

Forest Plan Revision Collaboration – Rick Acosta (509) 664-9210

At the last PAC meeting (1/25), we had set aside dates for future collaboration and regular business meetings (February 6, 28, and March 22). A chronology of events that have occurred since the January 25 meeting was explained by Rick Acosta. A lot of things have changed since 1/25 resulting in the rescheduling of our collaboration meeting. For example, Federal Register Notification requirements caused the cancellation of the February 6 meeting. Since our meeting in January, the Forest Service has also hired facilitators Susan Hayman and Kathy Bond to help us with our collaboration process. They suggested that we go about this collaboration in two phases. Phase 1 would consist of an assessment of the interdisciplinary team (IDT) and the PACs. This assessment is essential in order to properly design a collaboration process that will be suitable to our needs and our potential. The assessment will also hopefully identify realistic do-able outcomes that would be reasonable for the PACs to achieve. It's also hoped that the identified potential outcomes would be helpful to the IDT in making progress revising the forest plans. The facilitators are conducting an on-line survey of IDT members and interviewing a sampling of PACs' members via telephone. The facilitators felt it would be helpful if the (IDT) determined first what might be a practical product, task, or outcome that the PACs might be able to embark upon. On March 9, there will be an internal IDT meeting in which the IDT will determine the possible products, tasks, and/or outcomes of collaboration. These possible outcomes will then be presented to the PACs on March 22. Facilitators have already contacted some PAC members. About eight PAC members have already been contacted by the facilitators. Phase 1 (assessment and design of the collaboration) is occurring now. Phase 2 is the actual implementation of the collaboration based on the assessment and design of phase 1.

Members of the PACs who were present were then asked whether any of them had been contacted by the facilitators in a telephone interview. Five members indicated that they had. Each was asked whether they would be willing to share their experience and ideas related to collaboration to date. All agreed to do so.

Jessica Gonzales: talked with Kathy Bond. The questions asked by the facilitators were really good questions. They looked at efficiencies and what we wanted to get out of this process. Jessica commended the Forest Service for hiring the facilitators and doing the assessment. She felt that the assessment was essential to figure out the needs of the PACs and to figure out possible outcomes or what the Forest Service could ask of the PACS.

Howard Briggs: was contacted by Susan Hayman and generally talked about the collaboration process. He thought that the facilitator was very professional and had some good questions. But he also felt that the PAC members have worked in a collaborative manner over the years and already have a lot of collaboration experience.

June Helbig: said that it was a very good experience talking with Kathy. June asked that we define collaboration. She also wanted to know how much the Forest Service will use and values the input of the PACS. She also wanted to know how much the PACs input would count versus input from the other public meetings. She wanted to know if

the collaboration would consist of the PACs making specific recommendations or general principle recommendations that would be applied over all the watersheds.

Rick Acosta: Forest Supervisor Jim Boynton values the advice of the PACs. He values the input of the PACs to such an extent that he believes it's important that we do the best job possible and not waste the time of members of PACs. This is one of the reasons why he directed the contracting with professional facilitators who are experts in the field of collaboration. The PACs input is important because the membership of the PACs is diverse with each member representing an important interest that has a stake in the management of the national forest. PACs input will need to be considered equally as other ideas presented by the general public at large. It will be up to members of the PACs to determine what actually constitutes the collaboration. We hope to accomplish this on 3/22. The process and the outcomes belong to and will be determined by the PACs. Hopefully the outcome of the 3/9 IDT meeting will provide some reasonable possibilities for the PACs to consider for incorporation into the collaboration process.

Dale Neuman: The time with the facilitator went longer than the 25 minutes they estimated. He also stated that he thought it interesting that the Forest Service went to an outside facilitator when initially the Forest Service had said that it was in a hurry, and that there were deadlines.

Rick Acosta: A lot of work and interaction between Jim Boynton, Margaret Hartzell, Paul Hart, and others has occurred since the PACs last met on January 25. The situation has evolved. Jim wants this collaboration effort to be successful. He and others have listened to the advice of experts to go slow at first by first assessing and properly designing a process that meets our needs. This has along with other reasons (federal register requirements, for example) has caused the time frame to shift somewhat.

Paul Hart: One of the messages that I keep pushing upwards to my boss is that the time spent involving our publics is very important time and it is not a very good idea to rush it. This is a big deal, we don't revise Forest Plans very often; it has been over 15 years since we last revised our Forest Plan. We are talking about developing options to send out to the public for review and comment. We need to take the time to do this right. This is the biggest project that the PACs has ever considered embarking upon.

Carl Bjelland: What is the deadline?

Paul Hart: The deadline is in June.

Lee Carlson: talked with Susan for about an hour and found her very engaging. Susan and Lee talked about the group and the collaboration that they've already done. Lee stated that the PACs expect to be listened to and have their input acted on. The PACs' experience with the Forest Service is that the advice they have given in the past was accepted, especially with Sonny O'Neal (former Forest Supervisor) but it is a bit unknown with Jim Boynton (on forest for just over 2 years). Lee stated that the PACs would prefer to not wait until the last minute, and would like to look at the alternatives early on, and have input to the alternatives instead of reacting to them.

Walt Smith: What exactly do you expect from the PAC? Is it a final decision on each of the items?

Rick Acosta: The Forest Service's original proposal was that the PACS identify suitable uses for 6th field watersheds across the landscape of the national forests. Essentially, the Forest Service suggested that the PACs identify for example whether a particular 6th field would be suitable for various uses. Possible examples of how this could work is asking the PACs to consider when a particular watershed should have motorized recreation or only be non-motorized, whether trees could be cut for fuel reduction and other reasons in a particular watershed, and or whether a 6th field watershed should remain roadless or be recommended for additional wilderness. But that is in flux right now. The Forest Service heard the concern of the membership of the PACs on 1/25. It was expressed that the proposal of the Forest Service appeared to be overwhelming and perhaps not realistic within the stated time frame. Therefore, the Forest Service has re-grouped, hired professional facilitators versed in collaborative learning, and is spending time to assess our collaborative needs to design a feasible and do-able collaboration effort. We are hopeful that the 3/9 IDT meeting and our 3/22 meeting will achieve some outcomes that we can agree on.

Bob McGinnis: In any kind of planning process or business plan, one usually makes some basic assumptions upon which you base your decisions. Have these been developed or will that be part of the process that we will be involved in? Large population increase in the state of Washington and the accompanying increased recreation demand is one such assumption.

Rick Acosta: We know some things need to be changed in the Forest Plan. There have been a lot of social, economic, and ecological changes in our state and local national forests since the late 1980s and 1990 when the current forest plans were implemented. The 2005 Planning Rule mandates that we deal with these changes and revise our forest plans where they are not in sync with the changed social, economic, and ecological changes. Our plan is out of sync right now and that is what we are trying to fix.

Carl Bjelland: So it is a Forest Plan revision; it is a plan that we are going to revise. Is it possible that we all get a hardcopy of those plans to review?

Rick Acosta: We don't have very many hardcopies of the plans left. Since we are changing the plans, it doesn't make sense to spend the money for re-printing. Several of the members of the PACs asked how to obtain a copy of the forest plans. Since the Forest Service is asking the PACs to embark upon this collaboration, Rick said he would provide a downloaded hard copy or cd of the plan for anyone from the PACs who wants to participate in the effort.

Chris Parsons: Phase 1 is the design and assessment of the process, what are the other phases and the timelines? We really need to know the timeline so that our agency can plan its work and work effectively in the plan revision process. Right now, we have no idea of what is going to happen and when.

Rick Acosta: Phase 2 is implementation of the process. A timeline is needed. The timeline is something that the group can decide to tackle as part of the collaboration effort.

Chris Parsons: Part of the process of effective collaboration is hearing differing views, which may not happen in a one-day meeting in March.

Arnie Arneson: What is the IDT doing with the general public? I'm concerned about how you are bringing the input from other the general public and interest groups into this collaborative process.

Rick Acosta: Public involvement activities over the past couple of years include public meetings, web site postings, mailings, newsletters, meetings with special interest groups, clubs, personal phone calls and visits. Rick indicated that the members of the PACs can also sense the interests that they each represent and share their input. The result of the PACs meeting on 3/22 can not be predicted. The process and how the 3/22 meeting proceeds belong to, and will be determined by the PACs. We will have facilitators who will help us get there. It will be up to the PACs to decide how they want to proceed. Although it's hoped that the following will not occur, it is possible that the PACs will decide not to proceed with collaboration as they learn more. On 1/25, the PACs agreed to tentatively go forward with this collaboration idea provided a better understanding of what was expected of them is provided. On 1/25, it was agreed that if the PACs were not satisfied as they learned more, the PACs always would hold the option of not proceeding.

Carl Bjelland: Will the March 9 meeting notes be available to the PAC?

Rick Acosta: Usually IDT meetings are not part of the public record; they can be very candid meetings. Public scrutiny of internal meetings between specialists can often chill the candor and stifle constructive disagreement, honest discussion and progress. That is not to say that the Forest Service has never allowed this to occur. Margaret Hartzell has already indicated that sharing of IDT meeting notes would not occur but she can be asked if she would be willing to share notes from those meetings.

Jen Watkins: Rather than releasing notes, it would be good to know what the possible outcomes are that are produced at the 3/9 IDT meeting so that the PACs are better prepared prior to the 3/22 meeting.

Carl Bjelland: this is all that was desired in preparation for the 3/22 meeting.

Presentation by Mike Anderson

Handout #1: Executive Summary Long-Range Strategy for the Lakeview Federal Stewardship Unit

Mike shared his experience working with the Lakeview Stewardship Group in Lake County in south central Oregon (which involved a portion of the Fremont-Winema National Forest). He showed a PowerPoint presentation of the collaborative effort on the Lakeview Unit.

PowerPoint presentation:

The Lakeview Stewardship Group was formed in 1998 for the purpose of identifying a collaborative vision for the Lakeview Federal Stewardship Unit. There was a diverse group of members (including the local high school, Chambers of Commerce, FS Oregon Dept of Economic & Community Development, Sustainable NW, The Threshold Foundation, the Wilderness Society and local citizens.

Vision: The Lakeview Stew Group envisions a sustainable forest ecosystem possible through a new understanding of the interrelationships between the people and the land ensuring quality of life for present and future generations.

Goals:

1. Sustain and restore a healthy, diverse resilient ecosystem that can accommodate human and natural disturbances
1. Sustain and restore the lands capacity to absorb, store and distribute quality water
2. Provide opportunities for people to realize their material, spiritual and recreational values and relationships with the forest.

Major focus has been on Chewaucan Watershed monitoring (over 125,000 acres)

Lakeview Stewardship Group received USFS Regional Partnership Award

Long-Range Strategy:

- Restoration framework
- Information sources
- Issues
- Monitoring
- 5-year action plan
- Budget

Issues:

- Forest and rangeland health—Reduce fuels and fire threat, protect and restore old growth, prevent invasive species and noxious weeds, and combat juniper encroachment.
- Soils and water—
- Fish and wildlife—
- Roads
- Wilderness and roadless areas—Inventory existing roadless areas (USFS) and other unroaded areas (ONRC); Guidelines--to protect all existing roadless areas and evaluate potential wilderness in forest plan process e.g. compatibility with other uses and objectives.
- Recreation
- Community benefits—
- Implementation and economics

End of PowerPoint presentation.

Howard Briggs: Recreation is part of this, what is being done about recreation.

Mike Anderson: The plan tries to inventory the recreation opportunities available to the people of Lakeview and that need to be maintained. The recommendation to the FS is to maintain recreation sites. We didn't get into the motorized/non-motorized recreation issue, we identified it as an issue.

Dale Neuman: Who was your recreation representative?

Mike Anderson: Deanna Johnson from the Chamber of Commerce represented the local snowmobile club and 4-wheelers.

Paul Hart: Can you give any feedback on how the group managed to work together.

Mike Anderson: Initially it was convened by one the of the Lake County commissioners who worked with the Forest Service, environmental groups, and Sustainable Northwest out of Portland. It helps to try to find common ground in this process. My advice would be to be realistic, build on your level of trust and agreement first.

Nick Martinez: You have a \$4 million shortfall.

Mike Anderson: We have been talking with the Congressional representative, the regional forester to get funding allocated, and we are using stewardship contracting. The \$4 million is specifically the forest fire restoration work, the mechanical thinning. The priority has been to get the most acreage done at the least cost; the more difficult and costly areas will have to be done later through stewardship contracting opportunities.

Chris Parsons: How did you address cattle grazing and mineral extraction?

Mike Anderson: Minerals are not a big issue on the Fremont. Grazing is an issue that some people felt we tiptoed around and didn't address in depth but we did try to do an inventory of the existing allotments in the unit and evaluate how the different grazing systems are being applied.

The Fremont has a long history of grazing with some good range managers. Some sensitive species have affected grazing in the last 10 years or so.

Barry Donahue: How did the general public accept the plan, did they feel that they were well represented or was there criticism?

Mike Anderson: We had an evening public reception in which about 40 people attended, we had a rollout strategy in which we put ads in the local newspaper, we briefed the county commissioners, it has been very well received.

Paul Hart: What did the people involved get out of the process?

Mike Anderson: People felt very glad that we took the time and effort to do this; it was a 2-year effort. The Forest Service feels like they have a good basis to go forward with their Forest Plan revision. We didn't solve all the controversies surrounding this. Start from the easiest areas of consensus and work outward toward the more controversial issues.

Paul Hart: Collaboration is what you make of it, what you design it to be. The model we are using is called Collaborative Learning which was developed through Oregon State Univ and WA State Univ. It involves people of wide diverse interests getting together, learning about issues, and then looking for common ground. It doesn't mean that you will agree on everything; some things you will agree to disagree on. We first used Collaborative Learning after the big fires of 1994. This whole committee process has been founded on this process, getting together, sharing issues, coming to some agreement on issues.