

Wasco County Forest Collaborative Group
ODFW Screen Shop
January 5, 2017

Attendees

Bill Noonan, Coordinator
Tammy Tripp, Minutes

Committee Members

Ryan Bessette	Rich Thurman	John Nelson
Ron Schneider	Brenna Bell	

Collaborative Members

Kristen Dodd, ODF	Kameron Sam, Mt. Hood NF	Rick Larson, RMEF
Tyson Bertone-Riggs, ODF	Jim Nolke, BARK	John Dodd, Mt. Hood NF
Jim Thornton, Mt. Hood NF	Andrew Spaeth, Sustainable Northwest	
Chris Rossel, Mt. Hood NF	Whitney Olskel, Mt. Hood NF	
Casey Gatz, Mt. Hood NF		

Guests

Lisa Northrup, Supervisor, Mt. Hood NF	Phil Chang, Senator Merkley's Office
Steve Kramer, Wasco Co. Commissioners	Lisa Farquharsan, TD Chamber of Commerce
Michelle Harmon, TD Chamber of Commerce	Eric White, PNW Research Station USFS
EJ Davis, Resident, Wasco Co.	Pete Dalke, Mosier WS Council & OR Solutions

1:06 Opening Remarks and Introductions

Bill called the meeting to order. Bill announced updates and additions to the agenda. Kameron will be talking about needing some members for a committee. Bill went on to say that he, Tyson, and Ryan got the Forest Foundation grant completed and sent in. Tyson provided wordsmithing skills and overall they felt like they put together a good grant. The funding would provide for a facilitator and a coordinator, as well as summer workshops, field trips, community outreach to area schools and school field trips centered on fire education.

For February he'd like the group to think about where they may want to go as far as field trips, create a subcommittee to come up with a path for school outreach, and a bridge grant for the rest of 2017 to fill in the gap between grants. He won't hear anything on the Forest Foundation grant until the end of January to middle of February time frame. An electronic version of the grant is posted to the website at: http://www.wascoswcd.org/wcswcd_035.htm.

Kameron Sam, USFS

Kameron reported that the Hood-Willamette Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) provides advice and recommendations to Mt. Hood National Forest, the Willamette National Forest, and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. It is a public membered committee based around Title II funds applied for by counties in lieu of Pay Co. The committee is

required to look at projects applied for each year under Title II and determine if the projects are an appropriate use of those funds, providing they are for *“the protection, restoration, and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat, and other resources on public or private land within a watershed on or near US Forest land,”* (added). Members of the committee must be from specific counties relating to the National Forest such as Wasco, Hood River, Clackamas, Multnomah, Marion, Linn, Lane and Douglas. There are 9 vacancies and positions are term. Wasco Co. now has an opening as Arthur Smith from the Co. Rd. Dept. has left the committee. The committee meets in Salem 2 to 3 times a year. There is also an option to participate by phone. Members are appointed and serve 4 years.

There are 3 categories: (description taken from RAC website for clarification).

Category One: Five members who represent energy and mineral development; the commercial timber industry; organized labor or non-timber forest product harvester groups; developed outdoor recreation; off-highway vehicle users, or commercial recreation; or Federal grazing or other land permits or represent nonindustrial private forest land owners.

Category Two: Five members who represent nationally recognized environmental organizations; regionally or locally recognized environmental organizations; dispersed recreational activities; archaeological and historical interests; or nationally or regionally recognized wild horse and burro interest groups, wildlife or hunting organizations, or watershed associations.

Category Three: Five members who hold state elected office; hold county or local elected office; represent Indian tribes within or adjacent to the area for which the Council is organized; are school officials or teachers with knowledge in natural resource management or the natural sciences; or represent the affected public-at-large and/or are employed by a state agency responsible for the management of natural resources, land or water.

Kameron added that a background in recreation would be helpful as participation in this area has been limited and there is a need for the committee to be made up of a diverse group of individuals. Brenna asked who appoints. Lisa replied that selections are made from the Washington Office. Kristen asked what areas are the 9 vacancies in. (there was no answer provided to this question.) Ron explained the funding flow to RAC. Counties elect to put some or all of their PayCo into Title II funds. Title I is direct PayCo. It is related to the Secure Schools and Self Determination Act. Phil interjected stating that SRS won't be funded for 2017. Phil said that the collaboratives have also explored Title II for their funding. Further discussion ensued.

Kameron introduced Lisa Northrup, Mt. Hood Forest Supervisor and Bill introduced Phil Chang, the field representative for Senator Merkley's office for North and North Central Oregon. He is also the acting Liaison for Natural Resources. Introductions were made all around.

Lisa started by addressing the pre-submitted questions sent to Bill via email. She stressed that the government administers public lands by following rules, laws, and regulations as directed by Congress. They can't act outside of them. One question dealt with what is anticipated with the newly elected leadership. Phil said it is too early to know what the new Administration's policies will be. He added some fundamental questions for the future include how to pay for

fuels reduction and fire suppression; how federal lands contribute to economics and communities; oversight on federal lands and what process to use to plan for management activities. He asked how the collaborative thinks about fire activities such as suppression or is it just a tool and what role can collaboratives play in the process. He sees these as questions that have dominated and doesn't expect it to change any time soon. The group should decide how they weigh in on these questions.

Brenna asked about the trend towards dispossession from federal to state land. She said there seems to be a significant number of congress people calling to divest federal lands. Phil said he doesn't know how it will play out. The state doesn't feel large scale divestment of public lands is a good way to go.

Lisa said she is interested in hearing from the public. The collaboratives are important for getting that input. NEPA is part of that process. Phil said that Administrations have certain tools available to influence what happens based on the kind of people selected. The leadership will have the same effect. But basic principles won't change because of the people.

Pete Dalke asked about outcomes from the collaboratives. Lisa replied that it is all about communication. It is important to keep lines open throughout the process and work seamlessly across boundaries.

Further discussion included the definition of what a collaborative is, what they do, and who they are ending with a definition that a collaborative is a group of people who are expressing their wants & desires concerning a mutual topic of interest. It was pointed out that the most important thing for the group to do is to figure out their common purpose and drives then go from there.

Brenna asked if something is planned by the collaborative – what would it look like if the Forest Service follows something between what the collaborative planned and what the Forest Service did. Lisa state rarely does the collaborative come forward with an idea and the Forest Service dismisses it out of hand. Usually there is a federal rule or regulation involved that needs to be explored more. Kameron added, like the Rocky Burn. They provided the collaborative with as much information available on Federal regulations and rules to help the group make determinations to further understanding on what can and cannot be done based upon those rules. Tyson said it's usually a long time between what was recommended and implementation stage. Whitney added that the Stew Crew has been around awhile so they will have an opportunity to see the results between recommendation and implementation.

Bill said asked if the Forest Service is committed to the collaborative process and in the end the recommendations were not followed, where is the value of the collaborative effort? Lisa stated that the effort is of value but there could be constraints that might make it difficult to implement the recommendations. In this process they will be as transparent as possible and alert the group to the situation where they might be able to implement the project as planned.

Phil said it is important for the Forest Service to demonstrate to the collaborative that their input is being used. It is also important to the Forest Service that the collaborative be aware of why they can't and to be knowledgeable about the restrictions that policies and laws place upon the Forest Service. To learn about how things work.

Phil suggested the group look into the Forest Service budget and be familiar with what is in it and how it works. The Senator sits on the Appropriations Committee, the Interior Appropriations Sub-Committee and they seem to be mired in partisan politics and not much gets done. Lisa said the Forest Service spends most of its time implementing what is being mandated but not on what is needed. Phil added that it is difficult to get reforms passed due to the differences of opinion on how things should be done.

Tyson added that there is no single answer on how collaboratives engage the system. It is up to the group to determine how it wants to operate. The clearer internally they can be on their goals, the better they can operate. Bill said the group spent its first year trying to get to know themselves now is the time to start addressing the deeper purpose question.

Brenna asked if there were an opportunity to amend the Mt. Hood Fire Plan for full suppression in order to use fire as a management tool and can the collaborative help get the plan updated. Lisa said that 100% suppression is the rule. The highest priority is firefighter and public safety. They can draw the box larger than the fire to help in managing outlying areas. However, it would cost too much to amend the plan. The cost is in employee time to do it and it is a very difficult, lengthy process. Brenna asked who holds the purse strings to get more planning funds to the Forest Service. Lisa said that they would take funds from something else so there is hesitation about advocating for more funding in fear that a sister forest or another important project would lose funding. She added that for the most part, the Mt. Hood plan is silent on recreation it could do with some revisions as it is old and out of date with current needs.

The group took a short break. Upon return Lisa Farquharson and Michelle Harmon from The Dalles Chamber of Commerce voiced their willingness to be more of a pro-active partner in the community and are interested in taking a bigger stand on legislative issues. They are there to observe and to become more aware of what is going on in the community to see places they may be able to help. Bill thanked them for taking the time to visit the group.

Bill said the group ended with what is flexible around the Forest Plan and while it is a tall order for a revision, it seems there may be some opportunity to project based amendments. Ron said that in Region 6 they are looking at a Forest synthesis approach with the PNW Research Station. The Region asked Research and Development to write science synthesis questions and amendments to the Forest Plan. The scientists then wrote chapters on topics within the plan. The chapters underwent a peer review process – they are up to 300 reviews now, along with a public comment period, which has been extended another 2 weeks. Lisa said it is an attempt to get a snapshot of the current situation that could lead up to a revision. Ron said they are up to 1300 pages. It takes an understanding of what the frame work is and it is still almost impossible to read in addition to all the references it's related to.

Brenna observed that what works for one collaborative doesn't always work for another. For instance lack of leadership within the group, not working together outside the meetings, not building relationships within the group, and not participating in sub-committees can all be detrimental to the success of a group. Bill said so far this seems to be a pretty stable group. Andrew felt that there has been respectful dialogue and strong participation from the Forest Service partners. Pete asked what happens next. Are they at the point where the ball gets dropped? How long will Lisa and Kameron be around and how will the group be handed off to the next leadership. Will the Forest Service continue to engage with the collaborative? Lisa answered that they always have transition plans for continuity and stability. The flipside is when people stay too long and don't finish ideas.

Bill said that is key; what is next for the group. The group hasn't taken time to identify what they want to do. Brenna asked what does the Forest Service need and is there something the collaborative could do for them. Lisa suggested figuring out a common purpose, to get to the place that will help Mt Hood. Brenna suggested more education on the uses of fire and its benefit to the landscape. Tyson said that some collaboratives are already involved with outreach. The state is revising its smoke management plan that collaboratives could contribute to. He suggested a possible speaker in Paul Hesberg, landscape ecologist. He has a presentation on how fire works in the forest. He's a great speaker.

Bill reviewed the questions and said that he thinks they've all been answered. Group went into a general discussion. Bill then closed the meeting with some things for the group to think about in preparation for the next meeting. He said he should be able to have an update on the OWEB and NFF grants. The group should think about what kinds of projects they are interested in, field trips they'd like to take, a sub-committee for school outreach and what form that outreach should take, and continue to engage in determining their purpose. They should also think about the next step in Rocky Burn after the proposed action. He asked Casey if he'd provide the Rocky Burn update.

Andrew added that there will be a workshop on March 30-31 through the Hood River Forest Collaborative. They will talk about Legislation and the Federal Forest Restoration Programs.

Adjourned 4:00 PM
Tammy Tripp

Tammy added to minutes: more information on the RAC can be found here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/willamette/workingtogether/advisorycommittees/?cid=STELP RDB5048434>

Secure Rural Schools here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/pts/>