

Panhandle Forest Collaborative
Operating Protocols
Approved September 25, 2013
Updates Approved January 17, 2018

Vision

By assisting the agencies to bring balanced approaches to timber, wild ecosystems and recreation, the Panhandle Forest Collaborative (PFC) will help to contribute to sustainable social, environmental and economic viability within our region.

PFC Proposed Approach

The Panhandle Forest Collaborative will focus on issues on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, primarily within the Sandpoint, Priest Lake and portions of the Coeur d'Alene Ranger Districts, with the goals of reducing litigation, promoting sustainable operations, enhancing travel and recreation opportunities, maintaining infrastructure for timber, ranching and recreation, and conserving native ecosystems.

By building communication and connectivity between on-going local community efforts and county, state and federal agencies, we will work as a group to provide consensus recommendations for projects and forest plans which address our goals.

Guiding Principles

- Every effort should be made to ensure participation of our diverse stakeholders; the process will encourage participation, and be open and inclusive
- Decision making processes for the group should focus on producing outcomes that strive to meet the needs of all participants
- Project scope, complexity and objectives should be appropriately scaled
- Projects will be selected that are of mutual concern and are agreed upon by the group
- Projects will include a monitoring component
- Projects will honor the complexity of forest ecosystems
- Projects will focus on restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems
- Projects will support the current infrastructure, and generate economic opportunities
- Projects will contribute to enhancing recreational activities

GROUND RULES:

- Speak one at a time
- Make your thoughts heard up front ~ put all the issues on the table
- Listen to understand
- Be concise
- Be recognized before speaking
- Turn off cell phones

OPERATIONAL PARAMETERS:

On our forest projects, our focus will be on the thousands of acres that have all ready been logged once or twice, i.e., the “already managed and roaded forestland.” We do not support extensive new road systems without the elimination of some roads.

In our roadless areas, our focus will be on wilderness, recreation opportunities, and forest health and resiliency.

I. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

PFC will actively seek to involve representatives of diverse perspectives, needs, and expertise. This includes:

- Federal and State Agency representation (USFS, BLM, and IDL, USFWS, IDFG, NRCS, RC&D, etc.)
- Community nonprofit support organizations (Rocky Mountain Elk, Trout Unlimited, PCFC, etc.)
- County Commissioners
- Economic Development
- Contractors
- Forest industry representatives
- Environmental/Conservation Groups
- Other elected officials
- Concerned community members
- Landowners
- Tribes
- Recreation interests ~ motorized and non-motorized
- Local Businesses

A) Full Group

The full group consists of all the participating members of the collaborative. These members shall be constituency representatives (please refer to Organizational Structure) and shall allow for reasonable turnover.

Their responsibilities include: participation in meetings and committees, selection of the Chair and Vice Chair, overall collaborative decision-making, and defining strategic priorities. See “Participating Members” below for individual responsibilities.

B) Participating Members

- Be an active member
 - To become an active member, a person must actively participate in two consecutive meetings and agree to operate under guidelines outlined in the operations manual
- Maintain participating member status
 - After 4 consecutive absences, absent individuals may be removed from the member list
- Must be in “active” status to “decision make” at current meeting
- Provide input from each individual constituency; communicate back to constituents and organization; resolve internal conflict with other members of the representative’s organization (to avoid two opposing opinions from one member organization)
- Suggest ideas or initiatives
- Offer to take leadership on ideas and initiatives
- Provide technical resources
- Commit to long-term involvement (by partner or their representative)
- Provide solutions to non-consensus situations

C) Chair and Vice-Chair

The full group will nominate and approve a chair and a vice-chair, which will serve two-year terms. Their responsibilities are to:

- Set agenda
- Manage communications
- Manage funds
- Work with a fiscal sponsor if necessary
- Coordinate with the facilitator

D) Federal Partners

- Serve as non-decision making members
- Define the “decision space”
- Be committed to collaborative process and maintain active engagement at meeting discussions, project planning, etc.
- Offer resource information
- Share data upon request of the group
- Conduct NEPA
- Share technical resource and expertise
- Are not bound by what the group decides
- Participate actively in project discussions; clarify scope of recommendations acceptable to the agencies early on and consistently

E) Committees

- Ad-hoc committees will be created for projects or other needs.
- Individuals who are not active members of the PFC may participate in committees, as long as he/she adheres to the PFC Operating Protocols.
- The PFC shall maintain standing Forest Projects and Recreation Committees.

F) Guests/Community/Observers

- Information will be made available to guests on background of collaborative
- Full disclosure of guests at each meeting
- Abide by ground rules
- Listen
- Share experience and expertise

G) Media

- Information will be made available to media on background of collaborative
- Full disclosure of media at each meeting
- Abide by ground rules
- Listen
- Share experience and expertise
- Only one member of the collaborative will represent PFC when talking to the media unless given permission on a case by case basis.

II. COMMUNICATION

The collaborative group will develop, support, and suggest implementation of projects that fulfill the stated vision. The group will also be involved in the activities outlined in the scope of our work. We have developed the following operating protocols regarding how we work together.

- 1) To promote trust and respect, in our work together we agree to:
 - Respect each other in and outside of meetings
 - Operate in good faith
 - No backroom deals
 - No personal attacks in or out of meetings
 - Respect the personal integrity and values of participants and organizations
 - All participants bring with them the legitimate purposes and goals of their organizations. All parties recognize the legitimacy of the goals of others and assume that their goals will also be respected. These collaborative discussions will try to maximize all the goals of all the parties, as far as possible.
 - Avoid stereotyping
 - Honor agreements; commitments will not be made lightly and will be kept
 - Regard disagreements as “problems to be solved,” rather than as “battles to be won.”

- 2) To enhance open and honest dialogue, we will:
 - Participate in discussions and will encourage each other to “explore without committing.” This frees up the group to explore potential solutions without viewing those explorations as formal proposals
 - State interests, problems, and opportunities, not positions – positive candor is an effective tool
 - Air problems, disagreements, and critical information during meetings to avoid surprises
 - Commit to search for opportunities and alternatives. Group creativity can often determine the best solution
 - Substantiate rumors at the meeting before accepting them as fact

- 3) To communicate clearly in specific discussions, we agree to:
 - Disclose interest
 - Listen fully to understand
 - Look for ways to address not only your own interests, but those of others as well
 - Participate, share the floor, be concise
 - Look ahead – acknowledge the past but don’t rehash it; and
 - Be explicit and factual – ask for clarification if confused

- 4) To ensure inclusivity and transparency, we acknowledge and expect that:
 - Participants represent a broad range of interests, each having concerns about the outcome of the issues
 - Participants commit to keeping their colleagues/constituents informed about progress
 - Participants will not publicly represent the views of others

Meeting Behavior

All participants will:

- Come to meetings prepared
- Respect the basic rules of collaboration (as stated above)
- Voice their concerns during meetings and take the time to resolve those issues
- Refrain from side conversations during the meeting
- Only one person speaks at a time; let individuals finish thoughts and breathe deeply before responding
- Respect the facilitator and meeting agenda

Details of Participation

Participating Members

- Participate actively, as defined in this manual
- Be well-informed of group's activities
- State whether they are an individual partner or are representing a larger entity (i.e. organization or company)
- Provide input from each individual constituency; communicate back to constituents and organization; resolve internal conflict with other members of the representative's organization (to avoid two opposing opinions from one member organization)
- Suggest ideas or initiatives
- Offer to take leadership on ideas and initiatives
- Provide technical resources
- Abide by vision, ground rules and desired outcomes
- Attend meetings, as possible; send alternate if necessary; RSVP for all meetings
- Commit to long-term involvement (by partner or their representative)
- *Proxy Participation:* Participating group members can send proxies to participate in decision-making. Proxies must be an informed affiliate or member of the organization, business, or entity.

Guests/Community/Observers

Information will be made available to observers and guests on the background of the collaborative group, and all observers and guests will be introduced at the beginning of each meeting. Landowners adjacent to projects and other project stakeholders will be considered guests at meetings and will be encouraged to attend and participate in relevant meeting planning and coordination.

Meeting and Communication Protocols

- Full group collaborative meetings will be scheduled in advance
- For meetings where key decisions are anticipated, every effort will be made to announce date, time and location well in advance (2 weeks minimum, 1 month notice preferred)
- Meetings will be announced via email
- A preliminary meeting agenda will be established at the prior meeting, with action items highlighted to the extent possible. The final agenda will be sent out approximately 7 days prior to the meeting to allow for group input and suggestions.

Record keeping

- Notes will be taken at each meeting and will be made available no later than 2 weeks following any meeting.
- Notes from the prior meeting will be reviewed prior to the next meeting and any issues (clarifications, other) will be discussed; Notes will be approved.
- Member organizations and representatives will be listed in the notes, with information indicating their presence or absence.

Agreements amongst the full PFC will be documented in writing to support accountability to collaborative decisions.

Internal communications protocol

- A member email list will be used for ongoing communication with partners.
- A website will be maintained for storing and sharing all information when resources are available. Partners are encouraged to help develop content for the website (<https://sites.google.com/site/panhandleforestcollaborative/>)
- If a member has a concern with the collaborative process, that member may bring it to the attention of the chair, vice-chair, and/or facilitator in order to seek resolution.

External communications protocol

- Information about the collaborative will be made available to external stakeholders via the website and other venues as appropriate; all efforts will be taken to ensure that the group's work remains transparent to external audiences. Non-members will have access to all information and the ability to share thoughts and comments with the group.
- Members who had reservations recorded may express those reservations, including to the media, if the opportunity arises, however, all members agree that any statements expressing reservations about the decision will not be directed at the collaborative process itself.

Communications with the Forest Service

One point of contact for the Forest Service and for the PFC will be identified for each project.

III. DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Goal: to come to a decision that group members can support following a respectful hearing of all concerns.

The PFC will make decisions by **consensus**. Consensus is defined as decisions that all parties can support, or *at a minimum, agree to live with*.

A) Reaching Consensus

- Project-related decisions will be made first by the project subgroup. Decisions made during project subgroup meetings will be recorded in the notes and distributed within a week of the meeting to all subgroup members, and any other PFC member that requests

them in advance. Each subgroup or full group meeting will begin with a brief review of the decisions made during the previous meeting.

- Subgroup/committee members are encouraged to prioritize attending meetings in person. If this is not possible, members are encouraged to ensure a proxy is in attendance (see *Proxy Participation*), or to submit written input to the subcommittee chair ahead of time. Subgroup and full group agendas should note if the group will be asked to make a decision during that meeting. Materials and information that will help inform subgroup or full group member decision-making should be distributed at least a week before the group is asked to discuss it.
- Decisions made during meetings will not be revisited unless significant new social, ecological or economic information that may affect the decision becomes available. The subgroup will present their recommendations and rationale to the full group for discussion and final ratification.
- As decisions are being made by either a project subgroup/committee, or the full group, meeting participants will be asked to indicate their support level either by a show of thumbs or verbal confirmation. Each participant has the ability to disagree with elements of decisions as they're being developed, but must offer a constructive alternative that seeks to meet the needs of all participants involved.
- Level of support for a PFC decision will be indicated by each member in the following way:
 - Thumb up for full support
 - Thumb to the side for “can live with” the decision
 - Thumb down for “cannot live with” the decision
- If a member cannot support a decision, that member shall present a solution to the full group for discussion and consideration.
- Members may abstain from voting.
- A quorum of members must vote on a measure in order for the measure to pass.
- Digital voting is allowed, though its use should be limited to situations dictated by a necessity of timing.
- Once the full group has ratified a decision, a report will be given to the Forest Service for their consideration in their role as decision makers for their managed lands and waters.

B) What Consensus Means

- The PFC will make every effort to achieve full consensus, and a project may be voted on, tabled, and revisited any number of times before the attempt to reach consensus is superceded by a popular vote.
-
- Further definitions are provided in the table below.

PFC Consensus	Support Level	Member commitment
<p>Consensus without reservation</p> <p>All members can say:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> My organization and I agree with the decision and will publicly support it</p>	High	<p>No members (or organizations represented by members) will appeal/litigate or support outside challenges. All members will express support for the project* and work to resolve any issues raised later by non-PFC entities if the opportunity arises.</p>
<p>Consensus with Reservation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> My organization and I can live with the decision (and won't disparage it in public)</p>	Medium	<p>No members (or organizations represented by members) will appeal/litigate or support outside challenges. Members who had reservations recorded may express those reservations* if the opportunity arises; however, all members agree that any statements expressing reservations about the decision will <u>not</u> be directed at the collaborative process itself. Reservations about the decision will be recorded in the meeting minutes. Good faith efforts will be made by the person(s) with reservations to offer alternative language and try to achieve high support before the group settles for medium support.</p>
<p>No Consensus, but majority-vote approval</p> <p>(Some members have such strong reservations that they vote against approval; reasons are recorded in minutes)</p>	Low	<p>Members (or organizations represented by members) reserve right to appeal/litigate or support outside challenges. Members who voted against approval reserve the right to express their reasons for voting against approval* and may actively pursue opportunities to do so; however, all members agree that any statements expressing reservations about the decision will <u>not</u> be directed at the collaborative process itself.</p> <p>The PFC may decide to intentionally not take any position on a project or decision in order to prevent a majority-vote.</p>
<p>Majority vote disapproval</p>	None	<p>The PFC will inform IPNF that the collaborative does not support the project and recommend the IPNF drop the proposal. All members reserve the right to express their reasons for voting to drop the proposal* and may actively pursue opportunities to do so; however, all members agree that any statements expressing reservations about the decision will <u>not</u> be directed at the collaborative process itself.</p> <p>The PFC may decide to intentionally not take any position on a project or decision in order to prevent a majority-vote.</p>

* in media or elsewhere

C) Decision-making Participation

- A group member must be an active member (see *Participating Members*) to be able to participate in decision-making.
- Participating group members can send proxies to participate in subgroup and full group meetings. Proxies must be an informed affiliate or member of the organization, business, or entity being represented, and be able to represent the active member in decision making.

D) Raising New Issues

If one or more active members wish to raise an issue to be considered by the PFC membership, they shall use the following process:

- Draft and submit to the Chair and Vice Chair a short description of the issue, providing background, how it fits within the scope and purpose of the PFC, and suggested action steps.
- The Chair and Vice Chair will consider placing the issue on the next full PFC agenda. If the issue is time-sensitive, the Chair and Vice Chair have the option of bringing the issue to the attention of the Project Committee for discussion and circulation via email to the full group to seek electronic agreement.

These protocols will be reviewed and revised as needed.