

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

FROM: Mark Jones, BLM Division Chief, NRCD

SUBJECT: BLM Radio Electronic Site Standards Committee – Group Charter

DATE: May 28, 2015

I. INTRODUCTION

The DOI issued a Departmental Directive (DD) on December 8, 2009 regarding the need for the establishment of standards and a program to effect the improvement of DOI radio sites to ensure the safety, reliability and resiliency of radio communications infrastructure. This infrastructure is needed to support vital emergency response activities for law enforcement, wildland firefighting, and emergency response to incidents occurring on BLM land or nearby lands. One aspect of this directive is the establishment of the use by BLM radio program and engineering program staff of nationally recognized standards in the development, construction, repair, maintenance and operation of radio facilities. This DD specifically requires the establishment of a DOI Radio Electronic Site Standards Committee to establish departmental standards and to maintain those standards.

Those of us involved in the radio and infrastructure engineering programs have sought to establish a companion committee within the BLM to affect such standards for the BLM, and to act as liaison with the department in all matters associated with radio site standards. The accompanying group charter was prepared by a group of employees representing a cross-section of radio and engineering programs and is intended to establish the sponsorship of the committee and its operating rules and broad guidelines. The committee will establish its own definitive rules of procedure and related planning documents, some of which are already available in draft form.

This charter creates the committee, establishes its membership, and outlines its responsibilities to BLM and to the program areas it serves.

II. BACKGROUND

Since the DD was published in late 2009, BLM staff engineers and radio technicians have worked diligently to perform Condition Assessments of radio facilities, and have created the initial draft infrastructure standards. These standards were reviewed by a cross-section of staff experts located throughout the BLM, but also included outside representatives such as the USFS. These draft standards have been in use for about 3 years and now need to be updated and expanded to provide a full spectrum of the infrastructure needs of the BLM and overall DOI radio programs. It was judged to be appropriate that this function be administered by a committee representing all parties affected by the standards, and also including the realty group who must enforce and administer these standards as they are included in many realty documents.

III. POSITION OF INTERESTED PARTIES

The ad-hoc committee which drafted the charter has created a draft Communications Plan which discusses all the various entities and groups who might be interested in the work of this committee. This includes not only the field engineers and radio technicians who will work with the standards on a regular basis, but also the general public who visit BLM lands, the emergency response personnel who depend on the radio system for critical communications, and commercial users of BLM lands for communication purposes.

Insofar as all parties will be positively affected by BLM radio facilities which are more reliable, resilient and safe, we anticipate that all affected parties would support this effort to establish and maintain nationally recognized standards for all BLM radio facilities.

IV. LEGAL STATUS

This charter is the first step in formally establishing a group who will be responsible for establishing and maintaining the BLM Radio Infrastructure site standards. It is being created in direct response to a departmental directive on the same issue, created over 4 years ago. From that standpoint, the creation of this committee is long overdue.

At this point, since the charter has not been executed, there have been no challenges and no legal actions taken specifically to address it at this point in time.