



# Pinchot Partners

## FOREST COLLABORATIVE

### April Meeting Notes Wednesday, April 16, 2025 9am-11:30am St. Mary's, Toledo, WA & Zoom

**In attendance.** \* indicates participant attended meeting through Zoom

*PP Staff:* Janene Ritchie, Sarah Yeoman; *PP Board:* John O'Brien, John Squires, Anjolene Ngari, Fred Norman\*, Matt Cominsky, Bob Guenther, Ashley Short\*, Bill Little; *PP Advisory Group:* *US Forest Service:* Theresa Tanner, Jessica Hudec\*, Quentin Hall; *DNR:* Ben Hagadorn; Dalton Fry, Brooke Squires, Sheryl Hall\*, Elliot Johnson, Deidre Hayward\*, Ryan Krapp\*, Christina Donehower\*, Anna Nakae\*

**Today's Agenda.** MOTION to approve: Bill Little; Second: Anjolene Ngari; CARRIED.

**March Annual Meeting Minutes.** Google Drive has presentation slides from the annual meeting. MOTION to approve: Bob Guenther; second: Bill Little; CARRIED

**Treasurer's Report, Ashley Short.** Checking account balance is \$85,257.46. Credit card balance is \$0. Invoice from Forest Service came in of \$3,500 on old RAC will go straight to CFC. Discussion on moving money to an account that accrues interest. MOTION to approve: Bill Little; second: Anjolene Ngari. CARRIED.

#### Action Items.

- Janene will look into accounts that can possibly accrue interest. Switching banks might not be worth the hassle.

#### Programming Meeting, Josh Chapman

##### **Forest-wide plantation thinning and potential control line draft EA**

- Released Friday, April 11 and open for comment electronically through May 16. The EA is written as a separate document in the specialist report.
- Supposed to get a copy of the draft terms and conditions from national fisheries and get final BO by the end of the month. The next step will be complete with consultations for the next decade. Woo!
- Covers 156,000 acres of plantation stands under 80 years old, 500 miles of potential control lines, thinning 500 feet on either side of the road. Allows for mastication for what you can reach from the road. The intent is to work with fire managers to do regional analysis to identify key roads to protect to utilize in future fire situations. allows us to be prepositions to respond to fires in the future.
- Allows the annual basis to thin up to 3600 commercial acres in this project, and can include 300 acres on a regeneration basis. The historic average is 1200 acres thinned per

year. Had to come up with a reasonable estimate and basically doubled what had been done to get to the 3600 number, though no way to get through the entire acreage by the end of the project. Noncommercial is limited to 1000 acres annually, 1000 acres of prescribed burning and 1000 acres of pile burning on top of that

- There is concern that this project will be perceived as a result of executive orders, though the group understands that it has been going on for a long time and feels it is a well thought-out EA, not a timber grab.
- Added a story map that makes a good visual companion. The end of the story map identifies units they are looking at for the first 3600 acres of treatment.
- Appendix A has a checklist for accountability to make sure preimplementation work is getting signed off on before starting ground disturbance. Will share the units identified for thinning with the public around October and open up comments.

#### **Timber Executive orders and USDA emergency situation determination overview:**

- Across the agency have lost 5200 people in the last 6 weeks.
- Complete a strategy for USFS and BLM to streamline ESA consultation. Authorities were revoked in the mid-2000s, so seeing if they will get those authorities this time around.
- Endangered species committee (God Squad) identifies obstacles to timber production deriving from implementation of the ESA. In the past, it was written in the ESA that allows for a major project where an endangered species would be adversely affected, the God Squad can be convened. God Squad has only convened four times and found in favor of the species, and actions did not go through. It is a rare usage in the ESA.
- Sec of commerce is charged with initiating an investigation relevant to the forest service to the extent to which domestic production can meet domestic demand and feasibility of increasing lumber capacity to reduce imports. Haven't gotten talking points relevant to the EO.
- For many folks imports is a third rail. AFRC members have differing views. They are still processing memo and EO and figuring out what the Forest Service can really do. There were no added tools or removed barriers to increase efficiency or deal with long-term problems.
- Conversations about how Forest Service can use existing resources, but until directive on targets come to the regions, still operating in the status quo while increasing outputs.
- Implications of EOs: AFRC, NRDC, Sierra Club, Federal Forest Resource Coalition all have differing opinions. What is planned during this project does align with much of the EOs, but was put into motion long before the current administration. Collaboratives and community input are onboard and this is not a knee-jerk reaction.

#### **USDA Secretary Memorandum:**

- Brooke Rollins identified lands falling under 2 categories: high or very high under 2023 wildfire hazard potential model, and high insect disease in healthy forest restoration act for emergency situation determination.
- On the GP, about a quarter million acres are covered under the ESD, though 20% of that is in wilderness areas. Not a ton of opportunities for increasing NEPA. Looking to identify opportunities to develop smaller projects associated with ESD in scope of work for 2026.

- Other authorities being asked to explore include: Emergency ESA consultation, emergency and programmatic National Historic Preservation Act consultations, emergency and direct hire authorities, expanded use of GNA and shared stewardship with state and Tribal partners.
- Implications for the FS and GP:
  - Regional timber target increased. The expectation of 25% over the next 4-5 years. There's also the potential for increased scrutiny from environmental groups skeptical of any new timber-related projects.
  - Increased expectations to utilize GNA and TRPA and stewardship contracting to prep more sales in light of FS staff shortages. They are meeting twice a month with RO on the status of target attainment and fuels reduction targets.
  - Region is looking to help coordinate sharing of staff across the region to further timber outputs. They anticipate laterally filling vacant timber positions. There is a large exodus of employees taking deferments or early retirements.
  - None of these EOs or the ESD address survey and manage, which remains a significant investment of time and funding. The objection period is waved, but still need to do NEPA.
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### ***Forest Service Updates, Theresa Tanner and Quentin Hall***

- Skate Creek: Identified the neighborhood where they want to start and have evaluated resources and staff to start. They want to do CEs if possible in that area. They have a lot of open and active sales still under contract on the north side. They are being mindful of providing consistency to the industry on top of planning, capacity and time frames and hazardous fuels concerns.
- Forest Service budget is set: The first week of May is when funds should arrive. How much is yet to be determined. The continuing resolution goes through the end of the fiscal year, which is the end of September.
- Pre-season for fire prep: Meeting with emergency management teams. May 9 meeting in Randall with community managers.
- On the project list for this year is a plan to replace the Nisqually river bridge going into ashford. Repair work on Goat Rock trail is funded with disaster relief funds. Other disaster relief projects will be implemented FY 28.
- Staffing: Permanent seasonal positions: About 4200 permanent seasonal probationary employees were let go. A court order determined that was illegal, so positions were offered back. Many have come back but not all.
- This is the normal off season for permanent seasonals so they haven't been onboarded. What force reduction looks like in the next round is unknown, but it's very likely the same people will be targeted again.
- Road tech and fire were never terminated. Randall lost two and regained them. With staff reductions, they only have enough to cobble together one interdisciplinary team for the whole forest.
- Rangers meeting with admin officer to talk about decreasing lobby hours to Monday, Thursday, Friday.

- Small projects: North zone has completed 13 ahead of schedule. As summer progresses, expecting more of a capacity pinch. They are about to get signature on USGS seismic array to airlift seismic sensors across the northern part of St Helens.
- Special permit CEs on Johnson Ridge rebuilding the highway.
- 2801 road washout: drove the piles last year, replacing culvert with a small bridge. Should be completed this year. One lane on the Skate will have impacts.

### ***Operations Updates, Janene Ritchie***

- Outcomes of small group exercise at annual meeting: Janene pulled together common themes, which included priorities, outside the box, recreation community capacity, common-ground and relationship.
- Idea of a living document containing expectations and sideboards of relationships with Forest Service and DNR. The history and development of relationships can be recorded here, which is helpful when turnover happens.
- More clarity needed within the group on Forest Service needs and how Pinchot Partners can fill those gaps, as well as clarity on the priorities on Pinchor Partners. More detailed info out of the small groups will initiate discussions moving forward.
- Outcomes from second meeting day: Priorities for the next year are community outreach and engagement, science-based forestry restoration work, organizational health including board and financial, and continuing to develop Forest Service partnership. Board will continue refining objectives around those priorities.
- Building Forest Partnerships grant through the DNR has been delayed indefinitely because of the state of the state's budget. Janene is on a joint working committee once the budget is passed with the Forest Advisory Committee. Not looking positive.
- Next week Janene will be going to the AFRC meeting in Skamania.
- Collaboratives have been talking about how to advocate for the Forest Service. She and Josh Petit will be meeting with Rep. Gleusenkamp-Perez's DC staffer who has expressed interest on what is happening on the ground so she can advocate.
- For next month: Ryan with the Washington Trails Association is coming with updates on their projects. There will also be updates on the fungi festival.

### **Roundtable Updates**

- Suquamish Tribe has purchased 500 acres for a resort near Packwood
- Cowlitz Tribe has hired an emergency manager
- Quentin is considering taking the DRP.
- Andrew Spaeth is initiating a landscape resilience project. DNR is hoping to work in partnership with communities to support wildfire preparedness. Andrew is pulling together a wildfire preparedness event in Packwood this summer. A planning event is on Wednesday the 23rd at 3 pm.
- Ashley Short will be out on family leave for much of May. Molly will cover with anything PP related.
- Bob Guenther: A biodiversity ordinance zone has been developed in Lewis County from Centralia 55 miles out. He is attending a meeting with a biomass company to see what opportunities are.

- Matt Cominsky: Washington forest products roundtable is likely going away. working on a letter to Chief Schultz. There are potential niche markets on DNR lands that the Forest Service could fill. The raw log market has essentially collapsed for the foreseeable future, which could influence future projects for contract lengths and the types of bids submitted.

**Meeting adjourned at 11:39 a.m.** Minutes prepared by Sarah Yeoman