

WORKSHOP ON FEDERAL LAND USE POLICY: IMPROVING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION — A PILOT PROJECT

*Tiffin D. Harris, Extension Economist
Oregon State University*

The workshop provided a brief overview of the pilot project entitled *Federal Land Use Policy: Improving Citizen Participation*. This overview included background information about the origins of the project, its reasons for being (i.e., a brief description of various problems associated with public land management), and highlights from surveys with the general public and interest group leaders. The project's operational objectives were then presented, as were the procedures followed to achieve those objectives.

The operational objectives of the project were (1) to help people understand how and when to participate in the land use planning activities of the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service; and (2) to provide a forum for improved communication among and between individuals, groups and organizations interested in the question of federal land management. An implied objective of the project was to demonstrate the potential contribution of extension in facilitating the citizen participation processes of the BLM and USFS.

The educational materials developed as a part of the project were also briefly outlined, as were the public workshops during which the draft educational materials were tested. Currently available as a set of materials packaged in a 2-inch ring binder, these materials describe in non-technical step-by-step terms the rationale and procedures used by the BLM and USFS in planning for public land management and use. *A Citizen's Guide to the Environmental Impact Statement Process* is also included, as is a great deal of useful information ranging from tips on writing letters to suggestions for improving the effectiveness of testimony at public hearings.

These printed materials are supported by three professionally produced slide-tape programs. *Our Federal Lands: A Resource Management Challenge* describes the history of public land management, the current situation, and outlines some of the major conflicts inherent in a multiple-use approach to public land use planning. Two additional slide sets, one focusing on the BLM, the other on

the USFS, outline the planning procedures of the two agencies and highlight opportunities for citizen participation.

Evaluation of the pilot project was discussed. Several evaluation criteria were used to measure its relative success. These criteria included (1) results from the evaluation instruments used at project workshops and the "wrap-up" symposium, (2) the degree of cooperation achieved with the principal agencies involved, as well as individuals and interest group representatives, and (3) the relative demand for educational materials produced.

Using these criteria led project coordinators to conclude that the pilot project was successful in achieving its objectives, including the hidden objective of demonstrating extension's potential role in this arena of public policy conflict. Workshop and symposium evaluations were excellent, the degree of cooperation (with one exception noted below) was also quite high, and the demand for materials has been and continues to be greater than the available supply.

The one exception regarding cooperation stems from a tendency on the part of environmental organizations to view extension with a measure of distrust. These organizations tend to see conflict situations in terms of black and white; producers versus conservationists. Extension is viewed by the environmental organizations as being largely producer oriented and therefore biased in its approach to facilitating citizen participation. Nevertheless, these organizations took advantage of their opportunity to join in discussions and presentations at various project workshops.