

Members Present

American Forest Resource Council: Lawson Fite (phone); **Boise-Cascade:** Kevin Arneson; **Cascade Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group:** Jason Lundgren (phone); **Cascadia CD:** Patrick Haggerty, Mike Cushman; **Chelan County:** Bob Bugert, Mike Kaputa; **Chelan-Douglas Land Trust:** ABSENT; **Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition:** ABSENT; **Colville Tribal Sort Yard (CTSY):** ABSENT; **Conservation Northwest:** Kathleen Gobush; **Lake Wenatchee Fire Adapted Community:** Jim Passage; **Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCS):** Stan Jankowicz; **Okanogan Conservation District:** Lorah Super; **The Nature Conservancy:** Lloyd McGee, Darcy Batura; **Trout Unlimited:** Crystal Elliot (phone); **US Forest Service--OWNF:** Erick Walker, Teri Tucker, Jeff Rivera, Deb Kelley; **Vaagen Bros. Lumber Co:** ABSENT; **Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife:** Lynda Hoffman; **Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR):** Tim Vucklee, Nolan Brewer, Loren Torgerson; **Okanogan County:** Chris Branch, Char Schumacher; **WA Prescribed Fire Council:** ABSENT; **The Wilderness Society:** Mike Anderson; **Yakama Nation:** ABSENT; **Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board:** Melody Kreimes, Pete Teigen, Ryan Niemeyer, Nicole Jordan, Alicia Meier, Sarah Walker (Facilitator).

Other Meeting Participants

Regular Business

The group went through a general round of introductions. **Members approved the December 4, 2019 Quarterly Meeting summary.** Final copy will be put on the NCWFHC.org website.

State Legislative Session

DNR Wildfire Bill: Loren provided an update on DNR proposed legislation that would create sustainable long-term funding through an appropriation to implement the wildfire and forest health strategic plans. Funding would support 1) wildfire preparedness-planning, 2) forest health, and 3) forest product market development; fire suppression money would come from the general fund (**see Attachments for details**). For forest products/markets, the initial goal is a broad look at the process to develop markets, then identify opportunities linked to facilities-sources and local use of products.

The legislation is creative, big and bold. In January the Chelan, Okanogan, and Kittitas County Commissions sent a letter signed by all nine members with the following high-level messages:

- The funding cannot get 'swept' elsewhere by the legislature (the money needs to be used for what it is proposed)
- More money is needed for forest health treatments
- Funding needs to address NCWFHC-OWNF needs and priorities
- Clear implementation-feedback mechanisms are required for accountability

DNR's framework for allocating funds is not changing: NCWFHC should keep aligned with 20-year strategic plan and emphasize priority treatments and opportunities including ecological restoration. The bill calls for a floor (minimum \$25 million) to help 125 million acres by 2023 that would complement

DNR cross-boundary and partnership grant funds; unsure if bill would increase those grant funds. The legislature would review the appropriation for accountability in 5-6 years.

Members discussed developing a draft high-level letter from the NCWFHC and a letter the S. Pinchot partnership submitted that could be helpful. Members generally supported the idea of a letter, but also said commenting is a challenging because the bill language is not final. Members that were not able to participate in the discussion will need follow-up; Conservation Districts will need to check with their Boards. The bill is not scheduled to move out of appropriations until late February so there is not a rush.

Project/Subgroup Updates

UWPP

Teri, Jeff and Patrick provided an update. A new NEPA contractor (Tetra Tech) is on board; however, still a tight timeline to keep on schedule for a signed NEPA decision by September 30, 2020 (end of FY21). The contractor is firming up draft alternatives, including issues around temporary roads. The new DNR support for USFWS consultation staff is helping with draft Alternatives development work, coordination re: new Conditional NEPA framework. NCWFHC/SC/subgroup members need to maintain focused support and input between now and September.

The Implementation Plan breaks the UWPP project area into 7 “chunks”. The overall 1st priority chunk is Big Meadow in the lower Chiwawa area). Aquatics projects can occur in all chunks concurrent to work on all actions in the priority chunk. Concurrent aquatics projects, partnership with NCWFHC could enhance work on private lands

Members discussed the need for and timing of additional community outreach, any linkages to the formal OWNF schedule for UWPP outreach. Additional community outreach can be conducted sooner, independent of formal NEPA timeline; however, some meetings will be linked to NEPA timeline. Additional UWPP outreach should be coordinated with other planned forest health outreach in the area. For example, Chelan County is planning a ‘treatment tour’ that crosses state, private and public boundaries in late-spring or summer with the Nason Ridge community. Typically, the best timing for added community outreach is with when the equipment appears on the ground and during treatment. Future outreach should include good graphics, social media, videos, etc. Deb noted the OWNF can coordinate-collaborate on use of its video.

Anjolene highlighted the ongoing work of the UWPP Economics subgroup that was convened in 2019 to support the project. The group has developed a working ‘evaluation matrix’ to compare pre-sale design and layout options.

OWNF is hiring a pre-sale forester and survey help to support UWPP implementation; the current Sale Administrator has pre-sale skills. The OWNF remains short two heritage employees; R6 provided \$200,000 to contract this out for the UWPP and Twisp Project.

Twisp

The Twisp Project is proceeding through scoping according to schedule. OWNF is leveraging \$100,000/ Good Neighbor Authority seed money for fuel treatments in the Buck area. Members asked OWNF whether it was possible to reach out to the Colville Tribes for help with the heritage shortfall on select projects.

Mad-Roaring

Mad-Roaring-Mills (Central Zone) still planned for FY21.

Mission

The Alliance for Wild Rockies is still challenging the project in court (see Shared Learning below). Regardless, the OWNF/R6 intend to keep on track with the 5-year plan/ Mission Project implementation schedule. Trout Unlimited completed design on an aquatic organism passage project and Beaver Dam Analogs with DNR funding help. Trout Unlimited hopes to host a field trip this spring 2020.

Shared Learning: Project Litigation

Lawson Fite, Legal Counsel for AFRC, provided Members information on the project litigation process. The Alliance for the Wild Rockies is litigating many forests right now, including R6/OWNF-Mission Project. The typical timeline for this type of case will run through September. Judge may hold a fall meeting with a decision by the end of the year or early next; however, it would not be surprising for a decision to take until time next year (Nov. 2021).

There are different pathways that collaboratives-members can participate or be represented in the process when a project is litigated. AFRC could intervene in a member-involved project that is well-designed and has consensus support. Overall, AFRC is supportive --the NCWFHC framework allows--encourages people of all interests to collaborate on projects. Most federal judges benefit from the unique perspective that Collaboratives can provide. AFRC has successfully partnered with Collaboratives in other states/areas to defend projects.

Collaboratives may become involved as either an (1) Amicus - friend of the court, or (2) Intervener – member of the litigation process. Intervenor status allows filing motions, providing briefs and participating throughout the legal process. Intervening is more consequential because provides the opportunity to speak and educate the court; however, it takes more time and resources. AFRC has partnered with Counties as Intervenors; this can be particularly useful if a County is in a state with different legal-licensing requirements than that of AFRC counsel.

Members discussed the following:

- value of NCWFHC engagement
- what the “battle” looks like and whether the OWNF requires-desires support
- whether 501(c)(3) status would be required for the NCWFHC to Intervene---NEWFC is a 501(c)(3) and participated as an Intervenor in the A-Z Project on the Colville NF
- process for the Mission bid package without an injunction

The NCWFHC is in a good position to point out unique facts so that the court would allow intervention. Federal litigation structure allows for “unincorporated groups”; the NCWFHC could fall under that category for participation. Members (counties, tribes, state agencies, national-level entities like TNC, TWS, etc.) would need to either be carved out from or get formal approve to participate. Now is the time for those ‘chain-of-command’ conversations.

Members need to decide if they want to intervene between now and April. A motion would need to be filed mid-April to early May. An Amicus brief would require less preparation time and effort and could be filed as late as 1 week after July 17, 2020, the date the Government open brief is due.

OWNF Process Updates

The Tonasket Ranger District transfer to Colville NF is a work in progress; Tonasket projects remain under OWNF during transition. Kristin and Rodney Smolden will be meeting with Methow, Tonasket, Republic District staff re: how the transfer will change administration (e.g., retained receipts, shared-zone staffing needs, influence on 5-year plan POW/ projects, etc.) and how to meet Flagship targets for projects including fuels acres treated and timber sold. Transfer discussions also involve a look at opportunities to reduce OWNF fixed costs to 90% or lower.

Consolidation of the Entiat RD and Chelan RD is also happening. A small group has been assembled to look at different scenarios. The empty Entiat RD ranger position that is currently being detailed will not be filled. Soon Kari Weir will be filling in as both the Chelan and Entiat ranger until fire season and possibly a few months longer on detail. Tonasket RD discussions are the SO priority right now.

FY21 Program of work development

Over the next 2 months OWNF is looking at 5-year Integrated Plan and Timelines/ Projects for FY21. NCWFHC support is needed to id opportunities to bundle efforts and resources—stay on track, maintain focus. OWNF is getting internally ready to send out most current version of 5-year Plan/FY21 POW to gather feedback on priorities. Members with strategic/ multi-year plans can provide those to OWNF (i.e., the Yakama Nation 5-year Plan is helping OWNF with project alignment). The intent is to make the 5-year Plan as robust as possible.

Funding Proposal Updates

The CFLRP Tier 2 application was one of five submitted to R6. The Regional presentation went well due to NCWFHC support. All proposals will be forwarded to the National competition; two out of the five will be selected. The National review team has not been announced so the timeline for final review, notice is unknown. This round, approximately \$40 million is available for new and existing projects.

The NCWFHC, Stemilt Partnership, and Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition all received DNR partnership funding. In total, approximately \$600,000 of DNR funds coming into Chelan County for forest health. DNR is also providing approximately \$70,000 for boundary surveys, \$120,000 for presale layout for UWPP; \$194,000 in match provided.

Chelan County is talking to OWNF re: new UWPP contract admin duties it could assume instead of complete pass-through of funds for OWNF to administer, in order to increase efficiencies.

Members shared that SRS was reauthorized for another two years for approximately \$3 million. In terms of Title II and Title III allocation processes, OWNF has allocated about 75% of its Title II funds; however, there is currently not a Resource Advisory Council member quorum so further allocation work stalled. County Title III funding allocation is small (\$70k); ongoing decreases of about 5% annually.

NCWFHC was not awarded \$350,000 in NFF IFNF grant funding to explore how OWNF could use bonding, private funding, other mechanisms to fund forest health restoration. This is a new NFF grant; it is not known if it will be an annual solicitation.

Meetings-Members Survey

Sarah quickly reviewed background discussion and purpose for the high-level survey of NCWFHC members. The main purpose was to check in with Members on how they find Quarterly meetings (structure-content-value). Overall response level was good with an about 50-50 break between NCWFHC-only respondents and respondents who are both NCWFHC and SC members.

Member survey feedback and Quarterly discussion produced the following high-level themes (three or more similar responses):

- Members still value and are interested in attending Quarterly meetings
- Quarterly is still a good meeting frequency
- Quarterly structure does not need to change to allow for discussion time without OWNF staff.
- A consistent option for Remote access-participation would be beneficial
- Quarterly meeting duration should be shortened
- Priority topics should be placed before lunch time and given the most time for member “dig-in” and be strategic about discussing barriers and strengths of group/members to address issues.
- Updates/ topics that don’t require NCWFHC feedback or relate to a subset of members should be given less time and placed toward the end of the day
- One Quarterly a year should continue to include an outdoor field-learning component tied to specific intention-topics

Members discussed and shared other ideas to improve Quarterly meeting value, including switching to a working-lunch format to support networking and side-conversations; using the Joint Task Force for some topics; and exploring ways to consolidate updates and email traffic ahead of and between meetings.

The next SC Meeting is scheduled for March 4 from 1pm to 4pm at the OWNF SO in Wenatchee, WA.

The next NCWFHC Quarterly is currently scheduled from 10am to 4pm at Twisp Works in Twisp, WA.