

Department's program to improve management of the public rangelands:

- A RAC of 10–15 members, as required by § 309 of FLPMA;
- Openness and balance as required by FACA, assuring participation of commodity, environmental, and other interests;
- Consensus decisionmaking, with a majority of each group required to send recommendations forward;
- A RAC that is strictly advisory, as required by FACA and other statutes.

Consistent with many comments received, the rule provides a high degree of flexibility so that decisions can be made locally about how to structure the councils. Section 1784.6–1 of this final rule sets forth basic requirements that must be met by all councils. Three general interest groups will be represented, from which 10 to 15 members must be chosen in a balanced fashion. The first group includes various commodity industries, such as grazing and mineral interests, and other interests that benefit from use of public lands, such as outfitters. The second group includes nationally or regionally recognized environmental or resource conservation groups, wild horse and burro interest groups, archeological and historical interests, and representatives of dispersed recreational activities, such as birders or hikers. The third group includes persons who hold State, county, or local elected office, the public-at-large, Indian tribes within or adjacent to the area covered by the advisory council, natural resource or natural science academia, and State agencies responsible for the management of fish and wildlife, water quality, water rights, and State lands.

RAC members will be appointed by the Secretary. This is a requirement of both FLPMA and FACA. Governors of States in which the councils will be organized will be requested to provide a list of nominees for the Secretary's consideration. The Secretary encourages Governors to formulate nominations through a process open to the public. In addition, a public call for nominations will be made through a notice in the **Federal Register** and other appropriate publications. Persons can nominate themselves for membership. Membership of each RAC will reflect a balance of views to ensure that the council represents the full array of issues and interests within the area covered by the council associated with public land use, management, protection and an understanding of the Federal laws and regulations governing public lands. Individuals can qualify to serve on a RAC if they possess relevant

experience or expertise and have a commitment to collaborative effort, successful resolution of resource management issues and application of the relevant law. Members must have experience or knowledge of the geographic area under the purview of the council, must be residents of a State in which the area covered by a RAC is located, and must be supported by letters of recommendation from the groups or interests they will represent. An individual may serve on only one RAC. All members must receive training on issues related to rangeland management.

All RACs will be required to have specified quorum and voting rules, including the requirement that a majority of members from each category support a proposal before a recommendation can be forwarded to the authorized officer. Travel and per diem will be paid, and BLM will provide administrative support for the councils. A BLM employee will be named "designated Federal officer" as required by FACA.

All members of the council will be subject to conflict of interest provisions. To facilitate implementation of Federal conflict of interest requirements, council members will have to disclose their direct or indirect interest in BLM leases, licenses, permits or contracts. This does not mean that individuals with such interests cannot serve on councils; however, no member can participate in specific issues in which he or she has an interest.

The role of the RAC is to provide advice to BLM. Each RAC will focus on the full array of multiple use issues associated with public lands within its area of jurisdiction. They will consult on the preparation of standards and guidelines for grazing administration. The RACs will advise the Secretary and BLM—and other agencies as appropriate—on matters relating to multiple use issues associated with public lands and resources. They will also provide advice on preparation, amendment, and implementation of land use management plans and activity plans and consult in planning for range development and improvement programs. RACs will not provide advice on internal BLM management concerns such as personnel or budget expenditures.

Final § 1784.6–2 provides three models that supply additional detail on the structuring of public participation. Decisions about which model will be used in particular areas will be made by the State Directors of BLM, in consultation with affected Governors and other interested parties. Model A is

based heavily on the suggestions made by the Colorado Working Group. It includes three levels of groups—the RAC itself, local five member rangeland resource teams appointed by the RAC based either on its own initiative or as a result of local requests, and technical review teams established directly by BLM to solve specific, short-term technical issues. The RACs would have 15 members and would be established on BLM District boundaries, ecoregions, or resource areas. A 60% vote of the RAC membership (including a majority of each category of users) would be required to send suggestions to BLM.

Model B is based heavily on the suggestions made by the Wyoming Steering Committee. It includes 3 levels of groups—the 15 member RAC, formed on either a Statewide or ecoregion basis, a more local 10 member rangeland resource team formed by the RAC, and technical review teams established directly by BLM to solve specific, short-term technical issues. In addition to requiring membership to be balanced among the commodity, environmental and local interest groups specified in § 1784.6–1(c), the RAC would include individuals representing wildlife, grazing, minerals and energy, and established environmental interests. An 80% vote of the RAC membership (including a majority of each interest group) would be required to send suggestions to BLM.

Model C was developed by BLM in response to additional issues raised by the commenters. In addition to the requirements specified in § 1784.6–1, this model accommodates formation of the RACs, and any type and number of subgroups as needed. The RAC can be formed along State, BLM district, or ecoregion boundaries. A majority of each of the three categories of users must vote affirmatively to send suggestions to BLM. General function subgroups at the local level can be formed on the initiative of the RAC or by local initiative. Special function groups formed to solve special technical problems would be constituted by BLM on its own initiative or in response to requests from RACs or any of the subgroups under the RACs.

The Department expects that most, if not all, public land managed by BLM will fall under the purview of one of these councils. Exceptions will be made where BLM State Director determines that there is insufficient interest to form a council or that it would be impossible for such a council to have effective participation due to the location of the public lands with respect to the population. Implementation of the principles discussed above will result in