

USDA Forest Service, National Forest System, Region 6 – Pacific NW

NORTHWEST FOREST PLAN AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHARTER

1. Committee’s Official Designation

Northwest Forest Plan Area Advisory Committee (Committee).

2. Authority

The Committee is established under the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972, as amended (FACA; 5 U.S.C. App. 2) and the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA; 16 U.S.C. sec. 1612).

3. Objectives and Scope of Activities

The purpose of the Committee is to provide advice and pragmatic recommendations regarding potential regional scale land management planning approaches and solutions to these challenges in the context of the 2012 planning rule. Significant changes in ecological and social conditions across the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) area require the US Forest Service and its partners to evaluate existing management direction and consider new approaches to meet the intent of the NWFP, manage for landscapes that are adapted to climate change and resilient to wildfire, and provide for increasing use of and demands from national forest system lands. These changes have been experienced first-hand through plan implementation and are further documented in monitoring reports, the U.S. Forest Service’s “Science Synthesis to Inform Plan Revisions Within the Northwest Forest Plan Area” (2018) (Science Synthesis), and “Bioregional Assessment of Northwest Forests” (2020). The agency further recognizes in the “Confronting the Wildfire Crisis: A Strategy for Protecting Communities and Improving Resilience in America’s Forests” the need to address at landscape scale the increased frequency, intensity, and scale of wildfires brought on by fire exclusion and increased fuel densities, a warmer climate, and continued development into fire-prone landscapes. Similar challenges are discussed in Executive Order 14072: Strengthening the Nation’s Forests, Communities, and Local Economies.

For the purposes of this committee, the geographic scope includes in their entirety all the US Forest Service administrative units amended by the NWFP. Units in the Pacific Northwest Region (Region 6) include: Deschutes National Forest, Fremont-Winema National Forest, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Mt. Hood National Forest, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, Olympic National

Forest, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, Siuslaw National Forest, Umpqua National Forest, and Willamette National Forest. Units in the Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5) include: Klamath National Forest and Butte Valley National Grassland, Lassen National Forest, Mendocino National Forest, Modoc National Forest, Six Rivers National Forest, and Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

4. Description of Duties

The Committee is solely advisory in nature. Advice or recommendations of the Committee will be based on the best available science, as defined in the 2012 Planning Rule, and other relevant planning information. Land management planning options will result in sustainable, climate-adapted, wildfire-resilient landscapes. The Secretary of Agriculture or the Chief of the Forest Service may request other duties of the committee within the scope of the committee. The Committee provides timely advice and recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture through the Chief of the Forest Service and the Designed Federal Officer and perform the following duties:

- Planning options, complementing the national Wildfire Crisis Strategy, that assist the Forest Service's transition to greater proactive wildfire risk reduction and address key obstacles related to existing vegetation management.
- Approaches to address the dynamic nature of ecosystems that utilize adaptive management, monitoring, and integration of future uncertainty into land management planning.
- Application of the best available science regarding the following primary issues: 1) the ecological importance of older and old forests; 2) climate change, fire, and associated disturbance processes; 3) terrestrial and aquatic reserved land use allocations and the relationship between the two; 4) the climatic diversity of forests encompassed by the NWFP area; and 5) habitat connectivity at multiple scales in light of changed conditions.
- Consideration of additional indigenous traditional ecological knowledge, perspectives, and values into federal forest planning and management.
- Communication tools and strategies to: 1) provide greater understanding of landscape or programmatic level planning options and requirements and 2) enhance outreach efforts, public engagement, Tribal consultation and participation, targeted outreach to underserved communities, and stakeholder collaboration within the scope of the Committee.
- Issue preliminary recommendations in sequence with Forest Service NWFP planning timelines.

Committee recommendations shall stay within the scope of land management planning options that result in sustainable, climate-resilient, and wildfire-adapted landscapes. The

plan is for the committee to submit to the DFO recommendations in the following sequence:

- Within three months of Committee inception provide preliminary recommendations on aspects of the NWFP that need to change and complementary public engagement strategies.
- Within six months of Committee inception provide preliminary recommendations on the Proposed Action, desired conditions, and strategies for regional or sub-regional scale application.
- Within nine months of Committee inception provide preliminary recommendations on the development of NEPA alternatives.
- Within one year of Committee inception provide preliminary recommendations that address the duties outlined in #4 above.
- Within fifteen months of Committee inception provide advice on NEPA alternatives.
- Within eighteen months of Committee inception provide final recommendations.
- In months eighteen to twenty-four assist the Forest Service in prioritizing recommendations.

5. Agency or Official to Whom the Committee Reports

The Committee will report to the Secretary of the Agriculture, through the Chief of the Forest Service and the Designed Federal Officer.

6. Support

Clerical and the other administrative support for the Committee will be provided by the USDA Forest Service through the Pacific Planning Service Group. The USDA Forest Service will retain all decision-making authority pertaining to the establishment, implementation and management of the committee.

7. Estimated Annual Operating Costs and Staff Years

US Forest Service executive leadership supports funding this Committee. The estimated annual operating costs of the Committee are \$750,000.00. In Fiscal Year 2022 the estimated costs are \$25,000.00; primarily for staff and contractor time to prepare for implementation of the Membership Balance Plan when the Federal Register Notice is released.

In Fiscal Year 2023 most of the operating costs will be for third-party neutral facilitation for the Committee and subcommittees and necessary staff salary. Third party neutral facilitation is estimated to cost \$325,000 annually. This cost includes meeting preparation, facilitation, and all requisite meeting notes and documentation. The Federal staff support is estimated to be three full-time equivalents with an annual cost of \$380,000. This cost includes direct staff support for planning related information and

data, analysis, and the interface with Northwest Forest Plan planning efforts including public engagement. Committee meeting expenses may include meeting room rentals, travel costs, and A/V equipment purchase/or rental are estimated at \$45,000 annually and will be covered through the annual budget of the USDA Forest Service and administered through the Pacific Planning Service Group.

In the performance of their duties away from their homes or regular places of business, Committee members may be allowed reimbursement for travel expenses including per diem in lieu of subsistence, as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5703. Members of the Committee will serve without compensation. Reimbursement for travel expenses will be made in accordance with Federal per diem rates for attendance at meetings. All expenses will be subject to approval of the Designated Federal Official and the agency.

8. Designated Federal Officer

In accordance with agency procedures U.S. Forest Service, Region 6, Regional Forester will serve as the Designated Federal Official (DFO). The DFO will approve the advisory committee's and subcommittees' meetings, prepare and approve all meeting agendas, attend committee meetings (or send a designee), adjourn any meeting when the DFO determines adjournment to be in the public interest, and chair meetings when directed to do so by the official to whom the advisory committee reports.

9. Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings

The Committee will meet approximately 4-6 times annually. All meetings will be conducted in an open, transparent, and accessible manner.

10. Duration

Continuing.

11. Termination

In accordance with Section 14 of FACA, unless renewed this committee shall terminate two-year from the effective filing date of this charter.

12. Membership and Designation

12a. This Committee will be fairly balanced in its membership in terms of the points of view represented and the functions to be performed. Steps will be taken to maintain continuity and encourage fresh points of view such as establishing staggered membership terms and limiting the number of renewed memberships. Members will serve a 2-year term limit. For continuity purposes, members may be considered to serve an additional 2-year term at the pleasure of the Secretary if the committee is renewed.

12b. The FACA committee will consist of up to 21 individuals representing the following perspectives:

Science: Up to 9 members who represent the scientific community, and have an understanding in the following disciplines and how they relate to the NWFP area:

- Forest ecology
- Vegetation management
- Fire ecology
- Terrestrial wildlife ecology
- Aquatic and riparian ecosystems and species
- Climate change
- Social science
- Adaptive management and planning
- Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge (ITEK) practitioners

Organizations: Up to 8 members who represent a broad array of organizations who share a collective interest in the health and sustainability of the National Forest System lands within the NWFP area:

- National, regional, or local conservation organizations with staff and active programs in the Pacific Northwest
- Forest products industry
- Wildlife organization
- Recreation organization
- Organization involved in outreach with underserved communities
- Forest collaborative groups
- Watershed organization

Government and public: Up to 4 members who represent governmental entities or the public at-large:

- Member of the affected public at large
- Represent state governments
- Represent counties
- Represent American Indian Tribes

The committee will represent to the extent possible a balance across the three states covered by the NWFP (Oregon, Washington, California). It is important that these Committee members represent not only diverse professional backgrounds but also fairly represent the geographic and demographic composition of the NWFP area.

12c. Of these members, one will become the chairperson who is recognized for his or her ability to lead a group in a fair and focused manner and who has been briefed on the mission of the Committee. A co-chairperson may be assigned, especially to facilitate the transition to become the chairperson in the future. The chairperson is selected by the DFO.

12d. Ethics Statement

To maintain the highest levels of honesty, integrity and ethical conduct, no Committee or subcommittee member shall participate in any “specific party matters” (i.e., matters are narrowly focused and typically involve specific transactions between identified parties) such as a lease, license, permit, contract, claim, grant, agreement, or related litigation with the Department in which the member has a direct financial interest. This includes the requirement for Committee or Subcommittee members to immediately disclose to the DFO (for discussion with USDA’s Office of Ethics) any specific party matter in which the member’s immediate family, relatives, business partners or employer would be directly seeking to financially benefit from the Committee’s recommendations. Members of the Committee shall be required to disclose their direct or indirect interest in leases, licenses, permits, contracts, claims, grants, or agreements that involve lands or resources administered by the Forest Service, or in any litigation related thereto. For the purposes of this paragraph, indirect interest includes holdings of a spouse or dependent child.

All members will receive ethics training to identify and avoid any actions that would cause the public to question the integrity of the Committee’s advice and recommendations. Members who are appointed as “Representatives” are not subject to Federal ethics laws because such appointment allows them to represent the point(s) of view of a particular group, business sector or segment of the public.

Members appointed as “Special Government Employees” (SGEs) are considered intermittent Federal employees and are subject to Federal ethics laws. SGE’s are appointed due to their personal knowledge, academic scholarship, background, or expertise. No SGE may participate in any activity in which the member has a prohibited financial interest. Appointees who are SGEs are required to complete and submit a Confidential Financial Disclosure Report (OGE-450 form) via the FDonline e-filing database system. Upon request USDA will assist SGEs in preparing these financial reports. To ensure the highest level of compliance with applicable ethical standards USDA will provide ethics training to SGEs on an annual basis. The provisions of these paragraphs are not meant to exhaustively cover all Federal ethics laws and do not affect any other statutory or regulatory obligations to which advisory committee members are subject.

12e. Equal Opportunity Statement

Equal opportunity practices, in line with USDA policies, will be followed in all membership appointments to the committee. To ensure that the recommendations of the committee have considered the needs of the diverse groups served by the Department, membership shall include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

The USDA prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, political beliefs,

income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs).

13. Subcommittee

The Committee has the authority to create subcommittees, in consultation with the DFO. Subcommittees must report back to the parent committee and must not provide advice or work products directly to the Agency.

14. Recordkeeping

The records of this Committee, formally and informally established subcommittees, or other subgroups of the committee, shall be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule 6.2 or other approved agency records disposition schedule. These records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552.

15. Filing Date

December 6, 2022