



Quarterly Meeting Summary  
 Wenatchee Valley Fire Station #11  
 206 Easy St., Wenatchee, WA  
 February 12, 2025  
 10:00 am – 3:09 pm

**Quarterly Meeting: 10:00 am-3:09 pm**

- Participation by SC Members (*one voice-vote per Member*), OWNF staff and other Invitees
- Listen-Look access open to all public (remote or in-person)

**Formal Approvals**

Item	Action-Decision
Proposed February 12, 2025 Quarterly agenda	Approved. The final will be posted online at: <a href="https://www.ncwfhc.org/meetings/">https://www.ncwfhc.org/meetings/</a>
Proposed January 8, 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>
Approval of proposed Operating Protocols (EXCEPT Structure and Roles section)	Approved

**Next Steps**

Item	Follow-up
Share annual CFLRP report with Collaborative when available	Kerry Kemp, Karen Berg (summary ppt sent out)
Check with federal FS coordinator on helping sponsors not double-report partner work done with CFLRP match dollars	Kerry Kemp
FS/DNR MOU on FY24 accomplishments for Collaborative	Kerry Kemp
Send out link to give feedback for salmon recovery/wildfire resilience integration survey (TNC) Link to the engagement form: <a href="https://forms.gle/SWYaZjFQgbXHYWw57">https://forms.gle/SWYaZjFQgbXHYWw57</a>	Aileen Ettinger, Karen Berg
NWFP DEIS Comments – Share table of issues and alternative developed by DFW	Lisa Dowling
Look into fire district volunteers for drone monitoring	Patrick Haggerty, David Walker
Share link with new air curtain operating procedures	Patrick Haggerty
Add biologist opening in Chelan Co. with DFW to regional jobs page on UCSRB website	Gabby Vermeire

*Attendance*

**In-Person:**

Yesenia Perez, Marco Granados-Vidris (Wenatchee Café); Lisa Dowling (WDFW); Kari Grover-Wier, Victoria Wilkins, Seth Kammer, Erica Taeker, Kerry Kemp (USFS); Catherine Waterson, Darcy Batura, Cathy Baker (TNC); Kevin Arneson (Boise Lumber); Crystal Elliot (Trout Unlimited); Patrick Haggerty (Cascadia CD); Anjolene Ngari (Hampton Lumber), Karen Berg (NCWFHC/UCSRB), Matt Danielson (Conservation Northwest), Chuck Hersey (DNR), Lora Super (Okanogan CD), Moe Clark (Investigate West)

**Online:**

Brandon Rogers, Priya Swarnali (Yakama Nation); Ailene Ettinger, Tonya Morrey (TNC); David Walker (Lake Wenatchee Fire Adapted Communities), Matt Comisky (AFRC), Rebecca Hunt (CCT); Megan Birzell (TWS), Crystal Elliot (Trout Unlimited), Paul Willard, Deborah Kelly (USFS), Mike Kaputa (CCNRD), Eli Loftis (Okanogan CD), Josh Anderson (Vaagen Bros), Nick Timm (Okanogan County), Rick Evans (Office of Sen. Maria Cantwell), Ruby Gaston (Office of Rep. Kim Schrier), Susan Crampton (interested public)

## Welcome and Introductions

Facilitator Karen Berg opened the meeting at 10 AM. Members introduced themselves and reviewed the draft meeting agenda and draft January Steering Committee meeting summary.

Co-chair Anjolene Ngari reviewed the agenda and meeting summary.

The group approved the January 8, 2025 SC meeting summary and February 12, 2025 Quarterly agenda with no noted changes.

*Decision: February 12, 2025 Quarterly meeting agenda approved as presented.*

*Decision: January 8, 2025 SC summary approved as presented.*

Co-Chair Ngari reviewed the purpose, vision and mission of the Collaborative.

## OWNF Updates

### *Supervisor Office updates*

### **Staffing/Forest Updates**

Victoria Wilkins reported that OWNF supervisor Tara Umphries had a conflict at this time, but is now working full-time in the Wenatchee office. She said that while high-level changes were happening quickly, there was little of substance to report from the agency at this time due to uncertainty regarding actions from the incoming administration, and that the regional office was still waiting on guidance at the agency level.

Forest Service hiring is paused during the incoming administration transition, so there are no staffing updates. Victoria said that some seasonal wildland firefighter hiring is still moving forward. The funding pause may affect staffing paid for with BIL and IRA.

Q: Is return to work order being implemented?

- Yes, as of Monday all supervisors and managers are back in office full time. Union workers under contract agreements are not subject to this.

Q: Does this include prescribed burning?

- No, the FS typically uses permanent firefighters for Rx burning.

Q: Has anyone resigned per the OMB offer?

- Those resignations are not being handled through the FS, so the SO does not have that information.

## CFLRP updates

Kerry Kemp advised the Collaborative that the FS was required by Congress to submit an annual report on work done with CFLRP funding, due in December every year. Reports are made public in early spring, with the latest one undergoing review by the Washington office. Kerry said she could share it with Collaborative as well. Kerry gave an overview of the report for FY24 and planning for FY25.

- North Central Washington CFLRP Wenatchee River Ranger District north – FS, state and public lands
  - Authorized in 2009
  - Goal: Advance landscape-scale approaches to forest health
  - There is a bill currently in Congress to reauthorize CFLRP through 2030, but funds are appropriated on an annual basis
  - CFLRP 15-year report to Congress published in January
- FY24 accomplishments
  - Funding - \$3.9 mil.
    - FS must match all this funding, some of this was from CWI IRA match
    - \$3mil in match from partners, \$72k in in-kind contributions
    - Funding went to hazardous fuels contracts, invasive species contracts, aquatics agreements, and monitoring agreements
      - Projects included the Mission and Twisp projects
      - Invasives – Washington Conservation Corps
      - The aquatics match was much lower, and Kerry guessed that the partner work was not fully accounted for.
      - *Kerry asked partners to continue to report good outcomes on partner projects. If the work is in the CFLRP*
  - FY24 Accomplishments
    - 10k acres of reforestation and revegetation, over 5k acres of wildlife habitat restoration, over 16k acres of PB
      - Kerry noted that “accomplished” metrics are based on committed funding and are different from completed metrics.
    - Almost 5 mi of stream habitat restored, 52k CCF of timber sold

Q: Could we have updates from partners on projects on non-federal land during Quarterly meetings?

- Yes, KB can collect data
  - Use aquatics data from UCSRB?

Q: Is it useful for partners to recognize work that wasn't reported? Can this be done retroactively?

- Kerry said that there was no penalty for not reporting that information, but it does add some value.
  - It was noted that since sponsors also report on work done with non-FS federal dollars (Bureau of Reclamation, etc.), it's important to make sure sponsors don't double-report work. Kerry said that while it's good to capture as much match as possible, she can check with their federal coordinator on this point.

- Monitoring
  - Newly funded projects are required to address 13 monitoring questions
  - Starting to carry out monitoring work in-house, with contractors, NGOs, volunteers
  - Monitoring funds currently only cover CFLRP boundary
  - Examples
    - Study distribution richness and abundance of bird species, build species distribution model
    - Partnered with Cascade Fisheries to initiate environmental DNA project to look at aquatic organism passage and natural barriers
      - Will be collecting eDNA samples to examine timing and extent of repopulation of streams that were previously inaccessible
    - Using monitoring to see how treatments to the forest met prescription targets in order to move landscape to a more sustainable condition
      - Looking at several indicators including landscape change using panorama photographs
      - Partnering with DNR for stand-level treatment monitoring using drone photographs
  - They plan to revisit the plots 1, 5, and 10 years after treatments
  - Economic analysis
    - Total of 125 jobs supported, total labor income = \$9mil
    - Social analysis looked at how is CFLRP encouraging effective collaboration
    - Measured community perceptions of wildfire risk
      - This includes parcel risk assessment. Administering household surveys this spring, will inform planning moving forward.

In terms of FY25 funding, Kerry said that they expected \$3mil for planned activities.

### **CWI update**

Kari advised the Collaborative that all CWI work was funded under the IRA. Since this funding has been paused by executive order, there is uncertainty around this work.

The FS is currently working on completing an MOU with DNR within the next month on what has been done through FY24. Kari will make this available to the Collaborative.

If the CWI receives IRA fundings, the FS expects to receive \$10 mil in project funds and plans on treating 25,000 acres treatment in FY25. Fuel reduction projects include a forest-wide pile burning contract, implementation on the Upper Wenatchee Pilot Project and Twisp Project and moving forward on Chumstick to LP. This is being done in conjunction with CFLRP funds, which require match. Kari added that the FS was still dealing with its continuing resolution.

The science symposium in partnership with TNC and DNR was tentatively postponed until the end of April. While funding limitations may require switching to a remote-hybrid event, it would still be valuable to create a forum for implementers and researchers to talk.

The FS is still working on the prescribed fire EA, (project lead name?) and the forest-wide fuels reduction EA. This includes getting the programmatic NEPA completed, thinning, PB, and condition-based management, with scoping ideally happening in April – September. Kari added that they wanted to get big projects like Midnight and Chumstick to LP through consultation.

Q: Does funding being paused affect CWI staffing?

- Potentially

Q: Should we discuss outreach to members of congress re funding?

- Last SC meeting we talked about waiting out the next couple of weeks until we have more information to decide.

## **District Ranger Updates**

### *Entiat/Chelan RD*

Paul Willard reported that his district was getting ready for their spring prescribed fire program, with almost all signs up in Washington Cr., Tillicum, and the East Pine zone. He said that they were close to a proposed action on the Lower North Shore project, and said he would touch base with Co-chair Ngari in the project work group.

### *Wenatchee River RD*

Erica Taeker said that they were on the third round of review on the contract specialist reports for the EA for the Chumstick to lower Peshastin project. The estimated decision date has not changed, and the project remains behind other others in terms of consultation. She reported that they were also pulling together the contract for the timber sale for the Upper Wenatchee pilot project. She said that in general, because aquatics projects receive a variety of funding types, they should be okay moving forward. Fuel work being done under the GNA with DNR includes fuel breaks along roads with planned work to start this summer.

Erica reported that they had received approval for detail hires, who were proving to be valuable and quick studies

Q: What is the status of Chumstick to LP?

- The EA is expected in April
  - The Collaborative can help with outreach for this
  - Meadow and Raging project sales are ongoing
    - Potential sites for the Collaborative visit in May?

### *Methow Valley RD*

Chris Furr was not present but said to tell the Collaborative that he did not have any updates of note.

## **Integrating salmon and forest resilience to fire in the Western United States – Co-Chair Super**

Aileen Ettinger from TNC/SNAPP presented to the Collaborative on efforts being done to integrate salmon recovery actions with work being done for fire resilient landscapes.

Aileen is a quantitative ecologist who is part of a working group funded through SNAPP. Aileen described how typically there had been siloed approaches to managing forest wildfire resilience and restoring salmon populations, but that a more integrated approach was needed because of the spatial overlap of these issues.

Short-term negative impacts of intense wildfires on salmon include increased stream temperatures after wildfires, increased flooding, and subsequent bank erosion. Long-term interactions between these areas include enhanced streamflow following fires and large wood in streams. This presents a need for fire-friendly salmon management and vice versa

Aileen said the working group would be welcoming partner input on resources and challenges. The following link was shared with the Collaborative: members should ideally give input within the next 6 months, the sooner the better.

<https://snapppartnership.net/teams/salmon-forests-and-fire/>

Q: Are you comparing temporal data from when fire was previously excluded from a landscape?

- They are still looking for different areas for specific studies

## Federal Funding Opportunities

Rick Evans from Sen. Maria Cantwell's office spoke to the Collaborative about federal, congressionally-directed funding opportunities.

Sen. Cantwell recently signed on to a letter to the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior re. freezing of funds. Rick said that the Senator's office was seeking information from Collaborative members regarding what they are seeing happening on the ground as a result of funding cuts. They are emphasizing fuels as a priority. The office's **outreach strategy will need data and examples of impacts based on changes from money received in the past, showing what now can't be done**. Rick added that members should give this information to all members of WA's congressional delegation.

In terms of applying for a federal grant, the Collaborative itself can only apply through its fiscal sponsor UCSRB. Rick said the current funding opportunity was for funding for community project funding. In the next couple weeks, organizations and agencies will be able to apply for \$1-5 mil in funding to complete a given project. Although there is uncertainty regarding the continuing resolution in March, the funding is still appropriated as of now.

In terms of eligibility for Congressionally Directed Spending (CPS), Rick said there has previously been guidance on what types of projects are eligible for earmark funding. He can send the guidance from last year, even though it may change for this year. Depending on the account, the funding could be awarded through nonstandard process. Projects that are short funding due to the funding freeze like CWI/IRA-funded projects are not ideal candidates for this funding.

Applications would open in March and close in April depending on what happens with the continuing resolution.

Q: Do you anticipate a government shut down?

- There isn't a sense of this right now.

Q: Will money apply to only Rep. Schrier's district?

- It depends on the target area of the applicant. Applicants should go to both WA senators and the representative for your region.

Q: What types of entities are eligible?

- Cities, counties, nonprofits, no for-profits

The following Collaborative members said they were interested in participating in a subgroup to learn more about the funding opportunity: Co-chairs Super and Ngari, Chuck Hersey, Lisa Dowling, Matt Danielson, David Walker, Patrick Haggerty, Darcy Batura, Kari Grover-Wier, and Mike Kaputa. Chuck will convene this group for possible projects and application readiness.

Q: What is needed in terms of reporting impacts from the funding freeze?

- Reporting should include impacts on staffing, future work, seasonal hires, and as much "black and white data" as possible
- Crystal Elliot said that TU had an agreement giving them \$33 mil in IRA funding, and that the freeze was hamstringing low tech restoration work and created a pause on hiring staff. She said she will get more for Sen. Cantwell's office in writing.

Ruby Gaston from Rep. Schrier's office said they would like to hear impacts of the freeze as well.

Q: Who at the Forest Service is tracking status of active agreements?

- Reach out to Helena Murray at regional office

## HB 1168 Letter of Support

Sustainable Northwest is leading a regional support letter of continuing funding associated with HB 1168, which created a "Wildfire Account" when it was passed in 2021. This regional letter will highlight local accomplishments (projects, dollars spent) with funding from the bill.

Chuck Hersey noted that former Gov. Inslee's budget asked for a 30% reduction for this program, which is more likely to be 6-12% overall per Gov. Ferguson's budget. A first draft of the letter is expected by EOD tomorrow and will be circulated over email with the Collaborative. Kali from SNW is taking over for Gia Landis on the project.

## Governance Subcommittee Proposed Operating Protocols

Co-chair Super advised the Collaborative that they would be voting on adopting the new, proposed operating protocols with the *exception* of the structures and rules section. Co-chair Super reminded the Collaborative that this process was the result of a 2022 SC retreat where it was decided that while there

was an overall consensus the purpose, there were issues with trust and transparency. KKR Consulting was hired to develop new protocols. Co-chair Super gave the following overview:

- The new OP will include a recommitment procedure
- The OP will be a living document that will evolve with the group, which will revisit the operating protocols every year.
- It provides guidelines for
  - Strategic planning, an annual work plan, goals, Collaborative function
  - Code of conduct
    - Members must be respectful, participate in good faith, work with differences of opinion, be candid
    - Members agree to abide by code of conduct and participate in self-reflection
    - Make appreciations part of culture
    - Breaches of code are recognized with the understanding that all members *intend* to bring their best self, so that breaches are treated with emphasis on learning and change
  - Communications protocols
    - At least 2 in-person meetings per year, at least 1 public meeting per year
    - Protocols relating to storing records and internal communications on Google drive
    - External communications – work is transparent to public on its website
    - Website information will become more robust
    - Members will refrain from disparaging the group in public forums
  - Decision making
    - Decisions will be made on a consent-based model
      - Slightly different than consensus-based decision making,
      - Vote green, yellow, red (yellow=can live with it)
        - Red – have a constructive alternate idea
      - Reaching a decision requires a member quorum (half +1 of members must be present)
      - Applicable to committees and work groups
  - Conflict resolution process
    - Seeing things differently is common, all conflicts are learning and improvement opportunities
    - Bigger issues or repeated violations can be brought to SC
    - Amendments are based on annual review/member request

Overall, Co-chair Super said there were substantively not a lot of changes, and that most changes appeared in the code of conduct.

A quorum was present. No red or yellow votes were given. 13 members voted to accept the OP changes, passing the proposed Operating Protocols in all sections except Structure and Roles.

***Decision: Approval of proposed Operating Protocols (EXCEPT Structure and Roles section)***

## Project Work Group Updates

### NWFP DEIS Comments

Co-chair Ngari advise that the comment meeting for amending the Northwest Forest Plan will be pushed to Feb 25. Lisa Dowling said that she could share a table of issues and alternatives developed for DFW with the Collaborative. Comments are due by March 17.

### **CFLRP monitoring**

PWG, Kerry Kemp, Karen Berg have been talking with Resilient Forestry to get a sense of their capacity and ability to fill in gaps in monitoring for the FS using drones. The \$13 grant would originally have gone to hiring the contractors to collect stand-level evaluations. However, since FS seasonally-contracted teams are more experienced in collecting that type of data it would likely be slower for Resilient Forestry, and it was decided to instead use Resilient to do landscape modeling of the stands using drone footage and some data processing.

The focus for the monitoring would be in the Upper Wenatchee pilot project area, and data collected on stands would include number, size of gaps, tree distribution, clump sizes, and spatial pattern. This data could not be collected by stand monitoring alone.

Q: Kevin Arneson: How is this different from DNR/FS work?

- Kerry – DNR photography is farther away from the land. We want to make sure we're not doing redundant work. DNR drone photography is at large scale, this will be at meso scale,

Patrick Haggerty added that the fire district said they had volunteers who would be willing to take drone footage for monitoring as well. He will follow up with David Walker on this.

### **Outreach Workgroup Updates**

Catherine Waterston updated the collaborative on the Outreach Work Group's activities. Yesterday they met and discussed their draft 2025 work plan and Leavenworth Landscape CWE work plan

The May field tour is planned to be held in conjunction with the Quarterly meeting that falls on 5/7. She said a potential idea was to merge the group tour with a public tour a day before the Quarterly meeting.

The field tour would ideally highlight FRB field work and could include Collaborative members and FS representatives speaking at different tour sites along. A social event open to the community could be held after the tour.

Lisa Dowling added that there could be poster presentations for projects whose representatives are unable to be there in person.

Members noted that it would be good to make sure any event fits the Collaborative vision, and that it would be good to increase social buy-in in by showing the public the Collaborative's. Catherine said that she will share the outreach workplan with the collaborative.

Matt Danielson said that although it can be a touchy subject, it could be helpful to have a tour of spotted owl or another sensitive species habitat to start conversations. As FS and USFWS meetings happen over zoom, dialogue can be less productive than it could be in-person seeing these habitats.

Catherine also noted that April would see the start of Earth Day events, and that the Collaborative could look into having a presence at those events. The Collaborative could also have a table at the Chumstick Wildfire stewardship meeting at end of April. March 11 is the next working group meeting.

## Roundtable/ Partner Sharing

**Co-chair Super:** A best practices training for the Collaborative will be held by Sustainable Northwest on March 21 (tentative).

**Tonya Morrey from TNC** spoke to the Collaborative about HB 1563/SB 5491, which would establish a pilot program for those who experienced loss as the result of an escaped prescribed burn. She said that committee testimony had included stories about needing to find new insurance policies because of liability concerns after agreeing to allow land to be used for prescribed burning. She noted that while there were other programs in WA state with similar purposes, this one would fill gaps rather than compete with them, and that it would cover landowners along with those doing the burns.

Hearings for the bill in the House and Senate seemed to go well, and it will be a few weeks before the next hearing if it passes. If the Collaborative wanted to create a letter of support, Tonya would need an answer from the Collaborative in the next couple weeks (this can be an email item). However, support can also be added after the bill gets out of committee. Tonya emphasized that the bill would increase the potential for cross boundary work and allow private landowners to create MOUs with the FS with less liability. Tonya will share the link to view the bill and sign up for updates with the Collaborative.

**Patrick Haggerty from CCD** shared that the Department of Ecology would be opening up operating procedures for the average person to use burning, such as air curtain incinerators. Patrick can share a link with more information with the Collaborative.

He also advised the Collaborative that the Leavenworth Fire Open House would be held on April 30 and would be a kick-off for the community wildfire defense grant project. There will also be a presentation on the project by John Marshall at Pybus on February 25.

**Co-chair Ngari** said that the Fix our Forests Act had passed its house committee, and asked members to show support for this funding source also.

**Staffing update for DFW:** Lisa Dowling advised members that DFW was looking to hire a biologist for the Chelan region, and that they had just filled their assistant regional habitat program manager position with a former habitat biologist for the Methow. Gabby Vermeire can add the job opening to UCSRB's regional jobs list.

Lisa added that DFW was currently smoothing out kinks with the permit application process and that she would share an "area of responsibility" contact map for permitting questions. (linked here: [Areas of Responsibilities Map: WDFW Assistance](#))

Per the new operating protocols, members shared their acknowledgements:

- Members acknowledged the value of institutional knowledge that long-time members brought to the Collaborative.
- Karen said that she had met with coordinators from other collaboratives, and we noted that this one was relatively well-off in the face of the uncertainty issues facing us all.

**The meeting adjourned at 3:09 pm**

**The next Steering Committee meeting is planned for Wednesday, March 5, 2025, 1:00pm-4:00pm**

**Location: Wenatchee TBD**

**The next NCWFHC Quarterly meeting is planned for Wednesday, May 7, 2025, 10:00am-4:00pm**

**Location: TBD**