

# PACIFIC NORTHWEST NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL ADVISORY COUNCIL SUMMARY OF MEETING

*June 15 and 16, 2023*

The National Advisory Council for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNT) was convened for its fourth meeting at 9:00 A.M. on June 15, 2023, on Microsoft Teams. Designated Federal Official (DFO) Becky Blanchard, PNT Administrator, opened the meeting with a welcome to the new and returning Advisory Council members. In accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (PL 92-463), the meeting was open to the public from 09:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. each day. Members of the public were able to view the meeting, but without active microphone and video functions. These functions were activated to allow for public participation during the designated Public Comment period.

## **JUNE 15**

### **Council members present\*:**

Diane Barlow	Leah Dobey	Michael Lithgow
Glenn Blakeslee	Melinda DuPree	Michael Liu
Frank Bob	Molly Erickson	Elizabeth Nelson
Jeffrey Chapman	L Fisher	Ashley South
Callum Cintron	Philip Hough	Adam Sowards
Michael Cuffe	Clifford Kipp	Shelly Stevens
Mike Dawson	Jeff Kish	Diane Priebe (BLM)
Michael DeCramer	Justin Kooyman	Erik Frenzel (NPS)
Dan Dinning	Michael Kroschel	Kevin Knauth (USFS)

### **Council members not present:**

Randy Beacham	David Kennedy	Elizabeth Thomas
Robert Kendall	Soisette Lumpkin	

### **Forest Service staff present for meeting operations and technical support were:**

Caitlin Markus; Kelly Chase Veach; Nancy Taylor; Jonathon Thompson; Marcilla Demillion; Krystal Fleeger; Sarah Kassel; Joseph David; Nicole LaGioia; Richard Pringle

\*Attendance varied through the meeting and throughout the day due to schedule conflicts and technological challenges. As members moved in and out of the meeting, Forest Service staff worked diligently to capture movement and ensure quorum prior to any sensing or voting actions.

## **ADVISORY COUNCIL BASICS**

DFO, Becky Blanchard, provided an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the PNT Advisory Council as defined in the enabling legislation; the Advisory Council Charter, as filed on August 16, 2022; and the Advisory Council Bylaws as approved on May 4, 2016.

(See presentation: Advisory Council Basics for PNT AC\_2023-06-15.pdf)

## **ELECTION OF COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON**

The advisory council voted to select Diane Barlow as its chair, based on majority vote. Diane was appointed as a member in the tribal interests category, representing Blackfeet Nation. For the remainder of the meeting, Diane served in the chair role and helped lead discussion and call for motion on decisions. Diane will serve as chair for a 2-year term.

## **BACKGROUND ON PNT ADVISORY COUNCIL AND UPCOMING DEADLINES**

DFO, Becky Blanchard, provided a history of the Advisory Council and the enabling legislation as designated by Congress in 2009. The 1,200-mile non-motorized trail passes through three (3) states and numerous landownerships. The National Trail System Act requires the Secretary of Agriculture to consult with the Council regarding:

1. Establishment a Comprehensive Plan
2. Selection of rights of way
3. Determination of standards for the erection and maintenance of markers along the trail
4. Administration of the trail

The PNT Advisory Council has met previously three (3) times after establishment in May 2014. A brief recap of the previous meetings was provided and is available on the attached presentation document.

(See presentation: PNT Advisory Council Background History\_2023-06-14.pdf)

The June 2023 meeting reconvened the PNT Advisory Council for the first time since November 2016. It became administratively inactive in 2017. Since then, the Forest Service has worked to get members appointed and re-activate the council. The two-year charter was renewed August 16, 2022. The new council members were appointed May 10, 2023. The 10-year statutory authority for the council ends May 22, 2024. The DFO explained that the FS is seeking the Council's collective recommendations on the PNT Comprehensive Plan contents at the June 2023 meeting before the release of the Draft Decision Notice in mid-July, 2023. The timeline is tight to meet the court ordered deadline of December 31, 2023 for submission of the plan to Congress. Given the federal register notice requirements for Council meetings, the Council will not have the opportunity to meet again before the July publication deadline.

**Discussion:** Council discussion centered around the timeline required to meet the court ordered plan completion date of December 31, 2023. It was recognized that the Council has limited time to review and make meaningful comments on the Comprehensive Plan in order to meet the court-mandated December 31, 2023 completion date. While there may be avenues for Council engagement after the deadline for comments to the Draft Comprehensive Plan, further comments and discussion centered around the importance of formal government to government consultation requirements of the Forest Service with tribes and how that differs from the recommendations of the Advisory Council. It was also brought forward that some groups may not be well represented on the Advisory Council, however there is no intention of displacing legal uses along the trail, such as areas of legal motorized use. It was also acknowledged that an unexpected vacancy on the Council is present for timber interests. The DFO is interested in hearing ways to engage that represented group. Thereafter, discussion focused on the Plan and its contents.

### **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OVERVIEW**

An overview of the Comprehensive Plan included decision authority and requirements of a Comprehensive Plan. A chapter-by-chapter content outline helped orient those new to a comprehensive plan. The timeline for the remainder of the Comprehensive Plan process was provided:

1. Draft Decision Notice by mid-July 2023
2. Objection resolution meetings through September 2023
3. Final Decision Notice in November 2023
4. Finalization by December 31, 2023

(See handout: PNT Advisory Council Comp Plan Overview & FAQ 2023-06-12.pdf)

**Discussion:** Prior to attempting small breakout groups, larger group discussion centered around the concept of carrying capacity, both for the trail and for the resources potentially impacted by the trail. Metrics used for identifying carrying capacity, how carrying capacity is utilized in management and monitored for potential needed management changes.

Technical issues prevented breakouts, therefore, large group discussion occurred.

Themes from this large group open dialogue included:

- Nature and Purpose of trail language
- The concept of Key Uses vs. Primary Use
- Tribal Treaty Rights
- The Plan's impact on Tribes
- Trail amenities such as restrooms, water, and campsites
- Timeline for property acquisition
- Definition of Tribal lands and whether it is broad enough to include lands that are sacred to tribes but outside reservation boundaries
- Comprehensive Plan compatibility with land management plans
- Wildlife/hiker interactions and impacts of trail use on wildlife (specifically mentioned grizzly bear and elk)

## **DESIGNATED OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

No request for time during this open public comment period was received, nor was any written public comment. A few members of the Advisory Council shared written comments as they were unable to attend the meeting. Those written comments were shared to fellow council members via email.

## **MEETING CLOSED FOR THE DAY**

### **JUNE 16**

#### **Council members present\*:**

Diane Barlow	Melinda DuPree	Michael Lithgow
Frank Bob	Molly Erickson	Michael Liu
Jeffrey Chapman	L Fisher	Ashley South
Callum Cintron	Philip Hough	Shelly Stevens
Michael Cuffe	Robert Kendall	Diane Priebe (BLM)
Mike Dawson	Clifford Kipp	Erik Frenzel (NPS)
Michael DeCramer	Jeff Kish	Kevin Knauth (USFS)
Dan Dinning	Justin Kooyman	
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## **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS**

After a motion and unanimous vote, the agenda for day 2 was altered to focus the entire day on discussion around the Comprehensive Plan. This discussion was led by the Chairperson and DFO. Utilization of small group discussion occurred with reporting back to the larger group key highlights from the group discussions.

**Discussion:** Themes from yesterday’s discussion were used to start the Day 2 discussion. New themes were identified and added to the list (see table on next page). Council members participated in a “Top 3” sensing exercise to determine which themes generated the most interest from the council.

Results of the *Top 3 sensing exercise*:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Votes</b>
Trail Uses	18
Protecting the Trail Corridor/Experience	10
Complete PNT as Continuous non-motorized trail (addressing private land issues)	8
Wildlife	7
Treaty Rights and Resources	6
Visitor Use Management (permits, visitor monitoring, carrying capacity)	6
Maintaining the Trail (Trail Maintenance)	5
Trail Safety (address locations on roads)	4
Timber and Working Landscapes	4
Motorized Recreation (displacement)	3
Cumulative Effects Across the Landscape	3
Timeframe for the Council Work	1
Non-Signatory tribal Rights and Utilization	0

**Small group discussion recap:** Multiple groups reported out discussion around the concept of Key & Primary Uses. Conversations included the sensitivity of the terminology as well as how the different identified uses would be incorporated into Optimum Location Review process and future management decisions. Introduced and discussed the concept of “compatible use”. A few groups discussed trail facilities (camping, water, restrooms, food) and connectivity between the trail and those facilities. Discussion whether the connection to facilities should be incorporated into the comprehensive plan and overall trail management. The trail corridor was discussed, specifically widening the planning corridor to a width wider than the management corridor. A group also discussed carrying capacity and visitor use monitoring.

**Building Consensus:** Given the limited time available to formulate meaningful comments on the proposed Plan, Council members asked the DFO for assistance on developing the types of recommendation statements that would be the most helpful to the agency. The DFO provided several examples with reiteration that there was no stance by DFO on the substance of these examples, they were simply examples of the type of statements that would be useful to the agency for input on the content of the Comprehensive Plan. The DFO emphasized that the Council was at liberty to submit statements dealing with any subject matter. Before the Council broke out into small discussion groups, the DFO and Council chair shared the written comments received from those Council members who could not attend the meeting. The Council then broke

out into small groups with the assignment being to discuss and prioritize comments on the Plan and to utilize the examples provided by the DFO to develop its proposed recommendations.

**Small group discussion summary:** Reports back from each small group confirmed consensus or near consensus on several items. These items were moved into motions for voting.

**Recommendations:**

The Advisory Council made the following recommendations:

1. In the Comprehensive Plan, the Forest Service should elevate pack and saddle stock use to a primary use. Where accommodating pack and saddle stock use is not feasible, consider providing alternate routes for that use. Eliminate the “key use” concept. Identify bicycle use to be a potentially compatible use (replacing the term “key use”).

<b>Supported</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Opposed</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Abstained/No Position</b>	<b>3</b>

2. In the Comprehensive Plan, the Forest Service should recommend a national trail planning corridor that is wider than the current recommendation in the draft Comprehensive Plan. The NTPC should be wide enough to allow flexibility to identify an optimal location for the trail and address resource concerns.

<b>Supported</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Opposed</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Abstained/No Position</b>	<b>3</b>

3. The Forest Service should explore options to extend the timeframe of the Advisory Council or the establishment of a similarly collaborative group of diverse interests focused on the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail.

<b>Supported</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Opposed</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Abstained/No Position</b>	<b>1</b>

The Chair has requested that we set the next meeting date as soon as possible, which can be no sooner than the minimum 45-day processing time for Federal Register Notice publication (calculate this as the week of August 7, at the earliest).

The Chair further requested that the FS and, in particular, the DFO be complimented for their extraordinary effort in developing and drafting such a well-written and thorough Comprehensive Plan. Finally, the Council notes that it looks forward to viewing public comment on the Plan.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**

**ADDITIONAL HANDOUTS:**

PNT Advisory Council Roster\_2023-06-12

PNT Advisory Council\_June 15\_16 2023 Agenda\_2023-06-12

**MINUTES CERTIFIED BY**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diane Barlow". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

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**DIANE BARLOW**  
Council Chair