



Formal Approvals

Item	Action-Decision
Proposed Nov. 5, 2025 SC agenda	Approved. The final will be posted online at: https://www.ncwfhc.org/meetings/
Proposed Oct. 1, 2025 SC meeting summary	Approved. The final will be posted online at: https://www.ncwfhc.org/meetings/

Next Steps

Item	Follow-up
Circle back with answers re. G-Z contracting from presentation	Karen Berg with Andy Geissler (AFRC) – done and inserted in text below.

Welcome and Introductions

Facilitator Karen Berg opened the meeting at 10:00 am and welcomed all participants to this virtual only meeting. Introductions were made for all in the room.

Agenda and Summary

Karen presented the Nov 5, 2025 agenda and asked if there were any further edits or adjustments. Changes noted were that Co-Chair Luke would give OWNF update on behalf of the FS.

Karen asked if there were any edits or adjustments to the Oct. 1, 2025 SC meeting summary; none were noted.

The November 5, 2025 Quarterly agenda and October 1, 2025 SC meeting summary were approved as presented.

AFRC G-Z Primer for Collaboratives — *Andy Geissler, AFRC (Federal Timber Program Director)*

Andy Geissler, previously with the DNR, now with the AFRC presented a primer on the G-Z tool to the collaborative.

The G-Z model is a tool designed to help fill capacity gaps in implementing FS projects. It's a new model that excludes the NEPA process and helps fill the gap of timber sale layouts as a project bottleneck. There are 5 total G-Z projects – 2 in OR, 1 in WA and 2 in CA.

In the Fremont-Winema NF the cost of work exceeded value of timber. Timber volume and rates were a significant unknown. Cost of work was offset by future value.

Andy noted that the AFRC is always advocating for increased FS budget and capacity.

This is a service contract so it needs supplemental funding. Maybe future projects can be balanced on timber profit. Sale layout and sale preparation can be part of it. Anjolene noted that the South end of the Gifford Pinchot and the Colville have offered G-Z sales as well.

The Go Big G-Z was the first one and is being treated as a test. It was implemented 2 years ago. Fre-Win NF is 3rd in the nation for timber, behind Colville NF and Ouachita in Arkansas. One of the ways was through leveraging supplemental funding and timber value. There are commercial and non-commercial units. It is still being implemented, so they don't know exact volumes.

FS had only draft units with vague plans, so they were not sure if it was economically valuable. Collins didn't even know exactly what would be available. The first step was to do a rough recon. This requires a lot of communication and coordination between the contractor and FS. It is going relatively smoothly so far. Units may need to be dropped or trimmed.

The second step was that the contractor did a layout (GPS, boundary marking, marking for variable density thinning, wildlife, trees, etc.). Then, FS did the cruises to determine volume – the appraisal is held by FS by law and not turned over to the contractor. This will determine the advertised (minimum) rate.

There is a fair amount of risk for the contractor/purchaser. Bid premium must be included in the G-Z and it could be \$0 over minimum or more, e.g. \$5/ton above. There is an "out" in the event that the appraisal is too low to make economic sense.

Every forest has timber volume targets, so the G-Z has to fit in this framework and needs to account for every accomplished target. This sets deadlines for project progression and to manage the timber expectations from the Region and District. The flow is included in the contract.

This is not a standard timber sale – it requires much more in depth work between the contractor and FS. There is a huge risk without knowing stumpage.

There were two additional G-Z projects from August 2025. One was awarded to Gilchrist Forest Products on Tiny in August 2025. Based on volume estimations by LiDar, it has had some problems but FS is comfortable enough to set a minimum rate. It's pretty early to determine how well it's going, but it shows that G-Z can be done in different ways. Borderline IRTC rather than obvious IRSC Integrated Stewardship Contract.

Andy noted two case studies:

1. Anders IRTC/Fremont-Winema NF
 - a. Did future sale prep with current sale
2. Falls IRTC/Gifford Pinchot NF
 - a. Uses timber value to offset the stewardship work needed
 - b. More narrow than Go Big, but did boundary marking, unit eval work
 - c. Used timber sale value to help prep future sale values = tradeoffs
 - d. Optional items are if there are funds not if contractor "elects to do it"

Commissioner Hover noted that there needs to be a balance on getting county funds paid out for essential county services. County benefits via SRS have not been reappropriated. Okanogan county needs \$750k for county roads alone, not counting schools. Got \$83k this year. Commissioner Hover

noted if we aren't doing work on forests, we will all suffer. There are layoffs in all areas for plowing and road work. Eli noted that losing Title III funding affects wildfire mitigation and air quality programs. Andy Geissler responded that they support FS timber projects supporting county services and that apprehension from stakeholders is fair.

There is a concern that timber industry is reconning and prepping sales. Commissioner Hover noted that only qualified people can be selected by FS. Get experts in the process because it's in our best interest to have industry noting what's economically feasible. Make it so units will sell. Andy Geissler said there is past performance criteria and part of good stewardship contracting is to go with qualified contractors with a good track record.

Vernita asked in the chat: Andy, could you speak more about the potential disruption to FS funding delaying the work? Is that related specifically to unit layout, design, and prep? Contracting? Or other parts of the process as well?

There were disruptions in FS to be able to make the payments IIA/BIL. There aren't issues with retained receipts.

Rick Evans: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/356>

There was a discussion on the SRS bill that passed in the Senate this year. Commissioner Hover noted that it passed the Senate but is held in the House. It is possible it's included in a large appropriations bill in the coming weeks/months if it's not passed as a standalone bill.

Dwight asked if the FS checks the contractor cruise. Andy Geissler was not sure but will check on that.

Follow up from Andy 11/5: "On Go Big, the FS required cruising to Forest Service standards. The contractor designed the cruise plan and the FS reviewed and approved it. The FS did not require the cruisers to be forest service certified. They did a training day prior to cruising starting so the contractor was aware of some unique forest service expectations. They cruised it and then the FS check-cruised it when it was done. If it passed the check cruise, then it was accepted and paid.

So, there certainly seems to be FS oversight on the cruise despite the formal "certification" not being a requirement.

Anjolene and Kevin noted the analysis is by the company with all the company mindset behind it. Andy Geissler said maybe they do random checks like DxP check-ins. Dwight also asked if there is a way to scale the timber on the way to the mill? Andy Geissler noted that this one is tonnage and tracked the same as any tonnage sale would be tracked. Contractor does the cruise.

Vernita asked in the chat: I understand that FS cruises and industry cruises are often quite different in process and specs and that makes the crosswalk difficult from a Forest Service cruise to an industry cruise. Is there an efficiency to consider here? And have FS modernization efforts addressed this at all?

Anjolene said you have to go to a silviculturist with a certification and it's an incredibly onerous process. This fits the situation best to limit work items to meet what can actually be done by the purchasers. Andy Geissler has loosely polled the industry members and found that generally purchasers and operators are comfortable with this. A-Z to include NEPA is a tougher sell, but from sale prep forward, this is something industry can do. The model has a good future, though requires NEPA shelf stock.

Patrick asked if there is a "D-Z" model to cover more of the biological and cultural surveys. Heritage surveys are a bottleneck and becoming a need in these projects. With Categorical Exclusion projects, the requests were in surveys, particularly heritage surveys.

Yes, they could be included. It's expensive but can get the expertise and put it in the contract. Anjolene mentioned that Mt. Baker had the tribe do the cultural survey for free. There can be a great collaborative partnership with this.

Dwight asked that, given G-Z sales are fairly new, can company personnel for cruising be certified? Anjolene said they are and have to be certified through USDA. Resilient forestry can be certified under FS. Dwight asked if G-Z would not allow the cruisers unless certified. Andy Geissler will follow up.

Vernita mentioned in the chat: One industry partner paying for the NEPA and then being offered first right of refusal of sales/contracts out of that may create competition issues among industry partners if there is more than one mill in an area. A-Z seems best used in locations where there is only one operator. Andy Geissler agreed and said that because Colville has fewer operators it was a bit more appropriate.

Commissioner Hover asked if they are looking at the 20-yr Forest Plan or any other planning documents to select first steps to work in. Andy Geiss mentioned the genesis was a collaborative effort. Anjolene mentioned that on OWNF specifically, FS identifies the project area and desired conditions with an idea of what needs to be done but without a full understanding or NEPA. In Chumstick to LP, FS said they don't have an IDT to do the work and would industry be interested. Commissioner Hover asked if the offer goes out to all the players to solicit. Anjolene and Kevin said that an RFI went out to all industry but not all wood fits the industry player.

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (OWNF) Information – *Co-Chair Tiana Luke*

- Tiana gave a report out on the Forest's behalf.
- BAER report will be published here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r06/okanogan-wenatchee/fire/resources>, look under "reports"
 - Lower Sugarloaf is 93k acres and 90% contained
 - Low intensity soil burns, mismatched
 - Planned to use CE for salvage (<250 ac) with no scoping due to new NEPA regulations. Not planning any temporary roads. Tight timelines to complete CE by Dec for a Dec-Jan sale.
 - 5800 and 5200 roads are primarily hazardous tree work

- Planning to do a pheromone treatment for white bark pine to reduce beetles and could use collaborative help for this plus 3 years monitoring its effectiveness.

Outreach Workgroup Updates — Facilitator Karen Berg

- Written updates from Chair Catherine Waterston (TNC)
 - Storymap link: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/5ad62161cd02421ab90a74522a66d0d0>
 - Last month we welcomed seven state legislators to Chelan County to showcase the on-the-ground impacts of HB 1168’s Wildfire Resilience Account. The first stop of the tour was a fuel break on Chiwawa Loop Road, where Mike Kaputa and Erin McKay (Chelan County NR) shared how state funding has helped strategically plan forest treatments in the area and unlocked local, federal, and private funds to get this important forest restoration and wildfire risk reduction work done. At the second stop, in the Stellerwood community, we focused on community resilience and wildfire preparedness and heard from a local resident, Erin, Patrick Haggerty (Cascadia CD), and Chief David Walker (LWFRD). Speakers emphasized the all-lands, all-hands approach and the collaboration required to do this work successfully. Over lunch, we received an update from Scott McFarland from DNR on the active fires in the region and the importance of proactive wildfire preparedness. Jen Watkins followed (and knocked it out of the park) with her message that work funded through HB 1168 is saving lives, forests, and money – but will not continue without stable, long-term funding. Skippy Shaw (TNC) and Cody Desautel (Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation) closed out the tour by asking our legislators to follow through on their commitment to wildfire resilience and response funding in the upcoming legislative session.

It was a great day hearing from many of our Collaborative partners and showing west-side legislators the important work that is being done in North Central Washington and why it should matter to them. If you would like a virtual walk through of the day – check out the story map linked in the agenda. We have since shared this resource with many legislators that indicated interest in these issues but couldn’t attend the tour. Many, many thanks to Sustainable Northwest, Chelan County, and Chelan PUD for helping plan and fund the tour and to our great speakers throughout the day.

I also want to recognize that Okanogan CD and UCSRB also hosted legislative tours in October. I appreciated the leads for each tour coming together to both prepare and share lessons learned with each other, so we can continue to coordinate and plan successful tours in the future!

- The next Outreach Work Group meeting is scheduled for December 2nd. We’ll review Key Messages and the 2025-2026 work plan, both for the Steering Committee’s approval in January.
- If anyone has messages from their archives, please bring them to OWG.

Project Workgroup Updates — *Co-Chairs Luke and Ngari*

- Midnight Draft Decision Notice Final EA (sent out 10/23 and linked to PWG agenda sent out)
- Discussed at PWG 11/6 – meeting will be VIRTUAL ONLY
- Note that Midnight was developed with RF for proposed action. It shouldn't be a lift to do a comment letter.
- We wrote an objection to be at table, but in support
- Look for link in PWG agenda
- Look for link FS gave showing difference
- Timeframe – 45-day comment period (from 10/23/25)

Operating Protocols/ Guiding Documents & Procedures — *Facilitator Karen Berg*

- Operating Protocols Nov 2025 (with proposed sections noted in the document) sent out 10/29
- Member recommitment timing
 - Decision: The member recommitment process will occur each odd-numbered year at the May quarterly meeting and be initiated by the coordinator.

Facilitator/Coordinator Funding — *Facilitator Karen Berg*

- Grant updates
 - We are waiting on word from NFF and CFCNW
 - DNR and TWS anticipated – thank you to both
- Still in need but are currently funded through the winter

Meeting Schedule

- December SC meeting DATE CHANGE to 12/10, 1-4 pm – VIRTUAL ONLY
- 11/12 co-collaborative gathering Resilient Roots, 9 am-12 pm– VIRTUAL ONLY
 - Vernita mentioned the government shutdown affected the gathering, but they didn't want to lose all the planning effort. They hope to gather in February or March in person. Please hold 11/12.
 - Things are changing across Federal agencies – priorities, staffing, etc. This is a dialogue on impacts and how to retool/refocus how we work. Please join the discussion if you can.
- ~~11/13-14 CWI Science Symposium~~ – Postponed as federal employees are about ½ the attendees. We hope to schedule it for late winter or spring.
- March meeting DATE CHANGE to 2/25/26 to accommodate Lloyd's retirement party. Party will be at Timberline in Wenatchee following the meeting

Below is the revised 2026 schedule based on the discussion and group approval:

Month	SC/Quarterly (1 st Weds)	PWG (1 st Thurs)	OWG (1 st Tues)
January	Virtual	Virtual	Virtual

February	Virtual	Virtual	Virtual
March (Held 2/25/26)	Wenatchee/ Virtual	Wenatchee/ Virtual	Virtual
April	Wenatchee/ Virtual	Wenatchee/ Virtual	Virtual
May	Wenatchee/ Virtual	Wenatchee/ Virtual	Virtual
June	Okanogan County/ Virtual	Okanogan County/ Virtual	Virtual
July	Leavenworth/ Virtual	Leavenworth/ Virtual	Virtual
August	Wenatchee/ Virtual	Wenatchee/ Virtual	Virtual
September	Chelan/ Virtual	Chelan/ Virtual	Virtual
October	Okanogan County/ Virtual	Okanogan County/ Virtual	Virtual
November	Wenatchee/ Virtual	Wenatchee/ Virtual	Virtual
December	Virtual	Virtual	Virtual

The meeting adjourned at 11:55 am.

Attendance

NCWFHC Member	Representative	Participation	Steering Committee	11/5 Quarterly
American Forest Resource Council	Tom Partin	NCWFHC	Y	
	Matt Comisky	Alternate		
Cascadia Conservation District	Patrick Haggarty	NCWFHC	Y	PH
	Joe Hill	Alternate		
	Ryan Williams	Alternate		
Chelan County	Mike Kaputa	NCWFHC	Y	
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	Rebecca Hunt	NCWFHC	Y	
	Sam Rushing	Alternate		
Conservation Northwest	Matt Danielson	NCWFHC	Y	MD
	Dave Werntz	Alternate		
Hampton Lumber	Anjolene Ngari	NCWFHC	Y	AN
Okanogan Conservation District	Lorah Super	NCWFHC	Y	EL
	Eli Loftus	Alternate		
	Craig Nelson	Alternate		
Okanogan County	Commissioner Andy Hover	NCWFHC	Y	AH
	Commissioner Nick Timm	Alternate		
The Nature Conservancy	Lloyd McGee	NCWFHC	Y	
	Catherine Waterston	Alternate		
The Wilderness Society	Tiana Luke	NCWFHC	Y	TL
	Megan Birzell	Alternate		
Trout Unlimited	Crystal Elliot-Perez	NCWFHC	Y	CE
	Theo Burgoon	Alternate		
WA Department of Natural Resources	Chuck Hersey	NCWFHC	Y	AR
	Amy Ramsey	Alternate		
Yakama Nation	Brandon Rogers	NCWFHC	Y	BR
Boise Cascade	Kevin Arneson	NCWFHC		KA
Cascade Fisheries	Jason Lundgren	NCWFHC		
Chelan-Douglas Land Trust	Mickey Fleming	NCWFHC		
Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition	Cristy Bishop	NCWFHC		CB
	Mandy Maxwell	Alternate email		
	John Callahan	Alternate		
Lake Wenatchee Fire Adapted Community	Jim Passage	NCWFHC		
	David Walker	Alternate		
	Kris King	Alternate		
Methow Valley Citizen's Council	Lorah Super (interim)	NCWFHC		LS
Vaagen Bros. Lumber Co	Josh Anderson	NCWFHC		

	Kurtis Vaagen	Alternate		
WA Department of Fish & Wildlife	Lisa Dowling	NCWFHC		LD
	* empty at the moment	Alternate		
Wenatchee Cafe	Yesenia Perez	NCWFHC		YP
	Marco Granados	Alternate		
	Alma Chacon	Alternate		

Additional Parties:

Karen Berg (NCWFHC), Leslie Selgestad (UCSRB), John Kerkering (OWNF), Andy Geissler (ARFC), Gia Landis (SNW), Rachel McClure (Rep. Newhouse), Susan Crampton, Rick Evans (Sen. Cantwell), Maia Walston (Darrington Collaborative), Adam Gebauer (The Lands Council), Toni Ball (Sen. Murray)