



Pinchot Partners

FOREST COLLABORATIVE

November Meeting Notes Wednesday, November 21, 2024 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, Fred Norman, Ashley Short, Anjolene Ngari*, Matt Comisky, David Owen*, Bill Little, Andrew Spaeth*; *PP Advisory Group:* Gina Owen*, Dalton Fry, Deidre Hayward*, Sheryll Hall*, Amy Boyd*; *US Forest Service:* Quentin Hall, Josh Chapman*, Theresa Tanner*; *Washington DNR:* Andrew Spaeth*; *Cascade Forest Conservancy:* Amanda Keasberry*

Today's Agenda. MOTION to approve: Bill Little; second Fred Norman. CARRIED.

September and October Meeting Minutes. MOTION to approve: Ashley Short; second David Owen. CARRIED.

Treasurer's Report, Ashley Short. Checking account balance is \$18,675.77. Credit card balance is \$0. \$500 was paid this month for taxes. MOTION to approve: Bill Little; second: Matt Comisky. CARRIED.

Action Items. Form a subcommittee to draft a statement on forest funds to send to congressional representatives and senators, involve other forest collaboratives in crafting the statement. Start reaching out to venues to host the annual meeting. Create targeted guidance for next month's joint collaborative meeting to use time effectively. Add meetings and announcements to Facebook.

Programming Meeting

Huckleberry Monitoring Project Updates

Amanda Keasberry, Science and Stewardship Manager at Cascade Forest Conservancy.

Project update on the past two years gathering a second round of huckleberry restoration data. The original goal was to establish multi-year, self-sustaining huckleberry habitat in units traditionally managed with fire. However, fire cannot be brought into those units any longer. CFC is monitoring the effects of different types of timber harvests conducted between 2010 and 2016 had on huckleberry recovery. Selected results from data collected this year are very preliminary, and they are looking at change over time to establish how much time after initial timber harvests huckleberry needs to recover. There was significant change in huckleberry coverage and an increase in both fruit production and average plant height. Data suggests that higher slash cover results in reduced huckleberry cover. Beargrass seems to coexist with huckleberry while there was no relationship found between bracken fern and huckleberry. There was also no

significant correlation between canopy cover and huckleberry cover in the new results. What's next: The second data collection outing in 2024 had to be cancelled because of wildfire. The plan is to finish collecting data in the Pinto unit in 2025 and create a followup report documenting changes in the Pinot and Sawtooth units. There are also plans in place to collect baseline data in Yellowjacket units slated for harvest. Anjolene requested that following the next round of data collection, CFC present the longer term post-harvest data, and any pre-harvest data to compare results. Also requested a presentation on the same to other collaboratives interested in huckleberry restoration.

Plantation Thinning EA, Josh Chapman.

USFS is limited in filling positions due to the halt in hiring seasonal help. The USFS made decisions at the Washington DC level to not hire seasonal workforce (outside of fire positions) for at least the next two years. See additional issues outlined in Updates below, the hiring pause extends to all positions, not just seasonal. Modified plantation thinning has been put into effect to accommodate staff capacity. The Little White Salmon project is in completion and the Spirit Lake project is in review. They are hoping to get a draft of the biological opinion from the Forest Service on December 23, then finalize response to comments as soon as they receive the BO and return them by January 17, 2025. There are delays in the draft EA but it's still moving forward and they hope to have a decision in the spring.

Timber sales to go out in FY 2027 identified the first 3,000 acres of units in East Fort Lewis outside of Kalama. They are working with the Mt Adams Resource Stewards to collect baseline data. Surveying had to shift to internal staff to meet staff capacity. Group discussed looking into pre-work around timber sales and purchasers meeting happening on December 4.

Forest Service Updates, Quentin Hall, Theresa Tanner, Josh Chapman

- Northwest Forest Plan amendment comment period is open for 120 days and closes March 17. This area's meeting has been rescheduled for February.
- Gray Towers sale by the DNR is going up for bid and there are three upcoming sales in prep: Laser, Langer and Golina. They are packaged together for economic viability.
- French Butte and Cispus seed orchard NEPA has been completed and funding identified. Funding was retained and the state is moving forward with contracting.
- North zone IDT is currently working on Cold Water trails expansion. Working with Washington Trails Association to conduct a review so the NEPA will be finished this winter. Outstanding items include Tribal consultation and invasive plant concerns with existing seed bank in the area.
- Skate Creek EA is listed as forest priority for FY 2025. Forest Services is having to go back and adjust program of work across the entire forest with adjustments to staffing, which has pulled people away from moving Skate Creek forward in any real way.
- Another White Bark Pine planting occurred on October 29. Region 6 received new programmatic BO for White Bark Pine.
- On the hiring pause: The FS does not have the funds to cover their permanent salaries and will not replace someone when they leave- whether to take another position, or retire. above their headcount cap for permanent employees, meaning someone has to leave in order for them to fill any vacancies, they will have tough decisions to make on which they

will fill and which they will let remain vacant or try to find a detailer-they are only allowed 1 detail/month per forest...and everyone wants them. Additionally, some Forests have pulled money from retained receipts to fund permanent salaries, with \$1.2 million of KB funds from timber sales were pulled from the GP. Waiting for guidance from the region to document what sales were impacted.

Operations Updates, Anjolene Ngari & Janene Ritchie

- PP should consider writing a letter to congressional reps regarding the salary situation, as it is unprecedented to pull retained receipts to cover salaries knowing there is a major budget deficit (-\$750 million nationwide). Put together a letter with specifics on how these decisions have impacted the GP by showing job numbers and vacancies.
 - Set up a direct meeting between PP and Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez
 - Draft letter in a subcommittee
 - Involve other forest collaboratives for a more impactful statement
 - Push the letter to Rep. Gluesenkamp but also send to senators.
 - Discuss what everyday citizens can do if forests continue to be defunded
- Set dates for annual meeting: March 18 and 19, 2025.
 - Venue possibilities include David Owen's home and the Cispus Center
- Next month's meeting: The NWFP amendment comment period is open. PP is hoping to use the Zones of Agreement subcommittee to get ahead on comment letters. Next month will be a joint meeting with the South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative (SGPC) and co-chairs to help shape relevant comments.
- Taxes were submitted. Now turning focus on end-of-year housekeeping and annual report for the Secretary of State.

Roundtable Updates

- The Cowlitz Tribe has hired a new cultural resources director.
- Fred Norman: The Johnson bridge repair is slow going and there is no access to trails.

Meeting adjourned at 11:04am. Minutes prepared by Sarah Yeoman