

The Technical Review Team Process
By Alan Hoffmeister

The third in a series of success stories from the Modac-Washoe Experimental Stewardship Program, working to resolve conflicts and improve the rangelands in northeastern California and northwestern Nevada.

Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) is referred to as the Stewardship Program in this article.

“We can sit around this table and argue until we're 'blue in the face', but we'll never solve these problems until we get out on the ground, look at the real situations, and realize what we're all talking about!”

The Steering Committee came to the above realization as they struggled with some very complex problems in the early days of the Stewardship Program. The Steering Committee was intentionally composed of management level representatives. They were not expected to be technical experts and they soon realized they needed some technical expertise on the ground to represent their individual concerns and solve some of the difficult conflicts.

To get the right mix of technical expertise out on the ground, the “Technical Review Team Process” (TRT) was formed. Their mandate was simple. “Go forth into the field and don't come back until you can all agree on what should be done.”

The first team looked at the Home Camp Allotment. The team was made up of the grazing permittees, the field biologist for the Nevada Department of Wildlife, the District Conservationist for the Soil Conservation Service, and the Range Staff Specialist for the BLM.

The team worked under the Consensus Process similar to the Steering Committee. They were able to reach consensus. Their recommendations were written on the hood of a pickup and signed in the field. The Steering Committee accepted their recommendations and the BLM District Manager eventually modified his decisions and implementation began.

Since that first success, TRT's have been involved in solving problems or initiating management plans on many BLM and Forest Service Allotments. In almost every case, consensus was reached and management has begun.

The Steering Committee has learned that several important points must be followed to assure a successful Technical Review Team.

- 1) The team must be composed of “Field Level Technicians” who have a familiarity with the area under discussion.
- 2) Discussions must take place on the ground.

- 3) Complete and thorough staff-work must be provided to the team members prior to the field tour. This information would include maps, resources, developments, past and present grazing practices, current and potential uses, etc.
- 4) The TRT must be composed of representatives from all concerned parties. A minimum of five members has been established representing the BLM or Forest Service, the Soil Conservation Service, the State Wildlife Agency, a permittee representative, and environmental interest. Additional representatives are added as needed (i.e., wild horses, archaeology, off-road vehicles, etc.).
- 5) All agreements must be documented and signed by all participants.

The TRT process has been called by some, the "Guts" of the Stewardship Program. Experimentation with the process is beginning in areas outside of livestock grazing issues. The Process was used this year in developing' a preferred alternative for BLM Wilderness Suitability Recommendations on the Susanville District. Mike Lunn, past District Ranger on the Warner Mtn. District of the Modac National Forest is using the process to guide the development of a ski-area on his new National Forest, the Okanogan in Washington State.

The Modac-Washoe Stewardship Committee is one of three such Committees mandated by Congress to explore new ways to improve the public rangelands. For information, write ESP, P. O. Box 1090, Susanville, CA 96130.

“CRM: Between the extremes of resource exploitation and resource preservation stretches a scale of possible alternatives.”