

Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative

Operations Manual: Organizational Structure, Ground Rules, Communication, and Decision Making Process

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I. OVERVIEW

This document presents the Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative's process for working together. Members of this collaborative group developed this document together, modeling the collaborative and consensus-based approach they aim to use in advancing their mission and goals. They have agreed to honor and adhere to the principles and guidelines set out in this Manual. This is also a „living document“, and as the group evolves, and needs and opportunities change, so too will this document.

II. INTRODUCTION, MISSION, VISION, GOALS, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Introduction

The communities of the Ochoco Mountains are in the process of redefining their role in forest management. Opportunities exist to address ecological restoration and stewardship needs while providing quality jobs for local workers, and forest products and restoration „byproducts“ for local manufacturing. Accomplishing this requires a new approach to natural resource stewardship: one that is locally-supported, incentives-driven and that relies on the power of solutions that integrate the environmental, economic and social needs of communities. Collaboration between diverse stakeholders, and with the land management agencies, is an essential tool in this approach. The trust that is developed through collaboration will also lead to stable, long-term solutions that will hold through the shifting political winds.

Formed in April 2012, the *Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative* is a partnership of diverse local and regional interests who have come together to address and resolve the impassioned social gridlock and controversy surrounding natural resource management in the region. This group, which includes all parties that have had a role in forest management in the area, is committed to the collaborative process. It is a crucial and exciting time to build positive, forward momentum to address the critical issues of public forest land management. Through regular meetings, field trips, project planning teams and other activities, this group is building trust and relationships, identifying common interests, and advancing an agenda defined by restoration and collaboration.

Mission

The Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative is a diverse group of stakeholders who work together to create and implement a shared vision to improve the resilience and well-being of forests and communities in the Ochoco Mountains.

Vision

The Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative (OFRC) represents a broad constituency of stakeholders interested in healthy forest ecosystems, economic vitality and quality of life in Crook County, Oregon. We provide the US Forest Service (USFS) with proposals for management of National Forest (NF) lands, and we support the utilization of forest resources and related opportunities to strengthen local communities.

The OFRC is a member-driven organization with clear codes of governance of its own operations and its working relationship with the USFS.

OFRC engagement with the USFS supports efficient and timely progress of projects through selection, planning, execution and monitoring phases.

At all times the focus of projects is to support steady progress towards the long-term goal of the Forest as a healthy, diverse ecosystem that is resilient to natural and human disturbance, while at the same time ensuring our communities are safe from wildfires. Project selection and scale of execution is such that major restoration at the overall Forest level will be evident in a 30-year timeframe, with an eye toward appropriate structure for the long-term (150 years).

Activity in the forest and use and enjoyment of forest resources are foundational to the economic vitality and the quality of life of our local communities. We envision fostering a diversity of business and employment opportunities, and supporting the infrastructure to capitalize on the natural resources available from the Forest.

The OFRC engages in advocacy, science, and economic education to advance its vision.

Sensitive but persistent active management supported by the OFRC/USFS partnership, with a strong focus on a long-term vision for the forest, coupled with diligent monitoring to guide us, is returning the Forest to its natural resilient character.

Group Goals

- Ecologically-sound restoration
- Work together on solutions to local socioeconomic and ecological issues
- Grassroots community-driven role in public land management
- Proactive management for forest health
- A safe environment to share needs and ideas, and build solutions
- Tangible land management outcomes that address the broadest range of needs
- Collaboration early, at the watershed analysis stage
- Understand and support viable workforce and forest processing infrastructure that can make restoration possible—and understand what it takes to make management economically viable Increasing forest management and timber production that is ecologically and economically sustainable

Guiding Principles

- Every effort should be made to ensure participation of our diverse stakeholders; the process will encourage participation, and be open and inclusive
- Decision making processes for the group should focus on producing outcomes that strive to meet the needs of all participants
- Project scope, complexity and objectives should be appropriately scaled
- Projects will be selected that are of mutual concern and are agreed upon by the group
- Projects will include a monitoring component
- Projects will honor the complexity of forest ecosystems and enhance those ecosystems

- Projects will focus on supporting the current infrastructure and generating economic opportunities.

III. MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Ochoco Forest Collaborative is open to anyone interested, but will actively seek to involve representatives of diverse perspectives, needs, and expertise. This includes:

- Federal and State Agency representation, not including the US Forest Service (e.g. BLM, US FWS, ODFW, OWEB, and ODF)
- Community Nonprofit Support Organizations
- County Commissioners, City Councilors, and Other Elected Officials
- Economic Development Interests
- Contractors
- Forest Industry Representatives
- Environmental/Conservation Groups and Representatives
- Crooked River Watershed Council
- Concerned Community Members
- Landowners [Woodland, Residential/Homeowner, Industrial]
- Ranching Interests
- Tribes
- Recreation Interests
- University, College, Extension, and other Research Representatives

A) Full Group

The full group consists of all the voting members of the collaborative. Their responsibilities include participation in meetings and committees, election of the Executive Committee, overall collaborative decision-making, and defining strategic priorities. See “voting member” below for individual responsibilities.

B) Executive Committee

The Executive Committee serves the full OFRC by providing oversight on collaborative process elements (i.e. strategic planning, hiring and oversight of facilitator) and administrative functions (budgeting, agenda setting, interface with sub-committees).

It is recommended that the Executive Committee have a minimum of 5 members (and up to 9 members) representing, at a minimum, the following interest groups:

1. Local government or community elected officials
2. Local community member at-large
3. Conservation or environmental group or individual
4. Forest products industry or operator
5. The fiscal sponsor of the OFRC

Additional members representing local tribes, state and non-USFS federal natural resource agencies, recreation interests, and active OFRC sub-committees are desirable but not mandatory. OFRC voting members may also choose to add mandatory Executive Committee seats as needed through decision-making process outlined below in order to keep member composition balanced and representative of the diverse perspectives of the full OFRC.

Each Fall, potential members to the Executive Committee will either self-nominate or be nominated by another Full Group member with final selection determined by the full group per the decision-making process outlined below. Members are elected to two year terms, with odd/even seats up for “election” in corresponding odd or even years.

In the event that an Executive Committee member vacates a seat representing one of the designated interest groups above (for example due to job transition), the Executive Committee will solicit nominations from the Full Group and hold a “special election” to re-fill the vacancy through to the completion of the term.

Members of the Executive Committee will elect one of their members as Chair, with responsibilities and duties outlined below.

Members of the Executive Committee have duties and responsibilities above and beyond those of the Full Group participants and Voting Members. It is expected that current and potential Executive Committee members be willing to take an active role in OFRC processes, activities, and decision-making that may require additional time commitments beyond Full Group membership. These include a commitment to engage in most monthly meetings and business of both the Executive Committee, Full Group, participation in at least one sub-committee, and assistance to the Facilitator/Coordinator to support productive collaborative process and progress towards OFRC mission, vision, and strategic priorities.

Specifically, duties and requirements for Executive Committee membership include:

- Must sign the OFRC Commitment to Productive Participation
- Must be an active voting member
- Must participate in at least 1 sub-committee
- Will oversee solicitation, selection, and coordination with Facilitator/Coordinator for the Collaborative
- Will provide direction to the Facilitator/Coordinator, including an annual performance review in the Fall and the development of an annual work plan
- Will provide direction to OFRC staff, including an annual performance review in the Fall and the development of an annual work plan
- Will help to determine agenda items for upcoming meetings
- Will provide leadership in OFRC strategic planning and setting strategic priorities
- Will work together as Committee to coordinate engagement with the Forest Service
- Will keep the full group informed of Executive Committee activities
- Will coordinate with sub-committee chairs and request progress reports to the Executive Committee and Full Group

A quorum of the Executive Committee must be present when making decisions. The Executive Committee will strive for consensus. If consensus is not possible, the group will follow the majority vote of a quorum of Executive Committee members.

OFRC Facilitator/Coordinator will attend and facilitate Executive Committee meetings. OFRC staff are encouraged to attend the Executive Committee meetings, when available, but will not have a formal role in decision-making. Meetings are open to Full Group members and the public, with the option by the committee to close meetings as needed to discuss sensitive subjects such as staffing.

C) Sub-Committees

Sub-Committees will be formed and operate as needed to increase collaborative capacity when specific functions, issues, or projects are most effectively and efficiently addressed outside of Full Group meetings. All sub-committees are open to any interested participants of the full OFRC. The purpose of the sub-committee is to develop and implement a plan of work to address topics of interest to the Full Group. This can include shared learning processes, technical assistance and input, development of draft materials and tools. Sub-committees will bring all work deliverables and outcomes back to the Full Group for final decision per the decision-making process outlined below.

Sub-committees should strive to have, at a minimum, a chair who will serve as coordinator and point of contact between the sub-committee, Executive Committee, and Full Group. Sub-committees are responsible for developing their own draft budgets for submission and approval by the Executive Committee, and subsequent inclusion in the larger OFRC budget.

Sub-committee chairs are responsible for keeping the Executive Committee apprised of progress towards deliverables/goals through written and/or verbal progress reports. The Executive Committee is responsible for tracking progress and budget of Sub-committees towards deliverables/goals but does NOT, however, make decisions for Sub-committees on behalf of the full OFRC.

D) Chair

The Chair of the OFRC is elected by the membership of the Executive Committee to serve as the administrative leader for full group and Executive Committee. As such, the Chair will represent the diverse interests of the Full Group at the Executive Committee, serve as spokesperson for the Executive Committee to the Full Group, and serve as the principal spokesperson for the OFRC and collaborative decisions to external audiences as the need arises.

The Chair will also serve as the principal point of contact for the Facilitator/Coordinator, supporting coordination of Executive Committee activities, timely decision-making, and performance feedback from the Full Group and Executive Committee to the Facilitator/Coordinator. The Chair has the discretion to make minor, time-sensitive decisions (e.g., last minute meeting cancelations or agenda changes) in coordination with the Facilitator/Coordinator and OFRC staff, but will bring significant issues/topics to the full Executive

Committee for final decision. The Chair will serve a two-year term, with the option to serve one additional term if re-elected by the Executive Committee.

E) Facilitator/Coordinator

The Facilitator/Coordinator will work with the Executive Committee and Chair to establish duties, responsibilities, and objectives including (pending sufficient funding) the following tasks:

- Planning and facilitation of efficient and effective Executive Committee and Full Group meetings
- Maintain regular communication and coordination with Executive Committee Chair, Sub-committee chairs, OFRC staff, USFS representatives, and other partners, guests, and presenters as needed to plan and implement meetings
- Managing overall communications for the Collaborative, including meeting announcements, communications with partners, guests, presenters and others
- Take, distribute, and archive Executive Committee and Full Group meeting notes
- Ensure members of the Collaborative comply with the ground rules
- Maintain accurate list of meeting attendance, including current list of active voting member
- Maintain accurate contact lists of members
- Participate in an annual performance review and work plan development with Executive Committee and Chair

F) Voting Members

- Agree to operate under guidelines outlined in this operations manual
- Have signed the OFRC Commitment to Productive Participation
- Members are considered “active” if they have participated in two of the past four meetings.
- Participation can be through attendance, sending a proxy, or providing substantial written input to the facilitator
- When a proxy is sent, the voting member is responsible for briefing that proxy on prior discussions and preparing the proxy to represent your position
- Must be in “active” status to vote at current meeting
- Provide input from each individual constituency; communicate back to constituents and organization; resolve internal conflict with other members of the representative’s organization (to avoid two opposing opinions from one member organization)
- Suggest ideas or initiatives
- Offer to take leadership on ideas and initiatives and to participate in sub-committees
- Provide technical and other resources
- Commit to long-term involvement (by partner or their representative)

G) Forest Service

- Serve as non-voting members
- Be committed to collaborative process and maintain active engagement at meetings, project planning, etc.
- Offer resource information

- Share historical data
- Conduct NEPA
- Share technical resource and expertise
- Are not bound by what the group decides
- Participate actively in project discussions; clarify scope of recommendations acceptable to the agencies early on and consistently

H) Central Oregon Forest Stewardship Foundation

- Acts as the fiscal sponsor for the Ochoco Collaborative, raising and administering funds for facilitation/coordination, projects, or other needs. A COFSF board member, who is also a participant in the Collaborative, will serve on the Executive Committee.

I) Guests/Community

- Information will be made available to guests on background of collaborative
- Full disclosure of guests at each meeting
- Abide by ground rules
- Listen
- Share experience and expertise

J) Media

- Information will be made available to media on background of collaborative
- Media will disclose their presence at the beginning of any meeting they attend
- Abide by ground rules
- Listen
- Share experience and expertise
- The Chair will be the primary point of contact for the media.
- The Chair may choose to designate other representatives for specific topics or issues.
- This does not preclude members from talking to the media as an individual or private citizen. When speaking as an individual or private citizen you should not identify yourself as a member of the Collaborative.

IV. GROUND RULES AND COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

Ochoco Forest Collaborative Stakeholders developed this set of ground rules for conduct during their May 22, 2012 meeting.

Focus on learning

- * Come willing to learn
- * Come to meetings prepared
- * Present interests (e.g., desired conditions) not positions (e.g., management specifications).
- * Listen to understand. Be present and aim to fully hear others.
- * Critique constructively and ask questions to learn.
- * Be willing to be creative, explore alternatives, and search for opportunities.
- * Share all relevant information.
- * Share and take into account information from diverse sources.
- * Please ask—there are no stupid questions.
- * Respect the range of knowledge present in the group.
- * Adapt ground rules to reflect group needs and dynamics as they evolve

Listen and speak with respect

- * Only one person speaks at a time. Allow people to finish their thought. No interrupting and no side conversations.
- * Speak when you have something to say: bring up concerns and different views
- * No personal attacks. Come down hard on ideas, but never on people.
- * Voice your concerns and take the time to address conflicting concerns.
- * Do not dominate discussions. Do not use meetings as a forum to “soapbox.”
- * Respect each other in and outside of meetings.

Communication outside of meetings

- * Keep your colleagues and constituents informed about the process.
- * Bring relevant information back to the group.
- * Do not criticize individuals or the group process. Bring your concerns directly to the individual or the group.
- * Don't presume to speak for others who are not there.
- * No backroom deals.
- * A website will be maintained for storing and sharing all information. Partners are encouraged to help develop content for the website. The address is:
<https://sites.google.com/site/ochococollaborative>

V. DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Goal: to come to a decision that group members can support following a respectful hearing of all concerns and a thorough exploration of both the science and values involved.

The Ochoco Forest Collaborative will strive to reach **consensus** on decisions. Consensus is defined as decisions that all parties can support, or **at a minimum, agree to live with**.

A) Reaching Consensus

Decisions will be developed first by Collaborative sub-committees. Decisions made during subcommittee meetings will be recorded in the meeting minutes and distributed within a week of the meeting to all sub-committee members, and any other Ochocho Collaborative member that requests them in advance. Each sub-committee or full group meeting will begin with a brief review of the decisions made during the previous meeting.

Subgroup members are encouraged to prioritize attending meetings in person. If this is not possible, members are encouraged to ensure a proxy is in attendance (see Section III.F. for proxy definition), or to submit written input to the subcommittee chair ahead of time. Subgroup and full group agendas should note if the group will be asked to make a decision during that meeting. Materials and information that will help inform sub-committee or full group member decision-making should be distributed at least a week before the group is asked to discuss it.

Decisions made during meetings will not be revisited by the sub-committee unless significant new ecological, economic, or social information that may affect the decision becomes available. The sub-committee will present their recommendations and rationale to the full group for discussion and final ratification.

There will be a minimum of two weeks between the meeting when a sub-committee makes a decision and the meeting where the full group is asked to make a decision. This requirement is to ensure that sub-committee members that were unable to attend the meeting have time to develop and share their viewpoints with the sub-committee or the full group before the full group makes its decision.

As decisions are being made by either a project sub-committee, or the full group, meeting participants will be asked to indicate their support either by a show of hands or verbal confirmation. Each participant has the ability 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:

- I agree with the decision and will publicly support it
- I agree with the decision but will refrain from publicly supporting it
- 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 decision makers for USFS managed lands and waters.

B) Inability to Reach Consensus

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

If the sub-committee cannot reach consensus during a sub-committee meeting, members are encouraged to continue the conversation via conference call, email discussions, in-person meetings, or whatever format is most effective, in between meetings in order to function most effectively.

If a time comes when the sub-committee or full group is unable to reach consensus after significant effort, the following actions will be taken:

- Areas of agreement and disagreement will be clearly recorded in writing
- Differing position reports will be written to address the areas of disagreement. Each of these documents 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 members in the differing position groups 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.).
- The differing position reports will be given to the USFS for their consideration in their role as decision makers for USFS managed lands and waters.

C) Decision-making Participation

A group member must be an active member (see Membership/Active Participation in Section III.F. above) to be able to participate in decision-making.

Participating group members can send proxies to participate in sub-committee and full group meetings. Proxies must be an informed affiliate or member of the organization, business, or entity being represented, and be able to represent the active member in decision making.