



ROCKY MOUNTAIN COORDINATING GROUP

Bureau of Indian Affairs (Southwest, Rocky Mountain and Great Plains Regions)
Bureau of Land Management (Colorado and Wyoming)
Fish and Wildlife Service (Mountain/Prairie Region)
Forest Service (Rocky Mountain Region)
National Park Service (Intermountain and Midwest Regions)
State Agencies in Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas

Revised Consensus Decision Model

January 23, 2014

General:

The consensus process is a proven and effective model for group decision-making. It promotes group problem solving through creative consensus-building, and offers greater opportunities for the best possible agreements than the “majority rules” voting model (win-lose) of more traditional and formal meeting management.

Before the meeting:

The Chair or designated contact for a particular proposal should, when applicable, contact, or make themselves available for contact by, relevant stakeholders in order to devise a preliminary proposal that takes account of the concerns of the group.

Role of the Chair:

Keeps order, keeps the discussion on track, makes sure the discussion focuses on the merits of the arguments being made, and summarizes the tentative agreements reached and tests for overwhelming agreement. The Chair may, at any time, designate a substitute to facilitate the discussion. (Should such a substitution be made, “Facilitator” shall replace “Chair” wherever it appears in this document.)

Meeting Rules:

The Consensus Model shall be the preferred decision-making model for RMCG and is expected to be used by the group to reach the vast majority of decisions. A quorum of 66% (currently nine) of the current RMCG members must be reached before any RMCG business may be conducted.

- A. Someone presents a proposal. It does NOT need to be in the form of a motion, nor seconded for discussion.
- B. The proposal and the pros and cons are discussed.
- C. As a result of the discussion - the more input, the better - the proposal can be modified.
- D. If a general agreement seems to be emerging, the Chair tests for consensus by re-stating the latest version of the proposal to see if everybody agrees.
- E. If anyone dissents, the Chair returns to the discussion to see if the idea/proposal can be further modified in order to make it acceptable to everyone. The Chair shall encourage expression and examination of the concerns of dissenters. The Chair tests for support for modifications. This test could include a “straw vote”.
- F. The Business Manager shall record a summary, highlighting points of agreement and disagreement, for each issue discussed. This summary shall become a part of the meeting minutes and be preserved according to the RMCG Records Maintenance Program.
- G. Use of the Consensus Model does **not** prevent a request by any member to “suspend the rules” to utilize Robert’s Rules of Order for part of, or the remainder of, the meeting. Moving to Robert’s Rules of order requires an “overwhelming majority” vote (75% of the quorum members present, either personally or remotely). The decision is “made” when the Chair determines an “overwhelming majority” (75% of the

quorum members present, either personally or remotely) has been reached. The same procedure used to suspend the Consensus Model can be invoked for moving back to the Consensus Model. Common rounding rules shall apply for any percentage computations.

Dissent:

Although the consensus decision-making process should, ideally, identify and address concerns and reservations early, proposals do not always garner full consensus from the decision-making body. When a call for consensus on a motion is made, a dissenting delegate has one of three options:

Declare reservations: Group members who are willing to let a motion pass but desire to register their concerns with the group may choose "declare reservations." If there are significant reservations about a motion, the decision-making body may choose to modify or re-word the proposal.

Stand aside: A "stand aside" may be registered by a group member who has a "serious personal disagreement" with a proposal, but is willing to let the motion pass. Although stand asides do not halt a motion, it is often regarded as a strong "nay vote" and the concerns of group members standing aside are usually addressed by modifications to the proposal. Stand asides may also be registered by users who feel they are incapable of adequately understanding or participating in the proposal.

Block: Blocks are generally considered to be an extreme measure, only used when a member feels a proposal "endanger(s)" the organization (RMCG or representative agency) or its participants, or violate(s) the mission of the organization (i.e., a principled objection).¹

In the RMCG consensus model one block will be sufficient to stop a proposal, however, the blocking member must provide evidence and/or supporting citations which clearly show how the proposal endangers or violates as indicated above.

For decision-making, a Block may **not** be overruled through the use of Robert's Rules of Order (voting). Should a block occur, the group will move the item back to the floor for reconsideration. If the item is not dismissed or resolved after reconsideration, it will be moved to the RMA Fire Executive Council for resolution.

¹ *During a Block the member must be able to corroborate their "Block" by showing a legitimate: 1) safety violation, 2) demonstrating an endangerment of the ability of an organization or participant to function, 3) violation of policy, law or regulation, or 4) inability for the agency to participate in the activity. Documentation for the Block must be presented to other RMCG members upon request.*