



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

October 19, 2011

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 rules.

Before the meeting:

The facilitator, or identified "point person" 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 facilitator:

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.

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. 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 facilitator tests for consensus by re-stating the latest version of the proposal to see if everybody agrees.
- E. If anyone dissents, the facilitator returns to the discussion to see if the idea/proposal can be further modified in order to make it acceptable to everyone. The facilitator shall encourage expression and examination of the concerns of dissenters. The facilitator tests for support for modifications. This test could include a "straw vote".
- F. The decision is "made" when the facilitator determines an "overwhelming majority" (75% of the members present, either personally or remotely) has been reached.
- G. The facilitator, or a designee, shall write a summary, highlighting points of agreement and disagreement at the conclusion of the meeting.
- H. 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 members present, either personally or remotely). The same procedure can be invoked for moving from Robert's Rules back to the Consensus Model.

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 decisionmaking, 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.

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.