

information of value to their team and other teams. This system will be primarily for internal agency use. All teams will be notified by the RCTT when communication tools such as these become operational. Further guidance will be provided at that time.

B. Elevation of Issues

The outcome of elevated issues will be documented by the RCTT, who will include this information in the annual report.

1) Process for Elevating Issues from a Level 1 Team to the Level 2 Team

According to the Charter, Level 1 team findings must be by consensus. However, it is recognized that disagreements may occasionally arise in a Level 1 team over policy or procedure, applicable laws, and biology. All attempts should be made by members to settle disputes within their team. However, elevation to the Level 2 team is encouraged if a Level 1 team has exhausted their review and still clearly cannot resolve the issue. Examples of situations include:

- when differences in interpretation arise from biological uncertainties or regarding applicable laws that prevent Level 1 members from reaching a workable consensus
- to clarify policy and direction
- when substantial progress toward resolution of an issue is not forthcoming

In addition, the Level 1 team may elevate requests for resources, workload/species priorities, and recommended changes to the Strategy to the Level 2 team for their sanction.

There should be no stigma attached to elevation to Level 2. Such elevation should not be considered a ‘failure,’ but rather a sign that the system is working to identify problems of conflicting policy or interpretation of standards. The intent behind elevating issues is to avoid surprises or unnecessary delays. Elevation of an issue should not prevent the team from working on consultation or other actions independent of that issue.

A brief correspondence signed by the Level 1 chairperson representing their team’s consensus and sent to the Level 2 team chairperson can accomplish elevation. Appendix E provides examples of optional templates for use by the Level 1 and Level 2 teams to elevate their concerns. The correspondence will simply state the disagreement, concern, or recommendation about an issue and that the issue needs to be elevated. This elevation should concisely describe the issue but in sufficient detail to frame the salient points and suggest alternative solutions, including that solution preferred by the Level 1 team (when applicable). The letter should clarify why the Level 1 team cannot reach consensus or, in the case of a recommendation, why the Level 2 team should act on it. If appropriate, statements about disagreements may include suggested remedies to the situation offered by respective Level 1 team members. Information included in the elevation outline will better enable the Level 2 team—or Regional Executives if necessary—to make an informed decision.

Under the direction of the Level 2 chairperson, the Level 2 team should meet or hold a conference call as soon as possible, typically within two weeks of receipt of the letter. The goal of the meeting should be to: identify the Level 2 members that should be involved, review the issue, determine a course of action (e.g., hold joint Level 1 and 2 discussions or identify other agency personnel that should be involved), and identify a timeframe for reaching a Level 2 decision.³ The elevation to Level 2 should result in one of the following: 1) resolution of the issue and/or guidance to the Level 1 team, 2) direction to the RCTT to gather more information relevant to resolution of the issue, or 3) elevation to the Regional Executives (see below). Level 2 response/resolution may be to drop, modify, or continue with the originally designed action. The outcome should be documented in a response letter (Appendix E) to the Level 1 team and sent to that team's chairperson.

2) Process for Elevating Issues from the Level 2 Team to the Regional Executives

Level 2 teams should strive to reach resolution of an issue. If resolution cannot be reached, the Level 2 chairperson will elevate the issue to the Regional Executives with a simple letter notifying them of an issue and need for resolution. A copy of the letter will be sent to each of the Executives and the relevant Level 1 team chairperson. Appendix E provides an example of an optional outline for the written elevation document for the Level 2 teams to the Executives. The Executives may designate staff (such as the RCTT) to assist in resolution. The elevation document should include the Level 1 position statements, as well as other material the Level 2 team provides.

The Executives, or their designees, will then make an interagency decision and instruct the Level 1 and 2 teams how to proceed on the issue. When resolved, the action will be routed back to the Level 1 teams (through the Level 1 chairpersons) for further action.

IV. Roles of Federal Agency Personnel

District Rangers, Field Managers, District Managers, Forest Supervisors, FWS Field Supervisors, NPS Park Superintendents, agency biologists, and other specialists (such as range conservationists and silviculturists) are integral to the success of streamlined consultation.

A. RCTT, Level 1 and 2 Members

Depending on the agendas and needs of a particular team, members of other teams, from any level, may be asked to attend meetings to provide advice, technical assistance, or other support to a team's tasks. Such inter-team participation would greatly facilitate dialogue and

³ Although the National MOA (Appendix A) states that each stage of the elevation process should take no longer than 15 days, it is recognized that some particularly complex and/or controversial issues may take longer to come to resolution. In addition, the elevation process as envisioned in Colorado is not limited to dispute resolution. Nevertheless, 15 days is a good benchmark, and should serve as a goal for the Level 2 team and the Executives.