

July 2, 2025

Steering Committee Mtg. Summary  
Methow Conservancy, Winthrop, WA  
1:00 pm - 4:00 pm



**Formal Approvals**

| Item   | Action-Decision   |
|--|---|
| Proposed July 2, 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 June 4, 2025 SC meeting summary   | Approved. The final will be posted online at: <a href="https://www.ncwfhc.org/meetings/">https://www.ncwfhc.org/meetings/</a> |
| Hold winter meetings virtually only. Hold summer Quarterly meetings with a start time of 9:30 AM | Approved  |
| Apply for the National Forest Foundation Collaborative Capacity Grant                            | Approved  |
| Apply for grant through Thriving Together to fund Collaborative facilitator position             | Approved  |

**Next Steps**

| Item  | Follow-up                 |
|---|---------------------------|
| Add discussion on “known issues with implementation” for FS projects to agenda for next Quarterly   | Karen                     |
| Send out review form to Collaborative members for feedback on their project priorities  | Seth Kammer, Lisa Dowling |
| Send out feedback form to members and tour attendees about the Mission Field tour – members should provide comments                           | Karen                     |
| Follow up with Naches Forest Collaborative chair about their application for NFF grant  | Karen                     |
| Add discussion of adding Cle Elum ranger district to Collaborative to agenda for next meeting   | Karen                     |
| Draft letter to other forest collaboratives detailing NCWFHC’s own procedures for contacting legislators (in re. to After-Action Review item) | Karen                     |

**Welcome and Introductions**

Facilitator Karen Berg opened the meeting at 1:10 PM and welcomed all participants.

**Agenda and Summary**

Karen asked if there were any edits or adjustments to the July 2, 2025 SC meeting agenda. Co-chair Luke asked to move the After-Action Review Item to the member-only closed session after the break so that the Forest Service employees could leave on time as the meeting had started late. There was no objection and the agenda item was moved to after the break.

Tiana asked to remove the discussion around the letter regarding retained receipts as some key members were not in attendance.

Karen asked if there were any edits or adjustments to the June 4, 2025 SC meeting summary; none were noted.

The July 2, 2025 SC agenda and July 2 Quarterly meeting summary were approved as presented.

## Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (OWNF) Updates

### *Supervisor's Office Updates*

Victoria Wilkins from the Forest Service gave updates from the Supervisor's Office. Things at the OWNF continue to be busy as they are still experiencing fluctuations in numbers of employees and some lateral reassignments are in process.

- Co-chair Luke: Do you have a date for when the hiring freeze will be lifted?
  - Victoria: No definite dates on this yet as there are still fills from lateral reassignments to be done, and it is unsure how those will affect the regular hiring freeze. There is little Forest or agency-level direction on any of the new guidance.

There has been an announcement from USDA that they will be repealing agency-level NEPA regulations, meaning that all agencies would operate under a single set of federal NEPA regulations. FS-specific regulations would be less prescriptive about public engagement and would allow more flexibility. Victoria did not know when this would take effect.

There was a Region 6 pause on NEPA decisions with travel management decisions, which concern project-level travel decisions. Forests are currently working on a short-turnaround review of projects currently in planning or with recent decisions.

- Tom Partin: How will this affect new road construction?
  - Victoria: Unsure about how it will affect temporary road construction exceptions. It affects sediment requirements and a big part of consultation process.
  - Erica: The pause seems to be focused on travel management decisions that would decrease public access.

Co-chair Luke: What are the impacts to funding now that CFLRP is gone in new budget bill?

- Victoria – BIL and IIJA funds (big part of CWI funds) are being reallocated and we don't yet fully know what that means. IRA funds are being swept to the federal level, with all unobligated funds reallocated to the DC office. The OWNF won't have as much flexibility as funding will go back to the pre-CWI days.
- Co-chair Luke: Have CWI funds on the Forest been swept back?
  - Victoria: Not that we know of, but there will be a process to reallocate and we don't know the criteria yet.
- Co-chair Ngari: The economic subgroup of Collaborative previously met with FS staff and talked about the importance of spending CFLRP money in a way that would create long term benefits on our Forest, but I don't feel like this created much change.
- Lloyd: Can you get back to us on new 5-year targets for timber?
  - 18 million board feet for 2025, 40 for 2026 and 2027, 48-50 for 2028 (goal year) likely as a ramp up to get up to 900mmbf. Some forests went way up; ours is

- not a big change. It's in line with our 10-year plan and CWI plan. This includes firewood. Tonasket has most in the nation.
  - Where do the targets come from? Numbers from DC don't work when we don't have the workforce or the capacity. Conservation will support if it really helps the objectives of the projects.
  - Co-chair Ngari: It feels like we don't have the boots on the ground to do the work.
  - Matt: We are stuck reacting to these developments. For instance, we agree on increasing the efficiency of NEPA, but are worried about the effects on ESA protections.
  - Tom: Projects do need to be happening faster
- Commissioner Hover: If we don't have boots on the ground and have economically difficult projects, would changing timber regulations create more economically viable projects? What is break even point?
- Tom: Right now we are not in a good market. More volume per acre, better markets, shorter distance would all help.
- Matt: Economic and ecologically sustainable projects perhaps need subsidization.
- Com. Hover: Is there a way to do this through regulations and not just "printing money?"
- Karen: Would it be helpful to reconvene an economic subgroup?
  - Co-chair Ngari: The project work group can have these project-level conversations.
- Victoria: We need to balance moving things forward with having agreement among stakeholders because litigation will increasingly be used as a tool for these disputes. We could make up tools on collaborative involvement for G-Z projects. G-Z could work on Chumstick to LP.
  - Victoria will talk with Anjolene more on this. Put this on the PWG agenda.
- Com. Hover: Forest planning is often 30 years out in other forests - why don't we have this far-out planning in OWNF?
  - Victoria: Timelines get readjusted more with our plans, and there's more litigation we have to deal with.
- Tom: We just need implementation, we have to look at all options to get this done, we have a large backlog of good NEPA projects
- Victoria: Tara has been working with USFWS about consultation backlog issues and is making progress, also having conversations around G to Z, using stewardship contracts – we just have key vacancies in timber right now.
- Karen: Would this be helpful to bring this to the next Quarterly? – Known issues with implementation
  - All agreed to add it to agenda
  - Have Tara Umphries and Andy Hart there

Seth Kammer noted that last year there was a form sent out to the Collaborative re. their priorities for projects in CFLRP boundary. He asked if we do a review so we can send one out again this year.

- Co-chair Luke: Lisa Dowling had a good spreadsheet for filling out this form.
- This form was forwarded to Seth.

Lloyd added that he thought that timber targets were previously based on what FS believed their capacity to be. Victoria said that the new timber targets would require a lot of cooperation and that

OWNF could possibly share resources with Colville Forest. She said they believed the target increase was a manageable increase at this point, and that not every forest was increasing the target by 25%.

### *Ranger District Updates*

Erica Taeker updated that they were pulling together a sale contract review making sure it is in line with NEPA. DNR people are working on layouts and recon for Clear Creek sales, there is a layout in a potential sale for the Chumstick project, Chumstick to Lower Peshastin EA is being reviewed by a contractor, and the FS is working on BAs themselves. Scoping is not looking likely for late summer; they're getting the Interdisciplinary Team together now.

- Lloyd: Where is first project for Chumstick?
  - Eagle Creek
- Co-chair Ngari: Do we have a date for the public comment period or scoping period?
  - Scoping unlikely to be ready by end of summer
- Tom: What is status of LSR projects in UWPP?
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> decision on our to-do list but there have been capacity issues

## **Project Work Group Updates**

Co-chair Luke said the next project work group meeting will be tomorrow morning, June 3 at Thriving Together in Wenatchee. The agenda is available on the Google Drive. It will continue to be held on the first Thursday morning of the month moving forward. The agenda includes monitoring planning updates, trying to help with monitoring gaps for CFLRP, and Patrick Haggerty looking for volunteers to help with monitoring.

The group will review Collaborative Engagement Agreements.

- Work with Erica on Chumstick to LP collaborative engagement agreement
- We still need a collaborative engagement agreement for Nason project. Co-chair Ngari said it would be good to update Jim Passage on this.
- Upper Methow has an agreement from last December.

Seth said that there will be an ask for feedback on the Collaborative's priority projects once there was a list of CFLRP projects which would be followed by an intentional review process.

Tom: Is there an update on the Twisp project court case after it lost at the 9<sup>th</sup> circuit?

Victoria: It was remanded back to district court and we are awaiting decision, but not sure when we will get it.

Tom: Having condition-based management upheld has helped as a precedent for other cases we are involved in.

Co-chair Luke said the project work group was tracking ongoing FS changes and how they will affect projects on the forest and compiling resources on this. Co-chair Ngari said they could bring in project experts to PWG, SC, or Quarterly meetings.

Victoria noted that the FS could use partner help with media and public outreach. Even though they are limited on social media engagement, they can share partner messages and do in-person messaging. Right now, the only way they can do proactive messaging is through partners.

Co-chairs Luke and Ngari said they were both getting many media requests. It was suggested that the group agree on a broad message shared, that could include: “We are working through issues,” and “We are short on funding” (if applicable, e.g.).

- Timelines are challenging (often 24 hr turnaround)
- Conflict of interest is not valid because all members have interests.
- Can only explain the current info so far as the membership has talked about it.

Co-chair Luke added that it was okay for members to say that they are in a Collaborative but don’t speak for the Collaborative.

Karen said that they were in the process of creating a media statement and documentation on these projects, including background history on projects like Mission. There will be a protocol moving forward for working with media requests.

## Outreach Workgroup

Outreach Workgroup Chair Catherine Waterston gave updates. She reminded those present that at the last SC meeting they were asked to move forward with planning a legislative project tour, and that they were moving forward with phase 1. She said the workgroup had begun thinking more broadly about what outreach could look like in Chelan County, an “all lands, all hands approach,” and how to keep local state elected officials informed. She will be meeting with TNC’s government affairs director next week to help plan the legislative tour.

Commissioner Hover suggested that it was important to engage state legislators not from this area (e.g. King and Pierce Cos.), particularly those in the house and senate leadership, and to educate them on projects in this area. Catherine agreed that this was important, especially with HB 1168 and the budget issues.

Matt added that it would be good to invite Rep. Dan Newhouse on this tour.

In other partners events, Catherine reported that Wenatchee CAFÉ hosted their Pachanga and Mercadito event on June 28, which had outreach and education related to wildfire prevention and was attended by Collaborative members. Karen tabled and represented the Collaborative.

Yesenia Perez reported that it was a successful event and that they shared a lot of resources with the community. She is interested in hearing how it went from the perspectives of those tabling. The event was covered by radio and television.

Lake Wenatchee Fire and Rescue sent out a newsletter issue to local residents containing an article about the UWPP project which mentioned the Collaborative.

Our Valley Our Future had a wildfire symposium last weekend, which Patrick reported had many Wenatchee business owners in the audience who had good discussions about smoke and health.

## Mission Field Tour Discussion

Karen will be sending out the briefing from the Mission Project tour written by Lloyd McGee for edits and additions. Karen will be collecting ideas and lessons learned from the tour and asked members to send her their thoughts and feedback on that day's tour.

*~~ End of open session ~~*

## Governance Update

Co-chair Luke said that there would be an in-person governance discussion at the October SC meeting and encouraged everyone to come in-person to the meeting in Wenatchee. The SC meetings in November and December would have virtual-only attendance, since it was agreed upon to not have hybrid meetings moving forward. Karen will help lead these discussions.

What is the intent of the governance discussion?

- Discuss structure and roles and decide to change or keep as is.
- Everything other than Structure and Roles has already been decided on, including that NCWFHC uses consensus-based decision making, for example.
- The concerns that created this discussion:
  - Full collaborative was concerned that they weren't engaged in decisions and process
  - Consensus based on quorum of 50% at present
  - The challenge is between being nimble and efficient with a small amount of people making decisions, versus far reaching inclusion and member engagement which is also cumbersome and can prevent progress.

Discussions in meetings between now and October should be pointed, not retreading old content. Members discussed what structure and roles conversations should look like:

- What's wrong and how does this make right? What are we trying to fix?
- What changes were made or not made and why?
- Comparison of what we have vs the proposed – what do they accomplish and what is the change?
- Spell out decision process

The August meeting will have a synopsis of the proposed final changes. The focus is on how this helps us increase pace and scale by working better together. Karen and the Co-Chairs will

- Lay out different options of changing process and roles.
- Review what consultants recommended.
- Co-chair Luke said she could give her presentation of structure and roles discussion that she gave at a previous meeting.

Co-chair Ngari suggested that members attend meetings of other Collaboratives between now and October to see how their processes work. Pinchot Partners for example is run by an Executive Committee. They have a field tour 7/16.

## Grant Funding Opportunities

Now that DNR can not renew its funding contract for the NCWFHC for the foreseeable future, there is a need to look for alternate sources of funding for a Facilitator/Coordinator and associated expenses, including a new computer.

One possible grant to apply for is the National Forest Foundation Collaborative Capacity Grant. The mini grants fund proposals of \$10K or less and the standard fund proposals from \$10-\$75K and is due a bit later than the mini. She added that it was an obvious choice to apply for, but that the Collaborative does not want to be in conflict with Patrick Haggerty's application for the same grant for a CCD strategic plan for cross-boundary burning. Patrick said it shouldn't be a conflict since that work would be parallel with and complimentary to what the Collaborative does.

Co-chair Ngari asked if the Collaborative applied for this in the past and was successful. Co-chair Luke said that it did but that the NFF stopped offering it at some point and that it has been almost 10 years since it last applied. Co-chair Ngari suggested saying in the application that we applied previously, what we did with the funding, and why we were successful.

Matt confirmed he knew that the Naches Forest Partners is also applying for this grant. Karen will follow up with Matt and Lloyd to meet Jen Serowitz of their collaborative to coordinate.

***Decision: Approve applying for the National Forest Foundation Collaborative Capacity Grant.***

Another possible grant is one through Thriving Together, which already offers a meeting space that NCWFHC has been using. The grant could be also used for funding for facilitator salaries and can award between \$10-\$40K. It requires becoming a network partner, which is not extra work for the collaborative but offers benefits to us.

***Decision: Approve applying for the grant through Thriving Together.***

The NFF grant is due August 1 with a 5, 18, or 24 month grant period. The TT grant is due August 30.

Co-chair Luke said to make sure we are on the email list for grants through the Icicle Fund and the NCW Community Foundation.

Members brought up previous discussions of bringing in the Cle Elum ranger district into the Collaborative. It will be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Commissioner Hover said that he will see if Okanogan County can contribute to the Facilitator salary. Other members noted an option is to see if all can contribute a little, and this will be put on the next meeting agenda.

## **After-Action Review: Joint Collaborative Letter to Congresspeople**

Co-chair Ngari spoke about how forest collaborative coordinators from other collaboratives had reached out to legislators in a letter of advocacy and signed it as if it were coming from all the collaboratives. This was not in adherence with process or normal procedures. It was discussed how to set a precedent for this not happening in the future. not following processes, reaching out to senators

Commissioner Hover suggested writing a letter of concern. Co-chair Ngari suggested addressing letters to each of the other collaboratives. Co-chair Luke suggested the letters outline our own collaboratives processes and way of doing things. The following next steps were decided:

- Develop a NCWFHC Letter SOP
  - Issues of relevance
  - Comment dispersal means (Over the phone or letter)
  - Timeframe for completion
- Send a Letter of Concern to the authors
  - Addressed to all collaboratives in the state
  - Explain we're working on formalization of process; send them to others
  - Note not including us in letters as we need to go through the process of our collaborative
- When statewide level is appropriate, consider SNW as a convener for a letter

## Member Roundtable

Co-chair Ngari: She will be going to DC on behalf of Hampton Lumber to advocate for boots on the ground and Collaboratives, as well as working on advocacy. Hampton has also started a G to Z primer.

Lorah Super: The Conservation Commission awarded half of what was asked for for wildfire prevention and resilience to the Okanogan Conservation District. As a result, she was appointed to another watershed-related project. Eli Loftis will likely replace her on the collaborative.

Matt Danielson – The Upper Methow developing a lynx habitat model to use across the forest. This should ease consultation. Needs to have good science behind the model and decision. Not as much emphasis on the aquatics side of things and Yakama Nation is reaching out to MVRD.

Brandon Rogers – There has not been quite as much emphasis on the aquatics side of things in the Upper Methow, even though ideally that side of things to be as robust as in other places. Working on this across all projects.

Karen noted there had been a request for 9:30 AM start times for Quarterly meetings, since those traveling longer distances for the meetings preferred to leave earlier. She said we will try this for the next Quarterly meeting. Karen asked if all present were in favor of having virtual meetings in the winter with a 9:30 AM start time. All approved.

*Decision: Approve a) holding winter meetings virtually and b) Quarterly has a start time of 9:30 AM.*

The meeting adjourned at 3:57 PM.

July 2, 2025

Steering Committee Mtg. Summary  
 Methow Conservancy, Winthrop, WA  
 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm



*Attendance*

Additional Parties:

Karen Berg (NCWFHC), Gabby Vermeire (UCSRB), Victoria Wilkins, Seth Kammer, Erica Taecker (OWNF), Gia Landis (Conservation Northwest), Jim Passage (Lake Wenatchee Fire Adapted Communities), Yesenia Perez (Wenatchee Café), Brandon Rogers (Yakama Nation), Crystal Elliot (Trout Unlimited)

| NCWFHC Member                                   | Representative   | Participation | SC | 7/2 tour | 7/2 SC             | In-person/<br>Online |
|---|------------------|---------------|----|----------|--------------------|----------------------|
| American Forest Resource Council                | Tom Partin       | NCWFHC        | Y  | TP       | TP                 | in-person            |
|   | Matt Comisky     | Alternate     |    |          |                    |                      |
| Cascadia Conservation District                  | Ryan Williams    | NCWFHC        | Y  | PH       | PH                 | online               |
|   | Patrick Haggarty | Alternate     |    |          |                    |                      |
|   | Joe Hill         | Alternate     |    |          |                    |                      |
| Chelan County                                   | Mike Kaputa      | NCWFHC        | Y  | -        | -                  |                      |
| Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation | Rebecca Hunt     | NCWFHC        | Y  | declined | absent with notice |                      |
|   | Sam Rushing      | Alternate     |    |          |                    |                      |
| Conservation Northwest                          | Matt Danielson   | NCWFHC        | Y  | MD       | MD                 | in-person            |
|   | Dave Werntz      | Alternate     |    |          |                    |                      |
| Hampton Lumber                                  | Anjolene Ngari   | NCWFHC        | Y  | AN       | AN                 | in-person            |
| Okanogan Conservation District                  | Lorah Super      | NCWFHC        | Y  | LS       | LS                 | in-person            |

|                                    |                         |           |   |          |        |           |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|---|----------|--------|-----------|
|                                    | Eli Loftus              | Alternate |   |          |        |           |
|                                    | Craig Nelson            | Alternate |   |          |        |           |
| Okanogan County                    | Commissioner Andy Hover | NCWFHC    | Y | AH       | AH     | in-person |
|                                    | Commissioner Nick Timm  | Alternate |   |          |        |           |
| The Nature Conservancy             | Lloyd McGee             | NCWFHC    | Y | LM, CW   | LM, CW | in-person |
|                                    | Catherine Waterston     | Alternate |   |          |        |           |
| The Wilderness Society             | Tiana Luke              | NCWFHC    | Y | TL       | 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 | CH maybe | AR     | online    |
|                                    | Amy Ramsey              | Alternate |   |          |        |           |
| Yakama Nation                      | Brandon Rogers          | NCWFHC    | Y | declined | BR     | online    |