



Pinchot Partners

F O R E S T C O L L A B O R A T I V E

January 21, 2026 | 9:00 AM-11:30 AM

St. Mary's Mission, Toledo, WA

In attendance. *Board Members:* John O'Brien, David Owen, Ashley Short, Bob Guenther, Bill Little, Fred Norman, Amy Boyd, *Staff:* Janene Ritchie, Peter Sandifer (Volunteer); *General Membership:* Sheryl Hall, Deidre Hayward (WDFW); *USFS:* Quentin Hall; *Guests:* Gina Owen, Christina Donehower

Today's Agenda. MOTION to approve the agenda: David Owen; Second: Fred Norman. CARRIED.

Treasurer's Report, Ashley Short. Checking balance: \$37,500; Savings balance: \$79,043.63; Credit card account has been closed; MOTION to approve Treasurer's Report: David Owen; Second: Fred Norman. CARRIED.

Action Items / Key Tasks

- Janene will follow up with KeyBank to ensure John O'Brien has deposit access to the account.

Welcoming Peter!

Peter Sandifer provided a brief update and volunteered to assist with meeting notes and communications support.

U.S. Forest Service Updates, Quentin Hall

Iron Creek Campground Windthrow Event:

- Major windthrow event resulted in approximately 150 trees downed, with an additional ~50 standing hazard trees.
- Damage includes campground infrastructure and internal roads; vault toilets remain intact.
- Substantial surface fuel loading was introduced, estimated at 75-100 dump truck loads of fine fuels.
- A previous campsite fire occurred at the location in 2023, increasing concern for future fire risk.
- At least a one-year closure is anticipated, including closure for the upcoming summer season (not yet formally confirmed).
- Additional trees continue to fall following the initial wind event, increasing the scope and complexity of cleanup operations.

Response & Planning

- The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) is developing cleanup strategies.
- Potential mechanisms include a log sale, fish log partnership, or stewardship contract.
- Coordination is underway with the Cowlitz Tribe to explore use of downed logs as engineered log jams.
- Full extent of damage is still unknown due to limited access caused by snowpack.
- Interest was expressed in utilizing salvage logs for the Tribe's carving program.

North Packwood Fuels Categorical Exclusion (CE):

- No Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) nesting stands will be treated.
- Approximately 1,000 acres proposed for treatment, including ~577 acres of foraging habitat, ~440 acres of dispersal habitat, and ~100 acres of other habitat types.
- Several treatment units north of Packwood have been dropped due to habitat constraints.

Road 5290 & Selected Spurs Treatment Approach:

- 8-foot daylighting along road shoulders.
- Thinning prescriptions target 40–50% Relative Canopy Cover (RCC) depending on NSO habitat type.
- Roadside thinning will occur through root-rot pockets to meet fuels-reduction objectives.
- Upland thinning prescriptions also account for root-rot treatment.
- Treatments are intended to support fire line construction and transportation access during wildfire response.

NEPA & Categorical Exclusion Updates:

- Recent court ruling (Oregon Wild et al. v. U.S. Forest Service, January 13, 2026) eliminated the Forest Service's ability to use the USDA 30-day CE category.
- As a result, the North Packwood Fuels project can no longer proceed under that CE.
- Other CE categories may still allow proposed actions to move forward.
- Categorical Exclusions continue to require review for extraordinary circumstances, ESA consultation, Section 106 compliance, and Tribal consultation.
- Some CE categories require collaboration with stakeholder groups or collaboratives.
- The Forest Service is transitioning from SOPA to the new ELMS system, which will improve public visibility into project tracking and agency actions.

Additional Discussion:

- Bob Guenther spoke in support of biofuels as a near-term energy transition strategy, noting that wood utilization remains part of the federal administration's agenda.

Operations Updates – Janene Ritchie

- National Forest Foundation grant application was unsuccessful; however, NFF is offering limited technical assistance and consulting support. Janene will work with Maisie Powell (NFF) to support planning for the Annual Meeting.
- Amy Besunder will be engaged using Cowlitz Tribe grant funds to support fundraising strategy and organizational development.
- Annual Meeting scheduled for March 17–18 at the Packwood Community Hall; participant survey forthcoming to inform agenda topics.
- Janene will attend a nonprofit professional development event in May.
- February joint meeting with the South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative scheduled for Thursday, February 19, from 1:00–3:30 PM (Zoom only).
- First Fungi Fest planning committee meeting scheduled for the following week, with plans to expand programming, locations, and number of events.
- Vendor market and several public-facing Fungi Fest events will remain free and open to the community.

Roundtable Updates

- Gina and David Owen will be traveling abroad during February and March.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00am.