



# South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative

## OPERATIONS MANUAL

### I. Document Purpose

The South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative (SGPC) Operations Manual outlines the process for its diverse membership to work together. This document was developed by the Collaborative and members have agreed to honor and adhere to its principles. This is a “living document” that will change as the group evolves and additional needs and opportunities are presented. This document was created on 2/20/14 and amended on 3/19/15, 3/16/17, 7/28/20, and 7/13/23.

### II. SGPC Formation

The SGPC formed in December of 2011 through combining the former Mt. Adams District Collaborative and Lewis River Collaborative. Our intent is to develop solutions to natural resource issues facing the area with a common vision to move beyond controversy towards management of our public lands that supports both restoration of our forestlands and revitalization of rural communities. See the Appendix for a map of the area covered by the SGPC’s scope of work.

The SGPC has over 40 members with a diversity of backgrounds including (but not limited to) conservationists, community members concerned about GPNF, local and state government agency personnel, former US Forest Service (USFS) employees, the forest products industry, and the outdoor recreation community.

### III. Mission & Guiding Principles

#### Mission Statement

The SGPC’s mission is to collectively improve the development, facilitation, and implementation of projects that enhance economic vitality, forest ecosystems, outdoor recreation, and public safety on the south end of GPNF and its surrounding communities.

#### Guiding Principles

- a. Projects will focus on ecological, economic, and social objectives.
- b. Every effort will be made to ensure participation of diverse stakeholders.
- c. Our primary focus is on public lands (i.e., federal, state, county)

#### Priorities

- a. Plantation stands and natural stands on the east-side that have missed a fire cycle
- b. Watershed-scale restoration
- c. Road management for multiple-use access
- d. Biomass utilization and value-added wood products
- e. Developing zones of agreement (ZOA) for improved efficiency and expedited decision-making
- f. Developing monitoring projects for checks and balances on USFS and other projects
- g. Incorporating local recreation interests

## IV. Organizational Structure

The SGPC actively seeks to involve representatives of diverse perspectives, needs, and expertise, including:

- a. Federal and state agencies (USFS, USFWS, WDNR, WDFW)
- b. Community nonprofit organizations
- c. County Commissioners (i.e., Skamania, Klickitat)
- d. Economic development groups
- e. Contractors
- f. Forest products representatives
- g. Environmental/conservation groups
- h. Elected officials or their representatives
- i. Community members
- j. Adjacent landowners
- k. Tribes
- l. PNW research scientists
- m. Outdoor recreation users and user groups
- n. Academic institutions (i.e., universities)
- o. Students (e.g., local high-schools, regional universities)

### ROLES & EXPECTATIONS

#### A. Full Group

The ‘full group’ consists of all voting and non-voting members of the Collaborative. Member responsibilities include participation in meetings and subcommittees, collective decision-making (i.e., voting members), and identifying strategic priorities in conjunction with the Executive Director and Steering Committee. Voting members participate in Collaborative meetings regularly and are well informed of discussion topics. Non-voting members (i.e., USFS, guests) can attend meetings regularly and are welcome to participate fully, but cannot vote on SGPC initiatives.

#### B. Subcommittees

Subcommittees (i.e., ZOA, Recreation, Monitoring) meet independently as small-groups to make progress on projects of interest to the full Collaborative. Subcommittees provide updates to the full group and solicit feedback to help guide future work. Subcommittees members should represent a diversity of opinions on a given issue. Subcommittee participation is voluntary and subcommittees are limited to six people to promote constructive small-group discussion. This can then be brought to the full group for broader input and a formal vote (if warranted). Although subcommittees do not conduct formal internal votes, their work is aimed at reaching agreement.

#### C. Voting Members

Organizations have one vote; a designated organizational member or proxy must be knowledgeable of a given issue to vote. Electronic voting is acceptable (e.g., email, Zoom). Unless specified otherwise herein, all members are considered voting members if they meet the following conditions:

- a. Sign the *Declaration of Commitment* document yearly at the Annual Meeting or via email
- b. Agree to operate under guidelines outlined in this *Operations Manual*
- c. Participate actively -- have attended two of the three preceding meetings and are knowledgeable of the subject voted upon.
- d. Must be well-informed of the group’s activities
- e. Provide input from each individual’s constituency

- f. Provide constructive feedback
- g. Provide technical resources
- h. Work towards common ground
- i. Make decisions
- j. Openly voice concerns
- k. Provide local knowledge

#### **D. US Forest Service**

- a. Serves as *non-voting* members
- b. Committed to the collaborative process and maintains active engagement at meetings, etc.
- c. Offers resource information
- d. Shares historical data
- e. Shares experience working with local contractors
- f. Shares technical resources and expertise
- g. Can raise issues, participate in discussions, and make recommendations
- h. Provides input on meeting and field trip topics relative to planning area priorities

#### **E. Guests**

- a. *Non-voting* role
- b. Listen
- c. Share experiences or expertise
- d. Participate respectfully and appropriately
- e. Make effort to be informed of groups' previous actions/interests
- f. Identify themselves and their interest in collaboration

#### **F. Executive Director**

- a. Leads day to day operations with the decision-making autonomy to execute time-sensitive actions that are key to achieve the Collaborative's mission (with input from the Steering Committee as needed)
- b. Organizes and facilitates monthly meetings (i.e., arranges date, time, location, agenda, guest speakers)
- c. Organizes and facilitates subcommittee meetings and monitors progress
- d. Monitors project schedules and timelines to keep group on-schedule
- e. Ensures participants adhere to ground rules
- f. Ensures opportunities for members to participate fully
- g. Acts as a liaison between SGPC stakeholders, the USFS, WA DNR, other collaborative groups, and other public or private interest groups
- h. Organizes field trips in conjunction with SGPC partners and members
- i. Prepares press releases and interacts with media (assisted by Collaborative Assistant)
- j. Maintains and builds membership diversity
- k. Tracks meeting attendance and member voting eligibility
- l. Acts as official Collaborative contact; prepares and responds to official correspondences
- m. Increases capacity by identifying, researching, and pursuing grant sources
- n. Develops and submits grant proposals; completes grant reports required by funders
- o. Tracks Collaborative finances and provides updates to the Steering Committee at quarterly meetings; updates the full group at Annual Meetings
- p. Serves as non-voting member; remains neutral; applies Operations Manual guidelines to meetings and Collaborative activities
- q. Maintains the SGPC email list and website (web site maintained by Collaborative Assistant)

r.

## **G. Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee (SC) provides guidance and support to the Executive Director on key initiatives (e.g., strategic planning, procedures/policies, grants and agreements). The SC and Executive Director have the autonomy to make organizational decisions without input from the full Collaborative. Like the full Collaborative, SC members will strive for internal consensus. However, if disagreement exists within the SC over a specific initiative, a majority vote will be required to move forward. Any dissenting votes and outstanding concerns will be clearly documented. All current Steering Committee members must respond (i.e., in-person, electronically) for any full-group vote to be considered valid.

The SC is comprised of approximately six voting members of the Collaborative with diverse interests (e.g., timber companies, environmental groups) with one leading member who internally coordinates the group. SC membership and leadership will be revisited annually, and any personnel changes will be approved internally by majority vote. Other ongoing SC responsibilities include:

- a. Work with the Executive Director to set the Collaborative's direction and discussions
- b. Provide timely feedback (i.e.,  $\leq 2$  business days unless otherwise specified) to the Executive Director upon request.
- c. Facilitate hiring and conducts the Executive Director's annual performance review
- d. Review grant proposals upon Executive Director's request
- e. Act as a proxy for Executive Director as needed. Monthly meetings can proceed under SC if the Executive Director is unable to attend.
- f. Attend SGPC Annual Meeting to stay apprised to Collaborative activities and key initiatives
- g. Attend meetings when in-person only votes are to be conducted

## **V. Communication**

### **Discussion Guidelines**

- Listen actively
- Be curious: suspend judgment and consider others' perspectives and ideas. Keep an open mind.
- Be present and engaged: silence all cellphones
- Focus on finding solutions: concentrate on interests, not positions
- Be civil. OK to critique ideas, not individuals.
- Stay on topic and follow the agenda
- Respect time limits
- Accept ambiguity at times
- Add a little humor when appropriate

### **Meeting Planning & Coordination**

- Meetings will generally be scheduled for the third Thursday of each month from 1:00-3:30 pm, although this is subject to change as needed.
- Meetings will be hybrid (i.e., in-person and Zoom), remote (i.e., Zoom), or fully in-person as needed.
- Meetings will be announced via email and in local media sources (i.e., Skamania Pioneer, CRG News)
- Meeting agendas will be sent approximately one week prior to the meeting to allow for group input and questions.
- A standard meeting agenda format will be maintained.

### **Recordkeeping**

- Meeting notes will be taken at each meeting and shared with members via email.
- When available, meeting recordings will be available on the SGPC website (i.e., YouTube links).
- Meeting notes from the prior meeting will be approved at the beginning of each monthly meeting and any issues (i.e., errors, edits, clarifications) will be noted and addressed.

## Financial Records

- Finances (i.e., grants and agreements) will be tracked via a shared spreadsheet (shared with the Treasurer and SGPC fiscal sponsors) to ensure the long-term financial health of the Collaborative.
- The Executive Director will (a) maintain these records, (b) update the Steering Committee at quarterly meetings (i.e., review of funds remaining, any external funds being sought), and (c) update the full group at Annual Meetings.

## Internal Communications Protocol

- One email list will be used for all ongoing communication for voting and non-voting members.
- A website will be maintained for storing and sharing all information. The web address is: [www.southgpc.org](http://www.southgpc.org)

## External Communications Protocol

Information about the Collaborative will be made available to external stakeholders via the website and other venues as appropriate. All efforts will be made to ensure that the group's work remains transparent to external audiences. Non-members will have access to all information and the ability to share thoughts and feedback with the group.

## VI. Decision-making

**Subcommittees:** Subcommittees have autonomy to make decisions pertaining to their ongoing small group work. This includes relevant topics to address, defining meeting objectives, researching/inviting relevant guest speakers, planning special events (e.g., field trips), and facilitating subcommittee membership. Subcommittees, however, will periodically update the full group about ongoing activities to maintain transparency, receive feedback, and help inform and prioritize future work. Like the full Collaborative, subcommittee members will strive for full consensus. However, if disagreement exists over a specific initiative, an internal majority vote will be required to move forward. Any dissenting votes and outstanding concerns will be clearly documented.

**Administrative:** Administrative and financial decisions (e.g., meeting topics, guest speakers, grants and agreements) will be made by the Executive Director with support from the Steering Committee. If the SC is unable to reach full agreement on a given decision, a majority vote will be required to implement any associated changes.

**Full Group Votes:** The following voting process will be employed for initiatives requiring formal approval by the full Collaborative (e.g., approving ZOA documents, approving NEPA comment letters):

- **Setting a Motion:** A motion can be made by a voting member who has previously-established the motion and if it has been discussed by the full group. Alternatively, a motion can be presented by the Executive Director for vote. Meeting participants will be asked to indicate their support by show of hand or verbal confirmation.
- **Definition of Quorum:** To vote on a project or proposal, two-thirds of eligible voting members and all Steering Committee members must be present to create a quorum. Voting members may participate via video, tele-conference, or can vote electronically as needed (unless otherwise noted).
- **Modified Consensus:** The goal of the Collaborative is always to reach full agreement. However, if full consensus is not reached, the SGPC will use modified consensus. Formal documents and major initiatives will be considered 'approved' when most voting members (i.e.,  $\geq 80\%$ ) are supportive. In such

cases, a *Summary of Positions* document (see below) will be used to capture both areas of agreement and disagreement.

- **Summary of Positions:** If voting members are unable to reach full consensus, areas of agreement and disagreement will be synthesized in a *Summary of Positions* document. These documents will include (a) a detailed description of the methods used in attempt to reach consensus, (b) a breakdown of votes received for a given measure (i.e., number opposed, neutral, in-support), and (c) an in-depth summary of member feedback toward a given initiative.
- **Constructive Alternatives:** Each voting member can disagree with elements of decisions as they are being developed but must offer a *constructive, informed, and science-based* alternative that seeks to satisfy the needs of all participants.
  - If an organization or individual does not support a decision in public, they must substantiate their opposition by answering the following questions:
    - “What would it take to gain your support for this initiative?”

## Appendix

**Figure 1.** Mt. Adams Ranger District, the geographic area under the scope of SGPC work.

