

PACIFIC NORTHWEST NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

Advisory Council Meeting Notes

March 5th, 2024

The National Advisory Council for the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNT) was convened for its eighth meeting at 10:00 A.M. PST on March 5, 2024, on Zoom. Designated Federal Official (DFO) Jeff Kitchens, Strategic Project Manager, and Tom Krekel, Facilitator, opened the meeting with a welcome to the 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 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. PST, without active microphone and video functions. The microphone and video functions were activated to allow for public participation during the designated Public Comment period.

Council Members Present*: Diane Barlow (Chair), Glenn Blakeslee, Frank Bob, Jeffrey Chapman, Michael Cuffe, Mike Dawson, Leah Dobey, Melinda DuPree, Molly Erickson, L Fisher, Philip Hough, David Kennedy, Clifford Kipp, Jeff Kish, Michael Kroschel, Michael Liu, Elizabeth Nelson, Ashley South, Adam Sowards, Shelly Stevens, Erik Frenzel (NPS)

Council Members Not Present: Randy Beacham, Callum Cintron, Michael DeCramer, Dan Dinning, Robert Kendall, Justin Kooyman, Michael Lithgow, Soisette Lumpkin, Elizabeth Thomas, Diane Priebe (BLM), Kevin Knauth (FS)

Forest Service staff present for meeting operations and technical support were:
Jeff Kitchens; Jessica Ibarra; Olivia Tong

Forest Service members in attendance were:
Sally Butts; David Ilse; Lisa Romano; Craig Newman

*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.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

At the 10 a.m. start time, the meeting facilitator, Tom Krekel, took attendance of the audience participants. There were more than half of the Council members present, and a quorum was established. Forest Service (FS) staff and members of the public gave short introductions. Council members shared introductions and about their roles on the Advisory Council.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

The minutes for the January 16 and 17, 2024 meeting were sent earlier this week. The Council will not approve the minutes during the day's meeting and will require another month to review and approve.

Advisory Council Chair Diane Barlow began the meeting by thanking the FS staff for notetaking and the current members of the Advisory Council for reaching their fifth meeting. Designated Federal Official (DFO) Jeff Kitchens thanked Diane Barlow, the Advisory Council, FS staff, and Tom Krekel for facilitating and gave reminders on Zoom etiquette.

DFO Jeff Kitchens reviewed the agenda for the day's meeting. The meeting participants will be broken up into groups and enter breakout rooms to discuss topics, followed by summaries. Council members are encouraged to provide feedback for implementation and asked for understanding if no decisions were made.

There were no public comments received by the official date of the Federal Register notice. Members of the public will have opportunity to speak later during the public comment period.

Acting PNT Administrator Lisa Romano provided an overview of the agenda for the April 9th meeting. There is no set agenda yet, but they are in the process of sketching out the next meetings. There has been a focus on trail relocation and realignment and there will be opportunities for the Advisory Council to discuss it. The presentation shared during the January meeting has specific references for the Council to consider, such as Chapter 4 for trail relocation. Trail management and relocation are not straightforward, though location is important. The April meeting will focus instead on how the Optimal Location Review (OLR) process is conducted. The PNT Comprehensive Plan has general instructions to conduct OLR but does not include all details. OLR is important for analyzing and identifying potential trail routes for relocation. The Council can provide valuable input into OLR and the criteria that the FS should factor in for prioritizing trail segments.

DFO Jeff Kitchens discussed the remaining Council meetings. There was no meeting held in February due to no quorum. The plan was to hold two meetings in April, but there were concerns raised over multiple meetings in one month. The second meeting, April 30th, will be canceled and the Council will be meeting on April 9th and May 14th. There was agreement that two meetings may be too many. Others would like to keep the second April meeting for Council members who cannot make the first one to discuss OLR. The DFO will check on the availability for both meetings and look into alternatives for those who cannot attend to contribute to the OLR discussion and provide feedback.

A Council member asked for clarification on whether decisions on OLR were already made or if the decision process is still underway. Today's meeting is just highlighting what to expect and the April meeting will highlight more on OLR. The Council will continue to dive into greater detail on topics other than trail location. The Comprehensive Plan already outlines the process for moving the trail and includes the OLR process. If it is decided through OLR to relocate the trail, then it is subject to NEPA due to environmental factors. The FS is not changing what is in the Plan but is identifying the specifics of the broader OLR outline. Another Council member noted that he secured grants for information for the Olympic Peninsula area. It will require OLR to move forward with the project, so addressing trail location is crucial.

Sally Butts, R6 Director of Recreation, Lands & Minerals, shared out to the Council. Sally provided recognition for the Council's work in providing feedback to the Comprehensive Plan and thanked the Council for their time and dedication to the PNT. Now that the PNT is entering the implementation phase, there is much work left to be done on the trail. It is understandable that there are concerns over how long the process will take and the number of factors to be considered. It is important for the Council to provide input on trail location, and members are encouraged to think about what can happen more immediately. Sally shares appreciation for the Council in their understanding on the processes to re-establish the Council and for sharing their priorities to help make the Plan happen.

UPDATE ON DISCRETIONARY ADVISORY COMMITTEE REQUEST & EFFORT

Advisory Council Chair Diane Barlow gave updates on the request for a discretionary advisory committee. After the January 2024 meeting, the memorandum from November 2023 was successfully delivered to the R6 Chief Regional Officer. Diane Barlow also spoke with their office for another meeting and shared to them internal working notes with timeline and proposed Council roster. There is nothing

actionable to report on the request, currently waiting on the Chief Regional Officer to review the request and then sends to the DC office for a decision.

A Council member shared they he reached out to the region's Congressman for comment. The extension requires an executive order and depends on the FS. He shared that the grant funding secured and waiting to be used for kiosk project is why there is pressure from this group to move forward. Council Chair, Diane Barlow, gave appreciation for the Council members and their efforts in promoting the trail and spending time and resources. There were no other comments or questions on the discretionary committee request.

It was raised about having more discussion for the April 30th meeting, considering the termination of the Council in May, and having trail alignment as a topic. DFO Jeff Kitchens will check in and get a sense of availability.

UPDATE ON SERVICE MARK

Acting PNT Administrator Lisa Romano gave updates on the PNT service mark and overview of the expected process. The service mark is a three-sided logo that each scenic trail and forest has. It must undergo a process to become the official federal mark for the PNT. There are issues with the current service mark as the artwork was created without tribal input and is a problematic representation of indigenous art. The FS established a partnership with American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) who has worked on similar projects. AIANTA initiated a project to engage as many of the 26 tribes along the PNT to develop tribal tourism opportunities and generate proposals from indigenous artists for a new service mark. AIANTA is conducting outreach now and will request proposals for artwork by July. There will be a committee including AIANTA, the FS, and tribal representatives to review and narrow artwork options, and then complete further development of designs and then finalize on an official service mark. The service mark has a small format that makes it challenging to tell a full story. Additional media/artwork, such as a poster, can be considered to tell more of the story of the PNT from an indigenous and tribal perspective.

The FS was asked to provide more details on the project timeline for engagement. This partnership was established by former PNT Administrator, Becky Blanchard. There have been delays to the project and a lot of paperwork. Completion of the service mark project may be approximately two to three years. Requests for proposals will begin this summer and AIANTA will be following a process for reaching out and meeting with tribes for meaningful engagement. The exact timeline is not finalized and will depend on artwork submissions.

One concern was about how the Service Mark will represent all tribes, given that the old service mark was only representative of a few tribes in Washington. Another concern was regarding the limited sizing and format of the service mark. It is important to clearly communicate the artwork format and dimensions to the artists. The service mark will have to be visible without any color in addition to the colored version. It was asked if no more than three symbols can be considered, including a general logo for a usable trail sign so that the process does not take too long. These concerns are appreciated and the PNT Administrator will look into suggestions for more than one Service Mark; a poster is an option. The PNTA and AIANTA is working with the PNT about signage on the grounds.

A Council member shared additional thoughts on tribal representation. The effort to include tribal artwork for the PNT is appreciated. It was asked whether there was tribal government consultation on this project as AIANTA is not representative of tribal governments. It is not clear if tribes would even want Native artwork on the PNT. Acting PNT Administrator Lisa Romano responded that consultation effort in the Comprehensive Plan included the opportunity for tribal governments to work on the service mark and

there were no responses received. It was requested to have additional outreach to tribal governments to avoid raising future issues.

GOAL SETTING & BREAKOUT GROUPS

DFO Jeff Kitchens explained that the themes for the day's breakout discussions cover the general priorities of the Council. The purpose of the breakout groups is to provide opportunities for Council Members to discuss action items, ideas, and areas of focus. These will be further discussed during the Goal Prioritization Process. Council Members were separated into two groups to facilitate greater discussion of the topics.

Visitor Information and Interpretation – Group 1

The first session discussion revolved around providing input on priorities and focus areas for implementation, such as interpretation work and communication needs. A student intern from the Western Washington University worked on a [project](#) to create an environmental interpretation plan for the PNT. The interpretation plan is also included in the Comprehensive Plan. There is a lot of visitor information available on the FS and PNTA websites. Council Chair Diane Barlow proposed two categories for the topic: 1) information critical to trail users on routes including trail safety, permits, and notices/alerts for closures, and 2) education, outreach, and storytelling.

PNTA has worked to capture the full history of the trail. They are partnered with a university to host an intern to compile historical information and stories and then organize it into a usable, sustainable database system. Communities along the PNT have photos and stories of their own and it would be helpful to get them involved. An extensive project was conducted years ago to gather and build the trail's history. Settlement history is also important. PNTA has worked with the Conservation Northwest organization to identify priorities on storytelling. Research on the history of wildlife and animal species may be of interest to hikers.

Timing is important during implementation as the trail is currently being used. A key priority is to provide information on resource protection needs and user impact so that public use has minimal impact on the PNT. Another consideration is having information on biological communities along the trail. Honoring and representing tribal treaty rights are a big priority for visitor information and interpretation. It is important to protect tribal access and natural resources along the trail. There should be outreach to tribal governments about interpretation and resource protection.

There were additional concerns over trail safety and conflicts between different types of trail users. Different user groups include hikers, horses, and biking users. There has been work done with border patrol agents on trail safety and issues relevant to users.

Community, Collaboration, and Facilities – Group 2

For the community and collaboration breakout topic, Council members were asked to think about what communities need to be reached, what can be done better for better coordination, and what are the priorities that need to be highlighted when working with these communities. A variety of organizations were mentioned that would be good partners in spreading the word and providing valuable knowledge. From historical societies, police department and local Search and Rescue teams, hiking groups and PCTA were all mentioned as resources for outreach.

There was a lot of focus on private landowners and how they should be included in the discussions and also made aware of the trail planning. Localized maps are not available yet to show what private lands are affected, there is only a vicinity map that shows agencies and some private lands. Ideas on creating maps that highlighted private lands were brought up such as using Caltopo, reaching out to local GIS

groups, and also mailing notices to people living along the trail. More resources were requested to be better able to start discussions with locals including timber companies. More Forest Services representation also requested when working with non-profits and volunteers for coordination.

BRIEF BREAK

GOAL SETTING & BREAKOUT GROUPS CONTINUED

Visitor Information and Interpretation - Group 2

Council Chair Diane Barlow provided a recap of the discussion from Group 1 and the two categories for the topic.

The second session discussion centered around implementing visitor information and interpretation. A main issue is having access to information. Many people still do not know about the PNT and its existence. There are many opportunities to raise awareness to more people. One example is an annual Big Foot festival in Metaline Falls, Washington. There should be outreach efforts to local businesses and trail towns with opportunities for economic development. Outreach can include youth engagement and should connect hikers. There are existing resources and organizations conducting outreach work. Tabling events, mailers, toolkits, and social media can be leveraged to share more information, education, and positive experiences to communities. It is important to get more people excited and have public outreach.

There is historical interest from hikers and travelers. The county's historical society can provide resources. Stories and histories of the landscape and forces involved in shaping it, wildlife issues such as grizzly bear habitats, and indigenous tribes and communities living along the trail can be shared to trail hikers and people interested in learning. There is a map on the website with information on the PNT's landscape and its changes. Information on fire management is also of interest.

Community outreach and visitor information must consider the private landowners where the PNT is crossing through their land. The congressionally designated route crosses private property, so there will need to be relocation or easement agreements. There may be confusion between the Congressional route and the primary route created by PNTA. It is important to address how the PNT crosses through tribal lands.

It is crucial to have access to real-time information for hiker safety about ongoing developments that may be seasonal and occurring temporarily. The issue is accessing real-time information due to Internet service and having it displayed on the grounds. There should be warning devices for trail users. There is a kiosk project located at the end of the trail and the Olympic Peninsula, with two grants secured for funding. They need to know what information to put on those kiosks.

The FS has capacity to create these resources for visitor information and interpretation, but mostly rely on outside partners especially to get their perspectives.

Community, Collaboration, and Facilities – Group 1

In the second session, there was a focus on who the agency needs to collaborate more with and also utilizing existing trail-use apps to communicate about the trail. State agencies, tribes, and both local and non-local users were brought up as groups that the agency needs to improve relationships with. By improving relationships with both state agencies and Tribal governments, issues on their land will be easier to navigate when the time comes. Local groups also need to be considered more such as the Backcountry horsemen who have needs surrounding trailer accessibility and water resources near trailheads. It was also mentioned that people travel for these trails who are not local, and they also need to

be considered. Another point made was that the agency should not hold meetings with locals unless there is a decision ready to be made, as it could be a waste of time to have a meeting with no solution to offer.

The use of trail focused apps was mentioned to be a good way to reach trail users. Some of the apps mentioned were All Trails, Tread, and Far Out. PNTA already collaborates with Far Out by having the capability of removing information that is inaccurate and also provide any closure information.

GOAL PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

A summary of takeaways and priorities was shared on the first topic of visitor information and interpretation. There is a focus on safety needs, visitor information, resource protections, storytelling, and education around tribal treaty rights. There are many resources for the education and storytelling of the trail, such as the PNTA, projects conducted with Washington universities, historians on the Advisory Council, and different organizations. Outreach efforts can be made to local county and commissioners, and community events. Council members felt it is important to provide information on the PNT on topics including landscape, stories of indigenous tribes and communities, fire management, wildlife, conservation.

A summary was shared on the second topic of community, collaboration, and facilities. Council members discussed high priority needs that have not been addressed. There is need to strategically align with stakeholders and collaborative efforts about trail management and implementation and identify those who have not been involved. As a national scenic trail, will have to consider non-local interests in national level. It is necessary to have tribal engagement throughout implementation. There needs to be engagement with private landowners for trail access and location; local sheriff offices for trail safety; historical societies for PNT storytelling; and various interest groups including trail associations and outdoor groups. State agencies are integral to implementing the PNT. Counties can provide support for outreach. There are opportunities of building off resources and support of overlapping trails and other available apps and resources for trail information and education.

Another comment was to consider education efforts that are not just about the PNT and can also provide useful information about how things generally work with the FS, and trail and resource management that can be put in the context of the PNT.

These are not concrete goals but are considerations for the FS to work off with other agency staff to consider for priorities. These discussions have brought valuable input for goal prioritization.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

DFO Jeff Kitchens welcomed members of the public to provide comments during this period. A representative from the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation did not have official comments but shared that they are looking forward to working with the Council and the FS on supporting PNT implementation. No other comments received.

CLOSE-OUT & BIN ITEMS

DFO Jeff Kitchens will send out a poll to determine availability for the April 30th meeting and determine whether both April meetings will occur.

It was raised that the FS should check in with tribal governments along the PNT about the FS's engagement with AIANTA to work on the service mark, provide them opportunities to share questions and concerns, and keep tribes up to date. This suggestion is appreciated and will help legitimacy when AIANTA reaches out for native artwork.

There was general comment on the agenda. What is the agency looking to get out of discussions on trail location issues? This would help Council members understand the needs and expectations to think about how they will contribute at the next meeting. Acting PNT Administrator Lisa Romano states this thought will be prepared earlier ahead of the April meeting. The focus is to have input on elements to be considered in the OLR process. It should be about considerations for higher-level process and how to prioritize trail segments for OLR. Open to hearing suggestions from Council members on agenda. It would be helpful to have an agenda shared earlier to give more time to better prepare, and also context on things that have been done such as work on topics and scale of challenges.

Other general comments:

- How will the FS address the PNT being on motorized trails? It would be good to have more context for the next meeting.
- Have we captured information from people already using the trail on topics discussed?
 - o PNTA collects that information every year about general experiences and inputs.
- It is anticipated that the next meetings will be challenging with handling trail location issues.
- The FS is in the middle of the outreach for competitive process to hire a permanent PNT Administrator.

Tom Krekel, Jeff Kitchens, Lisa Romano, and Sally Butts thanked the Council for the conversations.

MEETING ADJOURNED

MINUTES CERTIFIED BY



DIANE BARLOW
Council Chair