

March 5, 2025

Steering Committee Mtg. Summary

Wenatchee Valley Fire Station 11, Wenatchee, WA

1:00 pm - 4:00 pm



Formal Approvals

Item	Action-Decision
Proposed March 5, 2025 SC agenda	Approved. The final will be posted online at: https://www.ncwfhc.org/meetings/
Proposed February 12, 2025 Quarterly meeting summary	Approved. The final will be posted online at: https://www.ncwfhc.org/meetings/
	Approved

Next Steps

Item	Follow-up
Provide Collaborative with information for public comment period for implementation for NEPA executive order	Victoria Wilkins – *
Share WDFW letter for support for its FS partners with Collaborative	Lisa Dowling
Write letter for support for its FS partners	Jim Passage, Matt Danielson, Megan Birzell, and Lisa Dowling
Can FS partners help with finding money for a mediator for FS/USFWS mediation?	FS
Send out draft letter re. DEIS for NWFP after meeting	Matt Danielson, KB – done 3/12/25
Add Outreach event dates to NCWFHC calendar	KB - 2025-meetings-events.xlsx - Google Sheets
Hold vote by email on Resilient Forestry monitoring contract scope of work	KB
Share NFRC Twisp amicus brief and newsletter article with Collaborative	KB - **

* <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/02/25/2025-03014/removal-of-national-environmental-policy-act-implementing-regulations>

** AFRC's [March 2025 Newsletter](#)

Welcome and Introductions

Co-chair Lorah Super opened the meeting and noted that Co-chair Anjolene Ngari would not be at the meeting. She added that several decisions would be put to the Collaborative after the meeting by email.

Agenda and Summary

Members introduced themselves and reviewed the draft March 5, 2025 Steering Committee meeting agenda and draft February 12, 2025 Quarterly meeting summary.

Facilitator Berg noted that there were no edits to the Quarterly meeting summary after it was shared over email. She asked if there any changes to today's meeting agenda and none were noted.

Approved the March 5, 2025 SC agenda and February 12 Quarterly meeting summary as presented.

Co-chair Super said that per the new operating protocols, all present were welcome to listen and look for first part of the steering committee meeting. Those who were not members of the Steering Committee will be asked to leave once the closed session begins. The closed session is for SC members to hash out ideas informally, and notes from the session will still be made public.

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (OWNF) Updates

Co-chair Super noted that all appreciate the FS personnel attending meetings, but that attendance was always voluntary.

Updates from the Forest Supervisor's Office

Kari Grover-Wier said that things were changing by the day with new executive orders, including a recent one to accelerate timber production. Forest Service Chief Randy Moore has retired, and the new Chief is Tom Schultz. Victoria Wilkins noted that there was a new EO regarding NEPA, and that there would be a public comment period on implementation.

Kari added that IGA (IRA) funding was under review and that they had lost quite a few employees over the past month. All federal agencies are required to have a reduction in force in the next couple of months.

Q: Of probationary employees lost, were any of those in timber? Are they coming back?

A: Victoria: We don't know those numbers, they are housed at the departmental level.

Q: Were you able to keep allocated permanent employees?

A: All probationary employees were permanent employees.

Lisa Dowling said that WDFW was writing a letter for support for its FS partners and the important roles they play. Co-chair Super said that it would be good to share that letter of support with the Collaborative as well.

It was discussed that the Collaborative could do something similar. Members suggested to send the letter to Washington's congressional delegation, and that it could be approved by email. Jim Passages, Matt Danielson, Megan Birzell, and Lisa Dowling could help with the letter.

Kari said that as far as the LSRA second decision, the proposed mediation between FS and USFWS was no longer happening. Tara Umphries is still meeting weekly with USFWS representatives.

Q: Does the Forest Service need help with funding a mediator?

A: FS can check on that.

Central Washington Initiative

Kari Grover-Wier said that FS was working on a CWI accomplishment report with DNR and presented members with a summary of what would be in that report.

Key accomplishments for FY24 included hazardous fuels reduction, non-commercial thinning, timber sales, stream habitat improvement, and 18.2 acres total of prescribed burning.

Total funding for FY24 was \$20.8M.

Kari reviewed the completed acres of fuel reduction work for each fiscal year since CWI funding began in FY22, noting that funding and work for FY22 was for half a year.

Kari reviewed total CWI funding to the FS (IJA/IRA funding) for each fiscal year since 2022. She said they had not yet received any FY25 funds besides salaries, and was unsure if they would receive it. She noted that unspent funds were carried over into the next fiscal year.

FY22-24 contracts and agreements

- Agreements
 - Fuel treatments – DNR, Chelan County
 - Aquatic restoration – Yakama Nation, Cascade Fisheries
 - Partnerships
 - Analysis – landscape evaluation, smoke emissions
 - Tribal support
- Contracts
 - Fuels reduction – thinning, mastication
 - NEPA planning - Midnight, Chumstick
 - Surveys
 - Timber sale prep and lay-out
 - Road tree removal

The accomplishment report will be finalized in April.

Upper Wenatchee Pilot Project Implementation Update

Pete Wier shared photos from the UWPP, including ones from Fall -winter 2024, and comparative pictures of Dry Forest Initial treatments and Moist initial treatments,

Pete reported that it had primarily been ground-based harvest this winter season with some tethered operations, and that log-processing was automated and efficient. He added that there was a promising lack of soil impact from the tree removal.

Pete reviewed the economic outputs for the project's implementation so far:

- 17 log truck drivers + 13 ad hoc drivers
- Raging sales – white wood to Randle, Douglas fir to Darrington & Morton, misc. dead wood to Ellensburg

Q: What are your overall thoughts on implementation of the project so far?

A: Sometimes DXP is at the bottom end of the range. In general, the folks working are getting it right the first time for harvest, and while many stands were not great to begin with, most look good now.

Q: How many truck loads have you had so far?

A: Over the last two months, we've had about 700 per month for February and January.

Q: Was snow pack an obstacle?

Q: Somewhat. However, the very cold temperatures resulted in a lack of impact to the ground.

Q: Have you had to deal with root disease treatment?

A: We target host species for removal with no diameter limit on those trees. It's usually Grand fir and Douglas fir, so we remove all those trees from those stands.

Q: Is the plan to come back next winter?

A: For Meadow sales we will be out soon but back when everything is dry for hauling, and it's the same with Raging. We will likely be back in the summer.

Q: What has been the community reaction to the activity?

Jim Passage said that he has not heard anything negative from community, even if they wondered what was happening with all the trucks.

Pete reported that sometimes folks from the community would watch the activity, but that there were no real impacts from that.

No one present had received negative community feedback.

Project Work Group Updates

Matt Danielson, standing in for Co-chair Ngari, provided updates from Project Work Group.

Northwest Forest Plan – Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Matt reported that he along with Co-chair Ngari and Lisa Dowling had workshopped a draft letter re. the DEIS for the NWFP to include high-level concerns for the Collaborative. The deadline for public comment is March 17. The rough draft had been sent out to the Collaborative yesterday, and members will have

until March 10 to review and give feedback. In order to submit the letter by March 17, members can expect a vote by email. Matt said that in giving feedback, members should look closely at each section, particularly the wildfire section, and let PWG know if they see things that the Collaborative shouldn't sign off on or isn't in its mission.

The next PWG meeting is March 25 from 10am to noon in the Thriving Together building.

Chuck Hersey said he believed the letter was too long, and that the Collaborative should think about what is important to highlight that it supports/has suggestions on. Tom Partin agreed that the letter was too long. Matt said that that he would send out a new draft letter with condensed bullet points after the meeting (Karen Berg will send out).

Outreach Working Group

Patrick Haggerty is standing in for Outreach Working Group chair Catherine Waterson. He said that per last meeting, the group had created an outreach work plan.

This included project tours for two areas:

- Chelan/Eniat – It was suggested that we tour the Bear Mountain project. On April 3, there will be a community event on Rx burning for Ruby U. at Ruby Theatre in Chelan (7-8:30 pm) Catherine would like to know the SC's level of interest in these ideas.
- Leavenworth/Lake Wenatchee
 - While at the last meeting it was suggested to combine a community outreach event with the May Collaborative field tour, it was decided at the PWG meeting that it was better to separate those tours.
 - Lake Wenatchee Fire and Rescue and Cascadia CD will do the community-focused tour, which Collaborative members are also welcome to attend.
 - For the field tour associated with the spring Quarterly meeting, the plan is to go back up to the UWPP. Members could see DNR's monitoring protocol with DNR could do a short training. Members could then do some stand surveys themselves.
 - Co-chair Super said that because May 7 is Okanogan CD's Community Day, she would not be able to attend the May 7 Quarterly meeting but would like to be at the May 6 tour.

Patrick said that they were planning on tabling at the Chumstick Wildfire Coalition's event at Lake Wenatchee (4/30), and TNC would be tabling at the capitol on April 9 for Forest Products Day.

Karen Berg asked if there was any opposition to using NCWFHC outreach materials at these events. None were noted.

Patrick said the Cascadia CD would be hosting presentations on wildfire protection on March 25 at Pybus, followed by elections for the CCD board.

Karen will add these outreach events to the NCWFHC website.

March 11 will be the next outreach workgroup meeting. Members with questions or who want to attend should email Catherine.

Patrick added that the next CCD newsletter would highlight work going on with UWPP, and that it would be a helpful read for those who have questions about where “all that wood” is going. Members with article ideas should get those in next week.

Upcoming Best Practices Collaborative Training Postponed

Co-chair Super advised that due to funding issues, the best practices Collaborative training was on hold indefinitely.

New Membership

Co-chair Super gave a reminder that there was a three-month hiatus on adding new members to the Collaborative or SC, unless the new operating protocols were adopted in full before then. As such, WDFW cannot be added to the SC at this time.

BREAK

**** END GENERAL STEERING COMMITTEE MTG ****

CLOSED SESSION BEGINS AT 2:30PM

Meeting Participation Protocol

Karen asked for all but SC members to leave the meeting.

Governance Subcommittee Proposed Operating Protocols Structure and Roles

Co-chair Super advised that the Governance work group has not yet met to figure out to reintroduce the subject of the Structures and Roles section of the revised operating protocols. The next steps are for the governance subcommittee to meet.

She added that there was still funding to do strategic planning and create Zones of Agreement.

Karen Berg reminded members of the difference between consent and consensus in the new operating protocols, where member feedback is key. On a given decision, green is “agree,” yellow is “have reservations but can live with it,” and red is “disagree, but here are alternate ideas.”

Co-chair Super added that the main hang up on the Structures and Roles was around voting members and the dynamics between members of the SC and the full Collaborative, and figuring out who wants to be involved in decision-making and how to codify this.

Building Forest Partnerships Grant Amendment to Monitoring

Matt Danielson reminded the SC committee that the Resilient Forestry contract came out of the need to use the \$13K Building Forces funding from DNR previously allocated for a facilitator. The proposal is to use the funding to supplement stand monitoring already being implemented by Kerry Kemp (OWNF). This additional monitoring would be using drones to evaluate spatial patterns in forest stands before and after treatment in the UWPP area. A vote is needed to approve the scope of work for the Resilient contract. Matt said that this was determined to be a better use of leftover money, and would make the stand treatment more effective.

He added that Kerry said the funding source she had been using is guaranteed for this summer for stand monitoring, so there were unlikely to be disruptions in the funding. Tom Partin added that per Pete Wier's report on UPPP implementation from earlier, there is good oversight on contractors out there. Co-chair Super noted that people like drone imagery because it can double as good publicity and can be educational.

Karen it would be helpful to see this monitoring as part of the May Quarterly tour. She said that the vote will come up by email and that we are currently on Resilient Forestry's schedule. The contract will be held by fiscal sponsor UCSRB, and the SC will vote on the scope of work using the new system of approval per the OP of green, yellow, and red. Expect an email vote in the next week or so.

Roundtable

Forest Service Leadership

Co-chair Super said that the FS chief had resigned and that the new chief was Tom Schultz.

HB 1168 – Sustainable Northwest letter of support

Co-chair Super said that Karen had circulated a letter of support from Sustainable Northwest for the Wildfire Account funding for DNR bill HB 1168, which was signed onto by the Collaborative.

Forest Service firings

Q: Do we know the full scale of the FS firings?

A: 40 for OWNF in total is the number going around, but nothing has been confirmed by the FS.

Congressionally Directed Federal Funding

Chuck Hersey spoke about following up on Rick Evans' (Sen. Cantwell's office) presentation on Congressional earmark funding requests. Congress doesn't appropriate additional dollars for these; they come out of line items. He said that group had met a few weeks ago to discuss what a high-level proposal would look like. Potential ideas for applying for the funding include fuel crews, GNA work on

federal land, and contractors for larger work on private land. Folks have been trying to develop those project components into a draft proposal, but there is overall uncertainty - Is match required? Is there a funding source that can be used to tap into work on federal land? Will it survive reconciliation? The group still needs feedback from the Senator's office on these issues. The Dep of Interior budget will likely be cut as well.

Q: Has there been communication with Forest Service about this?

A: Yes, Chuck talked about it with Kari.

LSRA 2nd Decision

Karen noted that all had voted on a letter to FS re. second decision on LSRA which had been received by the FS. Tom Partin said that the important question was if there would be a comment period for a second consultation.

Patrick Haggerty had followed up from last meeting by contacting consultants who did the first consultation for the UWPP and asked how difficult it would be to do a second. They said it wouldn't take much to put together second EA. He also asked what potential doors a second EA could open up, e.g. another objection period? What are the consequences of stalling progress? The consultant didn't have an answer on these. Tom said that he thought opening up the LSRA for another comment period would jeopardize the entire project.

Next Meeting in April

Karen said the next SC meeting was April 2. Because that is during many peoples' spring break, she asked if there would be a better date. Co-chair Super said she would be unable to attend. Tom Partin cannot make it and Megan Birzell is tentative.

It was decided that it would work better to move the meeting to April 9.

Members discussed when it would be good to hold a meeting further north, potentially the first Wednesday in June meeting. Chelan or the Methow might work as a good middle point. Chuck suggested touring the Cooper Ridge Fuel Break project in Chelan.

AFRC update on the Twisp Oral Hearing

Sarah Melton from AFRC's legal team gave the following updates following the oral hearing for the case on the Twisp Restoration project where NCCC is suing FS.

- AFRC provided an amicus brief to the court

- This lawsuit was brought about because FS used condition-based management for logging and thinning decisions
- This was the first time it came before the 9th Circuit – the action was upheld at the District Court level in Jan 2024, but the Plaintiffs appealed
- The Judges asked questions about process – there was a sizable reduction in project area.
 - FS lawyers said that nothing new came up, so all treatments were valid for the portion they moved forward with
 - NCCC counsel said that the ideal process would only take a year to complete (scoping, public comment)
- NRCC doesn't think that there's adequate agency monitoring and that all decisions are left to industry and doesn't include NEPA site-specific analysis
- The initial complaint objected to involvement of the Collaborative, but that part has since been dropped
- Smaller size of project area might need reevaluation
- Things went better than we expected
 - Still don't know when to expect something from the 9th Circuit on this topic
 - We've had decisions from these same judges that suggest they might have a more cautionary approach, but we're defending condition-based management in other projects
 - Momentum behind decisions favoring more and more public participation and analysis is falling more flat these days

Q: What should we expect in terms of a timeline?

A: Other similar decisions have taken a month. The court could decide to do a memorandum decision (which would only apply to this specific case) which could be faster but not as precedent-setting

The meeting adjourned at 3:39.

March 5, 2025

Steering Committee Mtg. Summary

Wenatchee Valley Fire Station 11, Wenatchee, WA

1:00 pm - 4:00 pm



Attendance

NCWFHC Member	Representative	Participation	SC	3/5 attend	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	-	-
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	Rebecca Hunt	NCWFHC	Y	-	-
	Sam Rushing	Alternate			
Conservation Northwest	Matt Danielson	NCWFHC	Y	MD	in-person
	Dave Wertz	Alternate			
Hampton Lumber	Anjolene Ngari	NCWFHC	Y	Absent w Notice	Absent w Notice
Okanogan Conservation District	Lorah Super	NCWFHC	Y	LS	online
	Eli Loftus	Alternate			
	Craig Nelson	Alternate			
Okanogan County	Commissioner Andy Hover	NCWFHC	Y	-	-
	Commissioner Nick Timm	Alternate			
The Nature Conservancy	Lloyd McGee	NCWFHC	Y	Absent w Notice	Absent w Notice
	Catherine Waterston	Alternate			
The Wilderness Society	Tiana Luke	NCWFHC	Y	MB	online
	Mike Anderson	Alternate			
	Megan Birzell	Alternate			
Trout Unlimited	Crystal Elliot-Perez	NCWFHC	Y	-	-
	Theo Burgoon	Alternate			
WA Department of Natural Resources	Chuck Hersey	NCWFHC	Y	CH	online
	Amy Ramsey	Alternate			
Yakama Nation	Brandon Rogers	NCWFHC	Y	-	-

Other Attendance

In-Person:

Karen Berg (NCWFHC), Gabby Vermeire (UCSRB), Kari Grover-Wier, Seth Kammer, Victoria Wilkins (OWNF), Gia Landis (Sustainable Northwest),

Online: Jim Passage (Lake Wenatchee Fire Adapted Community), Yesenia Perez (Wenatchee Café), Jason Lundgren (Cascade Fisheries), , Deborah Kelly, Pete Wier (OWNF), David Walker (Lake Wenatchee Fire and Rescue)