**Lesson 2 – Write Decision**

**Slide 1 –**In Lesson 1 we looked at receiving and adjudicating a new bond. In this Lesson we will take that bond and write an acceptance Decision. If your program requires a bond that means that a proponent may not begin operations on their project until they receive the Decision stating their bond has been accepted; this usually means the bond adjudicator is very well liked! I was once told by an environmental manager at Newmont, one of the largest mining companies in the world, that my nickname was the bond czar; as if with a wave of my pen I could grant permission to operate.

**Slide 2** – Let’s take a look at our lesson objective. By the end of this lesson, you should be able to, given a bond form and financial instrument, write a Decision in accordance with the bond processing handbook and the IRAC rules you learned in the Decision writing pre-work. You should also be able to, given a decision, update BASS in accordance with the data standards. Now that you know what our objectives are, let’s go over what we will cover to get you to those objectives.

**Slide 3** – First we will go over some general knowledge on decisions. Next, we will review the Decision writing steps and end with practicing writing a Decision and updating BASS. This is a very important step in the adjudication process because your Decision will be part of the official BLM record. Now that you know what we will be covering, let’s begin by going over some general decision knowledge.

**Slide 4** –The required pre-work for this course was some sort of Decision writing class. This could have been in one of the adjudication modules or reading the provided material on Decision writing. Since you should be familiar with IRAC and the different types of correspondence, we aren’t going to spend a lot of time going over that. We will just focus on the Decisions associated with bonds. So let’s go through some general Decision knowledge.

**Slide 5 -** A Decision conveys any action taken by the BLM. Decisions are important first to notify the customer of the action and also to document the case file. Who writes a Decision? Bond Decisions are usually written by the bond adjudicator. As stated before, Decisions are written when an action is taken. This would be to convey a bond has been accepted or rejected, or a rider has been accepted, or any action taken on the bond.

**Slide 6:** Decision formatting is based on the BLM’s correspondence Handbook. Each State will also have a supplemental handbook with any additional requirements for that state. The bond handbook has templates available also. However, these are simply to assist in writing decisions. Sometimes you will have a situation where you will need to be creative to capture your issue. While you want to make sure your Decisions are consistent you will often need to create new language for unique scenarios. In Nevada we have a shared folder where all bond Decisions are kept. Each adjudicator has their own folder where they keep their correspondence but since all Decisions are kept in the same place, we have a very large bank of sample language to pull from. Remember to work smarter, not harder. Now that we have covered some general knowledge about Decisions, let’s take a look at the steps in writing a Decision.

**Slide 7** – Topic 2, Writing Decision Steps. We will take a look at letterhead and format, the signature line and dating, and lastly we will discuss data entry.

**Slide 8 –** Step 1 is to locate and open your office letterhead. Hopefully you have this saved or know where to find it. Step 2 is to locate your Decision format. Once you have adjudicated a bond document and know what type of action you are taking you should be able to locate a basic Decision format to work from. Step 3 is to write the Decision. Remember your IRAC rules and follow the BLM’s correspondence manual to write your Decision. Your heading will explain what the Decision is about. Use simple words. Don’t be redundant. Stick to the point and write about one issue at a time. Know your audience. Keep sentences and paragraphs short. Use strong active words, and keep the tense consistent. Serve all parties; everyone affected by the Decision should receive a copy. If the decision is adverse, include appeals language.

**Slide 9 –** Now I’m going to show you a bond decision. You can see that it is on the BLM letterhead. Per the correspondence manual, the regulation is listed here. If you were writing a oil and gas bond decision this would show 3100. If you were writing a mineral materials bond decision it would be 3600. You can also see the office code is listed. This shows who exactly wrote the decision. NV921 indicates Solid Minerals and the letter Z indicates which adjudicator within the solid minerals team prepared the Decision. We have titled the document Decision and below that is the addressee. You may have multiple addressees depending on the nature of the decision. If this Decision were to accept a surety bond for instance, both the bond principal and the surety company would be listed. Next is the title of the Decision. This shows the reader what the Decision is about. And lastly the body. The Decision was written to accept a personal bond. The first paragraph addresses just that. We acknowledge a satisfactory bond was received and accept it. We address what the bond is for and give pertinent information regarding the bond. We link the bond to an operation and provide contact information for questions. Here at the bottom you can see that the Field Office received a copy of the Decision. Because they are an affected party they need to know the bond was accepted. Now that you have seen what a good Decision looks like, let’s take some time to write a Decision.

**Slide 10 –** In Lesson 1, you were given a personal bond form and a financial instrument. Using the bond processing handbook and these documents, practice writing a bond acceptance Decision. Please bring your bond Decision with you to the live, class webinar.

**Slide 11 –** Writing the Decision is not the end of the process! The next step is to get the Decision signed and dated. Who signs your Decision will depend on the Delegation of Authority in your office. A bond Decision in Nevada for the 3809 program is signed by the Supervisory Land Law Examiner. However, a bond Decision for a cultural site in Nevada is signed by the State Director. Please make sure you take the time to determine who the authorized officer is in your office. The last step, Step 5, in this process is to complete the data entry. The data entry for this step will vary depending on what you are doing but each Decision should have data entry to record that an action was taken. In this case we are accepting a new bond. Therefore, our data entry would be action code 469, bond accepted. If we were writing a Decision accepting a bond rider we would use action code 479, rider accepted.

**Slide 12 –** I’m now going to show you how to update BASS so you can do it yourself. First you will log into LR2000 as we did in Lesson 1. You will go to view/update a bond. Enter the bond number and click view. For this demo, I will enter the number used from our last demonstration in Lesson 1. This will bring up the bond abstract. At this point your bond disposition is pending and since all of the information for your bond is entered; all you have to do is scroll down to the actions section. Click on update actions. You will click on provide me with 1 new occurrence. At that point you will enter the date of your decision, action code 469, and in your remarks you will put the effective date the bond was accepted. You will also remove the pending org from action code 468, because you are no longer waiting to take action to accept the bond. Once the action code is entered and pending org is removed, you click save and exit. Once this is done, your disposition should change to accepted. You can click on bond abstract to print and add the updated abstract to the bond file.

**Slide 13 –** Now that you have seen me update BASS, let’s have you practice! Using the Decision you just wrote, update BASS with the correct data entry. PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE make sure you are working in the test training site and not the live BASS site. Please be sure to practice because we will review this exercise during the scheduled webinar.

**Slide 14 –** To close out, let’s take a look back to see what we covered.

**Slide 15** – If you will remember, our objectives for this lesson were: “Given a bond form and financial instrument, write a decision in accordance with the bond processing handbook” and “Given a decision, update BASS in LR2000 in accordance with the data standards.”

**Slide 16 –** In order to get you to those objectives, we had two demonstrations and two exercises. We also discussed that a bond adjudicator writes a decision to convey an action taken by BLM; we also talked about the format and what resources are available to write the Decision. Knowing how to write a good Decision is invaluable to a bond adjudicator. Over the life of a bond, you will write a Decision for every action taken regarding that bond. Next, in Lesson 3 we will continue down the bond adjudication path and discuss how to maintain a bond. While we talk about many things that can happen during the life of a bond, remember that each of those actions will require a decision just like the one you practiced here.