Validity model for public involvement

Raymond Walter Karr
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A VALIDITY MODEL FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

By

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B.S., Montana State University, 1953

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for the degree of

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Approved by:

[Signatures]

Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

June 17, 1975
The purpose of this study was to develop a method for validating the stages of the Forest Service public involvement processes being practiced in the preparation of environmental impact reports.

The validation model can be replicated for use by the agency's land use planners, public involvement technicians, information specialists, administrators, and managers as a means of validating public involvement processes. It can also be used as a tool for evaluating public involvement practices and decision strategies relating to a proposal or a decision completed by the environmental impact report process.

The hypothesis tested by the study was, "If peoples' concerns are accurately identified, dealt with, or coped with within the scope of responsibility of the agency, and people are involved and informed in this process by the agency, the people can and usually will then accept a rational-based decision by the agency." This hypothesis served as the basis for the model design, which assumes this usually happens when the public involvement process has been completed.

Forest Service field offices and the Information Office of the Northern Region were used as the laboratory to test the hypothesis. Draft environmental impact statements from four land use planning projects and one wilderness proposal were used to develop and perfect the model.

The designed and tested model provides a means for agency personnel to validate the public involvement process. Also, the model aids agency personnel in acquiring data from interested publics for evaluating the decision strategy and informational techniques being employed on the environmental project.
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PREFACE

As background it is important to provide the historical perspective of efforts by the Forest Service to cope with the rapidly expanding public criticism of Forest Service decisions—proposals in management practices—experienced beginning in the 1960s.

Regional Forester Neal M. Rahm of the Northern Region of the Forest Service, his staff, and the sixteen National Forest Supervisors from Montana, northern Idaho, eastern Washington, and North Dakota, met in Missoula, Montana in 1966 to discuss the growing public criticism of Forest Service management activities. Eighty issues were identified by this group, ranging in character from public dissatisfaction with simple construction or maintenance projects to concern with complex, professional activities such as silvicultural practices in logging systems.

This regional-level management group appointed an ad hoc task force from its membership to analyze the issues, to find the underlying problems, and to propose an action program for management to deal effectively with the situation. The task force was chaired by Information & Education Division Chief Kenneth A. Keeney and included two other Division Chiefs and four National Forest Supervisors. The seven-man group diligently carried out its assignment and presented a report of findings and recommendations in a publication: *Forest Service Public Understanding—A Candid Evaluation*, December 1968, Keeney, Karr, et al. The report verbalized the situation as perceived at that time.
by the task force in its introductory problem statement. As an example, the problem reported on page 5 of the report is:

The Forest Service has not adjusted fully to its change in relationships with the many publics which the National Forests serve. There is a need to identify the best approaches towards gaining public understanding, confidence, and support. Decisions must be reached on a case-by-case basis if degree and manner of working with public representatives are to be appropriate to the issues. There are no panaceas.

Currently, we must eliminate or minimize in-service barriers. It is not amiss to say here that reduction of the most significant internal barriers must precede a successful solution of external problems.

The task force's analysis proceeded along the organizational behavioral characteristics and identified the series of communication and relationship barriers between agencies and their publics. After reviewing all of the available material, the task force identified sixteen barriers it considered the most significant. Fourteen of the sixteen barriers required in-service attention and internal adaptations.

In addition to recommending attitudinal change within the organization, the study group recommended three objectives for public understanding. If achieved, these objectives would inherently include a minimum public involvement program. The task force listed these three public understanding objectives as:

1. To program the systematic gathering and weighing of all pertinent information by all of the people who should appropriately be involved

2. To identify and capitalize upon the best approaches to obtaining in-service and public understanding of and support for the decision reached

3. To eliminate or reduce further any remaining barriers to public understanding of the objectives of the Forest Service decision
The ad hoc task force recommendations were adopted as policy for the Region by Northern Regional Forester Rahm. Forest Supervisors were instructed, in January 1969, to implement the recommendations as the Region's new public involvement policy.

The National Environmental Policy Act was enacted in January 1970 (Public Law 91-190). The law requires that public involvement processes be part of any major Federal environmental decisions.

In January of 1971, Chief of the Forest Service Edward P. Cliff announced a service-wide policy making public involvement processes a part of all Forest Service resource decisions. Since the Forest Service establishment in 1971 of public involvement as policy for decision making, efforts have been expanded in the area of how to do it effectively. This effort is reflected in a number of Forest Service publications: Guide to Public Involvement in Decision Making, Forest Service, January 1971; Public Involvement Guidelines, Region 1, April 1971; Content Analysis, Forest Service, 1972; CODINVOLVE, Forest Service, 1973; Public Involvement in the Forest Service, 1974.

Additionally, training programs were implemented, centering on developing skills and confidence among members of the internal organization in public involvement techniques as meeting facilitation, verbal skills, group behavior, concepts for communication strategies, and the like.

The total, overall effort did not appear to have a national focus or direction, except in a broad sense. Most of the creativity concepts, skills development techniques, and public involvement techniques were developed in the field by people responsible for
implementing public involvement policies at the grass-roots level. The overall effort from a national perspective appeared somewhat disjointed and uncoordinated. A National Inform & Involve Meeting was called by the Chief of the Forest Service, April 14-18, 1975, in New Orleans, Louisiana, to coordinate and direct, on a national basis, current Forest Service public involvement activities. Up to that time, the majority of the Forest Service public involvement activities had been related to land use planning projects. As a result, many of the techniques and skills developed in the Forest Service centered on the unit area planning process. Land use planners are today among some of the most skilled and effective public involvement practitioners in the agency.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Subjective analyses, previously completed from public feedback in the form of external criticism of public involvement activities, indicate that incomplete communications between the agency and the public often affect the quality of the related public involvement activity.

Typical comments included: "I didn't say that." "You don't understand what I mean." "You're deaf." "You're manipulating our inputs." "You're ignoring our comments." "You didn't deal with the real issues." "You've got your mind made up already." "Is this a voting process?"

These comments indicate incomplete communications in handling public involvement inputs.

The consequences of incomplete communications appear to be poor understanding of the projects' purposes and lack of acceptance of the agency's proposals and decisions. Another consequence is improper interpretation of public inputs as an element of decision making. This leads to problems in the area of public understanding and acceptance of quality decisions.

It is assumed that if communications are complete in the public involvement processes, people will understand the purpose of the proposal and will accept the agency's rational-based decision.
This public involvement validity model has been designed for agency public involvement practitioners and managers for use in evaluating the effectiveness of public involvement program activities relating to any identified plan, program, or project which incorporates public involvement techniques.

All Federal and most State agencies have policy, environmental law, or administrative direction requiring the incorporation of public involvement as a part of their decision-making processes. The National Environmental Policy Act and the Montana Environmental Policy Act are examples of such requirements. The processes and techniques used by public involvement practitioners in response to these Federal and State requirements provide a basis for the design of a validity check on the associated public involvement activities.

As directed, agencies must also develop a draft environmental statement. This document formally outlines the agency proposal. In it the agency explains to the public what it plans to do and reviews the anticipated impact of the action. It provides a discussion of the pros and cons of other courses of action or alternatives. This is the document to which the public can respond.

The draft environmental impact statement is broadly distributed to interested and concerned agencies, organizations, groups, selected individuals, general publics, and news media. The public usually has a sixty-day period in which to respond.

One very important way to improve public involvement communications skills is to work at active listening. This means more than simply concentrating on what the other person is saying. It requires
the listener to let the other person know that he is heard. Frequently, what the other person means is assumed from his words. What he intended is presumed understood from his remarks. While this may be the case, often it is not. Important communication elements may be missed by the agency because of these assumption errors.

The following list of concerns, relating to the Forest Service public involvement program, represents the basis upon which the development of a process was initiated for public involvement practitioners and managers to evaluate the effectiveness of a public involvement program.

1. Is public participation an active part of the decision-making process?
2. Is the agency being responsive to public needs and desires?
3. Has public input been handled in a systematic and objective manner by the decision makers?
CHAPTER II

RELATIONSHIP OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT VALIDATION MODEL TO MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

Decision Process

One of the most significant contributions of the report, Public Involvement in the Forest Service (Hendee, et al., 1973), is the characterization of public involvement as a function related to five stages of management decision making, thereby breaking public involvement activities into five stages. The five basic stages of a total public involvement process, identical with the five processes of management and decision making, are identified and defined by Forest Service scientists, Hendee, Clark, and Stankey, as follows:

1. Issue Definition: legal, environmental, and fiscal constraints help identify a range of possible land use or management alternatives that require public input

2. Collection: includes all the varied processes which yield input from citizens

3. Analyses: the description of the nature, content, variation, and extent of public input

4. Evaluation: the subjective interpretation and weighing of all data that have been collected and analyzed for the purposes of making a decision
5. Decision Implementation: the process of providing feedback to the public, securing review, and translating a decision into a program of action

Although there are many ways of going about public involvement and various detailed flow charts can be constructed, these five stages are basic and are intimately related. Breaking down public involvement activities into these five stages was a conceptual breakthrough. It put the activity in a form the manager, the public involvement technician, the social scientist, and the planner can use in working with a total process, step by step.

These five stages of the public involvement process can be perceived as a straight line, one stage following the other. But for the purposes of this paper, the process should be perceived as an open-loop process, as shown in figure 1, for reasons which will be explained later in the paper.

The Forest Service's administrative structure for implementation of public involvement activities is called the Inform & Involve program. A nationwide program, it incorporates nationwide policies and techniques. The I&I acronym comes from the two major parts of the program. Inform is the informational services associated with informing the many publics which are interested, concerned, or affected by Forest Service decisions, policies, and activities. The Involve portion of the program centers around gaining input from citizens for decision making and providing feedback to citizens on the decisions. In effect, the Forest Service's Inform & Involve program is the agency approach in two-way communications with its many publics about National Forest management, Forest research, and State & Private Forestry.
DECISION PROCESS

"Management open-loop process" for Inform and Involve

Fig. 1. Decision Process
Decision-Making Strategies

One of the problems confronting decision makers, planners, and public involvement technicians is that public values are often shifting on a resource or environmental issue while the planning and decision making are in progress. Example, the forestry issues relating to the Bitterroot National Forest, 1969 to 1972. The decision maker needs a feedback system from the interested publics to reappraise the strategy prior to decision implementation in order to currently adjust to changing values when necessary and desirable.

Mr. Frank S. Gilmore, Director of Executive Development Program, Professor of Business Administration, Cornell University, and instructor at IMEDE in Switzerland, is the author of numerous articles on social and environmental issues. In "Formulating Strategy in Smaller Companies," Harvard Business Review, May-June 1971, Gilmore describes two decision-making strategies for management (see figure 2).

In the first, Strategy A, the traditional loop process, basically a lineal process, he describes the pitfalls of dealing with social and environmental issues where feedback and reappraisal are not built into the decision making in the face of changing public values. In other words, from the time of the first stage of the decision until the implementation stage, there could be changes in the organizational environment which wouldn't be perceived without a system of feedback and reappraisal. Gilmore calls this the traditional, open-loop process and says it is obsolete for making social and environmental decisions regarding today's modern problems.
A. Traditional open-loop process

B. Modern closed-loop process

Fig. 2. Management Processes
He calls the second, Strategy B, a modern, closed-loop process. The loop is closed with a reappraisal step; this brings the decision process back to the place it started for a reevaluation.

Gilmore states that we need to give up our preoccupation with such questions as, Where are we? and, Where are we going? Instead, we should give frequent consideration to such questions as, Are we making satisfactory progress with respect to the plan? and, Are our plans still valid? Instead of sizing up the situation at a given point in time, managers should schedule a reappraisal of current strategies. He explains that the effect of this change will be a shift from an open-loop, short-range approach to a closed-loop, long-range approach. (Illustrated in part B of figure 2.)

Figure 1 indicates the traditional stages for implementing an Inform & Involve program as described in Forest Service policy. This management practice is typically an open-loop management process. The open loop can be closed through a reappraisal stage of public feedback on the Inform & Involve program, the decision process, and an in-service review. Then the I&I process and the decision process can be based on the reappraisal of public feedback, as shown in figure 3. Inform & Involve Action Plans relate to a single land use plan, wilderness proposal, or program decision. The planning strategy also follows the traditional, open-loop process described by Gilmore and shown in figure 4. The validity check model closes the loop on the open-loop process of the I&I Action Plan by providing public feedback and an evaluation of the I&I Action Plan itself.
Public Feedback

In-Service Review
the Decision Process
and the I & I Process

Areas not covered by Management

Fig. 3.
Identification of I & I Needs

Develop I & I Actions
Flow Chart - Alternatives

Formulate I & I Plan
Implement I & I Plan

I & I Action Plan as it relates to Management Process

Fig. 4.
The public involvement validation model provides linkage to close the loop on the management process or the management decision-making process and it can provide a closed loop for the Inform & Involve Action Plan process and, in addition, provides validation of the decision-making process and the I&I programming and planning processes. In the management decision model, it provides a check on the issue definition, a check on the collection and analysis by the second question which is related to the use of data, and it provides a check on the decision implementation by assessing the acceptance of the decision. In the Inform & Involve program process, the validation model provides a check on the identification of I&I needs, the development of an I&I Action Plan through the first question, and it provides a check on the use of the data through the second question which would be a check on the analysis and the evaluation of I&I data. It also provides a check on the implementation of the I&I program through the third question which assesses public acceptance. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the model also closes the loop through a stage which gets public feedback on the I&I program and decision process and provides for in-service evaluation of public feedback on these two processes. The model leaves open the opportunity for the decision maker and the public involvement practitioner to reappraise the current position and modify it if appropriate. The interrelationships of these processes are shown in figures 5 and 6 on the next two pages.
Validity Check formulates and completes Management Loop

Fig. 5.
Figure 6. Inform & Involve Program Management
CHAPTER III
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT
VALIDATION MODEL

Theory

Although the Forest Service's Northern Region established a policy in 1969 that requires public involvement be a part of the decision-making processes, the philosophies, concepts, techniques, skills, systems, and organization were not at that time developed to implement the policy. The policy was a statement of direction. In the early days of public involvement, everyone did the job as best he could, reflecting individual philosophies, concepts, and skills. As a result, there was a great deal of trial and error in implementing the policy and there was much wheel-spinning and duplication, particularly in the development of conceptual public involvement strategies. Within the agency, though, there was a great deal of experience developed over the more than 50 years that the organization had been communicating with local, regional, and national publics on many issues, particularly in informational activities. Through the process of personnel selection, administrators most skillful in gaining public understanding seemed to progress to the top. This large grass-roots organization provided a great deal of skill and judgment gained from these successful experiences. These people relied on skills and practices developed out of their administrative understanding and experience for their public involvement.
decision making. Nevertheless, there was a great deal of uncoordinated, decentralized individual trial and error public involvement activities. Some were successful; many were not. Many of the public involvement efforts were not conceptualized, verbalized, or articulated. Many of the publics affected reflected little understanding of or confidence in these public involvement activities. The agency started getting a great deal of critical feedback about some of the more common public involvement activities. The critical feedback categorized like this: "The Forest Service doesn't listen." "They've already made up their minds before they involved us." "I didn't say that." "That's not what I meant." "Why go to public meetings, it doesn't do any good." "Public involvement is a political process, it's just a vote counter." "You're professionals, why go to the public?"*

Also, the agency started getting some critical feedback from more formal groups, such as the President's Council on Timber and the Environment in a field review of the Northern Region's timber management activities. The Council review criticized the Northern Region's public involvement efforts from the standpoint that it appeared to be more of a polling process than a public involvement process that was part of rational decision making. This, of course, necessitated the Northern Region to conceptualize or verbalize the conceptualization of the public involvement practices then being used. This was presented to the President's Council in an unpublished paper, "A Program for Public Involvement in the Northern Region, A Synopsis," 1972, prepared by

*Public involvement in decision making by definition is a political process in the simplest meaning of the word, political.
John Holden, Management Analyst for the Forest Service's Northern Region. The following unanswered questions were generated as a result of this paper, the public feedback, and the expressed concern by the agency public involvement practitioners for public involvement in decision-making administration:

1. Is the public actively participating in the decision-making processes?
2. Is the agency being responsive to public needs and issues?
3. Is the public input being handled in a systematic and objective manner by the Forest Service?
4. Are the decision process and the related public involvement processes visible to the publics?

These questions and concerns were the basis from which began the development of the public involvement validity model. The theory was that if the agency identified the issues based on public concerns and coped with or adapted to these concerns and issues within the framework of the multiple use ideal and, if the agency verbalized these actions to the point where they achieved public understanding, using skillful methods of Inform & Involve, the agency could expect a high degree of public acceptance of the decision.

Construction of the Validity Model

The idea of testing this validation theory, like many good ideas, came from the people in the field who were struggling with public involvement practices.

The land use planners on the Lolo National Forest's Missoula Ranger District were struggling with polarization that developed out of
the Gold Creek Land Use Planning Unit Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The polarization involved groups interested in wildlife management, particularly elk, and groups concerned about timber management. Polarization of these divergent interests threatened to disrupt implementation of the Gold Creek Land Use Plan. To evaluate the depth of the polarization, specifically the areas of nonacceptance resulting from failure to understand the plan alternatives, these land use planners went back to public involvement respondents on a one-to-one basis to confront them on the issues that concerned the publics. By doing this, the land use planners got feedback from the concerned publics on the specifics of the issue at hand and were able to adjust the management alternatives and explain to the respondents how the Forest Service was dealing with their concerns. Out of this, the planners achieved understanding and acceptance of a modified alternative that still met the Forest Service's multiple use objectives.

This experience on Gold Creek gave genesis to the idea that the basis for a process validation could be with the publics themselves. If communication and understanding of the public involvement process existed, the interested publics could best attest to how well this process was completed. So the concept of feedback from the interested publics as the basis for validation was born.

Next to be developed was the content of the feedback, what questions should be asked to provide the data necessary for a process check. Going back to the theory outlined in the beginning of this chapter, it was obvious that at least three questions would have to be designed to test the hypothesis: Were the issues identified? Were they
dealt with? Is the decision acceptable in the opinions of the publics?

The matter of how many respondents would have to be polled to provide an adequate base for validation would have to be answered, as well as a method of contacting respondents and gaining feedback to the questions.

The idea was to design a simple, easy to use model that practitioners of public involvement could use as a tool to validate their processes.

To test this idea, a model was designed and tested during 1974 as a graduate research project. The model consisted of six steps and three questions to be put to the respondents in an attempt to quantify understanding and acceptance by the publics. It was designed to correlate understanding with issue identification and public acceptance with understanding and issue identification. The correlations did not prove significant so this part of the model was discarded and replaced with an analysis-evaluation step. The newer, eight-step model was then tested on three projects: Mission Mountain Wilderness proposal, Flathead National Forest; Murr-Baldy Multiple Use Land Use Planning Unit, Lolo National Forest; and Cube Iron Multiple Use Land Use Planning Unit, Lolo National Forest. The three questions asked of respondents in an attempt to quantify understanding and acceptance by the public were:

1. Did the Forest Service identify your concerns regarding the proposal?

2. Did the action of the Forest Service or the management alternative chosen deal with the concerns you expressed?
3. Do you think the agency can now go ahead with this project as revised?

The response format used is shown in figure 7. This validity check was made by telephone and some personal, one-to-one interviews with individuals in the local area. A sampling table was designed with the assistance of statisticians in the branch of State & Private Forestry of the Northern Regional Office to reduce polling to a minimum level and still provide a high degree of statistical validity. Before the process was started, there was concern about establishing rapport with those being contacted. This was resolved by developing a standard response form for role playing and training those to do the sampling. Training included discussions of questioning strategies, how to handle hostility responses and requests for more information. One group made the first contact and provided feedback to the others doing the sampling. Individuals doing the sampling were oriented to the project and received special training in telephone interview techniques.

Sampling of the Mission Mountains Wilderness proposal proved the biggest challenge, primarily because of time factors involved. The project was started about four years prior to the validity check. While it generated wide interest, it was not current. Many respondents had to review their input for background before they would answer the samplers. Many of the respondents had changed addresses, telephone numbers, or were no longer involved with the groups they had represented. Responses by the fourteen contacted about their Mission Mountain Wilderness proposal inputs were as follows:

All said "Yes" to question 1 (Did the Forest Service identify your concerns regarding the proposal?) Thirteen said "Yes" to question 2
RESPONSE FORMAT

Identify yourself. State purpose.

My name is ____________________. I am doing some followup on the public involvement activity on the ____________________ project which was conducted by the Forest Service. I would like to get your response to some questions regarding this project.

1. The Forest Service identified and listed the following concerns you expressed during the public involvement on this project. These concerns were taken from ______________ dated __________ submitted by you.

2. Read list of concerns as defined by the Forest Service.

3. Ask — Does this cover your concerns? Yes ☐ No ☐ Record answer.

4. The Forest Service dealt with your concerns in the following manner.

5. Read Forest Service response.

6. Ask — Do these actions deal with the concerns you expressed?

Yes ☐ No ☐

7. Do you think the agency can now go ahead with this project as revised?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Fig. 7. Response Format
(Did the action of the Forest Service or the management alternative chosen deal with the concerns you expressed?) and one said "No." To question 3 (Do you think the agency can now go ahead with this project as revised?) twelve said "Yes" and two said "No." All fourteen respondents were interviewed by telephone.

The Cube Iron Multiple Use Land Use Planning Unit project was the most current project. This made it easier to contact those giving inputs. Most of those contacted easily identified with the project and were quite vocal. Of the six people contacted, all six said their concerns had been identified. Five of the six understood Forest Service multiple use rationale for dealing with their concerns and felt that their concerns were dealt with. One said "No" in response to the second question. All six felt the Forest Service could now go ahead with the project.

The Murr-Baldy Multiple Use Land Use Planning Project was current and, basically, offered some of the same advantages as Cube Iron project. There was some problem in contacting the individuals because of no telephone or address changes. Of the nineteen respondents, eighteen felt their concerns were identified in the draft statement. One did not. All nineteen understood the Forest Service alternative, thought it satisfied their concerns, and expressed willingness for the Forest Service to go ahead with the project.

A majority of those contacted responded very favorably to the Inform & Involve validation process but were somewhat surprised at being contacted and expressed a very positive reaction to the process and the Forest Service. Many stated that they would continue to give input.
because it now appeared that the Forest Service was responsive to their comments, suggestions, and opinions. There was no apparent problem in using clerical staff to do the telephone sampling. Background information on study project details was not a barrier. The publics were very willing to talk to the clerical staff about the projects.

Of the thirty-nine people contacted in the three projects, thirty-eight thought their concerns were identified, thirty-seven thought their concerns were dealt with by the Forest Service, and thirty-seven were willing for the project to move ahead. The two that were unwilling to endorse going ahead with the project expressed the thought that they would not openly contest the project but, because they represented an extreme point of view, they could not accept the compromise of the wilderness proposal.

In summary, the validation process appeared to provide feedback to the public on the final Forest Service position, demonstrated to the public that their input was being used, and generated more input from the public on the proposals. An unquantifiable spin-off from this process was the additional trust generated by the agency going back to the original respondents and soliciting their perception of the decision-making and public involvement processes of the Forest Service on these particular projects of special interest and concern to them. The feedback confirmed that this validation did, in effect, restore public trust in the processes being used by the agency. It was this element, that couldn't be quantified or measured, that upset, I believe, efforts at correlation of negative responses on identification, understanding, and acceptance. While there were two negative responses on the Mission
Mountains Wilderness proposal, they were related to a value system polarization in favor of total wilderness.

Cube Iron and Murr-Baldy both received positive acceptance from all the respondents. Cube Iron had a negative response on understanding and Murr-Baldy had a negative response on identification of the issues. The thing that overcame these negative feelings, as reflected in feedback to the questioners, was the trust created by the validation process. It put the respondents in a positive frame of mind regarding both the Forest Service decision and public involvement processes. They could then feel comfortable with the Forest Service project proceeding decision.

The model as finally completed is an eight-step activity that can easily be replicated by public involvement practitioners or decision makers. It is described next.

**A Public Involvement Process Validation Model**

**Step 1.** Select sample responses. Gather responses to the draft environmental impact statement (example, figure 8) or other proposal which has been distributed for public comment. Use the following random selection process in choosing responses to be analyzed:

- 1 to 10 responses - Sample size 1 to 10, 100 percent of available respondents.
- 11 to 100 responses - Sample size 5 to 50, 50 percent of available respondents.
- 101 to 1000 responses - Sample size 20 to 50, 20 percent of available respondents.

Maximum needed: 50 questionnaires of selected responses.

*For a graphic presentation of the process, see figure 13, page 42.*
TO: U. S. FOREST SERVICE

Flathead Wildlife, Inc., Kalispell, Montana, by unanimous vote of its membership goes on record in favor of the proposed Mission Mountain Wilderness Plan.

Yours very truly,

DAN McKLEON
Secretary

Fig. 8. Public input sample
Step 2. Categorize sample responses. Using content summary analysis techniques, identify opinions and reasons. The content summary assures that everything that is talked about, to any significant degree, can be incorporated in the analysis. The basic concept underlying systematic content analysis of public input is that the common denominators reveal virtually all public opinions offered for, against, or about the issues in question. (Examples, figure 9.)

Step 3. Define issues from responses. An issue is defined as a matter that is in dispute, a point of debate, or a controversy. The respondents' concerns are named and listed as issues. They can be summarized and stored as issues for later retrieval. (Example, figure 10, page 28.) A response is an opinion, view, appraisal, or judgment formed about each particular matter by the respondent. A reason is a statement offered in explanation or justification. For the purposes of the paper, we are using these definitions of issue, response, and reason.

Step 4. Write rationale for coping with the identified issues. Using the identified issues, the Forest Service develops a visual display of how the data was used. This is normally done in section 8 of the final environmental impact statement on federal proposals. (Example, figure 11, page 29.) In this discussion, the agency discusses, in writing, situational considerations for dealing with each issue and identifies: (a) change or non-change in content from draft to final environmental impact statement regarding each issue identified in Step No. 3; and (b) the rationale for change or non-change regarding each issue identified in Step No. 3.
### Response to Draft Statement

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Public Demands</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Roadless Area and Wilderness Study Areas</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Land Exchanges and Land Ownership</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Water</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Other</td>
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*This does not refer to the number of respondents to a response category but rather the number of comments made concerning a category.

Fig. 9. Response analysis sample
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative Favored</th>
<th>Response Categories</th>
<th>No. of Similar Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. **Grazing**

1. Favor wildlife grazing over domestic grazing  
4. Management for wildlife (elk) wherever possible  
N. Management for wildlife (elk) wherever possible  
4. Remove domestic stock grazing completely  
4. Provide horse facilities at Boulder Lake

7. **Water and Fish**

4. Stock lakes and streams with fish  
1. Stock lakes and streams with fish  
4. Maintain water quality  
4. Bull and Mud lakes questionable as to ability to support fish  
4. Boulder Lake will have people problems if fishable

8. **Campgrounds**

1. No campgrounds in planning unit  
1. Build campgrounds in planning unit  
4. Provide semi-developed campsites around Boulder Lake

9. **Fire**

4. Let fire burn wherever possible  
4. Burn slash depending on silvicultural requirements  
4. Chainsaws and aircraft—only fire control in upper left 1/4 of Area B

10. **Miscellaneous**

4. Combine Gold Creek and Rattlesnake planning units  
1. Maintain buffer zone between Gold Creek and Rattlesnake  
4. No powerlines  
1. No powerlines  
4. Provide information signs on scenic overlooks  
4. Plow snow on main Gold Creek road to trail

Fig. 10. Response categories sample
As part of the consideration for these needs, a review was made of existing transmission lines in this vicinity. Two Montana Power Company transmission lines exist, one crossing through the Placid-Blanchard Planning Unit immediately to the north of this planning unit and one in the southern portion of this planning unit which traverses over Lockwood Point and into the Rattlesnake drainage.

The need for future routes was also considered. Region 1, in conjunction with the State of Montana, is currently trying to identify transmission corridors that will be needed throughout the state. However, this has not yet been completed. Therefore, as part of this planning effort, specific consideration was given to the potential needs for additional corridors through this planning unit. The tribal council of the Confederated Kootenai and Salish Tribes has gone on record that they do not want a corridor through the South Fork of the Jocko River. Therefore, any additional corridor or powerline through the Gold Creek Planning Unit which would traverse north and south into the South Fork of the Jocko River would not be agreeable to the tribal council. After review it was felt that no future power corridors would likely traverse the upper parts of this planning unit, and that any future or additional developments would probably go to the east and north of this planning unit or along the existing Montana Power Company lines in the southern portion of this planning unit.

**CONCERN:** Powerline considerations are not consistent between Management Units 1 and 2 and not consistent with the management unit objectives.

**Discussion:** (Requires change from Draft Statement) Management Guidance item 21, page 39 [43] and item 6, page 41 [45] have been changed, "Special Use such as powerlines which will detract from the view generally will not be allowed. However, requests will be evaluated and considered if future needs demand that a powerline corridor be developed somewhere in this vicinity and no other suitable alternative route can be found. The public will be involved in future considerations for uses such as powerlines."

**CONCERN:** The Bonneville Power Administration has a series of hydromet stations in the area.

**Discussion:** (No change from Draft Statement) The Bonneville Power Administration does have a series of hydromet stations throughout western Montana, including the Seeley Lake and Missoula area, but there are none within the Gold Creek Planning Unit. The need for a future hydromet station was reviewed, and to the best of our knowledge there is no foreseeable need within this planning unit. However, if the need should arise, consideration of an application for a special use for this type of station would be permissible under the Management Guidance in this management plan.

Fig. 11. Discussion of concerns in Environmental Impact Statement - sample.
Step 5. Question sample response. Using the selected response in Step 1 (figure 7), make direct contact with respondents. Process is:

A. Identify yourself, state purpose of call, establish rapport
B. Identify concerns expressed by the individual and from what type of document they were taken
C. Read concerns as identified from content analysis. Ask if Forest Service has identified their concerns. Here we are looking for Yes"/"No" response. If "No," record additional concerns and establish with the respondents the concerns will be followed up.
D. Take each concern and establish how the Forest Service dealt with it. Read the response directly, do not interpret or summarize.
E. After reading each Forest Service response, ask individual, "Does this action deal or cope with your concerns?" Again we are looking for "Yes"/"No" answer. If "No," record remarks.
F. The last step covers the acceptance of project. Ask, "Do you think the agency can now go ahead with this project as revised?" Again we are looking for "Yes"/"No" response. If "No," record remarks. An example of an earlier questionnaire is attached. (Figure 12.)

Step 6. Summarize the responses from direct contact with the public. The percentage of positive responses to question 3, "Does this cover your concerns?" indicates the degree of issue identification by the agencies. The percentage of positive responses to question 6, "Do these actions deal with the concerns you expressed?" again indicates the degree of understanding of the rationale used by the agency in dealing with or coping with identified issues. In the percentage of
Good Morning (Afternoon). My name is ______________. I am employed by the Forest Service at the Regional Office in Missoula. In cooperation with a graduate study at the University of Montana, we are conducting a survey of the use of public involvement in the establishment of the Mission Mountain Wilderness. I would like to ask you some questions about the comments you provided the Forest Service when they were preparing the Mission Mountain Wilderness proposal.

The Forest Service identified and listed the following as concerns you expressed during the public involvement process on this project. These concerns were identified from your ______________.

List Concerns:

1. In favor of proposal Mission Wilderness
2.
3.
4.

Does this identify your concerns regarding the Mission Mountains proposal?

Yes ☐ No ☐

The Forest Service dealt with your concerns in the following manner:

1. ________________
2. ________________
3. ________________
4. ________________

Did this action deal with the concerns you expressed?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Generally speaking, do you have any problems with the classification of the Mission Mountains as Wilderness?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Remarks:

________________

Fig. 12. Input from telephone interview-sample
positive responses to question 7, "Do you think the agency can now go ahead with this project as revised?" indicates the degree of respondents' acceptance of the project.

**Step 7.** Analysis of response. There are several analysis methods that can be used. A simple tabulation is probably best to determine the degree of acceptance and understanding. This tabulation can be further broken down into such things as: which publics accept the project; which publics don't and why; what publics understand the proposals; what publics don't and again, why; what issues did the agency identify, which did they miss; what publics were considered in the public involvement effort, what publics were missed; which could be affected by the proposal; what steps in the public involvement process were completed; what portions of the process were not affected or were incomplete; what steps in the decision process were complete; and what steps were missed or not displayed adequately.

**Step 8.** Evaluation of the public involvement process. Based on Step 7 of the analysis, critique the process. Make a judgment regarding whether sufficient public understanding of proposal exists to go ahead with the project. Make a judgment whether additional informational public involvement action is necessary prior to going forward with the project. Make a judgment as to whether a decision process has been completed. Reassess the proposed decision based on the input from the validity check model. Critique the process in all three dimensions:

Dimension I - Effectiveness of the validity check itself. Did it close the loop, provide the feedback, validate the I&I
and decision processes? Did the agency interpret what the publics' concerns were? Were they responsive to public concerns? What degree can the agency expect public acceptance of the project? How can the agency update the public involvement process?

Dimension II - Critique the Inform & Involve program. Did the action plan inform and involve the publics affected by the decision so their concerns were identified and dealt with? (The I&I Action Plan provides for informing the publics and displaying the decision process to them so that they can accept the project or decision.)

Dimension III - This is the decision process itself. (It involves definition of public input, including collection, analysis, and evaluation of I&I data in an objective manner.) Was the implementation of the decision completed with public understanding and acceptance?

Evaluation Criteria

The decision maker-planner and information specialist seek to feel secure in the quality of their field work in public involvement efforts. The validation model described in previous sections can give them the data needed to make a quality appraisal.

Hendee, et al., in the study *Public Involvement in the Forest Service*, 1973, developed a list of indicators of "Good Public Involvement." The data, gathered in the user validation model and applied to these six indicators, provide a sound basis for appraising the quality of the public involvement effort. Although some of these
indicators have a limited relationship to the quality of the public involvement effort, in total they will give the decision maker and technician a good handle for evaluating the total effort.

1. **Volume of Input.** A large volume would be an indicator of good public involvement. A sparse volume of input raises a question, "Is this because of inadequate Inform & Involve programs or is it a reflection of a lack of public concern resulting from no issues relating to the project or of minimum impact on the publics?"

2. **Abatement of Polarity.** A second indicator of good public involvement is how effective the process has been in reducing polarization. If polarization is not reduced or is heightened, you should ask the question, "Were the public involvement techniques adequate to the job? Is there a need for further skills?" With good public involvement, there should be a reduction in polarization as opposing groups confront each other with their concerns through the process and arrive at a better understanding of each other's goals.

3. **Representation.** Representation is a good indicator of the quality of public involvement. By assessing what publics--local, regional, or national--will be affected by the decision, you can check to see that all publics--that are interested, concerned, and will be affected--are represented in the public involvement process. When there are obvious gaps in group or interest representation, it indicates a weakness in the I&I processes.

4. **New Information.** New information to the proposal does indicate an effective public involvement process. Any new data gathered
from public input beyond that relating to the proposal is a bonus to the public involvement effort and the planning process.

5. **Decision Modification.** Modification of decisions or proposed decisions, as a result of public input, is a mark of a successful public involvement effort. Absence of modification does not, of itself, indicate poor public involvement. The thing to assess is whether the rationale for the decision modification is displayed back to the publics for their understanding. It can strengthen confidence in the agency's public involvement efforts. Public confidence is a mark of public involvement quality.

6. **Acceptance of Decision.** The theory of the validation model is that if people's concerns are identified and coped with in the information-involvement processes, people will then accept rational-based decisions made within the scope of the agency's responsibility and authority.

The absence of challenge to a decision does not, necessarily, reflect good public involvement. Validation questions to be asked here are: Are the publics' concerns identified? Are the issues dealt within the framework of the agency's responsibilities? Has this been displayed so that the concerned people understand the processes? Are they given the opportunities to provide their feedback to the agency in their critique on the processes?

7. **Quality of Decision.** Another indicator added here is that the quality of the decision is also an indicator of the quality of the public involvement process.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The model presented in this paper has been submitted twice to professional groups for evaluation, consideration, and comment. It was presented formally the first time at the Forest Service's National Inform & Involve Meeting, April 14-18, 1975, in New Orleans, Louisiana. The meeting included the Information Directors and public involvement specialists within the entire Forest Service. The participants had regional and national Inform & Involve responsibilities. Three consultant sociologists also participated in the meeting. The group recommended and encouraged the Forest Service use of the public involvement validation model service-wide for training and development of I&I personnel.

This same presentation was made at a region-wide workshop, the Forest Service's Northern Region Land Use Planning Workshop, April 22-23, 1975, in Missoula, Montana. The workshop involved land use planners and public involvement practitioners from the regional headquarters and the National Forests. Out of this workshop came a recommendation to adopt the public involvement validation model as a tool for use in the land use planning. While the validation model was designed to test primarily the public involvement process and validate the process' five stages, the model presented in this paper is designed as a step-by-step procedure that can be replicated.
In developing the public involvement validation model, it became apparent that when the public involvement process is validated, the decision process is, to some extent, also being subjected to validation. The stages of the public involvement activity are integrated with the decision process. This gives a second dimension to this model. Action plans and strategies for public involvement and information programs associated with the project are also integrated with the stages of public involvement and decision making. The I&I Action Plan includes a third dimension that can be validated by this model, since the I&I Action Plan is interrelated in the how-to-do-it portion of the public involvement process.

In effect, the public involvement validation model, as a tool, can be useful in all three dimensions. It was designed primarily as a tool for practitioners' validation of the five-stage public involvement process. But it also provides them with techniques for showing publics how their inputs were handled through the feedback process. Also, the information specialist can use it as a tool in validating the public involvement process and developing data for assessing I&I plans, information programs, and the effectiveness of the Inform & Involve techniques utilized in the project.

The decision maker can use this tool as well. It permits the decision maker to reassess the decision strategy, based upon public feedback. The evaluation of this feedback comes prior to the agency being locked into a final decision. This flexibility can improve the quality of decision making. For the manager, the validation model can be a useful tool in assessing the quality of the decision process, the quality
of the public involvement process, and the quality of the information programs relating to any project proposal.

Additional benefits demonstrated in the research on the validation model related to improved communications, increased confidence, and trust between the agency and its publics. The fact that the agency was going back to the publics to validate the public involvement process created public confidence and trust. At the same time, as a result of the data from the added public feedback, the decision maker and the public involvement practitioner knew where they stood with their constituency. And, by identifying the strengths and the weaknesses in the process, it gave them renewed confidence in their public involvement and decision-making efforts.

Regarding techniques, the telephone interview process seems very effective. Respondents were receptive to the telephone interviews, particularly calls by clerical-stenographic people. The simple Yes/No on the response form was effective in developing the data needed to validate these processes and to provide sufficient information to effectively evaluate the public involvement process.

There was no strong correlation in the negative responses involving issue identification, public understanding, and the acceptance of the project. On the other hand, there was a strong correlation on the positive responses involving identification of issues and the understanding and acceptance of the project by the publics contacted. The nonacceptance of the project was related to group value systems that were beyond the scope of multiple use values.
In summary, the tests of the model on the three projects: (1) Mission Mountain Wilderness proposal; (2) Murr-Baldy Multiple Use Land Use Planning Unit; and (3) Cube Iron Multiple Use Land Use Planning Unit; showed that the model is effective in validating public involvement process. It can also be used as a tool to validate the decision process and to validate information processes. Additionally, it provides the public feedback data which can be used by the manager, decision maker, public involvement technician, and information specialist to evaluate activities.

Added spin-offs include improved public confidence in the administration, management, and public involvement processes of the agency and improved confidence by the agency personnel in the processes and confidence in the publics they deal with.

Each of the validation checks took about one man-week of work. The research work was done with the cooperation of Northern Regional Forester Steve Yurich and the Northern Region headquarters personnel of the Information Office. The Northern Region of the Forest Service was the laboratory for the project. Further testing of the model is planned. This paper will be presented to the Regional Forester and his staff in June and proposed as a tool for application by the personnel of the Northern Region.

Suggested research should be designed to modify this model which was designed primarily to fit in with the environmental impact statement process so it can be used as a tool to validate public involvement processes relating to programs with other goals. Possible modified models could fit social program needs such as housing projects, welfare
and health programs, to mention sample applications. Also, research should be expanded to consider a validation model for processes relating to economic programs such as agricultural assistance projects, tax programs, business regulations, and the like.

Principles of this model can be applied and tested through research on a variety of programs that involve public input. Areas in need of further research include the elements for the evaluation criteria outlined in chapter III. The issue of representativeness could benefit from additional research, particularly the question of interest representativeness versus demographic representativeness. The issue of decision modification will require additional research: How much are decisions modified by public input? What is the expense of the modification? Are the modifications small elements of the decisions or major elements of the decisions? Are these modifications quality modifications or compromise modifications? Then there is an opportunity, based on a lot of the material presented in this paper, to develop an evaluation model for public involvement programs. There is also a possibility of quantifying the evaluation.

In conclusion, the model as described did work as an effective tool for the public involvement practitioner and/or decision maker to use to validate their public involvement and related decision processes. It also provided the data that was necessary to evaluate the quality of the related public involvement activity.

The model will be tested further in the Northern Region and refined for simplification, such as refinement of sampling tables, repostering of questions, and further work on evaluation criteria.
In addition, step 5, question sample response, will be revised to provide the respondents feedback on all of the changes proposed in the final environmental impact statement rather than only the issues of concern to the respondents. These changes, many of them mutually exclusive, will be itemized as part of step 5-D of the Validation Model, figure 13. The respondents will then be questioned as per steps 5-E and 5-F, "Does this action in total deal with your concerns?" Answer yes/no. "Do you think the agency can now go ahead with this project as revised?" Answer yes/no.

It was a successful project and was adopted as a tool for use by Forest Service public involvement practitioners on a nationwide basis at the National Inform and Involve Meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 1975.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select sample response</th>
<th>Categorize sample response</th>
<th>Define issue from response</th>
<th>Write rational question</th>
<th>Sample response</th>
</tr>
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Randomly select (informally) try to include representative sample of each type of input. Attached sampling table as recommended guide.

Using content summary analysis technique, identify opinions and supportive reasons. The content summary assures everything that is talked about to any significant degree can be incorporated in the analysis. The basic concept underlying systematic content analysis of public input is that the common denominators of virtually all public input are opinions offered for, against, or about the issues in question.

Issue ... a matter that is in dispute ... a point of debate or controversy.

Response (opinion) — a view, judgment, or appraisal formed in the mind about a particular matter.

Reason ... a statement offered in explanation or justification.

Using the identified issues, the Forest Service develops a visual display of how the data was used.

Using the selected response (Step 1), direct contact with respondents is made. The process is:

A. Identify yourself. State purpose of call and establish rapport.

B. Identify concerns expressed by the individual and from what type of document they were taken.

C. Read concerns as identified from content analysis. Ask if F.S. has identified their concerns. Here we were looking for yes/no response. If no, record additional concerns and establish that there will be followup to them.

D. Take each concern and tell them how the F.S. dealt with them. Read the response directly, do not interpret or summarize.

E. After reading the F.S. response, ask individuals: "Does this action deal with your concerns?" Again, we are looking for yes/no; if no, record remarks.

F. The last step in process covers the acceptance of Project. Ask: "Do you think the agency can now go ahead with this project as revised?" Again we are looking for yes/no response; if no, record remarks.
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<tr>
<td><strong>summarize the response</strong></td>
<td><strong>analysis of response</strong></td>
<td><strong>critique of p.i.</strong></td>
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</table>

Summarize response from direct contact with public.

Analysis of response. There are several analysis methods that can be used. A simple tabulation can be used to determine degree of acceptance, understanding, and use of data.

Critique of the total process leading toward evaluation of (1) effectiveness of validity check itself; (2) did we interpret what the public concerns were; (3) were we responsive to public concerns; (4) to what degree can we expect public acceptance to the project; (5) how can we update our public involvement process.
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Selection of the final new study areas from roadless and undeveloped areas within the National Forests.

