

June 4, 2025

Steering Committee Mtg. Summary
Wenatchee Valley Fire Station 11, Wenatchee, WA
1:00 pm - 3:30 pm



Formal Approvals

Item	Action-Decision
Proposed June 4, 2025 SC agenda	Approved. The final will be posted online at: https://www.ncwfhc.org/meetings/
Proposed May 5, 2025 Quarterly meeting summary	Approved. The final will be posted online at: https://www.ncwfhc.org/meetings/
Assign Outreach workgroup with the task of planning a legislative tour for Fall 2025	Approved

Next Steps

Item	Follow-up
Share letter to FS re. retained receipts with Collaborative SC and solicit edits	Co-chair Luke, Karen Berg
Determine best person at FS to send retained receipts letter to	Seth Kammer
Plan legislative tour for the fall	Catherine Waterston and Outreach workgroup
Share media statement with Collaborative for edits	Karen Berg
Share Hampton Lumber statement to Investigate West	Co-chair Ngari
Send Collaborative statement to Investigate West once final language is approved	Co-chair Luke

Welcome and Introductions

Co-chair Anjolene Ngari opened the meeting and welcomed participants. Those present in-person and online introduced themselves.

Agenda and Summary

Facilitator Karen Berg reviewed the letters that will be up for discussion during the meeting, including a statement from the Collaborative to be used for media purposes and a letter to the Forest Service regarding the retention of receipts.

Members reviewed the draft June 4, 2025 Steering Committee meeting agenda and draft May 5, 2025 Quarterly meeting summary.

Facilitator Berg said that no one had any edits to the May Quarterly meeting summary after it was shared over email. Karen noted that the agenda would be amended to include a discussion of a Collaborative statement to the media. A motion was made to approve the meeting agenda and meeting summary:

Decision: Approved the June 4, 2025 SC agenda and May 7 Quarterly meeting summary as presented.

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (OWNF) Updates

Seth Kammer from the Forest Service gave updates from the Supervisor's Office.

Personnel and Positions to filled/ vacancies

In terms of personnel and positions to be filled, lateral reassignments were taking place and the FS was trying to fill key positions. Seth was not sure when all positions will be filled. The FS will provide more details when they can.

Retained receipts across OWNF

Co-chair Luke introduced the issue of retained receipts, which are how much money remains with the FS after timber sales, and the process for deciding where they go. Seth said he had talked to his colleagues, and that the OWNF was in possession of \$797,365 in retained receipts. Receipts are retained at a District level, with approvals made each fall. In March there was approval of ~\$400K for restoration projects. Retained receipts do not have expiration dates. They can be used to cover salaries beyond the scope of a project, and can be pulled during a budget shortfall for these purposes.

Co-chair Ngari noted that many forests in the region have had to pull their receipts to cover local expenses.

Commissioner Hover said that the government did not renew rural school payments in Okanogan County. He said it would be good to let legislators know that if we can't cut timber at a rate that will fund roads and schools, they will need to keep school payments at their former levels.

Mike Kaputa noted there had been similar funding cuts for Chelan County.

Several members expressed the desire to keep receipts local and apply receipts from the forest to the local landscape.

Co-chair Luke said the letter which was being presented to the Collaborative was to advocate for using retained receipts from timber sales for the Upper Wenatchee Pilot Project (UWPP).

Lloyd McGee said that after 6 years of analysis on the landscape, those funds should be used for this project rather than moving them elsewhere.

The Naches Forest Collaborative sent a similar letter regarding the Huckleberry timber sale use their retained receipts in the landscape. The FS acknowledged the letter and used funds to pay for the Little Crow EA, setting a precedent for this type of letter being successful. FS has their own team that looks at receipts and makes decisions internally.

Co-chair Luke said the letter was addressed to the regional forester. Jim Passage asked if the letter could CC the FS chief; Co-chair Luke said it could.

Seth Kammer said he would ask who was the best person in FS to receive the letter. He added that FS will make final approval of the destination of the receipts, and it would be good to get the letter on the District Ranger's radar.

Co-chair Luke would like edits to letter from Collaborative members by the end of this week, and that it could be sent out once Seth determines the best FS recipient.

Lloyd said he believed the FS Supervisor should be the main recipient. He added that the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (2022) requires FS to get recommendations from Collaboratives on how retained receipts are spent.

Karen summarized: Co-chair Luke will solicit more edits to the letter which will be shared by EOD today or tomorrow, and Seth will find the right people to send the letter to. Ideally the letter will be sent off early next week.

Gia Landis asked if it would be better for the FS to use retained receipts for salaries rather than on the project landscape.

Co-chair Luke said she will specify in the letter that retained receipt spending includes salaries for positions working on a project.

New District Ranger

Karen welcomed new Chelan-Entiat District Ranger Holly Krake.

2025 Fire season projections

Karen noted there was a link in agenda for the [2025 fire season projections](#).

Co-chair Luke asked the FS representatives how will personnel capacity impact the fire season?

Holly said that the Chelan and Entiat districts were fully staffed for these two districts. The FS was looking into how all the positions that support the firefighters will be filled and funded.

Lloyd McGee asked where to direct questions about the Central Washington Initiative with the FS vacancies. Holly said that Tara Umphries and Victoria Wilkins would be the point people for CWI.

Co-chair Ngari confirmed this, and added that Tara wants to engage more with Collaborative. As far as timber goes, Andy Hart and Nate Standish are still points of contact.

Project Work Group Updates

Monitoring planning update

Co-chair Luke said the next Project Work Group meeting would be for monitoring, where they would discuss the challenges of monitoring capacity on the FS right now. They want to coordinate with Kerry Kemp on how to increase capacity for monitoring, which is CFLRP required. TWS will give \$10K towards this, and CCD will contribute staff to do the work.

Outreach work group

Outreach Work Group Chair Catherine Waterston said there had been one outreach event since the May Quarterly meeting. Lake Wenatchee Fire and Rescue hosted a tour of the UWPP and Meadow project in the same location as the Quarterly tour, which was attended by 25 members of public. It was a good tour where Lloyd McGee talked about the origins of the project and Jim Passage talked about community engagement. Participants saw a fuel break and it was followed by a tabling event at Squirrel Tree. Catherine noted it was a little less well-attended, which could have been due to meeting fatigue or the cold weather. Copies of literature from the event were available.

Catherine said that Wenatchee Café was hosting an event on June 28 in Wenatchee on how to protect homes and landscapes from fire and extreme heat; partners and the Collaborative will be tabling there.

Karen said all these materials will be collected in the group's Google Drive folder.

Mike Kaputa said that there had been talk internally about what type of outreach to do with state legislators, and that he didn't believe that they were as up to date on the Group's activities as they needed to be. He said it would be good to engage state legislators, especially in regards to HB 1168. He added that success stories were helpful as was articulating the role of state funding in successes.

Catherine added that while partners have done this, this particular group hasn't done this type of outreach.

Gia noted that Sustainable Northwest had just hired a new government affairs person.

Co-chair Ngari said that Sustainable Northwest had pulled together a Washington Forest Collaborative Network, and that she and Gia and Karen were getting success stories from other collaborative leaders. Once they had developed a repository for these stories, they could send a generic letter from the Collaboratives to federal legislators.

Karen spoke about an example letter from Lake Wenatchee Fire and Rescue that talked about what funding they received and what it funded. She has created a Google Drive [folder/file](#) to add more of these to.

Mike said that it would be good to start messaging in late September or early October for federal elected officials, and that messaging for state representatives could go out later in November.

Co-chair Ngari suggested using video from the UWPP field tour in outreach story telling.

Mike said that outreach should include information about the Community Wildfire Defense grant, since local legislators might not know about this grant or project, and that a tour should identify this and other landscapes as well as additional FS projects going on.

Lloyd suggested that a 3-tier structure might work best – for example, the May 5 tour was for the Collaborative, the latest one was for the public, with the hypothetical future tour for legislators. This

reflects the different types of information shared for each type of tour (e.g. more funding-oriented information for legislators).

It was noted that FS can be reluctant to involve legislators on tours because of advocacy issues. Mike Kaputa said FS could be invited, however.

Mike added that the tour should be more state legislature-focused (e.g. discussion of the supplemental budget for HB 1168). Co-chair Luke noted that HB 1168 had 48% of the usual funding this year compared to previous years.

Jim Passage asked if it would be good to involve Democratic legislators outside of our region since they are the party in power? Mike Kaputa: Maybe, but Rep. Mike Steele is the ranking republican on the capital budget committee. He said the County will help with this.

Tom Partin said that discussion around part of UWPP not moving forward because of USFWS would inevitably come up.

Lloyd suggested having the Outreach workgroup pull a tour together. Karen asked if the Outreach Workgroup should be formally assigned to plan a legislative tour.

Karen called for a vote. Lloyd McGee made a motion to assign the Outreach work group to put together a tour for legislative leaders. The motion passed.

Decision: Assign the Outreach work group to plan a tour for elected officials for fall 2025.

Governance update

Co-chair Luke said the group needed to move forward with the changes still on the table. The next step is to continue the conversation around Structure and Roles with the rest of the Collaborative. Co-chair Luke will work with Co-chair Ngari and Karen to figure out how to make sure all voices are heard. The Google Drive folder now includes the group's operating protocols. In lieu of a discussion today, SC members should send recommendations to any of those three.

Lloyd McGee: What will the SC look like? What will change? How do we create more balance? How can we increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our organizational structure?

Karen said that all ideas about governance structure are located in a single document in the Google Drive. Co-chair Ngari said the Google Drive was important for referring to previous discussions. (if you need the link again, please ask Karen.)

Mike Kaputa said he believed Karen was uniquely qualified to facilitate these conversations as a neutral facilitator.

Gia Landis noted that the way partners interact with the FS is changing and that change management is happening, so it is important to have these discussions now.

Media statement

Karen Berg said that recent events showed it would be important to have an agreed-upon statement to provide to media and press from the Collaborative.

Co-chair Luke said that she had just shared a draft with the Collaborative, and that it had been written quickly. Currently, the Operating Protocols say that Co-chairs can speak to the media on the Collaborative's behalf. This discussion became necessary after a reporter began asking members questions, who suggested the Collaborative was closed off. Co-chair Luke said she spoke to the reporter after speaking to Co-chair Ngari. The statement was written with input from Lisa Dowling and Lloyd McGee. She would like to get the statement out this week, and having the statement would be valuable to have on hand in the future.

Karen reiterated that it would be good to have a response about who we are and what we do. Members will need to vote by noon tomorrow. She said that members should expect an email vote on this statement.

Co-chair Ngari will share a statement that Hampton Lumber wrote regarding the involvement of industry as a collaborative member.

Lloyd said that the letter says that we don't make decisions, just recommendations, and that we minimize conflict of interests by having diversity of leadership over time. He asked if we should include successes in the letter? Co-chair Luke said that they could create a separate list of successes.

Commissioner Hover added that bringing a lot of people together and being able to make any decision is a success. We operate on consensus, and coming to a common decision is hard in itself.

Jim Passage said that another inherent success was having very little turnover in the Collaborative.

Tom Partin asked if the Collaborative had a mission statement that could be shared right away.

The Co-chairs confirmed the one available on the website is in the letter.

Roundtable

Gia Landis (Sustainable Northwest): Sustainable Northwest would be part of a meeting about UWPP on what's working and what isn't. She said she will provide the Collaborative with updates from those conversations.

Mike Kaputa (CCNRD) – The County has entered into an agreement with DNR for the community wildfire defense grant, which included a \$10 million project. The UWPP resilience bond was turning into work on the ground. This was a 5-year project and they were getting positive news on all the funding sources.

Jim Passages shared some positive sentiments about the resiliency of individuals and organizations in the face of large national hardships beyond their control.

Tom Partin (American Forest Resource Council) – Tom updated on litigation on the Twisp project. The case had been heard at 9th circuit court of appeals in April, resulting in a mixed decision. They didn't shut Hampton Lumber activity down, but they have paused for the time being. The judge wants the FS to look at cumulative effect of Twisp projects. Condition-based management was ruled as a legitimate way to plan a project, which is an excellent precedent given that we have a lot of projects using condition-based management. The alternatives were ruled to be adequate, which was another win. Twisp sales are held up for this fiscal year and the case was remanded back to the district judge.

A likely outcome of the Supreme Court's decision on NEPA will be that FS will no longer have to do a deep dive into every project, with a less nit-picky process, and not being required to show all project implications outside of the project area. Details are in the AFRC newsletter discussion of NEPA:

<https://amforest.org/june-2025-newsletter/>

Additionally, Tiana Luke shared that The Wilderness Society's did an analysis of last week's NEPA decision which includes a summary from EarthJustice at the bottom of the summary, to be forwarded to the membership.

Co-chair Ngari added that the decision overall states that court needs to defer to agency as the expert.

Lisa Dowling (WDFW): In terms of staffing updates, WDFW has hired a new area habitat biologist for the position Lisa has recently been filling. McLane Johnson is now in the position. They are currently hiring for Carmen Andonaegui's position after she retires.

The next Steering Committee meeting is July 2. While there is discussion of holding it in the Methow, the project to potentially tour there may not be ready then. At this time, the meeting location is TBD.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30pm.

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Attendance

NCWFHC Member	Representative	Participation	SC	6/4 SC	In-person/ Online
American Forest Resource Council	Tom Partin	NCWFHC	Y	TP	online
	Matt Comisky	Alternate			
Cascadia Conservation District	Ryan Williams	NCWFHC	Y	PH	online
	Patrick Haggarty	Alternate			
	Joe Hill	Alternate			
Chelan County	Mike Kaputa	NCWFHC	Y	MK	in-person
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	Rebecca Hunt	NCWFHC	Y	--	
	Sam Rushing	Alternate			
Conservation Northwest	Matt Danielson	NCWFHC	Y	absent with notice	
	Dave Wertz	Alternate			
Hampton Lumber	Anjolene Ngari	NCWFHC	Y	AN	in-person
Okanogan Conservation District	Lorah Super	NCWFHC	Y	LS	online
	Eli Loftus	Alternate			
	Craig Nelson	Alternate			
Okanogan County	Commissioner Andy Hover	NCWFHC	Y	AH	online
	Commissioner Nick Timm	Alternate			
The Nature Conservancy	Lloyd McGee	NCWFHC	Y	LM	in-person
	Catherine Waterston	Alternate			
The Wilderness Society	Tiana Luke	NCWFHC	Y	TL	in-person
	Megan Birzell	Alternate			
Trout Unlimited	Crystal Elliot-Perez	NCWFHC	Y	CE	online
	Theo Burgoon	Alternate			
WA Department of Natural Resources	Chuck Hersey	NCWFHC	Y	AR	online
	Amy Ramsey	Alternate			

Yakama Nation	Brandon Rogers	NCWFHC	Y	BR	online
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Other Attendance

In-Person:

Karen Berg (NCWFHC), Gabby Vermeire (UCSRB), Seth Kammer (OWNF), Gia Landis (Sustainable Northwest), Mike Kaputa, Hannah Wilkins (Chelan County Natural Resources Department), Jim Passage (Lake Wenatchee Fire Adapted Community), Anjolene Ngari (Hampton Lumber), Loyd McGee, Catherine Waterston (The Nature Conservancy), Tiana Luke (The Wilderness Society)

Online:

Tom Partin (American Forest Resource Council), Patrick Haggerty (Cascadia Conservation District), Deborah Kelly, Holly Krake (OWNF), Amy Ramsey, Chuck Hersey (Department of Natural Resources), David Walker (Lake Wenatchee Fire and Rescue), Andy Hover (Okanogan County) Brandon Rogers (Yakama Nation), Cathy Baker (The Nature Conservancy), Sam Jordan (Chelan Douglas Land Trust), Crystal Elliot-Perez (Trout Unlimited), Lisa Dowling (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife) , Lorah Super (Okanogan Conservation District), Ruby Gaston (Office of Rep. Kim Schrier)