



Pinchot Partners

F O R E S T C O L L A B O R A T I V E

Joint Collaborative Meeting Notes Wednesday, December 18, 2024 9am-11:30am St. Mary's, Toledo, WA & Zoom

In attendance. * indicates participant attended meeting through Zoom

Janene Ritchie, Ashley Short, Sarah Yeoman, Josh Petit* Sheryl Hall* Emily Stevensen* John Paul Anderson*, Chase Moore*, Bob Robison*, Diedre Hayward* Diane Bedell*, Sarah Allaben*, Amber Johnson*, Jim White* Jody Nickerson Powell* Chuck Hersey*, Karen Berg*, Christina Donehower*, Anna Nakae*, Matt Danielson*, Garrett Meigs*, Jessica Hudec*, Maia Walston*, Travis Joseph*, Susan Jane Brown*, Ryan Ojerio*, Kyung Koh Willis*, Joy Peplinski*, Sue Wright*, Matt Comisky*, Joe Mundell*, Jon Gellings*, Matt Comisky*, John O'Brien, Angelina Ngari, Fred Norman, Bob Guenther, Brian Nichols, Bill Little, Andrew Spaeth, Ben Haggardorn, David Owen, Gina Owen, Sean Tran, Dalton Fry, Josh Chapman, Teresa Tanner, Quentin Hall, Niel Kissler, Amy Boyd,

Programming Meeting

The Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) was appointed by Secretary of Agriculture. Applications were open to the public. The 21 member FAC was convened to give consensus advice to the federal department and is comprised of volunteer scientists, tribal representatives, elected officials, community reps, industry reps, conservation reps. First convened in September 2023. Were narrowly focused on amendment to the plan and deliberations were constrained. Broke into working groups on Tribal inclusion, forest stewardship, climate change and adaptation, wildfire, biodiversity, adaptive management, and community economic self-sufficiency. Goal was to give consensus recommendations about what they think needed to change with the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP). Voted on those recommendations in June 2024. All 21 members supported suite of recommendations that forest service used in the draft environmental statement.

What was not on the table: The committee was not allowed to recommend land use allocation changes, changes to aquatic conservation strategy, survey and management, NEPA or endangered species act, or any federal laws that supersede managed lands. The core thoughts of the FAC considered: How do we in the 21st century provide protection to old growth and species and supply a sustainable source of timber to support communities?

Alternative B: the meat of what the committee recommended.

The FAC determined that there should be distinctions between moist and dry forest types, changing what the plan determines now on different management areas. Made recommendations based on what you can do based on where you are in the landscape.

Recommendations:

- Moist matrix stands over 200 years old are off limits to active management logging.
- Moist matrix stands between 120 and 200 years old are considered mature. You can do ecological forestry here, but timber production can't be the primary driver.

- Moist matrix stands less than 120 years old - timber production is a driver and goal of that land base. Variable retention harvest in those stands is allowed on that limited land base. Removes about 1.5 million acres in that land base.
- Active management approach for restoration in dry forest types to address the wildfire forest health crisis. Prescriptions are aimed at restoration across allocations.
- Individual trees that are 150 years or older are protected wherever they are.
- Committee also made recommendation on salvage - no salvage be allowed in LSRs but area salvage be allowed in matrix.

FAC feels that alternative b aligns with consensus and is very consistent with consensus recs. Applauded the forest service for their fidelity. Some questions still remain and aspects of other alternatives and the committee is interested in exploring further. FAC is now giving feedback on where the forest service maybe missed the mark.

No one is sure how the upcoming administration will affect these plans. The committee is focused on what they can control: Educate stakeholders on process and recommendations and spend time clarifying misconceptions.

Changes in tribal inclusion: When NWFP was developed in 1994, there wasn't any authentic engagement with tribes in the region. Forums were held where Tribal interests could express their ideas and concerns to the FAC. The committee took those issues to heart and a lot of things needed to change. The biggest chunk of proposed amendments have to do with tribal inclusion. If these provisions are enacted, it will be a large change as the forest service, as a sovereign government, engages with other sovereign governments. Planned components are calculated to start to address those needed changes. The Public will still have the opportunity to comment on projects, and lands will not close to public enjoyment.

Leadership commitments: what can the Forest Service do without a forest plan amendment. These focus on issues that can't be completely resolved through objective recommendations, but can be resolved through softer directives, and can be better addressed outside the NWFP amendment process. Local workforce development and contracting and community development, adaptive management are examples. FAC is working with forest service to come up with leadership commitments before their next meeting in February 2025.

Age limit being raised to 120 years old: In Late Successional Reserves, 80 years is usually the cap, and the committee moved to move that age limit to 120. They came up with the change through science and consistency. Depending on the stand and site specific conditions there may be reason to intervene in that middle age class (120-200 years old). Committee decided 120 is appropriate where there is still an opportunity to intervene to accelerate intermediate stage stands into something more ecologically complex and on the path to old growth. Current standard of 80 comes from a legal decision not a scientific decision, so revising that number based on scientific and consistency perspective.

Exceptions to allow for management in old growth: The only thing changing from the 1994 NWFP is the age limit changing from 80 to 120. Under the proposed amendment you have new age limits that serve to limit timber harvest in a lot of ways. In dry forest, 150 year old trees are off limits, the reason is because dry forests are not as productive as moist forests. In moist forests focused on preserving trees over 120 years of age, which does not exist under the status quo. Planned components identify where there may be exceptions which are narrowly tailored to

address tribal sovereignty and public health and safety. FAC expects those exceptions to be rare and not the norm.

Group discussion:

Components of other alternatives: Community protection zones. Looking at obstacles to meaningful stewardship and protecting communities – communities over process. Survey and manage and exemption up to a quarter mile adjacent to communities.

Alternative C's passive management paradigm - there is less prescribed fire under Alternative C than Alternative B. Allowing more active management allows the land to absorb and accept more fire.

FAC discussed definitions of moist forests matrix with less than 120 year old: variable retention harvest. They aimed to focus on an ecological forestry approach that is consistent and thinking about retention. Using a heavier touch on the land base, but thinking about what you want your outcome to be and how to you promote more biodiversity. FAC aimed that heavier touch would be on plantations.

FAC was intentionally ambiguous about refining the differences between variable retention thinning and regeneration harvest because they wanted to leave that to managers on the ground. Land managers needs to make those decisions based on different areas and community needs. Particularly when forests like the Gifford Pinchot, which contain both moist and dry forests and intermediate. The group is concerned that this can lead to conflict in transition areas where it is not immediately apparent if the site is dry or moist.

- How do we reduce complexity to recommendations on a page. FAC is taking suggestions on what prescriptions should be and tools the agency should be using that are also transparent to the public. May not end up in the Final Environmental Impact Statement because it's so tricky.

Committee was not allowed to touch survey and manage. Forest service has not constrained themselves and talked about Alternative D where there would be a waiver around communities for risk reduction projects, but survey and manage would still apply to stands of 120 years and below in moist matrix.

Will Tribal interests supersede guidelines: Any land management that the Forest Service is going to undertake is still going through the public review process. In general there is a difference in opinion in approach on the FAC about the prioritization of planned components to implementing tribal requests for action across the land base. There is no other waiving other components if a tribe wants them to. But some tribal interests do want that, and that gets into a challenging and opaque conversation. What do you do when you have two sovereigns who disagree. FAC recognizes those are difficult conversations that need to be addressed at the specific site.

Disparity in board feet production: Setting targets for the next 30 years, the alternatives only set up for 445 million board feet. How do commenters remedy that within comments?

- FAC suggests calling out board feet disparity in comments is important. No action alternative is not the original NWFP. Encourage collaborative to highlight that, and that power lies in consensus. Focus on what you agree on when commenting. It's helpful for Forest Service to hear what collaboratives agree on.

Comparative use for dry areas, acres treatment varies a lot between alternatives

- FAC agrees its confusing. Prioritizing old growth in dry forests to preserve what we have left. It shows up that way because in Alternative D, there is more emphasis on wet forests because that's where milling is located. An important consideration for rural communities wanting to hold on to milling infrastructure, but that might not be the highest priority in forest management. The 1994 plan did not deliver for rural communities and they are trying to remedy that in new amendment. Suggest what an authentic and respectful community development program would look like in comments.

Forest service updates:

North Zone: Quentin Hall, Teresa Tanner, Sean Tran

- Skate Creek boundary marking will start this summer. It can be a time consuming process. With staffing capacity they currently have, they are moving ahead with marking three miles of boundary starting this summer. Have identified an area Northeast of Packwood as the starting point since there is private land with homes and dense stands of timber.
- Gray towers sale the bids aren't coming in because there was not guaranteed access to gravel. Hopefully there will be access to clean gravel next time it goes up for bid. Using no bids as an opportunity to identify limiting factor of that sale, and likely a limiting factor in yellow jacket sales is limited quantity of weed free rock. Coming up with treatment plan to address that need. Process that comes out of this will be able to be applied to skate creek and other NEPA planning areas. The benefit is reducing the cost of road packages for timber sales and making more crushed rock available for public programs like rec and engineering.
- Working with Washington Trails Association and Mount St Helens Institute for Cold Water Trail expansion. Almost done with NEPA. There should be an invite for tribes to consult this month.
- Yellow Jacket Pond and Elk Bench toilets are going to be decommissioned because of structural issues.
- Updated scope of program work was finalized last week. Five frontliners for Cowlitz Valley in summer 2024, and 3 of those are 1039s, or temporary seasonal employees, and so they will be at half capacity for this summer. Able to bring in an FSR to Mt Adams to be announced in January. Forest horticulture position advertised for regional Forest Service employees only. Not hiring 1039s except for fire.
- Due to staffing challenges this year, it was not originally part of the plan for the GNA team to have the Galina sale. Found capacity within own workforce and adopted Galina to be offered this summer.

South Zone: Joe Mundell

- Mt Adams planning side: working through response to comments on Little White Salmon BA. Targeting end of January to be through responses to comments.
- Also working through remaining survey work for field season. Five active timber sales in the Siletz zone.
- Developing 2025 planting and huckleberry restoration process.
- Finalizing sale for Williams Mine fire. Also considering a back sale or public firewood sale. Slash piles will be burned next fall.

Monument: Jon Gellings

- Spirit Lake outflow safely improvement project NEPA process in ongoing.
- With regard to facilities in the monument, there has been some effort to start up a friends group that can be collections agreement partner with the Forest Service to get

funding to improve the infrastructure up there as well as interpretive projects as well as trails.

- The 25 road was a washout last year that has precluded access. Some construction has been completed. Project slated to be complete in August 2025
- Slated to be hopefully fully staffed on the district January 12.
- Southern Washington Cascades map will be updated to correct errors that does not show any external landscape of Mount St Helens. There are new maps that will be printed specific to each district later on this year.
- Science and learning center at Coldwater has been acting as visitor center, now closed for the season until May
- Johnston ridge Observatory is not accessible but power and comms lines have been reconnected. Design phase for bridge replacement is being conducted, slated to reopen to public in 2027

Pinchot Partners Operations Updates

- Janene will be taking the week of Feb 14 off to assist her husband. Amy Boyd will be meeting coordinator for the February PP meeting.
- Email survey for annual meeting will be sent out early January.
- Janene and Josh Petit met with a staffer of Rep. Gluesenkamp Perez who is supportive of collaboratives working together to draft a letter concerning staffing and the ability of the Forest Service to continue doing its work. She said they are working on two new bills to introduce to congress that could relate to this concern, and will send collaboratives language around bills when ready.
- Cowlitz tribe statewide fund have awarded \$75,000 over the next year. Unlike other funding it's all up front. It's very flexible funding. Suggested to report on a quarterly basis what we are doing with that money. There will be reporting requirements.

South Pinchot Collaborative Operations Updates:

- NWFP update is main focus within the ZOA subcommittee.
- Meeting with Gluesenkamp Perez staffer on continuative collaborative support and a good opportunity to express concerns.
- Reconvened the Washington Forest Collaborative network last week. Trying to reinvigorate that group. Start meeting every couple of months.
- Last month meeting - Loretta Duke presented on Williams Mine fire presented potential opportunities for salvage.
- Meeting next month will be on the 23rd. Will hear from DNR and potentially CFC on the little white monitoring plan. Feb meeting is on the 20th addressing NWFP and getting ducks in a row for comments and a partnership for initiatives

Round table update

- Bob Guenther - Suggested applying for a grant from the Clean Energy Commission to get refrigeration infrastructure for seed orchards if needed.
- David Owen - concerned about permits for forest products on GP for small commercial outlets will be reduced with limited lobby hours and staffing. Theresa notes that has been a part of the conversation on adjusting lobby hours, and they have a year of data for when people come in for permits. Potentially could move permits online.
- Ryan Ojerio - Washington Trails Association is hoping to do in 2-5 years is to use the GP trails plan to get some work done to protect habitat and cultural resources. In 2025 he will reach out to folks to see if there is interest for collaboration in the silver star area.

Meeting adjourned - 11:32. Minutes prepared by Sarah Yeoman