

Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative Group

Operating Principles Framework

DRAFT: 1/24/2013

I. Group Mission

Mission: To improve the social, economic, and ecological resiliency of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest and local communities, through collaboration by a diverse group of stakeholders.

II. Group Values

Participants in the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative agree that their collaborative efforts should:

- a. Recognize the legitimacy of the interests and concerns of others, and expect that their interests will be represented as well.
- b. Participants agree to collaborate in good faith.
- c. Work on tangible, implementable projects in the short-term while also building information and engaging in deliberative dialogue on other issues which appear to have more potential for conflict.
- d. Focus on projects within the National Forest:
 - i. with the highest restoration need,
 - ii. which can provide long-term benefits,
 - iii. which are aimed at promoting ecological resiliency and natural disturbance regimes,

- iv. that provide economic and social benefit to local communities and reliable/stable supply of material, and
- v. that protect and restore clean water, stable soils, native vegetation and quality habitat for native fish and wildlife.
 1. Focus on native vegetation does not exclude or preclude the use of non-native vegetation and/or exclude eradication of invasive weeds.
- e. In pursuing these efforts, the members of the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative will strive to incorporate holistic landscape-scale information and analyses before making recommendations that take into account: adjoining private lands, grazing allotments, and the value of wildlife habitat and corridors

III. Representation, Participation, Committees

“The Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative will welcome all stakeholders and actively foster diverse perspectives, needs, and expertise that includes, but is not limited to representation and input from:

- Federal and State Agency representation
- Community nonprofit support organizations
- County Commissioners
- Economic Development
- Contractors
- Forest industry representatives
- Environmental/Conservation Groups
- Other elected officials
- Concerned community members

- Landowners
- Tribes
- Recreation interests
- Agricultural interests
- Educational interests
- Mining Interests
- Scientific Community
- Other interests as appropriate

Signatories on any report submitted to the Forest Service or other authorities must have signed the Operating Principles of the Wallowa Whitman Forest Collaborative. Only one signatory per organization is allowed.

IV. Ground Rules

A) Basic Rules for Collaboration

Members and contributors to WWFC meetings/discussions will:-

- Respect each other in and outside of meetings.
- Not enter into any “backroom deals or agreements”.
- Not tolerate nor engage in personal attacks.
- Respect the personal integrity and values of participants.
- Avoid stereotyping participants or other stakeholders.
- Not make commitments lightly
- Keep and honor all consensus agreements
- Regard disagreements as “problems to be solved,” rather than as “battles to be won.”
- Understand that the participants represent a broad range of interests, each having concerns about the outcome of the issues at hand.

- Recognize the legitimacy of the interests and concerns of others, and expect that their interests will be represented as well.
- Keep their colleagues/constituents informed about the progress of these discussions.
- State their interests, problems, and opportunities and avoid taking positions before consensus is reached.
- Air problems, disagreements and critical information during meetings to avoid surprises.
- Search for opportunities and alternatives noting that the creativity of the group can often find the best solution.
- Agree to verify rumors at the meeting before accepting them as fact.

B) Meeting Behavior - all participants will:

- Come to meetings prepared.
- Respect the basic rules of collaboration (as stated above).
- Voice their concerns during meetings and take the time to resolve those issues.
- Refrain from side conversations during the meeting.
- Make sure only one person speaks at a time – let individuals finish their thoughts and then take a deep breath before responding.
- Respect the facilitator and meeting agenda.

C) Meeting planning and coordination

- As a general rule, WWFC meetings will be scheduled for the fourth Wednesday of every month.
- Meetings where key decisions will be made will be announced at least two weeks in advance.
- Meetings will be announced via email and available on the calendar located on the WWFC website (or by phone and/or mail for members who do not have email).

- Meeting agendas will be sent out approximately 10 days prior to the meeting to allow for group input and suggestions.

D) Record keeping

- Minutes will be taken at each meeting and shared with members who are on the list serve or have requested them by mail no later than 2 weeks following any meeting.
- Minutes from the prior meeting will be reviewed at the beginning of the next meeting and any issues (clarifications, corrections) will be discussed; meeting minutes will be approved by consensus.
- Collaborative members, and as appropriate their organizations will be listed in all minutes, with information indicating their presence or absence.

E) Internal communications protocol

- A web page will be maintained for storing and sharing all information. Partners are encouraged to help develop content for the website. The web page is located on Wallowa Resources web site – www.wallowaresources.org – under the *Stewardship Work* tab, and under *Community Planning Process*.
- The direct address is:
http://www.wallowaresources.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=112&Itemid=67

F) External communications protocol

- Information about the collaborative will be made available to external stakeholders via the website and other venues as appropriate; all efforts will be taken to ensure that the group's work remains transparent to external audiences. Non-members will have access to all information and the ability to share thoughts and comments with the group.

V. Decision-Making System

“The Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative will make every effort to make decisions by **consensus**. Consensus is defined as decisions that all parties can support, or ***at a minimum, agree to live with.***”

A) *Participation*

While anyone may participate in meetings and deliberations of the Collaborative or any working groups that have been established, only persons signing the Operating Principles document may participate in Collaborative or working group decision-making. Individual members must have attended at least 2 of the last 4 meetings of a body to formally participate in making decisions (while allowing the use of “alternates” if needed).

Collaborative members are encouraged to attend meetings in person. If this is not possible, members may designate an alternate to attend a meeting and contribute to discussions on their behalf. Alternates must sign the operating principles and the name of the alternate should be conveyed via email to the Collaborative facilitation/support office prior to the meeting. It is incumbent upon the Collaborative Member to ensure that the alternate can accurately convey their position. It is also incumbent upon the person representing an organization to accurately convey the position of the organization they represent. Collaborative and working group agendas should note if a decision would be made during that meeting. Materials and information that will help inform the Collaborative or working group member about the decision-point should be distributed at least a week before the issue is to be considered.

The Collaborative agrees that substantive decisions will not be made at meetings where the spectrum of stakeholders is not present. The group may make tentative decisions at such meetings, or may delay decisions until the following meeting.

Technical input and assistance from Forest Service staff personnel is extremely important to this effort, recognizing that Forest Service staff may only participate in an advisory capacity.

B) Reaching Consensus

Project-related decisions will be made first by the project subgroup(s). Decisions made during project subgroup meetings will be recorded in the meeting minutes and distributed within two week of the meeting to all subgroup members, and any other WWFC member that requests them in advance.

In the decision making process, dissenting members are asked to provide a constructive alternative(s) that will meet the group's mission and values. Each subgroup or full group meeting will begin with a brief review of the decisions made during the previous meeting. Subgroup/Collaborative members are encouraged to prioritize attending meetings in person or via other arrangements, such as sending an alternate.

Decisions made during meetings will not be revisited unless significant new and relevant information becomes available that could affect the decision. The subgroup will present their recommendations and rationale to the Collaborative for discussion and final ratification.

There will be a minimum of two weeks between the meeting when a subgroup makes a decision and the meeting where the Collaborative is asked to make a decision. This requirement ensures that subgroup

members that were unable to attend the meeting have time to develop and share their viewpoints with the subgroup or the Collaborative before a decision is made.

When making decisions either by subgroups, or the full Collaborative, participants will be asked to indicate their support either by a show of hands or verbal confirmation. Each participant has the freedom to disagree with elements of decisions as they're being developed, but must offer a constructive alternative that seeks to meet the needs of all participants involved.

Consensus on a decision about a project, recommendation, or action the group plans to take will be reached when all meeting participants can make one of the following statements about a decision:

1. I agree with the decision and will publicly support it.
2. I agree with the decision but will refrain from publicly supporting it.
3. I can live with the decision (and won't disparage it in public).

Once the full group has ratified a decision, a report will be given to the USFS for their consideration in their role as managers of USFS lands and waters.

C) Inability to Reach Consensus

Subgroups and the Collaborative will make every effort to reach consensus within a given timeframe for making decisions (as laid out in the project timeline developed at the outset of a project). As stated above, there will be a minimum of two weeks between when the subgroup makes a decision and the decision is brought to the Collaborative for discussion and ratification (see "Reaching Consensus" for interim steps).

If the subgroup cannot reach consensus during a meeting, members are encouraged to continue the conversation via conference call, email discussions, in-person meetings, or whatever format is most effective between meetings to better inform a decision-making process. If a time comes when the Collaborative is forwarding its recommendations to the WWNF management team and it is unable to reach consensus the following actions will be taken:

- Areas of agreement and disagreement will be clearly recorded in writing in the report; and/or
- Separate reports will be written and submitted that address the areas of disagreement.

In such cases, each document will include:

- The name of the lead author and names of all who agree with the report
- A description of their proposal and the rationale used to develop it
- What the members of the Collaborative anticipate doing if their proposal is chosen by the USFS (i.e. defend it in public), or not chosen (i.e. file an objection, appeal, litigate, etc).

In order to sign the report, the person must have committed to the operations principle.

- There is only one signatory per organization allowed for these reports.

VI. Roles

Wallowa Resources is the “host organization” of the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative and will provide, as funding allows, fiscal administration, neutral facilitation, outreach, minute-taking, and other

functions desired by the group. Wallowa Resources may enter into contracts with other entities to perform desired functions.

The Board of Commissioners for Wallowa, Union, and Baker Counties were the initial conveners of this organization.

DRAFT