Blues Intergovernmental Council (BIC) Meeting Summary

April 28, 2020
Zoom Video Conference
Session One: 10:30 am – 12:00 pm PDT
Session Two: 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm PDT

Session One

Attending via Zoom or phone:
Adair, Patti; Anderes, Paul; Billman, Tucker; Casamassa, Glenn; Christofferson, Nils; DeBone, Toney; Eddy, Bruce; Fesenmyer, Sarah; Hagle, Calla; Hampsher, Jim; Harvey, Bill; Huffman, John; Keniry, Julie; Kirsch, Mark; Kristofferson, Nils; Laverty, Maura; Lindsay, Amanda; Lind, Bill; Maille, Peter; McConnell, Scott; Medema, Travis; Meyer, Marissa; Montoya, Tom; Nash, Todd; Nickkel, Gina; Owens, Gina; Owens, Mark; Palmer, Sam; Pozzanghera, Steve; Rea, Ryan; Riber, Julia; Roberts, Susan; Scheeler, Carl; Shafer, John; Shelman, Kristen; Stein, Kris; Svejcar, Tony; Thomas, Brett; Trulock, Craig; Watrud, Eric; Watrud, Eric; Weiseman, Darcy; Wolf, Greg

Facilitators: Laurel Singer and Kristen Wright (National Policy Consensus Center). Note-takers, Julia Babcock, Cat McGinnis, Jennah Stillman, Kristen Wright (National Policy Consensus Center)

Welcome, meeting overview, and introductions—Conveners Mark Owens, Susan Roberts, Glenn Cassamassa, and Gina Owens.
Mark, Susan, and Gina jointly provided a welcome and overview to the meeting, emphasizing:

- The current global pandemic understandably has affected everyone, requiring a great deal of time and attention, re-shifting priorities, and attending to important community needs.
- At the same time, hope to continue with the momentum that we’ve started over the last three months.
- The BIC has made very good progress working through a lot of the organizational details, including the completion of the BIC operating principles, approved by the steering committee.
- The meeting is structured to accomplish a small but important step to set up our subcommittees. The morning session will be spent in subcommittees addressing some key questions to stand up these committees. The afternoon session, will consist of subcommittee report outs to get feedback from the full BIC.

Glenn Cassamassa also reaffirmed that this work continues to be a priority for USFS and they will continue to be fully engaged and the work continues.
Subcommittee Break Out Sessions:
Each break out committee was asked to address three key questions, getting as far as they could. These questions were:

1. What do you see as the most important issue(s) for this subgroup to explore in order to address the identified focus question?
2. What people are needed (internal and external to the BIC) to allow this subgroup to get the full perspectives and the expertise needed to create recommendations on the issues identified?
3. What kinds of information or resources would be helpful to address those issues & what are the potential sources for this?

Paul Anderes, co-convener of the socioeconomic subgroup provided an overview of the role of the convener. He reviewed a handout “The Keys To Convening: AOC County College.” included as appendix A.

The large group broke into subcommittee sessions that lasted approximately 45 minutes. Each subcommittee had a note taker to capture the group discussion.

Notes from subcommittee break outs sessions are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcommittee: Access, Habitat, Wilderness and Set Aside</th>
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<tr>
<td>How do you provide access for human needs and protect important habitat?</td>
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**Attendees:**

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**NOTES:**

*What do you see as the most important issue(s) for this subgroup to explore in order to address the identified focus question?*

- Current open forest designation (working forests) in Blue Mountain Forests (related to access issues)
  - What are drivers/issues that might lead to closures? (e.g., elk, security, etc.)
○ What is the right balance of open (vehicle access)/closed (walk-in only) forestland? If 75% of the forest is closed in some way, how do we assess what the remaining 25% is? (statistics here came from firefighting group presentation)

○ What type of access is an issue, where, and why? Access categories include: ATV/UTV, snow machine, full-sized automobiles, e-bikes, horse, by foot.
  ➢ What are the social, economic, and ecological impacts and values associated with each type of access?
  ➢ What types of uses are issues, where, and why? Use categories include consumptive (non-timber and timber forest products), non-consumptive (hiking, etc. recreational) and management.

● Habitat management as it relates to the different management tools.

● What is the right balance of any new recommended wilderness areas and other set aside areas with more restricted access?

What **people** are needed (internal and external to the BIC) to allow this subgroup to get the full perspectives and the expertise needed to create recommendations on the issues identified?

● Consider: These may overlap with other subcommittees. Also, these categories of groups for each forest area as they may be different for different forests.

● Who are the voices that have issue with too much access or too little access?

● Individuals involved in elk research *(ODFW- Darren Clark, and USFS - Mike Wisdom/Dave Bonart (?) or Chad Boyd, Lizzy Berkley, WDFW - Paul Wik)*.

● Community organizations: Rocky Mountain Elk, OHA, Forest Access for All, Agriculture groups (Farm Bureau, Oregon/Washington Cattleman’s Associations), Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Eastern Oregon Mining Association.

● Landowners in specific elk-damaged areas (Mark Kirsch could aid in identifying who these landowners are).

● Wilderness advocate or environmental organizations: Oregon Wild, The Nature Conservancy, Greater Hells Canyon.

● Timber contractors/mills.

● Trails Association (Wallowa Whitman has one).

● Outdoor recreation commercial interests: Outfitters and guides.

What kinds of **information or resources** would be helpful to address those issues and what are the potential sources for this information?

● What do we mean by certain designations and what are the implications for access? What does the management of different designations look like?

● Look at write-ups for recommended wilderness designation.
- Road closure overlay map of roads that are needed for different reasons.
- Habitat Resources:
  - Blue Mountains Elk Nutrition and Habitat Model - USFS PNW Research Station.
  - Habitat Guidelines for Mule Deer—Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
  - Resources with different perspectives on habitat than the two resources above.
- Wolf Studies

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### Subcommittee: Forest Health—Wildfire Management, Fire Suppression, and Post Wildfire Salvage

*How do we develop wildfire management and suppression strategies that protect both natural and economic values?*

### Timber Harvest and Forest Health

*How can we develop timber management strategies that support local community economies and forest health?*

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#### NOTES:

*What do you see as the most important issue(s) for this subgroup to explore in order to address the identified focus question?*
• **Forest health and fire risks are intertwined.** Difficulty in treating forest mechanically, thus there is a strong interest in more boots on the ground to address catastrophic fire.

• **EO 19-01 Wildfire Council based on 3 tenets of national cohesive fire strategy (landscape, suppression, and community adaptation and resilience).** Could help inform this group, actively treating % of landscape based on communities at risk. Heavy fuel/mitigation focus—codified 6 months ago around legislative ask. Ask and other elements across a broad set of stakeholders, collaborative efforts. Quadrennial review. Landscape level restoration component can be scaled to geographic focus of BIC.

• **Grazing and 21-inch rule should be reviewed and addressed** as both relate to economics, fire risk and management.

• **Avoid prescription, allow people on the ground to define details at project level with site-specific details.** Large-scale vision for forest planning, under new forest plan—sets high level forest conditions in future and what forest will provide. Eric Quaempts presentation reflected what they are trying to manage for on tribal lands—resiliency of forest operations for uncertainty. Guise similar to district-level for forest resilience for future disturbances; asking what that looks like for forest and communities—hand-in-hand tied together in Eastern Oregon. Ecological, social, and economic resilience. How to show we’re on the same page to support boots on the ground

• **Human element must be ever-present in local forest management to respond to community needs and previous forest plan objections (public comments).** Need to maintain awareness around 350 objections raised by community to previous plan. Forest resilient and health—shared by those who live, work here. When listen and read comments—high-level vision is there but not on the ground involvement of people needed to make decisions (crux of issues). Local foresters and rangers are often not allowed to make decisions with community, which can disrupt the process when waiting for internal review from agencies. Need to address governance—people on ground in charge of forests locally—can work with communities. Buy-in around where trees need to be cut and addressing broader objections. Counties have principles for discussion to be covered. Maintain an open table for engagement at subcommittee table level

• **The legal framework of ESA and environmental interests informs prescriptions at the landscape and local scale around sensitive areas such as riparian zones.** I understand that we need to manage our forests to maintain forest health, to reduce fire risk, and to achieve a sustainable economic benefit to local communities. But, want to remind folks that timber harvest comes with litigation risk, possibly more so than most other Forest Service activities. For NOAA, the pace and scale of timber harvest allowed under the plan is going to be important, as is how riparian areas will be treated under these activities. In general, our interest in timber projects goes up incrementally the closer the activities get to streams. From a fisheries perspective, riparian functions and processes provided by riparian areas
are going to need to be an important consideration over what prescriptions should occur within one and two site-potential tree heights from streams. We’re not going to be worried much about what harvest activities occur upslope, are probably going to be okay with some potential thinning in the outermost portion of the riparian zone, but will expect to see a much lighter approach immediately adjacent to streams. If we can design a plan that follows this sort of approach, we’re more likely to have projects that sail through ESA consultation and survive litigation, especially if we’re able to tie some aquatic restoration package to various activities.

- **Infrastructure is critical part of equation for forest management long—term; need to secure input for contractors, mills, and entrepreneurs in start-up phase.** Without that element, economic side does not pencil out. Public-private partnership; need to understand private sector factors and supporting infrastructure. Address flexibility for new markets in communities; example new mills on Malheur and one opening wood and alfalfa pellets seasonally in Harney. Responsive to types of materials, predictability for feasibility to run. Start-up expensive, need to demonstrate sustainable wood supply. Address at project level; regionally look at inputs and need. (Travis and Amanda) Cross-lamination, biofuel, alternative energy link to entrepreneurs—need to have steady, secure supply quantifiable upfront.

- **Comparisons between public and private sector management factors can inform forest plan and practices on the ground.** Need to understand how to manage land, water, timber, crops—how to better align and understand private sector practices for public forest management. Ranchers have grazing, fishing in ponds/streams and have balance that’s working. Public ground, section how we manage at scale and look at through private sector lens.

- **Forest protections should be defined broadly; from fire, from risks and liabilities for people, forests and the economy.** Forest management and restoration; protection of communities threat from wildfire and economic stability. How are communities preparing for wildfire roles, resources, and public, private, and county concerns? From community circle to forest managers to design projects that protect communities, infrastructure and landowners adjacent to forest.

- **Goal is to never have fire on the ground but when/if it happens fire salvage should be planned for to make the most of opportunities for community resilience.** Wildfire and forest health go hand-in-hand. Goal to never have severe fire in blue mountains; given uncertainty and conditions on the ground—new forest plan address fire salvage and framework to address that area when/if occurs. Other plans looked at prescriptions for fire salvage (published paper on way)—how to salvage at bigger scale when wildfires occur.

- **Wildfire salvage**—Canyon Creek example; agencies had woodpecker study backlash—that information can provide guidance for future fires. Other side; burn to cut concerns. 20-inch rule one factor and human element factors upfront—document useful for group that if fire comes through account for opportunity to
salvage timber. Enough timber (blue pine) to build homes for populations who need shelter.

What **people** are needed (internal and external to the BIC) to allow this subgroup to get the full perspectives and the expertise needed to create recommendations on the issues identified?

- Need to represent the people working in forests to reflect the opportunity and need to manage forests to circulate funding in the local economy and businesses.
- EO 19-01 Wildfire Council participants.
- Eric Quaempts presentation.
- Dave Powell’s work silviculture on Umatilla NF to guide density management and forest types.
- Paul Hessberg OR/WA landscape-level type information and how fires impact forests historically and into future.
- James Johnston research on Malheur—historical composition and disturbance patterns to understand historic conditions to inform vision for future management to understand change over 100 years in order to guide resilience efforts.
- Local USFS and contract staff Wallowa County Larry Knoll—works all over Pacific NW (Wallowa Resources) examples of staff that has worked well with community. Nils Christofferson.
- Grant County; Irene Jerome provide information as private contractor on firewise and several initiatives where there is alignment around local economic goals and forest management.
- Lisa Meehan previously NRCS and private consulting Sam Magara work with private landowners—resource for gathering information.

What kinds of **information or resources** would be helpful to address those issues and what are the potential sources for this?

- County economic development data, tax assessor office—look at tax revenue by county. State level employment office. (Pull from Socioeconomic data group?)
- State forestry plans create private landowner guides.
- BMFP Grant County-based collaborative (industry, USFS, and environmental ngo’s) developed zones of agreement and have upper wetlands document—worth review as starting point for the factors considered and layout to inform BIC.
- The Western Regional Strategy Committee (aka the Western Region) is the western arm of the Wildland Fire Leadership Council, chartered to support and facilitate
implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy across the West. [http://wildfireinthewest.org/](http://wildfireinthewest.org/)


**Miscellaneous notes:**

- Work to align zone of agreements and inclusion of broad perspectives to move towards.
- Question around ongoing participation for EO 19-01.

### Subcommittee: Livestock, Grazing, Fisheries and Hydrology

*How do we develop strategies that both maintain and increase grazing opportunities and improve fishing and hydrology conditions?*

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**NOTES:**

*What do you see as the most important issue(s) for this subgroup to explore in order to address the identified focus question?*
● With many topics in question, it was recognized by the group to first and foremost acknowledge the scale of the conversation by focusing on the broader plan level and prioritize a review of pre-existing documents, forest plans, and reports to clearly identify past/current objections, struggles, or failures as a starting point to set the framework for the committee’s subsequent conversation and steps forward.

● Addressing these issues through communication and overlapping efforts with the other subcommittee processes to identify and resolve the issues collaboratively.

● Other issues/opportunities nested within the larger framework include, but are not limited to:

○ Conflicts between timber management and grazing impacts, forcing cattle into riparian areas.

○ Hydrologic function.

○ Reauthorizing of non-use, vacant grazing allotments.

○ Exploring upland grazing function to help contribute to increasing grazing areas and improving habitat.

○ How to best incorporate grazing alongside threatened and endangered species habitat.

○ Current barriers from outdated policies that need review.

○ Alleviate the overburdening of management stipulations placed on producers, to reverse the declining number of permittees and help to set them up for success.

○ Set reasonable framework into forest plan revisions and describe activities that would occur within and outside of the framework so that there’s clearer direction for permitting and related to actual effects on the ground.

○ Prioritizing locations to first do forest health treatments that would also be beneficial for grazing.

○ Create a process to remove permittees that aren’t gearing their management towards seeing successful outcomes and sustainability for all.

○ Financial constraints and general affordability of restoration, changes, etc.

○ Need for a clearer framework related to effects on the ground.

○ Regarding upland forage, there is a need to better embrace all tools in the toolbox (stewardship contracts, good neighbor authority, etc.) to achieve certain acreages.

○ Concern regarding the level and timing of grazing, with a desire to allow it but to also protect species.

What people are needed (internal and external to the BIC) to allow this subgroup to get the full perspectives and the expertise needed to create recommendations on the issues identified?
• TBD

What kinds of information or resources would be helpful to address those issues & what are the potential sources for this information?

• Review GM-3 for language, standards, objections, and guidelines. Identify to see what wasn’t feasible, what the points of opposition were, and what was in the plan that got removed. For those topics that were problems or removed, first see why those were unacceptable, then the group can discuss to determine if there may be alternatives. (Craig Trulock and Tony Svejcar will begin putting together some general framework. Maura Laverty can provide the ARCS/GM3G summarization of the objection issues.)
  ○ Which parts of the standards are people having trouble meeting and how long does it take to analyze/evaluate these?
  ○ Most efficient monitoring/sampling system and which parts of it create problems for the producers, RangeCon, etc?

• Review Starkey models and fish recovery needs (document from 2019).

• Create a concise list of predominant grazer problems. (Todd Nash offered to develop this.)

• USFS to share any information pertaining to potential improvement suggestions that have been collected and to provide descriptions of “tools” and how to utilize these most effectively for acreage treatments.
Subcommittee: Socioeconomic Assessment

How do we gather data to better characterize the social and economic conditions for communities affected by the Blue Mountain Forest Plan that can better inform forest management practices?

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What do you see as the most important issue(s) for this subgroup to explore in order to address the identified focus question?

- Group discussed plans for county profiles and scenarios to look at impacts of the forest plan at the county and the sub-county level. Reports would draw from the example of USFS Region 5 and Chico State research. Reports would be for cross-county comparison as well as examination of vulnerability (economic shocks of changes to forest management) of various communities within those counties. Reports would be county specific but include information about those communities. For example, a report about Union County might address impacts to North Powder. Community profiles would be comparable across communities in same or other county reports as well.

- Bulk of the work will involve the granular research/modeling about communities within counties. Data cannot be collected via surveys under current contract, so will need to rely on secondary sources.

- Group began an examination of what counties would be reported on. Will follow up with discussion of what communities within those counties will have reports/scenarios. This is a starting point for larger BIC to respond regarding what the reports/modeling should cover. Ultimately, budget will factor into how many reports/how much research can be done.
- Initial list of counties: Baker, Crook, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Wheeler, Asotin (WA), Columbia (WA), Garfield (WA), Walla Walla (WA).

- The economy of some of these counties is different, and may not fit easily into the list of counties that will be reported on.

What **people** are needed (internal and external to the BIC) to allow this subgroup to get the full perspectives and the expertise needed to create recommendations on the issues identified?

- Recommended subgroup addition or phone call with Mark Metcalf.

What kinds of **information or resources** would be helpful to address those issues and what are the potential sources for this information?

- At this point, subgroup seeks the input of the BIC on what counties and sub-county areas to profile and create scenarios for.

**Session Two**

**Attending via Zoom or phone:**
Adair, Patti; Amerein, Charles; Anderes, Paul; Bambrick, Dale; Billman, Tucker; Casamassa, Glenn; Cathey, Kathleen; Christofferson, Nils; DeBone, Tony; Dorroh, Patti; Eddy, Bruce; Fesenmyer, Sarah; Hagle, Calla; Hampsher, Jim; Harvey, Bill; Hillock, John; Huffman, John; Keniry, Julie; Keys, Jessica; Kirsch, Mark; Kristofferson, Nils; Laverty, Maura; Lindsay, Amanda; Maille, Peter; McConnell, Scott; Medema, Travis; Meyer, Marissa; Montoya, Tom; Nash, Todd; Nickkel, Gina; Owens, Gina; Owens, Mark; Palmer, Sam; Pozzanghera, Steve; Rea, Ryan; Riber, Julia; Roberts, Susan; Scheeler, Carl; Shafer, John; Shelman, Kristen; Svejcar, Tony; Thomas, Brett; Trulock, Craig; Watrud, Eric; Weiseman, Darcy; Wolf, Greg

**Facilitators:** Laurel Singer and Kristen Wright (National Policy Consensus Center). Note-takers, Julia Babcock, Cat McGinnis, Jennah Stillman, Kristen Wright (National Policy Consensus Center)

**Welcome, meeting overview and introductions—Mark Owens, Susan Roberts, and Gina Owens**

Welcomed the group back and instructed that the intent of this session was to get report outs from subcommittees and enable an opportunity for BIC members to ask questions and provide feedback.

**Report out from subgroups with feedback from full BIC**
For notes on subcommittee reports, see subgroup meetings notes above. Documented below are the full BIC’s responses to the subgroup reports.
Group 1. Access, habitat, recommended wilderness, and set aside (Reporting to the full group: Bill Harvey, Carl Scheeler)

**BIC responses:**
- There is some overlap between the subcommittees. Additionally, several subcommittees may be engaging the same outside stakeholders. Subcommittees will need to coordinate around these contacts. How can that best be done?
- A lot of the subcommittee’s discussion seemed to revolve around elk. There is more to it than elk.

Group 2. Timber Harvest and Forest health (Reporting to the full group: Sam Palmer)

**BIC responses:**
- Having a note-taker for the break out groups was very helpful.
- Reiterated the question about how to coordinate subcommittee contacts across committees. Laurel flagged that question for further discussion.

Group 3. Livestock, grazing, fisheries and hydrology (Reporting to the full group: Kristen Shelman)

**BIC responses:**
- Craig Trulock and Maura Laverty will pull together documents to respond to: Review of the GM3, Review of the Starkey Models, predominant grazing models.
- Upland grazing has ability to pull cattle away from riparian areas. Craig Trulock can provide information to other subcommittees.
- It would be good to review the original objections to the withdrawn forest plan.
- Recovery of riparian areas or species tends to get put on the back of the permittee, rather than on USFS. There tends to be little consideration for keeping the grazers going. Need to feel like there’s a partnership with USFS.

Group 4. Socioeconomic data assessment (Reporting to the full group: Nils Christofferson)

**BIC responses:**
- Need to make sure we have enough BIC members working on the subcommittees to make the subcommittees’ work impactful.
- How do you connect the county/sub-county profiles and scenarios back to the forest plan? Response: We will be using In-Plan to look at the impacts from the forest plan. We will match county/community impacts from forest changes we want to make, so people can make more informed choices.
- With these profiles/scenarios, there will be no quantifiable outcomes for whether increasing harvest vs. recreation impacts other factors. Response: The profiles and scenarios don’t really tell us what to do. But they tell us what the impact of a given scenario is on a given community. The response to the withdrawn plan was that the socio-economic analysis was too general. This approach will allow examination at the granular level.
- We need the socio-economic analysis.
• What questions will these analyses answer? Will it be broader than resource extraction? Response: What scenarios we will run has yet to be determined.

• It would be good to ask the counties what revenues they have coming in. Counties need more opportunities to extract resources, not recreation and tourism. We should look to natural resources to keep the timber, agricultural, and cattle industry running, e.g. during an event like COVID.

• When talking about socioeconomics, important to not lose track of the economic driver that cattle are. The focus from USFS is on other issues besides grazing, but grazing is important to communities. Response: That will come out in the profiles.

• In determining which counties to profile, it would be helpful to know the cost of economic analysis. Advocate for being more inclusive—all fourteen counties, plus some tribal lands.

Public Comment Period
No public attendees or comments

Next Steps
• The coordinating group will consider how best to move forward. Send ideas to Laurel.
• The steering committee will meet next week.

Adjourned
Appendix A:

THE KEYS TO CONVENING
AOC County College

1. **Be inclusive.** Engage a wide variety of people from different perspectives. If important players are left out, any solutions the group develops will be suspect.

2. **Meet in a neutral place.** The place needs to ensure an impartial process. When the issue is complex and divisive, it will be helpful to get assistance from an experienced facilitator in planning and conducting the process.

3. **Be impartial.** To keep people participating, they have to believe the leader is not going to favor one side or another rather that they are trying to find a solution that all sides can embrace. If people think a leader is taking one side or another, they will not stay with the process.

4. **Establish the purpose for the process.** Let participants help frame the issues to open the way for discussion and problem solving.

5. **Direct, rather than dominate, the discussions.** Bring people together to find agreement. Enable them to talk with each other, rather than talk only to you. It is often useful to get someone else to facilitate the discussions so you can listen and ask questions.

6. **Keep people moving.** Help keep participants focused and working together when their differences threaten to drive them apart.

7. **Demonstrate visible commitment.** Even if a leader cannot be present at every meeting, send signals demonstrating on-going interest and provide feedback to the group on their progress.

8. **Finally, make sure there is an outcome.** The best outcomes involve written agreements that spell out different people’s responsibilities. Leaders can ensure that the agreements they reach are formally adopted.