

April 9, 2025

Steering Committee Mtg. Summary

Virtual only

1:00 pm – 2:35 pm



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### Formal Approvals

Item	Action-Decision
Proposed April 9, 2025 SC agenda	Approved. The final will be posted online at: <a href="https://www.ncwfhc.org/meetings/">https://www.ncwfhc.org/meetings/</a>
Proposed March 5, 2025 Quarterly meeting summary	Approved. The final will be posted online at: <a href="https://www.ncwfhc.org/meetings/">https://www.ncwfhc.org/meetings/</a>

### Next Steps

Item	Follow-up
Write letter of support from Collaborative for Congressionally-directed funding projects in Chelan and Okanogan Counties	Karen Berg
Summary of the timber executive order and responding memos from the FS.	Karen Berg forwarded last week and can provide to others as requested. Anjolene Ngari will provide her version to Karen Berg for distribution.

### Attendance

Online:

Lorah Super (Okanogan CD), Anjolene Ngari (Hampton Lumber), Karen Berg (NCWFHC), Gabby Vermeire (UCSRB), Kari Grover-Wier, Seth Kammer, Victoria Wilkins (OWNF), Matthew Danielson (Conservation Northwest), Lisa Dowling (WDFW), Brandon Rogers (Yakama Nation), Andy Hover (Okanogan County), Catherine Waterston, Lloyd McGee (TNC), Jim Passage (Lake Wenatchee Fire Adapted Communities), Amy Ramsey, Chuck Hersey (DNR), Yesenia Perez (Wenatchee Café), Megan Birzell (The Wilderness Society), Jeannie Davidson (Blue Forest)

### Welcome and Introductions

Co-chair Lorah Super opened the meeting at 1:04 and members introduced themselves. She noted that it would be her last meeting as Acting Co-Chair and that Tiana Luke (TWS) will be resuming her position as Co-Chair at the end of the month.

### Agenda and Summary

Members reviewed the draft April 9, 2025 Steering Committee meeting agenda and draft March 5, 2025 Steering Committee meeting summary.

Facilitator Berg noted that there had been a change to the DNR/BFP grant application agenda item to now discuss that it is paused rather than ready for SC review.

*Decision: Approve the April 9, 2025 SC meeting agenda as amended.*

*Decision: Approve the March 5, 2025 SC meeting summary as presented.*

### Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (OWNF) Updates

*Updates from the Forest Supervisor's Office*

Victoria Wilkins provided updates from the Forest Supervisor's office. This will be Kari Grover-Wier's last meeting, as she and Pete Wier will be retiring from the Forest Service by taking the deferred resignation. Victoria said that it's expected there will be more significant staffing reductions in the near future. She understood partners had many questions about their capacity to move projects forward in the future.

Co-Chair Ngari asked if there was a backfill plan for Kari's position. Victoria said that they were working to determine outstanding responsibilities and how those would be transferred to the remaining staff.

Regarding the second decision on the Upper Wenatchee Pilot Project, Victoria advised that while FS is aware of the urgency partners feel about the timeline, they are unable to move forward with the project this fiscal year.

In terms of the LSRA, the Executive Order on timber sales and changes to CEQ regulations have created enough moving parts that make having the LSRA discussion difficult, especially as LSRA guidelines are likely to change. A summary of the timber executive order and responding memos from the FS were sent out to the collaborative last week from Facilitator Berg. Co-Chair Ngari said she just finished a summary of this Memo and the letter from USFS Acting Associate Chief French in response to the Memo that she can provide post meeting to help folks digest it all.

Victoria also shared the FS press release on the matter: <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2025/04/04/secretary-rollins-announces-sweeping-reforms-protect-national-forests-and-boost-domestic-timber>

### ***Central Washington Initiative***

Kari Grover-Wier updated members on CWI work moving forward. She said she believed significant work had been done with the CWI, and that continuing work would be able to adjust to the new administration's focus on timber. She said that aligning with new goals will take some time but is feasible. New funding for the CWI is uncertain in the future. Tara Umphries will be the new point of contact for CWI. Kari added that while there were no newly allocated CWI funds for this year, previously allocated money was still in place. There will be no new CWI contracts but existing contracts will be fulfilled.

There is still prior year funding for CFLRP work, including monitoring work, a monitoring position, supporting UWPP Forest Resilience Bond. Hopefully CFLRP will receive new funding for Twisp fuel reduction work.

Andy Hover said that Okanogan County commissioners had met with the ranger for Tonasket who had spoken about sharing resources across forests and wondered if this would be helpful. Kari said that this resource sharing was an important strategy and that they were looking into ways to do it with both the Tonasket and Colville forests.

Matt Danielson asked what would happen to other positions involved with CWI. Kari did not know if any of those people would be leaving FS in the future, but they were still working at this time.

Matt also asked how they thought that EO's would affect on-the-ground operations, and if the timber directive would open any doors as far as project implementation was concerned.

Kari noted that the Okanogan-Wenatchee national forest was different to begin with, as it was especially prone to wildfire and had more expedited processes as a result. She said that emergency consultation could be streamlined as a result of the EO's.

### **Ranger District Updates** *(provided in writing prior to the meeting)*

For Upper Methow:

- The terrestrial landscape evaluation has been completed. The district has this in hand and has been working with the data.
- The aquatic LE is 95% complete. Contractors are waiting on review of the datasets and final management implications by district and forest staff (Gene, Lance, Michael).
- Contractors may be doing an additional roads analysis (GRAIPlite) after delivery of Aquatic LE (there is already a roads analysis in the Aquatic LE, but it was run with a different model than GRAIPlite).

Kari added that they would likely scope Upper Methow FY26 Q2.

### **Project Work Group Updates**

*Co-chair Ngari provided updates from Project Work Groups.*

#### **Northwest Forest Plan – Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

Co-Chair Ngari reported that the letter from the Collaborative on the NWFP DEIS was submitted successfully before the March 17 deadline.

#### **Lower North Shore project**

Co-Chair Ngari said the next focus for the PWG is the Lower North Shore project.

The project is likely to go from a broad EA to a Categorical Exclusion, which means quicker analysis and less public input. There is no commercial element to the project currently.

The next project work group meeting is April 15, 10-12pm at Thriving Together in E Wenatchee or virtually.

### **Outreach Working Group Updates**

#### **Work Plan**

OWG Chair Catherin Waterston said that the SC could review and provide feedback on the outreach working group work plan before it is presented for approval at the Quarterly Meeting. The work plan includes holding outreach events for the four watersheds identified in the work plan annually. There were a couple of projects (Nason and Upper Methow) being delayed to 2026, so they were removed from the 2025 work plan and bumped out a year.

## **May Tour and Quarterly Meeting**

The group is actively working on the May field tour and Quarterly meeting, which will be held on May 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> respectively. Participants will tour the UWPP and be able to participate in a monitoring demonstration with Kerry Kemp (USFS) and Amy Ramsey (DNR). The tour will be from 10-4pm, followed by a social at the Wok About Grill from 4-6 pm. The meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> will be held at the Chumstick Grange, Leavenworth, 10-4pm.

Co-Chair Ngari said that she would be unable to attend the tour of the Meadow DXP sale, but Kris McCall who worked on the sale with Hampton Lumber will be there. Catherine said a high-level agenda would be emailed that day with an RSVP form and a more detailed agenda would be available soon.

Catherine noted that the most recent Cascadia Conservation District quarterly newsletter that went out last month was about forest health and included an article about prescribed burn projects. [2025 Spring Newsletter – Cascadia Conservation District](#)

Another recent outreach event was a film showing in Chelan (Ruby U.) on megafires followed by a panel that included many Collaborative partners. There was great turnout and a lot of engagement.

The Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition Townhall will be held on April 30 at the Snowy Owl Theater in Leavenworth from 5-8 pm.

The Leavenworth Landscapes (Community Wildfire Defense Grant) public tour of the UWPP will also be held in May (*confirmed as May 29 after the meeting*).

The next Outreach Working Group meeting will be held on April 29. Members can reach out to Catherine for details.

## **Congressionally-Directed Funding Project Proposal**

Amy Ramsey described how the working group was formed after Sen. Cantwell's staff (Rick Evans) spoke to the Collaborative about the potential federal funding opportunity. After some investigation, the group found that applications will need to be submitted by county and could not be applied to national forest land. A proposal for Chelan County will be sent to Senators Cantwell and Rep. Schrier. The Okanogan County proposal will be sent to Sen. Cantwell and possibly to Newhouse's office.

The application is to fund crews to do fuels reduction work on non-federal land in each county, including some fuels reduction on private land. The Chelan County work would be done by USFWS, and the work in Okanogan Co. would be done by USFWS and DNR. The Collaborative will try and get a letter of support approved by the SC ASAP. Amy said a template was already available.

## **Review of DNR BFP Grant**

Amy Ramsey explained that DNR administers the Building Forest Partnerships grant that provides funding to administer collaboratives like this one all over the state. Due to funding cuts at the state level and funding uncertainty at the federal level, this grant program is on hold.

Co-Chair Ngari asked about the possibility of securing another funding source to cover Karen's time. Karen said UCSRB thinks there may be other options and is looking into it.

## **Member Roundtable**

Karen Berg – The DNR BFP grant amendment will go before the Board at UCSRB's April meeting for final approval. The drone imagery project is on Resilient Forestry's schedule to begin work at the end of May into June.

Megan Birzell advised that she had been contacted by a reporter who had questions about the Collaborative and asked how she should proceed. The operating protocols specify that media requests should be addressed by the Collaborative Co-Chairs.

Matt Danielson noted that many wildlife people he worked with had been fired and rehired and that the field felt uncertain as a result.

Amy Ramsey said that DNR was dealing with difficulties due to the state budget. Chuck Hersey said that in general, we would have to wait for things to settle with the Forest Service.

Lisa Dowling reported that WDFW was onboarding several new staff members, even though she is still "wearing two hats" at this time. WDFW is working on bringing on a statewide lamprey representative to talk to partners about how to make restoration projects friendly to lamprey. Lisa can share the lamprey presentation agenda and link to those who are interested.

Yesenia Perez said that Wenatchee Café would be holding an event on June 21 around the issues of labor rights, environmental justice, and wildfires. There would be an opportunity to table at the event, and Yesenia will send out an email to the Collaborative later today with more details.

- ***The meeting adjourned at 2:35.*** -

The next Annual Field Tour and Meeting is May 6-7 in Leavenworth.

The next Steering Committee meeting is June 4. It will possibly be paired with a tour of Bear Mountain or the Lower North Shore project in Chelan.