Blues Intergovernmental Council (BIC) Meeting Summary
Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office, Pendleton, OR
December 20, 2019
11:00 am – 3:00 pm PST

Attending:
Bill Harvey (Baker County, Oregon), Bill Lind: Representative (NOAA), Bruce Eddy (ODFW), Calla Hagle (Burns Paiute Tribe), Carl Scheeler (Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation), Charles Amerein (Columbia County, Washington), Courtney Cromwell (Regional Solutions, Oregon Governor’s Office), Craig Trulock (Malheur National Forest, USFS), Eric Watrud (Umatilla National Forest, USFS), Greg Wolf (County Solutions, Association of Oregon Counties), Jim Hamsher (Grant County, Oregon), John Shafer, (Umatilla County, Oregon), Julia Riber (USFS), Justin Dixon (Garfield County, Washington), Kathleen Cathey (U. S. Senator Wyden, Lisa Northrop (USFS), Mark Owens (Harney County, Oregon), Patti Adair (Deschutes County, Oregon), Paul Anderes (Union County, Oregon), Sam Palmer (Grant County, Oregon), Steve Pozzanghera (WDFW), Susan Roberts (Wallowa County, Oregon), Todd Nash (Wallowa County, Oregon), Tom Montoya (Wallowa Whitman National Forest, USFS), Tony Svejcar (Eastern Oregon Counties Natural Resources Consultant), Tucker Billman (U. S. Representative Walden)

Attending via phone
Bobby Brunoe (Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs), Patty Dorroh (Harney County, Oregon)

Facilitator
Laurel Singer (National Policy Consensus Center) with meeting support from Gary Winterstein (Community Solutions of Central Oregon).

Welcome, Overview & Introductions: Why here, why now, why this group

Susan Roberts, Lisa Northrop, & Mark Owens convened the meeting and explained that the focus was to begin to work through the operating principles and process framework that would provide guidelines for how this council would do its work. The conveners emphasized that this organizational focus required patience, but would be important for their ultimate success.

Conveners reviewed that the concept for the Blues Intergovernmental Council (BIC) emerged from 8 months of meetings between the USFS leadership and eastern Oregon county commissioners, initiated after the USFS withdrew the forest plan revision last year. The BIC is envisioned to pilot an innovative government-to-government approach to creating an implementable and sustainable forest planning effort in the next 18 months. The initial focus for the BIC will be on developing a plan for the Blue Mountains. The BIC will make recommendations to the USFS for a forest plan that promotes the interests of all forest users and the BIC could then become a structure for on-going land management recommendations. General discussion followed with members reinforcing the need for a durable, sustainable forest plan that builds on guiding principles to better address struggling economies, impacted habitat, forest roads and infrastructure, forest and grazing needs, long-term preservation strategies, and to care for all affected people and landscapes.
Draft BIC Operating Principles – Review & Revise

The group began revising the draft operating principles, developed through the EOCA and USFS meetings and intended to be a starting point for the BIC participants to revise. Recommended changes included:

Adding an introductory section that describes the purpose of the guiding principles document, clarifying it is to serve as a guide for how the BIC conducts its work including:
- Expectations of its members and how they will participate,
- That members are not committing to any predetermined outcome,
- Reaffirming is a living document with the ability to be adapted as the BIC works together over time
- That the BIC does not replace other existing processes like consultation, NEPA and the objections process.

Changes to the decision-making section included:
- Further define what is meant by agreement seeking (i.e. that this is consensus on a recommendation or action that all can live with),
- Replace actions with the word recommendations as it relates to the plan,
- Add “seeking mutual understanding” to the agreement seeking process,
- Delete bullet points outlining areas where agreement will be sought.

Questions were also raised about what is realistic to achieve, whether “informed decision” equates to “sufficient” consensus, or if in the absence of consensus an approach would be to document the range of perspectives and solutions discussed. The group also discussed that in describing the BICs intent to seek zones of agreement, that it be noted this process includes identifying and working through differences.

Other issues for further consideration:
- Signing of the operating principles may be difficult for some members. An alternative option may be simply including a list of members.
- Members must be specifically designated representatives of governmental entities, either elected or officially designated to assure BIC complies with FACA. This may require written designation by the governing entities.
- Non-governmental representatives need to be engaged with care to assure compliance with FACA. It is anticipated they will be involved through participation on sub-groups.
- Discussion emerged about how to characterize the role of the convener and how to incorporate it in the operating principles.
- The questions also emerged about who is paying for the BIC and whether and how that should be described within the operating principles.
- Members are expected to be a liaison to the people and entities they represent – keeping them informed as the process continues and bringing feedback to the BIC.

Review and revise draft framework and timeline

Members from the BIC steering committee helped draft a framework and timeline for the work of the BIC. Carl S. presented this framework to the group for discussion emphasizing:
The framework had three key phases: 1) Building understanding of the issues, 2) Developing preferred options, and 3) Engaging in public input and impact analysis. The timeline could range between 18 months – 24 months.

BIC phases are not intended as distinct steps -- more overlapping with interlocking activities throughout the process.

Subcommittees would be established by the BIC for technical expertise or other needs to advance their work.

The first and most important phase will be for BIC members to identify issues and mutually educate one another on concerns and perspectives and to work toward a common vision. How they resolved these issues will help determine the preferred options and process moving forward.

Group members supported the framework as a guide for its work.

Understanding the socio-economic landscape

Paul Anderes, provided an overview of a potential approach for conducting a socio-economic study for the BIC based on the 2018 Weaverville [California] Economic & Demographic Report, conducted by the Chico State University in California. The Weaverville Report is very easy to read, organized with one issue and related analysis summarized per page that pulls together a wealth of information useful for follow up action and related initiatives.

The approach outlined would be as follows:

- A BIC appointed subcommittee would frame the key questions and provide oversight and gather existing data, such as information available through Oregon Explorer (oregonexplorer.info) online, a collaboration between Oregon State University (OSU) and The Institute for Natural Resources. Members might include staff and experts from Oregon State University, Oregon by the Numbers, the Oregon Regional Economist, Tribal Representatives.
- Eastern Oregon University, through its Rural Economic Vitality (REV) Center would work in conjunction with Wallowa Resources, to collect missing data through community engagement and interviews.
- Chico State University would serve as mentors and consultants.

The Weaverville Report relied on an in-depth review of economic data by specialists who were guided by key questions formulated by a community based advisory team. The engagement of economists are seen are essential and for this reason, these experts would also be engaged at the subcommittee level. Members from Washington also added their hope that the Washington Counties would also be included in this study.

The overall cost for the Weaverville Report was approximately $133K. Business Oregon expressed an interest in helping to fund developing this socio-economic data through their strategic reserve, as this data could prove valuable in advancing economic improvements. The USFS has pledged $35K towards the effort with additional funds possible from other Oregon Counties and the Governor’s Strategic Reserve Fund (SRF).
The BIC is overall in support of conducting a socio-economic analysis but would like to see the Weaverville report and discuss in more detail.

Next Steps

All participants agreed to the importance of keeping the general public informed about the progress of the BIC and expressed a desire for materials to be provided online for ease of access. BIC members thought it would be helpful to have talking points related to the BIC. A subcommittee on communications was suggested as possibly needed to help coordinate messages.

- National Policy Consensus Center (NPCC) will set up a BIC project page on its website, as is typical for any of its projects. Anyone will be able to access all meeting materials. Facilitator will send out the link to all BIC members with the meeting summary.
- Eastern Oregon Counties Association is setting up a website for their community members.
- Paul A. will send a link to the report and his PowerPoint presentation that the facilitator will send to all members.
- Conveners will send facilitator a press release and talking points have been developed that will be sent to all members.
- The group agreed that all future meetings through the winter will be in La Grande at Eastern Oregon University (EOU), and the time will be expanded an hour.

Next Meeting:

The next full BIC meeting will be Tuesday, January 28th from 10:30 am – 3:30 pm at Eastern Oregon University in LaGrande, Oregon in the top floor of the Hoke Union Building.

Meeting Adjourned at 3:00 p.m.