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E. Implement Monitoring as a Pilot Study (Figure 2.5)

1. Collect field data and evaluate field methods

The first trial of a monitoring method in the field often exposes problems with the methodology (e.g., plots cannot be positioned due to dense vegetation; the proposed counting unit cannot be applied consistently; lacy vegetation proves a problem for measuring shrubs along a line intercept). This is why the pilot period is important for testing the feasibility of the proposed monitoring approach and identifying improvements. You may find at this stage that

the project cannot be implemented as planned and requires substantial revision, or even abandonment, in spite of all the work done to this point.

2. Analyze pilot study data

Analyze data from the pilot study. Do assumptions of the ecological model still appear correct? Are sampling objectives of precision and power met? If not, you may need to alter your monitoring design (add more sampling units or improve the efficiency), the sampling objective (accept lower precision and/or power), or perhaps abandon the entire project. Is the level of change or difference you've specified seem realistic? Do changes due to weather seem larger than you anticipated, thus swamping the quantity specified in your objective, or do the plants appear so slow-growing that the proposed change is unrealistic? You may need to reassess the quantity or time frame component of your objective.

3. Reassess time/resource requirements

The pilot project should provide a better estimate of the resources required for monitoring. Your estimate of costs should include the amount of time it has taken to develop the monitoring to this point as well as how much time it will take to continue the monitoring annually and complete final data analysis and reporting.

4. Review

Solicit review of the results of the pilot period. Do all parties still agree to continue the monitoring and abide by the results? Are the resources available to implement monitoring throughout its life span? Make necessary changes to the monitoring design and the monitoring plan and solicit final review.

F. Implement Monitoring (Figure 2.5)

1. Collect field data

Complete data collection at specified intervals. Ensure data sheets are completely filled out, duplicated, and stored in a safe place.

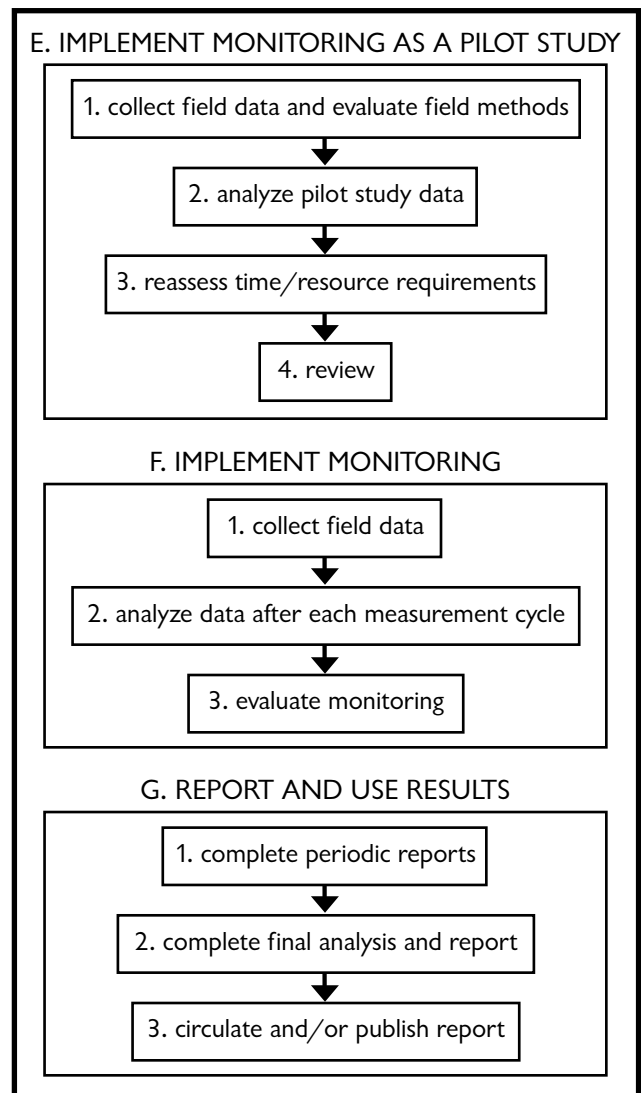


FIGURE 2.5. Flow diagram of the monitoring process, continued. Tasks associated with implementing monitoring as a pilot study, continuing monitoring, reporting and using results are illustrated.