

Minutes of June 9, 2011 Meeting
CalPac Certification Panel
Minutes of Open Session
L. Ford, Chair: July 26, 2011

The panel met in Davis at the USDA NRCS office on June 9, 2011. Panel members present—Bartolome, Bush, Connor, Ford, Gustafson, Horney, Pearce. Guests—Ferrier and Huff. Panel members absent—Frost.

OPEN SESSION

1. Reports of Chairman and Secretary.

Approval of minutes from April 8, 2011 meeting by teleconference—Gustafson moved and Pearce seconded motion to approve draft minutes; vote of approval was unanimous.

Ford was tasked to prepare, but has not completed an updated summary memo on operating guidance to the panel per the Bagley-Keene Act.

ACTION: Ford to complete updated summary of Bagley-Keene Act guidance.

2. Discussion of CRM examination qualification criteria for substitution of education and experience.

Ford reviewed the committee's August 2010 proposal for internal guidance on using its existing discretion to substitute education and experience in review of CRM applications, and the panel's progress on this issue. Panel members each discussed their opinions to resolve this issue. We discussed concepts such as need for structure yet flexibility, consistency, problems of misperceptions and misunderstandings among potential applicants, need to avoid acceptance of unqualified applicants, need to accept good applicants without standard qualifications, adherence to RPF process, and use of the improved CRM exam as a means to determine whether non-standard qualifications are adequate (as done for RPF). CalPac certifies for all rangelands in California; the BOF licenses for a narrower set of rangelands. Ferrier observed that CalPac has evolved to point where we can rely on the CRM exam, which is more rigorous, standardized, and comprehensive, and thus could be used to reflect education and experience. If RPF applicant has non-standard qualifications, they may let the applicant take the exam, many of which don't pass. The CRM panel could use its same review with requirements for remedial work or recommendations for study to pass the exam, and shift the review emphasis to whether the applicant is ready to take the exam. We already have the authority to do so. However, before we agree on such a shift, we should seek concurrence from the CalPac BOD, and determine whether we need approval from the PFEC. Before we formally agree, let's test the procedure, and refine it. When approved, we should publicize it.

Bush moved and Gustafson seconded motion as follows: (a) The CRM application process will retain the same structure and emphasis on both education and experience, including use of the panel's discretion to accept substitutions, and basing the panel's review solely on the materials submitted in the application (no advocacy by panel members); (b) the CRM exam and its grading will be rigorous and comprehensive, to reflect the intended kinds and level of qualifications; (c) the list of qualifying courses will be expanded to include more range-related topics; (d) when the reviewers are significantly divided (for and against acceptance, in spite of majority) in their judgment of the applicant's documented non-standard education and experience, then the panel will accept the applicant for taking the exam as a test of those qualifications; and (e) the panel will "test" this procedure by re-reviewing up to 10 applications most recently declined, to determine whether any could be accepted to challenge the exam, and to refine the process. The panel voted unanimously to approve this motion.

ACTION: Ford to arrange a panel meeting in July to conduct the test of the proposed internal guidance on exam qualification. Bartolome to send the most recent exam to the panel for reference.

3. New and unfinished business.

Huff offered suggestions and BOF rules for appeals of application denials and not passing the exam to revise the CRM Program Description. The process used by CalPac must fit the law and rules of BOF. Appeals go to the BOF, not through CalPac.

Huff introduced plans to propose legislation revising Foresters Law. He asked us to discuss, consult CalPac colleagues, and propose revised language for unlicensed practice rules, importance of profession, exemptions, and definitions for terms, such as “rangeland” and “forested landscape.”

Huff stated there is no exemption from RPF and CRM rules for federal agencies. He is advocating for licensing and adherence to current MOU with USFS.

ACTION: Huff to prepare revised draft of CRM Program Description. Panel to hold discussions and consult colleagues on desired revisions to Foresters Law. Huff to update panel on progress with federal agencies about MOU on licensing.

4. Public comment—no members of the public were present.