

Breakout Session National Environmental Policy Act Planning

Concerned about adequate involvement of RAC in the planning process

Barbara Hawke – project level decisions, controversial decisions, scoping and field trips are very useful for seeing how dynamics come into play, different backgrounds present different questions, scoping and site visits, conduits back to community, take sentiment of planning process back to community.

Sub-RACs (local stakeholders) are useful and provide information to RACs and/or generate recommendations to RAC. RAC members agree with the usefulness of sub-RAC groups. Members should maintain sub-RAC groups for ongoing issues.

Member commented that the power of RACs is dependent on a balance between differing interests; balance is often not reached by public comment because there is one narrow interest group that drowns other interests out, it is the RAC members' job to understand the other interests that are not as vocal.

Members felt as though the public is left out of the planning process, and that it is the responsibility for RAC members to organize their community and provide information to the community on decisions.

One member asked if a RAC really gets to make meaningful recommendations on planning, and that a more concerted effort must be made to gain the perspective of all stakeholders to make better recommendations.

Members generally agreed that the RAC should make more recommendations to the BLM as a collective Joint RAC during the statewide meeting regarding pressing issues/topics.

Members felt hurried by the NEPA process in general, they felt that they should be consulted for recommendation more often. The result could be a broader approach to soliciting joint-RAC recommendations throughout the NEPA process.

RAC members suggested that they have access to planning/NEPA documents before they are released to the public - assuming there was a disclosure statement in place.

RAC members also discussed more involvement in the quarterly leasing process. One example would be to address and/or vote in favor of individual parcels that are nominated for lease. The vote for support/opposition would be done with community consensus in mind via the RAC members.

Several members thought it would be helpful if sub RACs would vote on issues and topics brought up at meetings to have some sort of record of how the group as a whole felt. Members hoped that voting results would be forwarded to the statewide RAC for recommendation.

A different member felt that a majority to pass a resolution is cumbersome and it hinders opinions.

Majority to pass resolution is cumbersome, hinders opinions with resolution regulations.

Member asked Steve Bennett if it would negatively impact a FO if a vote is taken and if it is useful for RACs to state opinion. Steven Bennett replied that authentic feedback from the RACs is valuable.

Be careful if RAC is not adopting recommendations, cannot take individual input if RAC does not get behind it.

Member commented that the public's sentiment is that what is purpose of RAC if recommendations are not accepted? Different member said that RAC members should communicate the role and methods of involvement for the public

Member commented that it is difficult keep the public interested in long term projects. Member illustrated the point by saying that a decision is made three years after public scoping.

If community against decision, hard to generate interest, what is the point?

Member stated that the goal of public involvement should be to publicize opportunity to be involved should be the goal, not enhancing participation.

Member thought that informal summits (coffee shop meetings) between BLM and public not on specific issues but general discussions about topics of interest would benefit planning process.

Member felt that the RAC's representation of public interest sometimes does not reach BLM.

Member suggested that there needs to be another mechanism other than a resolution to document positions.

Members would like to vote on decisions so that RAC members have a record to show constituencies of how the RAC felt about a certain issue.

One member commented that elected officials won't vote because they want to converse with constituency before voting. Member responded that elected officials should be able to vote without counsel with community even if RAC does not vote.

One member felt that more progress would come of one on one discussions rather than presentations given by the BLM (Thursday morning presentations and forums.)

Member commented that the point of RAC is to collaborate and talk and not enough collaboration and talking is occurring.

Need of RAC to outreach and educate public on what the RAC is, people don't know what the RAC does.

Members would like to have input into RAC agenda.

Open call for agenda items at end of meetings

Member said that field managers should reach out to RAC members on items of interest in agenda.

Some members felt that there is not enough communication with the BLM outside of meetings

Steve Bennett asked the members if they know enough about NEPA process. Members responded that the flow chart was beneficial

Brief discussion about the difference between EA and EIS and process. Members would like to be briefed on a few EA's EIS's at the statewide meeting

Members felt that the sooner the RAC can see the agenda the better. And that if meeting materials were sent out in advance members could formulate questions and prepare for discussions

Members want draft minutes sent out as soon as possible.

Having info and question on situation and go around to gain RAC members view valuable as some members do not provide opinions without prompt