Decision Path Library | *Aiding community decision making & catalyzing informed courses of action*

What is a decision path?

Guiding community and stakeholder decision processes requires a comprehensive understanding of the range of possible decision paths available. A decision path is a description of the various ways that a given stakeholder may approach and resolve a problem. Decision pathways extracted from community planning documents are aggregated within the Decision Path Library (DPL) as a relational, open source database.

DPL aids identification of community objectives and evaluation of potential management actions, and can power a variety of tools and resources for stakeholders making policy, planning, and environmental management decisions. The library contains information describing:

Who is making a given planning, policy, or other management decision?

What objectives are they trying to accomplish?

How can these objectives be accomplished? I.e., what management options are available to fulfill chosen objectives?

How can progress be measured using indicators and available data?

What data does DPL contain?

The Decision Path Library database contains comprehensive tables of generic descriptors for each of the above four color-coded elements, as well as tables that define the relationships between them. These elements describe the array of decision pathways that outline the alternative ways stakeholders and communities may approach and solve problems. Datasets within DPL were compiled systematically from planning documents, expert elicitation, and case studies, and were classified taxonomically using grounded theory methodology.

How is the data within DPL structured?

System concepts describe detailed issue areas and function as a unifying coding system for elements of the database. Relationships between all elements are defined within the relational database. The diagram above depicts a simplified version of the contents and relationships within the Decision Path Library database. The lines represent relationships (links) between content tables.

For more information regarding the Decision Path Library, please contact Marilyn ten Brink: tenbrink.Marilyn@epa.gov