

significantly greater than they were for the grazing advisory boards, particularly with the addition of a residency requirement. The issue of costs of advisory committees is discussed further at § 1784.3, Member service.

The system will not necessarily be a multilevel structure. Under the provisions adopted today, only the RACs themselves will be required. The other subgroups will be discretionary. While the groups will be local, in a broad sense, the Department believes that providing for diverse participation through implementation of the provisions adopted in this section of the final rule will ensure that all interests are fairly represented. Furthermore, the requirement for consensus, which is retained in the final rule, will ensure that the three groups represented will have an equal say in making decisions, and no one interest will be isolated by majority vote.

The Department acknowledges that it is the responsibility of BLM to manage the public grazing lands. However, several different statutes, including FLPMA, PRIA, and NEPA, call for public participation in decisionmaking processes regarding such programs. A purpose of these RACs is to facilitate such participation, and their formation and structure is fully consistent with those legal requirements. While there may be some initial complications in establishing the RACs, the Department believes that they are critical to long-term improvements in the management of our public grazing lands. For that reason, the Department has decided not to try them on only an experimental basis. The Department has carefully considered the structure and functions of the MRACs. In response to the concerns about under representation of grazing interests, the Department agrees that, to the extent possible, the make-up of the commodity group on the council should reflect the distribution of commodity interests in the area represented by the specific council. For example, if approximately 3/5ths of the commodity interests in an area are grazing operators, 1/5th are timber harvesters, and 1/5th are miners, the commodity group on the council should include 3 permittees or lessees, 1 timber harvester, and 1 miner. Such a distribution will ensure that the necessary expertise is present to deal with technical issues which might come before a council representing that specific geographic area. While the Department does not agree that it is necessary or desirable to specify this in the text of the rule, since in some cases it may be impossible to achieve these optimal numbers, the Department will

strive to arrive at this outcome during the appointment of council members.

Under the rule adopted today, environmental members will not have to be members of national groups. All nominees to the RACs will be required to have letters of recommendation, but because the final rule requires residency in one of the States within which the area to be covered by the council is located, the letter need not come from a local source. These requirements apply equally to all council members, environmentalists as well as commodity interests. Additionally, all members will be required to have some expertise or knowledge that will be useful to a council's deliberations.

The Department agrees that representatives of other Federal agencies should not be members of the RACs. Other Federal agencies are normally consulted about issues that affect them through other formal processes and do not need to be provided access through the RAC structure. However, under FACA, each council must have one "designated Federal official" present at each meeting. State agencies are a different matter. While it is true that BLM will coordinate on many issues with State agencies, nevertheless the Department believes it will be useful, in some cases and depending on local circumstances, to include State employees on the RACs. However, in the final rule, the Department has revised the discussion of the third group to limit participation of State employees to representatives of State agencies responsible for managing land, natural resources, or water.

The Department believes that the requirement to have broad representation from the three groups specified in this section of the final rule is a reasonably specific provision. It is not feasible to specify in more detail exactly what types of persons should be selected to ensure such representation. That is a decision that will have to be made on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature of the population in an area covered by a RAC, and on the specific types of interest groups present in that area. The Secretary, based in part on nominations from the Governors, will strive to ensure that each RAC is fairly representative of those groups. Certainly, in many cases, tribal representatives should—and will—be included on the councils. The provisions of this section of the final rule allow inclusion of mining, timber, and other interests. However, this section deals specifically with the RACs that will be formed to provide advice on the public lands grazing program, and it is not appropriate to specify

requirements related to the mining or timber industries here.

The Department does not agree that lending institutions should be specified as a group to be represented on all RACs. Of course, persons from such institutions could serve on the councils as representatives of the local public, local elected officials, or other interests listed in this section of the final rule. Similarly, academicians are listed as possible members because of their ability to contribute to technical discussion of rangeland issues. Therefore, the Department believes it is appropriate to limit membership of academicians, per se, to those involved in the natural sciences. However, an academician with some other specialty could participate as a member of the local public, as a representative of one of the other specified groups. Academicians who are not in the natural sciences are not prevented from serving on the councils.

The Department agrees that local expertise is essential to effective councils. The rule adopted today requires that members of RACs, rangeland resource teams and other local general purpose subgroups must reside in the State, or one of the States, within the jurisdiction of the council or subgroup. Additionally, the rule requires demonstrated knowledge of the geographic area. The Department does not agree that national environmental groups should be excluded, but again, representatives of such groups should have local knowledge and meet residency and other membership criteria.

Furthermore, the Department does not agree that all members should have a financial stake in the land or pay user fees. Anyone with a genuine interest in the management of the public lands, and with expertise to make a contribution, should be eligible to be considered for council membership, so long as the person meets other membership criteria.

Similarly, the Department does not agree that council members must share a primary commitment to improving grazing as a land use. While clearly the councils should provide advice on improving the grazing uses of the land, and grazing expertise will be an important component on the councils, many other issues are legitimate concerns, including non-grazing uses of the public rangelands. This is consistent with BLM's responsibility to multiple resources and uses.

Issues regarding selection of members have been discussed at § 1784.2-1, Composition. The Department believes that self-nomination is an appropriate