maps from the Tool.

Before meeting with community members, complete the Prep Tasks. Then use the Meeting Agenda Template to plan and facilitate your meeting.

Prep Tasks for Facilitators/Conveners

Step 1: Define your purpose(s) for using the Tool and what question(s) you want to answer

Identify your purposes in using the tool from the options below:

- ☐ Provide input on a plan or policy
- ☐ Comment on a specific project
- ☐ Comment on a specific issue
- ☐ Something else

Frame the question(s) that will guide your exploration in the Tool. Be specific where you can – see examples below.

If you want to provide input on a plan or policy…
What social and environmental factors may be important to consider for carbon management _____ (policy or plan name) in _____(policy or plan area)?

If you want to comment on a specific project…
What social and environmental factors may be important for to consider for carbon management _____(project name) located in _____(project location)?

If you want to comment on a specific issue…
How does _____(my area) compare to the rest of the state on issues I care about, such as_____(specific social or environmental factor from the list above)?

Step 1 Outcomes

- Be able to state your purpose(s) for using the Tool
- Be able to state the question(s) you want to answer with the Tool

Step 2: Identify social and environmental factors to consider in your area based on the data

Create 2-4 maps that summarize key social and environmental factors. Create maps using the steps in the user guides (Step-by-step Social, Step-by-step Environmental, or Step-by-step Comprehensive) linked in ***Overview and Navigation*** section of the Colorado Decision Support Tool.

Maps should focus on the geographic area you mentioned in your question from Step 1.

As you explore the information in the Tool, use the list of factors on page 2 of this guide to note the social and environmental factors that rank higher in your area compared to the rest of the state.

Step 2 Outcomes

- Maps from the Tool that summarize key social and environmental factors to consider in your area.
- List of the social and environmental factors that may be more important to consider in your area compared to the rest of the state.

Step 3: Create a handout of key social and environmental factors for your area

Edit page 2 of this guide to show the key factors you identified using the Tool in Step 2. You can do this by highlighting or **bolding** those factors the Tool shows are more important to consider in your area. Do not delete the other factors, though. Remember that the Tool highlights factors based on how they compare to the rest of the State of Colorado. There could be other reasons a factor is important to the community. These will be something to discuss at your meeting.

Once you highlight or bold the relevant factors, print pages 1 and 2 of this document as a handout for your meeting.

Step 3 Outcome

- Introductory handout of social and environmental factors, focused on those important in your area.

Plan Your Meeting

Agenda: Fill in or adapt the agenda template that follows to fit the needs of your group. Text in red is guidance for the facilitator/presenters. To create a participants' version, delete all red text before distributing.

Timing: Plan for *at least* a 90-minute meeting. Time estimates provided in the agenda assume a small group (less than 20 people). This agenda will work well for an established group with good working relationships. You will need more time or more meetings for a larger group, meetings for the public, or where controversy and disagreement are likely.

Roles

- Presenter: Consider inviting someone who is involved with any policy or planning effort or specific project you are addressing. Have them attend your meeting and provide a very brief (~2 minute) overview of the plan or policy and what it will cover. Encourage them to stay for the rest of the meeting to listen to community perspectives and be available to answer questions that may arise about the project or the planning/policy-making process.
- Facilitator: Designate someone to host the meeting and facilitate discussion using the cues in red text in the agenda template below.
- Notetaker: Designate someone in advance to be the notetaker. Ask them to document factors the community considers important, questions and answers from the meeting, outstanding questions the group did not get answered during the meeting, any clear areas of agreement or disagreement, and next steps assignments and due dates.

Materials: Send out materials and meeting agenda at least a week in advance to give participants time to look them over. If meeting in person, have hard copies available during the meeting. If meeting online or by phone, remind attendees how to find the versions you sent out, and display them on screen if possible. Consider creating a brief summary of the meeting based on the notes to share with all invitees afterward.

Agenda TEMPLATE
Social and Environmental Priorities for Carbon Management Policy

Text in red is guidance for the facilitator/presenters. To create a participants' version, delete all red text before distributing.

Meeting Location:
Date and Time:

Objectives

- Introduce carbon management
- [If related to a specific plan, policy, or project] Provide overview of the [Plan, Policy, or Project]
- Review relevant information from the Colorado Decision Support Tool
- Discuss our values and priorities and how they align with the factors identified by the Tool
- Agree on next steps

Materials

- Handout on carbon management and important social and environmental factors (pages 1-2 of this guide)
- Map 1– include a descriptive title of what each map depicts
- Access to the Colorado Decision Support Tool or additional Maps or Tool outputs needed to support the discussion

Agenda

Welcome, Agenda Review, and Meeting Purpose (at least 5 mins)
Speaker/Facilitator:

- Welcome and introductions
- Explain what will be covered during the meeting
- SHARE the purpose(s) for using the tool and question(s) the group aims to answer (from Step 1 above)

Background and Context (at least 10 mins)
Speaker/Facilitator:

- Introduce carbon management and the Colorado Decision Support Tool (see handout, page 1)
- ASK for any clarifying questions about carbon management or the Tool
- If applicable, provide an overview of any specific plan, policy, or project that your discussion will address

Review and discuss important social and environmental factors (at least 20 mins)
Speaker/Facilitator:

- RESTATE the purpose(s) for using the tool and question(s) the group aims to answer (from Step 1 above)
- TALK EVERYONE THROUGH their handouts: the maps and list of factors identified using the tool and how they answer the question(s)
- SUMMARIZE how you extracted this information from the tool

- REMIND everyone that the tool looks at how each area compares to the rest of the State.
- EXPLAIN that the factors highlighted by the tool are more important to consider in your area compared to the rest of the state. And there may be other factors that are important to your community besides those highlighted in the Tool.
- ASK if there are any questions about the Tool or how these highlighted factors were identified

Discuss our values and priorities for carbon management (at least 30 minutes)
Speaker/Facilitator:
NOTE: Choose from or adapt these questions to fit the needs of your group. Depending on how much time you have, you may be able to work through all these questions, or you might take one set of questions at a time over several meetings.

Getting clarity
- Do you have questions about any of the factors highlighted for our area?
- What questions do we have about the [Policy, Plan, or Project] and how it relates to these environmental and social factors?

Identifying important factors to consider
- Looking at the factors highlighted for our area, which ones stand out or resonate most for you? Why?
- Looking at the full list of factors (not only the ones highlighted for our area), do you see any with special significance for our community?

Guidance for decision makers
- *When people make decisions about carbon management in your area, what information would we like them to look at? Or what questions would we like them to ask about environmental and social factors? This could include specific data, studies, resources, or trusted people to consult.*
- *Are there social or environmental factors that we would like decision-makers to view as red flags? What do we want decision-makers to know about why these factors are important in our area?*

Recap and next steps (at least 15 mins)
Speaker/Facilitator:

- Summarize areas of agreement and disagreement from the discussion
- Note any outstanding questions that require follow-up
- Discuss and assign next steps, which might include:
    - Reaching out for answers to outstanding questions
    - Returning to the Tool to gather additional information or create different maps
    - Following up with individuals to better understand issues they raised
    - Drafting a letter or other written guidance for decision makers that reflects the priorities of the group
    - Scheduling a follow-up meeting to finalize the draft guidance