

# LIAISON vs CONFLICT

by Joyce C. Kilmer, SR/WA

The following procedures were designed through the joint efforts of Mountain Bell and the U.S. Forest Service. The development of these procedures could not have been possible without an underlying belief in the necessity for cooperation and mutual involvement in the planning process.

The Telephone Company feels they have gained a tremendous amount of benefits from the present working agreements between the U.S. Forest Service and Mountain Bell. We well remember the way it "used to be," when obtaining a permit from the Forests was a long and arduous task, that took as long as a year to process. At times we were guilty of encroachment without proper permits, due to the great pressures put on us to provide service to customers separated from our lines by lands owned by the U.S. Forest Service.

We now look forward to working with the Forest Service personnel, as we have found few situations or conditions in which we have been unable to make satisfactory arrangements with the ranger or rangers involved. In thirteen years we have never missed a construction date as a result of delay by the Forest Service.

Our present liaison program with the U.S. Forest Service began as a result of a conflict between an assistant ranger and a Mountain Bell radio engineer. Our engineer was quite upset that the assistant ranger would not agree to the location of a microwave tower site which had already been surveyed. The location was on the edge of a mountain road turnout. The right-of-way agent was brought in to negotiate the site with the ranger, who was on vacation at the time of the original on-site meeting.

Many hours were spent trying to convince the Forest Service that that was the only place for the tower. Communications eventually deteriorated, even with the Forest Supervisor. We in the Telephone Company had never before been stopped

dead in our tracks. Communications seemed to be a commodity everyone needed and, therefore, permission was always granted. Also, there appeared in the Forest Service Communications, a phrase called "Multiple Use Areas," meaning use of forest lands which are compatible to each other. The locations of the proposed tower did not fit into the present use or the anticipated use of the area.

Our next stop was the region level, where we were directed to the Land and Recreation Officer who was willing to listen to our story. After much discussion, it was determined that an on-the-site review by all parties concerned should be the place to start. The Regional Forest Service Land and Recreation Officer, supervisor's representative, district ranger and his assistant, along with the Telephone Company State Radio Supervisor, the original radio engineer and two right-of-way agents met on the proposed site. After each side had jointly presented the pros and cons of the radio tower location, it was determined that the site could be moved 275 feet north of the surveyed site without any loss of radio transmission, sight path, and particularly no increase in the cost of construction. Access to the tower site would not be impaired in any way.

The original surveyed site was a point on the Rampart Range Road, where travelers, particularly tourists, could pull over and view the Great Plains, Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Manitou Springs and Green Mountain. In addition that point gives the traveler a fabulous view of the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range.

The site which was finally agreed upon, backgrounded against the hills, and was not noticeable to the people stopping for a view. Had the radio engineer made a field review and picked a primary site, with at least one alternate site, this conflict could have been avoided. From this conflict, however, came one of the finest liaison programs between a government entity

and industry that we know today.

Prior to our liaison program, we were establishing tower locations and ground lines routes; making firm surveys and engineered and developed routes all without any contact with the Forest Service. Customer service dates were missed, which meant loss of revenue.

Mountain Bell and the Forest Service established a series of conferences in each of 10 forests encompassing approximately one third of the total area of Colorado. Program Evaluation and Review Technique Charts (PERT) were developed which indicated the step by step process of doing our respective jobs. These meetings were attended by the Forest Service rangers, land and recreation officer and Forest Supervisor, along with the right-of-way agents, supervising engineer, and supervising construction foreman from Mountain Bell, who we felt were the key personnel that could input the necessary information.

Our relationship and coordination with the Forest Service led to the development of a joint PERT Chart. By both entities utilizing the information on the PERT Chart, a master permit was formulated and working agreements were approved by Mountain Bell and the U.S. Forest Service.

The predominant element in the development of the Master Permit and the Working Agreement was the Delegation of Authority by both entities. The Forest supervisor delegated authority to the district ranger for full authority to authorize construction of telephone company lines on Forest lands and to accept the authorization letter. The Telephone Company district engineer delegated full responsibility to the area engineer to act on his behalf in the development of location and construction procedures. The supervising construction foreman delegated full responsibility to his foreman to act on his behalf on developing construction procedures.

The two entities worked with the joint PERT Chart and the new lines of organiza-

tion for six months and found many of the steps developed for microwave systems and some pole lines were quite cumbersome to use for buried cable and some aerial lines.

In subsequent meetings with the Forest Service, we had demonstrations, provided information and training as to which tools and vehicles would be used to place the buried cable, and to show the minute impact made by the cable plows. Also we explained our pedestal and pole line identification systems to the rangers.

We entered into a preliminary Working Agreement which is the construction portion of the Special Use Permit. Our first step was a joint filed review to inventory all permits and easements held by the Telephone Company. The review and inventory pointed out the fact that both parties had been negligent in the maintenance of the existing easement and permit system. We found lines had been placed without formal authority from the Forest Service. On the other hand, many lines had been removed, but the easement or Special Use Permit was never cancelled with annual rentals continuing to be paid by the Telephone Company. All of this a direct result of poor communications between the two entities.

During this review and inventory, it was pointed out by several rangers and forest supervisors that the impact for direct burial process was such that they felt a short form should be developed. Also, it was decided to eliminate the surveys for two reasons— 1) The Bell System buried cable policy requires that we locate our facilities within 48 hours, and 2) It would be impossible on a scale map of two inches to one mile to show any significant detail.

Both the Forest Service and the Telephone Company agreed that the use of the cable locator would be much more accurate and less expensive for both parties to administer. Inasmuch as the annual rental is on a lineal mileage basis we are given a corridor in which to operate, and our right-of-way is that portion occupied by our facilities. This eliminates straight line right-of-way paths, and gives us the flexibility to work around obstacles such as trees, rocks and/or other unforeseen objects. Since working under this concept, we have *NOT* cut any trees to accommodate our facilities.

The formal Master Permit is the operation and maintenance portion of the special use permit.



*Timber cut to accommodate Pole line Loveland Pass, Colorado*

The following are direct benefits enjoyed by both the U.S. Forest Service and Mountain Bell because of this joint venture:

- Customer satisfaction
- Improved field relations between Forest Service and Mountain Bell
- Better knowledge of other plans and organization
- Integration of engineers and construction design
- Integration of authority and responsibility
- Clear and concise records
- Bi-lateral record systems
- Easily administered billing system
- Office space savings
- Standardized inter-organization forms
- Decreased time between customer order and service intervals

It soon became evident that human nature would again play a role which would require another tool be added to help expedite the program we had worked so diligently to develop. The correspondence between Mountain Bell and the Forest Service was not always forthcoming. Delays were caused, confusion existed and finally the "Route Planning and Construction Approval Mountain Bell—Forest Service" form was created to aid the total process. (To the best of our knowledge,

this form is the only joint government and industry form in existence.)

During the last five years, since the Federal Land Policy and Management Act was passed, we heard many internal rumors that this process could not continue. The reason given was the requirements for archaeological surveys. We have met these challenges with no significant changes in our regular processing time. These surveys, thus far, have been made far ahead of our proposed construction dates.

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