Planning CoP Webinar Series

How to Effectively Write and Respond to Review Comments

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Workshop Objectives

- Develop **GOOD** Review Habits
  - ► 4 Part <u>Comment</u> Structure
  - ► 5 Key <u>Response</u> Components
  - ► Document <u>Discussion</u>
  - ► <u>Backcheck</u> Best Practices
- Remove **POOR** Habits
- **SHARE**

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When Bad Things Happen During Reviews...

How embarrassing!

I have NO idea what the reviewer means!

Well, that could have gone better.

Why are they ignoring all my comments?

We spent WAY too long discussing that.

WE ARE SOOO BEHIND SCHEDULE.

The reviewers spent all their money!

I am never doing ATR AGAIN!

✔

UGH! *eye roll*

That was NOT fun.

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BLUF: Why Should I Care?

Effectively written comment and responses:

- Improve quality of products
- Save time and funding
- Minimize schedule delays
- Make life a bit easier ...

        ...and less stressful

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…And Also

Effectively written comments and responses

- Promote communication
- Minimize misunderstandings
- Document review history
- Inform decision makers
- Professional public record

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Discussion

What are your...

Review Strengths?

Review Areas of Improvement?

Review Pet Peeves?

As a PDT Member? As a reviewer?

Type your thoughts in the Chat window

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Components of Comment-Response Record

| Comment | Response | Discussion* | Backcheck |

*Optional, Use when appropriate

Focus on 1st 3 components, and a bit on the 4th

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4 Part Comment Structure

1 Clear statement of the concern

2 Basis for the concern

3 Significance of the concern

4 Recommended action to resolve the concern

The Foundation for Effective Review Comments & Responses

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4 Part Comment Structure

Concern

- Be clear and succinct

- What is the problem to be resolved?

Basis

- Cite the appropriate law, policy guidance, procedure, or state of practice if possible

Significance

- Not just High/Med/Low

- Explain how the concern could affect product quality, decision making, or project implementation

Recommendation

- Be specific

- For example, what additional analysis are needed or where should the report be revised

What part do you think is the most important?

4 Part Comment Structure

ATR

DQC

ALL REVIEWS

IEPR

Policy & Legal

✓ Which reviews you have participated in as a reviewer or a PDT member?

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Poll

Which of the following best describes your use of the 4 – Part Comment Structure:

a. What is the 4 – Part Comment Structure?

b. I use it when I have time

c. I use 2 of the 4 parts regularly

d. I use all 4 parts consistently

Are comments using the 4 part comment structure easier to respond to?

Components of an Effective Response

So what about those Responses?

5 Key Response Components

1. Clear Statement

2. Address All Concerns

3. Provide relevant information

4. Summarize pertinent discussions

5. Describe how concern was addressed

Give an example of a clear statement of agreement or disagreement

How do you handle it when there is no clear statement of agreement/disagreement?

Effective Responses: What to Avoid

- Expression of personal opinions/perspectives
- Personal pronouns
- Criticism of an individual
- Becoming defensive
- Unsupported statements
- Ambiguous statements

DO NOT INCLUDE

When and How to Document Discussions

And the Discussions?

When and Why to Document a Discussion

Reviewer	PDT Member	Reviewer
• **When:** Prior to writing a comment.	• **When:** Prior to writing a response.	• **When:** During comment backcheck.
• **Why:** To seek clarification or additional information to better identify or describe a potential concern.	• **Why:** To seek clarification about a comment OR if the PDT member does not agree with the comment.	• **Why:** To seek clarification about the response or to resolve disagreement.

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Key Components to Discussion Documentation

Raise your hand if you have handled a discussion outside of DrChecks

Clear statement of point of disagreement

Concise description of resolution

Description of any actions taken & citation of revision location

Explanation of when/how the issue will be elevated if not resolved

Inclusion of supporting information

Discussion Documentation: What to Avoid

- Verbatim record of back and forth discussion
- Expression of personal opinions or perspectives
- Criticism of an individual
- "Agree to disagree" statement

DO NOT INCLUDE

Poor Discussion Documentation Example

Reviewer

PDT Member

Original Comment "There is so little labeled on this drawing that it tells us nothing. Where is the pump stations? where is the levee? where is the flowway area, main detention versus additional storage? What are all the lines representing?"

1st Response: "This drawing was added for clarity not detail. The detail in on several other figures. It is only to show where the NDA is located. This area is refered to through out the engineering portion of the document. Without this figure the NDA is hard to get a handle on."

Backcheck Comment: "It doesn't give any clarity - i still don't have a handle on NDA. CAn you add nothing that will make it more informational?"

"Closed without comment."

Backcheck Response "I have added the Flowways and pump station to the drawing. It is a drawing I inserted for my benifit and need to be very generic. I need this drawing for clarity."

*Comments from DrChecks without editing; typos left as example.

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Better Discussion Documentation Example

Dr.Checks Backcheck:

 "Okay on all responses EXCEPT residual risk. Reviewer still had concerns about assumptions of zero development within the floodplains considering that there is available agricultural land within the floodplains. Follow on discussion occurred between PDT member and reviewer in which the PDT member presented additional information that showed there has been no development of these agricultural lands within the past 30 years and existing conservation easements that prevent the majority of these lands from being developed. With this additional detail, the comment is now closed."

Backcheck Best Practices

Explicitly confirm that the reviewer's concern has been resolved

- A simple statement such as "the concern is resolved; comment closed"
- How the concern was resolved, if not clear
- If future additional review is warranted, state if an agreed to analysis won't be completed until some point in the future

"Closed without comment" is rarely acceptable.

What are YOUR Review Best Practices?

- Share your best practices in the Chat window

As a PDT Member? As a reviewer?

Common Review Best Practices

- ✓ Use the 4 part comment structure
- ✓ Be succinct
- ✓ Be professional
- ✓ Be respectful
- ✓ Focus on improving the products
- ✓ Review proposed comments and responses to ensure consistency

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