

# PACIFIC NORTHWEST NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL ADVISORY COUNCIL SUMMARY OF MEETING

*August 24, 2023*

The National Advisory Council for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNT) was convened for its fifth meeting at 9:00 A.M. on August 24, 2023, on Zoom. Designated Federal Official (DFO) Richard Pringle, Acting PNT Administrator, and Facilitator Tom Krekel 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 08:30 A.M. to 3:00 PM. Members of the public were able to view the meeting but were asked not to participate by voice or chat so that the council could conduct its business. A Public Comment period was provided early in the meeting, but there were no requests to speak received.

## **Council Members Present:**

Diane Barlow	Leah Dobey	Michael Liu
Glenn Blakeslee	Melinda DuPree	Elizabeth Nelson
Frank Bob	Molly Erickson	Ashley South
Jeffrey Chapman	Philip Hough	Adam Sowards
Callum Cintron	Clifford Kipp	Shelly Stevens
Michael Cuffe	Jeff Kish	Diane Priebe (BLM)
Mike Dawson	Justin Kooyman	Erik Frenzel (NPS)
Michael DeCramer	Michael Lithgow	David Kennedy
		Soisette Lumpkin

## **Council Members Not Present:**

Randy Beacham	Kevin Knauth (USFS)	Elizabeth Thomas
Dan Dinning	Michael Kroschel	
L Fisher	Robert Kendall	

**Forest Service staff present for meeting operations and technical support were:**  
Michel Mouzong; David Hays; Valery Serrano-Lopez

**Forest Service Staff attendance in afternoon:**  
Robert Sanchez, Sally Butts, Tracy Calizon

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

## **MEETING BASICS**

Prior to the 9 a.m. start time, the meeting facilitator, Tom Krekel, gave a presentation on Zoom tools and menu; explaining the audio and camera options, participant view, the chat box, how to raise the hand, and using the breakout rooms.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The meeting facilitator, Tom Krekel, explained the purpose of the meeting to the advisory council and the previous topics discussed in the June 2023 meeting were reviewed. The advisory council was asked to think about the advice and new ideas that they can give to the Forest Service.

Council members introduced themselves in the chat, and Rick Pringle introduced himself as the acting Designated Federal Officer in place of Becky Blanchard. He provided an overview of the agenda items for the meeting. The primary task was for the advisory council to brainstorm ideas for implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Senator Cuffe: Asked a question about the recommendations and continuing the meetings. Last meeting discussed any changes to the Comprehensive Plan, this meeting is to concentrate on plan implementation.

## **COUNCIL CHAIR REMARKS**

Diane Barlow made remarks about the previous meeting, including showing the official recommendations in June 2023. The implementation recommendations will be different from the sensing topics discussed for the Comprehensive Plan. This meeting is the start of the implementation phase and to provide committee recommendations to the Forest Service for implementation focus and priorities. Diane Barlow also mentioned that the Appalachian Trail, now roughly 100 years old, only occupies half of its original route, as an example of how trail management and route selection can be a long term and ongoing process. The PNT is just at the beginning of its management.

## **APPROVING MINUTES FROM JUNE 15-16, 2023 MEETING**

Council member David Kennedy motioned to approve the meeting minutes for June, 2023, Seconded by Glenn Blakeslee.

**Motion is passed unanimously.**

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Members of the public were asked to identify themselves; they will be able to observe the meeting and view the breakout rooms but did not have audio permission beyond the public comment period. There is a specific time in the agenda available for members of the public to speak and they must notify the DFO prior to the meeting per the instructions in the Federal Register Notice.

It was expressed that there was not enough time to fully engage the advisory committee on the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan was court-ordered to be approved and finalized by the end of this calendar year. The amount of time it took to appoint the council members was unfortunate and resulted in less review time.

Main Questions: What is the relocation process for the agency, can the council members have a “run through” what a relocation could look like? Does the agency see this process as a priority? Will there be an optimal location review process? If so, what would it look like? How will the management of signage be addressed? Many of these answers to these questions can be found in the comprehensive plan.

The trail location is a topic that everyone is interested in discussing, and more specifically, how to move forward with an implementation plan. Several council members commented that a wider trail planning corridor was necessary. For clarification, it was mentioned that the Comprehensive Plan defines a trail “planning corridor” (where we look for best route/location, and where the trail should maximize the trail user’s experience), and a trail “management corridor” (where the right of way and surrounding area is identified and addressed by the forest management plan and formally managed by agencies to protect the quality of the trail user’s experience). A concern was voiced from a timber industry and local economic perspective that the size of the trail corridor would limit vegetation management activities adjacent to the trail because it is treated as de-facto Wilderness. However, it was noted that the corridors are not de-facto wilderness, and that multiple uses could be decided upon by the local managing unit. Additionally, future relocations, need a broader assessment of the landscape; wildlife habitat for grizzly bears on the Kootenai NF were emphasized.

Other comments during the general discussion:

- There is a grant for linking a segment of the Olympic Discovery trail to the ferry in Port Townsend, WA. This could be a portion of the PNT.
- There is a signage issue to consider when marking the trail in urban areas (Port Townsend ferry landing was an example).
- Motorized recreation displacement - Some of the trail, or potential alternates, are motorcycle trails on Forest lands. If it is going to be a non-motorized trail corridor, what happens to OHV users? The Forest Service will need to consider this.
- There may be interest in having the trail showcase farming, timber harvesting, and other commercial activities along the trail route.

## **DISCUSSION OF BREAKOUT GROUPS AND FOCUS TOPICS**

The sensing topics from last meeting were presented and the group was asked what areas they were interested in discussing. The group agreed that the topics from last meeting needed to be modified since their purpose related to input on the comprehensive plan and today's purpose was for implementation.

1. **Location of the Trail/ Planning Corridor Width** (Whole group)
  - Private party owners
  - Wildlife and conservation issues
  - Private resource issues: Timber
  - Incompatible uses
  - Public resource extraction
2. **Visitor Use Management** (Breakout Room 1)
  - Visitor safety
  - Trail Maintenance
3. **Tribal, Cultural; and Educational Opportunities** (Breakout Room 2)

## **DISCUSSION OF 1. TRAIL ROUTING (WHOLE GROUP)**

The first comment in this discussion dealt with different visitor uses. It was mentioned that in a multi-use area, incompatible uses must be separated, as they can't all occur in one place. It was mentioned that the trail crosses through private land, the agency will need to share how they will deal with private land if the trail is not relocated. The council asked how the agency will decide to manage agreements with adjacent land managers that will provide hikers a variety of experiences.

Other comments during the general discussion:

- There is some concern that trail relocation can only be within half mile of current trail, so this is constrained, and better routes might be farther out. There's a need for a broader assessment of the landscape. The comprehensive plan states that the planning corridor is a minimum half mile on each side of the trail. This would enable the management corridor width to be wider.
- We have a lot of questions re: relocating the trail, which are beyond this Council. But we don't know agency plans for moving the trail route; there is a need to know what that process is.
- For non-federal lands, how the FS decides to manage things like agreements with adjacent land managers will provide hikers a variety of experiences. Many of these things are interwoven. The process of determining width will take place at the forest units.
- Lots of the trail goes through DNR lands and there may be issues if land use is restricted in the trail corridor, such as potential logging restrictions. There is a

relevant lawsuit involving the Olympic Discovery Trail re: state lands and logging restrictions or land acquisitions.

- Substantial changes in trail route may take congressional approval.
- If we are giving advice to FS, should they prioritize actual tread of the trail, or the management corridor? Need to start somewhere. Or do you concentrate on trail location, or the management corridor? Process is always about finding the route that is most optimal for the trail experience. Optimal location review is to come up with a location for the trail that, in the long-term, will meet the nature and purpose of the trail.
- Moving forward to give advice to the FS around the process of selecting the corridors? Braiding connectivity would not inhibit uses. What recommendations can we agree on to give the Forest Service advice on trail location?
- Suggest town hall meetings in local communities to hear concerns and ideas.
- Suggest widening of the planning corridor more than a mile: The planning corridor will be a minimum one mile wide, but it depends on the location. Suggest clarifying a maximum corridor width. Recommend adding a maximum width to the corridor. How much latitude does the FS have when determining the planning corridor? What is the legal guidance? It's a Congressionally designated route; there may be a need to go back to congress to modify the route again.
- The trail's management corridor is established through Forest Plan revisions or amendments. The management corridor was not established through the comprehensive plan. This process will be different for other managing agencies: Tribal, State, or local government lands.
- Lincoln County, national forest lands have designated Grizzly Bear areas. There is concern that the trail corridor crosses these grizzly areas. If 20 parties per week use the trail, this could cause issues between users and grizzly bears with negative impacts to both. Lincoln County commissioners want the corridor to stay where it is.
- How does this council give advice to the FS on how to implement this process in concert with other landowners? What recommendations can the group give the agency (FS)? One answer: Advise the FS to prioritize certain locations and certain safety concerns.
- Should we recommend a timeline for what needs to be done, when to start, complete a certain section of the trail every year, etc. The plan will be approved by December 31, 2023.
- Recommend funding, targets, and deadlines to help the agency. Set goals or percentages for how much could be completed by a specific date.

**BREAK FOR LUNCH**

## **R6 DEPUTY REGIONAL FORESTER**

Robert Sanchez, R6 Deputy Regional Forester, and Sally Butts, R6 Director of Recreation Lands and Mineral Resources, attended the afternoon session.

Robert Sanchez expressed thanks and appreciation to the council members for their commitment to this project and for their patience during the difficulties establishing the second advisory council. He explained the next steps to get the Comprehensive Plan approved and signed: The objection period ends August 28. Region 6 Regional Forester, Liz Berger, is the responsible official signing the decision notice. Jacqueline Emmanuel, Associate Deputy Chief of National Forest System in Washington D.C. is the Reviewing Official for Objections. The completed Comprehensive Plan is signed by the Chief of the Forest Service and submitted to Congress. Completion of the comprehensive plan is an important pivot point for the role of the council. Where we need to shift our focus towards plan implementation and bringing the vision of the PNT into focus. Robert recognized Tribal interests and connections to the trail and showed appreciation to tribal members participating on the council. There are diverse perspectives in the group, which can be a strength and a challenge, collectively the trail connects us.

Question: Can the Comprehensive Plan be changed in response to an objection without allowing interested parties to respond to such objection? Answer: This process is following the “218 regulations” ([36 CFR Part 218](#)). Parties that have standing and submit an objection may be invited to an objection resolution meeting to discuss the objection with the reviewing official.

Question: Has the Forest Service determined how it will staff the implementation phase of the trail project? Answer: Not specifically, but it is anticipated that the Forest Service personnel who worked on the Comprehensive Plan will also be working on the implementation phase.

Question: Will the Advisory Committee continue to be in existence after the Comprehensive Plan is approved? Answer: In accordance with the National Trails System Act, the Advisory Committee shall be in existence for ten years following establishment of the trail. Since the PNT advisory council charter was established in May 2014, the PNT Advisory Council will remain in existence until May 2024. The statute does not provide for continuation of the Advisory Council after that date. This prompted further discussion regarding the need for a PNT Advisory Council beyond May 2024. The chair indicated that avenues to extend the life of the Advisory Council or to establish a new Advisory Council would be undertaken and discussed at the next meeting.

There were then discussions of extending the Advisory Council beyond 2024.

Council member Michael Decramer motioned for an in-person Advisory Council meeting asking federal agency to support the meeting; Seconded by Mike Dawson.

<b>Supported</b>	17
<b>Opposed</b>	1
<b>Abstained/ No Position</b>	9

The motion to hold an in-person Advisory Council meeting passed. Members of the Council did express interest in knowing the cost of an in-person meeting before a commitment is made to planning.

## **CONTINUATION OF BREAKOUT GROUPS**

### **BREAKOUT GROUP REPORT OUT: 2. Visitor Use Management**

The Visitor Use Management breakout room discussed visitor use under the subtopics: safety, capacity and monitoring, and partnerships. In the safety subtopic, the group recommended the priority to relocate the trail off of roads with traffic. If the trail must go on roads, there must be signage indicating pedestrian traffic; the group recommended collaboration with the relevant state or federal Department of Transportation. Once the Comprehensive Plan gets signed, start to implement signage (for outdoor safety, regulations, wayfinding, and wildlife). The agency must have proper information sharing, communication between partners and investments in new technologies, in part to ensure that there are active and up-to-date trail closures.

In the capacity and monitoring subtopic, the group recommended that knowing the capacity is a priority. It was recommended that the agencies have an implementation plan on capacity before it is too late. There must be identification of the hotspots that need to be addressed before other lower priority areas. Monitoring and management will need to be completed at a local level, this will include figuring out numbers of different user groups, including equestrian.

In the partnership subtopic, the group recommended partner involvement in the administration of the trail. The partners can play a role finding funding, monitoring, maintenance, and education.

### **BREAKOUT GROUP REPORT OUT: 3. Tribal, Cultural, and Educational Opportunities**

This breakout discussion focused on communication and education of the public, generally related to Tribal and cultural history along the trail. Examples, such as NPS web pages for Glacier National Park, were discussed. Generally, there was agreement that we should utilize this trail to educate people about aboriginal lands that have been long used, and this should be an intentional part of how trail management moves

forward. "The landscape tells the story of people living here, as well as other cultural history."

Other topics discussed:

- 21+ tribes part of the footprint of the trail. Non-federally recognized tribes should be included in conversation, as well.
- There are many opportunities to educate users about areas they pass through, particularly about tribal and cultural history, but also geology, natural history, etc.
- Use of tribal crews to be stewards of trail.
- Use of aboriginal/native languages in signage and educational products.
- Western WA tribes see increased recreation as a growing impact and threat to treaty rights - traditional uses and wildlife. Voiced concerns about growing cumulative effects of recreation.
- Use partnerships for developing educational messages where FS, NPS can't.
- There may be a need for an Interpretive Plan for the trail.

## **NEXT MEETING**

A request for the next meeting has been sent for a half day session on November 2, 2023. Once the meeting is posted in the federal register a copy of the notice and the agenda will be posted on the PNT advisory council website. A meeting hold has been sent to advisory council members.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**

**NO ADDITIONAL HANDOUTS**

**MINUTES CERTIFIED BY**



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**DIANE BARLOW**  
Council Chair