

## Approaches to Forest Planning by James D. Arney, PhD, FBRI

**Textbook Reference:** Ackoff, Russell. (1981) *Creating the Corporate Future: Plan or be Planned*. John Wiley, New York.

All organizations plan; the only difference is their approach. Prior to starting a new strategic planning process it will be necessary to access the past planning approach that has been used within the organization and determine how the organization's culture may have been affected. Addressing these cultural issues is critical to the success of the current planning process. These approaches are easily associated with the different ownership classes in forestry.

The four possible approaches to planning are:

1. **Reactive - past oriented**

Reactive planning is an active attempt to turn back the clock to the past. The past, no matter how bad, is preferable to the present. And definitely better than the future will be. The past is romanticized and there is a desire to return to the "good old days." These people seek to undo the change that has created the present, and they fear the future, which they attempt to prevent. *In forestry this is known as "Restoration Forestry".*

2. **Inactive - present oriented**

Inactive planning is an attempt to preserve the present, which is preferable to both the past and the future. While the present may have problems it is better than the past. The expectation is that things are as good as they are likely to get and the future will only be worse. Any additional change is likely to be for the worse and should therefore be avoided. *In forestry this is the lack of desire to make an active forest management decision. It is also known as "fire fighting" where nothing is done until a catastrophic event happens which requires immediate action.*

3. **Preactive - predict the future**

Preactive planning is an attempt to predict the future and then to plan for that predicted future. Technological change is seen as the driving force bringing about the future, which will be different than the present or the past. The planning process will seek to position the organization to take advantage of the change that is happening around them. *In forestry this is the anticipated result of human-caused "Climate Change".*

4. **Proactive - create the future**

Proactive planning involves designing a desired future and then inventing ways to create that future state. Not only is the future a preferred state, but the organization can actively control the outcome. Planners actively shape the future, rather than just trying to get ahead of events outside of their control. The predicted changes of the preactive planner are seen not as absolute constraints, but as obstacles that can be addressed and overcome. *In forestry this is an active working forest sustained yield plan.*