Using the 8-Step Approach: A Hypothetical Example

To assess the potential for cumulative impacts, the practitioner determines the potential for past trends and current and reasonably foreseeable future actions, in combination with the proposed project, that affect the health of the resource.

Below is a brief outline of how to use the steps, with a hypothetical example for wetlands:

***Step 1*:** The project will have direct or indirect impacts to wetlands; therefore, wetlands are included in the resources to consider for cumulative impacts assessment.

Step 2: Based on consultation with environmental biologists and wetlands specialist, you determine that the relevant resource study area (RSA) is the drainage basin.

Step 3: The context: Currently the area is being used for some farming and rural housing, and has relatively intact wetland complexes. The urban growth boundary has recently been moved and now includes this area. Current resource study area acreage: 1,000 acres. Historically (pre-settlement), the area contained abundant wetlands. The wetlands have been disturbed by agricultural activities over the past 150 years. In recent years, urban development has increased the pace of wetland loss. The trend: Rapid development is continuing, and is expected to accelerate over the next 20 years.

Step 4: This project will have two acres of direct and indirect impacts to wetlands in the Resource Study Area.

Step 5: You have identified reasonably foreseeable actions in the wetlands Resource Study Area, and the associated impact to wetlands. These reasonably foreseeable actions include two new housing developments, a new business park, and several transportation improvements. Based on available environmental documents, discussions with wetlands experts, and other information you have collected about these actions, you estimate that 200 acres of wetlands will be adversely affected by reasonably foreseeable actions.

Step 6: You used a trends method to analyze the cumulative effects on the wetlands loss over time. You also consulted with environmental biology staff and regulatory experts to analyze the effect of cumulative stresses (fragmentation, pollution, sedimentation) to the values and functions of wetlands in the Resource Study Area.

Step 7: You concluded that there will be substantial cumulative impacts to wetlands within the Resource Study Area given past, current, and reasonably foreseeable actions. Your analysis shows that your project will account for two acres of the 200 acres of potential cumulative impacts to wetland. You conclude that the wetland impacts associated with your project will contribute minimally to the impacts of other current and reasonably foreseeable projects.

Step 8: Based on your analysis of the status of wetlands in the Resource Study Area, you recommend that compensatory mitigation for the direct and indirect project impacts be near existing wetland mitigation areas or wildlife refuges. If practicable options for cumulative effects mitigation exist, disclose them and suggest possible mitigation to those agencies responsible. Remember to include in your disclosure any avoidance and minimization that has been done.