

# **Operating Principles For the Blues Intergovernmental Council (BIC)**

This document is to provide a framework for how the BIC intends to conduct its work, including defining the group's scope, purpose, decision-making processes, membership, structure and commitments.

Members recognize the BIC represents an opportunity to approach forest planning and management in a new way. They have agreed to support these operating principles, recognizing these are guidelines for participation and are not a commitment to any predetermined outcome or substitute for existing NEPA, consultation, or the objection process. This is a living document that is intended to be adapted as needed by the BIC.

## **Overall Scope**

The Blues Intergovernmental Council (BIC) is to serve as an overarching entity for planning and guidance around land management issues related to the Blue Mountain Forests (consisting of the Wallowa-Whitman, Malheur, and Umatilla Forests) including but not limited to the forest plan revisions.

The BIC will serve as a forum for members to work together to create zones of agreement to guide programmatic planning, frame future work to achieve mutual goals, identify innovative pilots, remove barriers to working together, and align work for implementation of efforts. In working toward agreement, members seek to create a table where they can be honest and constructive in their communication, surface and work through differences and seek mutual understanding as the basis for joint recommendations and actions.

## **Common Purpose**

Our common purpose is the sustainability of our communities' economic and social-cultural health and enhancing environmental stewardship. By integrating and respecting the unique values of tribal, federal, state and county governments, we will develop zones of agreement that can be used by the USFS to develop broadly supported forest plans for the Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests that form the Blues Mountains.

## **Decision Making**

The BIC will seek mutual understanding in working toward joint recommendations. Members will seek to make decisions by full consensus, meaning all members could live with a decision. If the group has reached a point where all members believe a thorough attempt to understand all perspectives has been made and further discussion will not bring any new understanding yet there is not a full consensus, group members can opt to stand aside to allow a decision to move forward and/or can provide an opportunity for members to submit a summary that characterizes the nature of their concern.

## **Roles and Organizational Structure**

Following outlines elements related to roles and structure of how the BIC will operate and outlines guidelines related to the membership, roles, organizational structure, and facilitation.

**Members** - Membership consists of leaders from Federal, State, Local and Tribal Governmental entities. Membership is voluntary although attendance is expected at meetings once an invitation to participate has been accepted. Entities to be invited are:

- Federal agencies: US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS), Rural Development (RD), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); US Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Fish and Wildlife (USFW); US Department of Commerce; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
- Tribal Governments: Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Nez Perce Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, Burns Paiute Tribe
- State Government: Oregon State Governor's Office, Washington State Governor's Office, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WA-DNR)
- County Government: All affected Oregon and Washington Counties
- State elected representatives and senators upon request to the BIC.

Membership is by invitation only and requires endorsement by governmental entity. Membership can be modified by agreement of the full BIC.

Members are expected to serve as liaisons to the entities/constituencies they represent, providing regular updates and bringing feedback from these entities/constituencies to the BIC. Staff of the Oregon Department of Forestry will serve as a point of contact for the Oregon State Department of Environmental Quality and the Governor's Round Table and staff from Washington State Fish and Wildlife will serve as the point of contact for the Washington State Department of Ecology assuring leadership in these state programs are up to date on BIC progress and bringing their feedback to the BIC. Representatives of these and other state programs can also be invited to engage in the BIC to provide technical support and engagement on sub committees.

Federal congressional leaders and their staff, are welcome to attend as observers of the BIC for the purpose of staying informed about BIC activities.

**Conveners** - Leadership from the USFS and representative leadership of the eastern Oregon counties will serve as co-conveners. Co-conveners will serve as the point of contact for the BIC, convene full meetings, help frame issues, keep the BIC moving toward identified outcomes, and chair the steering committee.

**Steering Committee** - A steering committee consisting of the BIC conveners, at least one convener from each of the BIC subcommittees (which include representatives of federal, state, county, and tribal government) and the facilitation team will provide oversight of the BIC. The Steering committee has responsibility for helping to insure the BIC is making progress toward shared objective, including planning the agendas and creating other work products for each for BIC meeting. The Steering Committee will meet via zoom call between full group meetings to discuss logistics and process.

**Sub Committees** - Subcommittees would be formed as needed to assist the BIC in taking advantage of expertise and information that could assist them in conducting their work on specific topic areas such as grazing, socio-economic conditions, etc. The BIC would establish the questions to be addressed by a subcommittee. At least two BIC members, one representing the USFS and one representing Tribal or

County Leadership, would serve as the conveners of a subcommittee. Membership on the subcommittee will be by invitation and conveners are responsible for forming committees that are a diverse balance of public interests along with representatives of governmental entities. Sub-committee conveners are expected to keep the BIC updated and will decide whether to invite members of the subcommittee to present to the full BIC or to provide reports themselves. Subcommittee members would form recommendations for the full BIC consideration and decision.

**Facilitator** - A neutral facilitator will be selected by the steering committee to help support the process. Funding for these services will be paid for through joint sponsorship from member entities. Initial funding is sponsored by the Eastern Oregon Counties Association, the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the US Department of Fish and Wildlife.

### **Meeting Times and Location**

The BIC will meet regularly. It will initially meet each month from approximately 10:30 am to 3:00 pm. on the last Tuesday of each month and may adjust the schedule as needed as work gets fully underway. Meetings will primarily be held at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande, Oregon, particularly in the Fall and Winter. However, in Spring and Summer, the meeting may rotate to other OR and WA locations within the Blues Mountain Area such as Baker, Harney, Grant and Walla Walla Counties. Locations will be sought that offer travel ease (i.e. airport access) or need to be visited to address specific topics (i.e. site visit tours). Meeting will be held in locations that can accommodate phone or video conference connections. Subcommittees will meet between full group meetings to develop draft work products for full group review, discussion and direction.

### **Public Participation**

Meeting will be open to the public. Up to fifteen minutes will be scheduled at each meeting for 2-3 minutes/person for public comment.

### **Meeting Summary /Action Items Memo**

In order to assist the BIC in documenting its activities, the facilitator will prepare and distribute a meeting summary after each meeting detailing agreed upon action. These summaries are intended to convey general information on topics discussed and help ensure that timelines for completing agreed upon actions are clear to all participants and can be distributed. All entities will take responsibilities to post meeting notices and summaries if required by law.

### **External Communication**

Information and materials related to full BIC meetings will be made available through a project page on the National Policy Consensus Center (NPCC) website <https://www.pdx.edu/npcc/blues-intergovernmental-council-meeting-materials>, and other venues as appropriate to ensure that the group's work remains accessible to external audiences.

BIC Conveners will serve as the initial point of contact for all media inquiries with the ability to designate other BIC members at their discretion to speak on behalf of the BIC. As may be needed, the BIC may adopt other communication strategies, such as talking points for all members. Outside of the adopted

communication strategies, individual members speaking to the media will make it clear they are not speaking on behalf of the BIC.

BIC members are expected to keep colleagues and constituents informed about the process and to bring relevant information back to the group. Individuals are expected to bring concerns directly to the individual or the group.

### **Communication Guidelines and Commitments**

The BIC strives to create an environment that supports open discussion where mutual understanding of needs and interests is sought. All members agree to hold each other accountable to the established communication guidelines and principles, which include the commitment to:

- Conduct BIC business at the BIC meetings. While discussion and idea generating may happen outside the meetings, all decisions will be made in the context of the full BIC meetings and concerns will be brought to the group for discussion and problem solving.
- Refrain from personal attacks—stay focused on the issue.
- Be respectful—even if you have an agenda.
- Stay open.
- Explain terms in a clear, understandable way.
- Stop and ask if something isn't clear; take time to explain when asked.
- Be honest—if you have something on your mind, say it.
- Don't agree to something you cannot fulfill.