

Many of the commenters' concerns and suggestions could not be reconciled within the framework of the specific proposal made on March 25, 1994. In order to be more responsive to those concerns, the Department has made a number of changes from the proposal in this final rule.

The section is retitled, to indicate that it now specifies those elements of advisory councils which will be required to implement provisions of FACA, FLPMA, or the goals of improving the rangeland management program. Optional features are provided at final § 1784.6-2. The word "multiple" is eliminated throughout the section.

Most significantly, the Department has dropped much of the detail regarding RAC requirements from this section of the final rule, and has substituted language that allows a more flexible structure. Coupled with the provisions adopted in final § 1784.6-2 this will allow a model for public participation to be selected for each State that best suits the State's own needs.

Many of the wording changes in the final rule are consistent with the goal of introducing flexibility. References to rangeland resource teams and technical review teams have been replaced with "subgroups." Provisions in paragraph (a) that would have been specific to District based councils have been eliminated, since this final rule allows councils to be formed along State, District, or ecoregion boundaries.

Provisions in paragraph (c) regarding membership have been changed to eliminate specific numbers of members, since these can vary under the provisions of final § 1784.6-2. The language regarding the membership of a local official is adjusted to conform to FLPMA. A provision is added requiring that council members must reside within one of the States within the geographic jurisdiction of the council. This wording was selected to accommodate those cases where ecoregion-based councils may cover an area in more than one State. Provisions regarding membership of State employees have been consolidated for clarity. Other minor revisions have been made in this section for clarity.

Final paragraph (e) is modified from the proposal to specify that the letters of recommendation required of nominees to the councils do not have to be from a locally based group. Since the Department has decided to introduce a residency requirement, as discussed above, there is no need to require that letters of nomination also be local.

Provisions in proposed paragraph (h) regarding quorums and voting requirements have been revised consistent with the flexible models of public participation adopted today. Rather than numbers of members being specified, the final provision requires that council charters all contain rules defining a quorum and establishing procedures for sending recommendations forward to BLM, and that such recommendations require agreement of at least a majority of the members of the three groups defined in paragraph (c). This establishes a minimum requirement. Each council's charter could require higher levels of agreement.

Taken together, the Department believes the provisions adopted today fulfill the goal of broadening the base of public participation in rangeland management decisions, while ensuring that advice provided to the Department represents the views of a council which is balanced in its membership, knowledgeable about the land and issues, and committed to consensus decisionmaking.

#### Section 1784.6-2 Resource Advisory Councils—Optional Features

The proposed section would have provided for the formation of rangeland resource teams by an MRAC on its own motion or in response to a petition by local citizens. Rangeland resource teams would have been formed for the purpose of providing local level input and serving as fact-finding teams for issues pertaining to grazing administration issues within the area for which the rangeland resource team is formed. They would not have provided advice directly to the Federal land manager.

Rangeland resource teams would have consisted of five members selected by the MRAC, including two permittees or lessees, one person representing the public-at-large, one person representing a nationally or regionally recognized environmental organization, and one person representing national, regional, or local wildlife or recreation interests. Members representing grazing permittees or lessees and the local public-at-large would have been required to have resided within the area for which the team would have provided advice for at least two years prior to their selection. The proposed rule would have required that at least one member of the rangeland resource team be selected from the membership of the parent MRAC.

Rangeland resource team members would have had to be qualified by virtue of their knowledge or experience of the lands, resources, and communities that

fall within the area for which the team is formed. All nominations for membership would have required letters of recommendation from the local interests to be represented. The membership provisions were intended to ensure that rangeland resource teams were able to represent key stakeholders and interests in providing input to the more broadly organized MRACs.

The proposed rule would have required that all members of rangeland resource teams attend a course of instruction in the management of rangeland ecosystems that had been approved by BLM State Director. The Colorado Working Group developed a proposal for a "Range Ecosystem Awareness Program" that would have established a basic curriculum including basic rangeland ecology, human resource development, the relationship of public land resources to private lands and communities, and the pertinent laws and regulations affecting rangeland management.

Rangeland resource teams would have had opportunities to raise any matter of concern with the MRAC and to request that the MRAC form a technical review team, as described below, to provide information and options to the council for their consideration.

Although no specific provision was made in the proposed rule, rangeland resource teams could have petitioned the Secretary for chartered advisory committee status. Chartered rangeland resource teams would have been subject to the general provisions of 43 CFR part 1780 and the provisions of the charter prepared pursuant to FACA.

Many of the commenters on this section opposed the formation of rangeland resource teams. Many reasons were given for this opposition.

Some asserted that both rangeland resource teams and the technical review teams would be subject to FACA, unless they could be sequestered from BLM. A commenter suggested requiring that the subgroups be fairly balanced. Others opposed any requirement for members to be local residents.

Some other commenters stated that the teams violate the requirement of Section 8 of PRIA to consult, coordinate, and cooperate. Many of the same commenters asserted that the Department cannot change the groups targeted by Section 8. Some commenters stated that the teams were not needed, would not be effective, would be costly, or would slow the planning and implementation process.

Some were concerned about how the teams would be formed. Some stated that they should be created by and report to BLM; others suggested that the