

Payette Forest Coalition

Thursday, February 15, 2024 – 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Hybrid meeting: Payette National Forest Supervisor's Office, 500 N. Mission Street, McCall, ID

and [Join Zoom Meeting](#): Meeting ID: 815 3909 0811 Passcode: **703461**

One tap mobile: +13462487799, 81539090811# US (Houston)

Desired Outcomes

- (1) Review outcomes regarding the Granite Goose comment letter and identify potential ways to address them.

Agenda

- 10:00 AM Introductions, review agenda and desired outcomes
- 10:10 AM Granite Goose comment letter outcomes, Facilitator
- 12:00 PM Lunch
- 12:30 PM Comment letter outcomes continued
- 1:30 PM News and Updates

References for Meeting

The references below are attached to this agenda.

January 18, 2024 meeting notes

Basic Conditions of Collaboration

PFC mission, goals and objectives (using Granite Goose as example)

PFC Decision Process

NFMA Business Process

NEPA Business Process

Addendum to NFMA and NEPA Project Design Business Processes

Topic Information sheet

Granite Goose comment letter

A range of new concerns and information were brought forward after the January PFC meeting at which members discussed and agreed upon the content of a comment letter for the Granite Goose draft EA. Given the volume of that new information, it was not possible to meet, discuss and negotiate potential changes to the letter before the draft EA's comment period closed. The voting threshold needed to submit the letter was ultimately not met. This raises a number of questions that should be discussed. The PFC's objective will be to examine these, and perhaps other, questions and begin identifying potential ways to address them.

- What did the PFC intend to do?
- What actually happened?
- What drove the difference(s) between what was planned and what happened?
- What will the PFC do next time?
- What are next steps now?

**Payette Forest Coalition
Meeting Notes
January 18, 2024**

Desired Outcomes

- (1) Decide by consensus whether to supply a letter of support and/or comments for the Granite Goose draft Environmental Assessment (EA).

Granite Goose draft EA

MAIN POINTS

- Rick Tholen stated he didn't see Randy's comments on the Forum and he received no notification of the posting. Suggested that all comments be in the same location and all be notified when someone posts or responds to a post.
- The website needs to be more user-friendly; it's too difficult to navigate and find documents. Suggestion made that links to documents in agendas, etc. take the reader directly to the document in question so no further searching is needed. **Action:** Facilitator will work with the Steering Team and Dennis Murphy on this.
- General comment that Forest Service (FS) often uses a dismissive-sounding response when responding to PFC recommendations (see [Forest Service review of PFC recommendations](#) in PFC Project Library under Granite Goose). It feels as if PFC's work is falling on deaf ears. Could the Forest respond in a better way? Dana Harris apologized and stated no offense was intended: They use such responses in the interest of expediency and in the future will try to respond in a way that either follows PFC's priorities or acknowledges that they were heard.
- Timeline: Draft EA comment period ends February 3, comment analysis and response follows, 45 day objection period in May, Decision expected late summer.
- Question about who can vote on a comment/support letter. Facilitator explained those members who voted on the Granite Goose recommendations are eligible to vote on the draft EA (he has the voting record).
- Fuels modeling does not appear to account for diseased and dying timber and thus underestimates the rate of wildfire spread in the no-action alternative. As a result, the argument for proposed vegetation treatments is not as strong as it could be. This could be a problem if there is an objection to the project. **Action:** Dana Harris will see if there is something from the specialist reports that could be included in the draft EA to more strongly communicate the need for veg treatments.
- Specialist reports are referenced in a number of places throughout the document but are not yet available. This makes it hard for some members to decide whether to support the project and/or gauge whether the project meets restoration goals.
- Question on why the northern boat ramp at Brundage reservoir was taken out of the EA. Jenni Blake will check into the specifics and follow up with Garret Visser but thought it was because they didn't have a good construction plan and proposed instead to harden the current one.

KEY MESSAGES

- Some confusion about why 4.4 miles of temporary roads (pp. 18, Table 6) don't appear to be removed at the end of the project and where they will be added. Jenni Blake explained they will be added using a special use permit and will not be removed until the permit expires (i.e., if the permit gets renewed, they stay on the landscape after the project ends). Dana Harris knows temporary roads will not be put into the Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) and thinks they will be used by the Little Ski Hill and Idaho Power. Request by PFC members that FS clarify all this in the document. **Actions:** 1) Dana will check into this and pass that information to John Lewinski and Randy Fox. 2) Randy identified some confusing language in regard to temporary roads and some other typos and will send them to Dana.
- PFC is concerned about use of prescribed (Rx) fire in commercial stands prior to mechanical treatment and in Whitebark Pine stands. Recommend adding to paragraph 5 under Prescribed Fire (pp. 15):
 - "the potential financial impact on timber resources" to the examples of other relationships that would inform use of Rx fire at the field review stage, and
 - "including Whitebark Pine" after the words "sensitive plants."
- Unclear what was meant by the term "seral" (pp.33, paragraph 4.1.2.4). Did the Forest mean "late seral?" Requested use of a descriptive word in front of "seral."
- Discussion about why shaded fuelbreaks and infrastructure protection treatments were removed from state lands (pp. 6, paragraph 1.5.1) because they do not align with the state's management objectives. The way the document currently reads, no treatments will be done at all. Dana explained that IDL is open to thinning but was concerned that proposed treatments would decrease timber volume. Suggestion: Describe what treatments will be done or state that treatments will be modified to meet IDL management objectives.
- Question from Randy Fox (ICL) about non-incidental treatments in IRAs added after scoping. "Non-incidental" is undefined and it is unclear what and where proposed treatments will occur. Dana Harris clarified that proposed treatments include fuel breaks, balsam woolly adelgid, and commercial timber harvest (pp. 102, Table 36), follow roadless area themes, and were analyzed to be as intense as possible so FS can scale back if needed (i.e., conditions-based). Up to 869 acres (pp. 103, Table 37) may be logged using heavy equipment and existing roads (no new roads proposed). The objective is to maintain or restore stand composition and health and locations of proposed treatments are seen in the project's [storymap](#). Request made to spell out the exception circumstances for prohibited actions in IRAs in simple language in the final document.
 - After discussion, it appears that ICL can support proposed treatments in IRAs except timber harvest using heavy equipment. Randy offered some options: 1) drop the timber harvest, 2) create a second action alternative that does not contain heavy equipment harvest in IRAs, 3) run the proposed harvest by the Roadless Commission and if it supports the action ICL will.
- Lack of consensus over proposed Granite Mountain winter closure. Some understand and support the Forest's rationale (reducing user conflicts and making enforcement easier) for the proposed action, others do not and cannot support it. Larry Laxson

asked to see the analysis underlying the proposed closure. **Action:** Dana will talk to the recreation specialist to see if that is possible.

- Concerns include:
 - Perception that the Forest has not listened to stakeholders and has made a decision. Dana noted FS has listened to comments, responded with changes after doing so, and that the EA is an analysis of a proposed action, not a decision.
 - It is an issue of fairness: A private entity gets to use public land for cat skiing but other motorized winter recreationists from the general public cannot. Suggested options:
 - Remove the proposed changes to closure dates from the EA and leave the current dates in place (January 15th to March 31st).
 - Take up the proposed closure as part of Brundage's master plan. Jenni Blake explained that the cat skiing special use permit is held by an outfitter, not Brundage, and therefore is not part of Brundage's master plan.
- Concern expressed over how Whitebark Pine (WBP) planting might impact recreation opportunities and grazing if it is planted in modeled habitat which may be outside of its historic range. Viki Purdy stated Adams County cannot currently support the draft EA because of this and would need support from allottees to do so.
 - Dana stated no changes will be made to grazing decisions: Grazing is not part of the EA's purpose and need.
 - FS does not foresee any impacts to recreationists or grazing allottees in this project as WBP would only be planted where it historically exists.
 - FS has coordinated with West Zone allottees where it was planted and there have been no impacts to grazing. Kristin Williams (FS) observed that cattle and sheep don't feed on seedlings and that cattle don't typically hang out on ridgelines where WBP is found because there is little forage.
 - **Action:** Dana will look at the Project Design Features to see if there is anything that talks about coordination with allottees that could be added to the draft EA and will reach out to Viki Purdy and Frank Schwartz.
- The threshold for consensus support of the draft EA cannot be reached today (three voting members eligible to vote on this project cannot live with it). This may change between now and when the Decision comes out this summer, at which point the Coalition would need to decide by consensus whether to support it. Some discomfort with this approach as this has never happened in the Coalition's history. *Facilitator note:* Evidently, there was a lack of consensus on the Draft EIS for the very first project, Mill Creek-Council Mountain. The [PFC Project Library](#) includes the letter the PFC submitted to the Forest Supervisor summarizing unresolved differences among Coalition members.
- Agreement that PFC should submit a comment letter: Saying nothing is generally seen as unpalatable. Straw poll of eligible voting members showed a consensus minus 1 agreement that a qualified letter of support should be submitted. Much discussion about whether and how that should be done. Agreement reached on the following: The letter should stipulate broad support for the proposed vegetation, watershed, wildlife, and roads and recreation treatments while briefly stating the issues which prevent

consensus support of the entire draft EA at this time (i.e., proposed Granite Mountain closure and heavy equipment logging in the IRAs).

- Suggestion made that the Steering Team reach out to those who cannot live with the project and explore potential ways to reach consensus support.
- **Actions:**
 - The Steering Team will draft a letter next week and put it to an online vote the week of January 29. Rick Tholen will headline the effort and reach out to Sandra and Larry if needed for the proposed closure issue.
 - Randy Fox will send Rick a paragraph regarding ICL's unresolved concerns.
 - Facilitator will coordinate these efforts, work with Dennis Murphy to set up an online vote, and submit the letter before the comment period closes February 3.

News and Updates

Garret Visser submitted an update report to National Forest Foundation on the grant PFC received from it last year. All \$6312 in funds have been spent. He will advise the PFC if there is another round of grants available. Forest Service stated there is currently an estimated \$19,000 available in funding for this FY. With an average of \$3600/month in costs, there will be a need to secure additional funding to complete the year beyond May.

Adjourned at 11:58 am.

Next meeting: February 15, 2024

PFC Meeting Sign-In (Remote) Jan 2024

1/18/2024 9:00:56	Rachel Vandenburg	Woodgrain Inc.			
1/18/2024 9:00:58	Garret Visser	Idaho Wildlife Federation			
1/18/2024 9:01:04	Bill Moore	Southwest Idaho RC&D			
1/18/2024 9:01:11	Randy Fox	Idaho Conservation League		0	0
1/18/2024 9:01:16	samantha wittell	Idaho Department of Lands - GNA/Shared stewardship			
1/18/2024 9:01:32	Rob Mallery	Payette NF		0	0
1/18/2024 9:01:37	Wendy Green	Adams Soil & Water Conservation District		0	0
1/18/2024 9:01:38	Dave Bingaman	Valley County Parks and Recreation Dept	dbingaman@co.valley.id.us	0	0
1/18/2024 9:01:44	Sandra Mitchell	Idaho Recreation Council		0	0
1/18/2024 9:02:09	Caroline Torkildson	USDA Forest Service			
1/18/2024 9:02:35	Brandon Flack	Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game			
1/18/2024 9:02:48	John Lewinski	Citizen			
1/18/2024 9:03:13	Larry Laxson	valley County			
1/18/2024 9:03:14	Ken Rider	Brundage Mountain			
1/18/2024 9:03:43	Will Perry	PAYETTE NF			
1/18/2024 9:03:51	Tim Leishman	USFS		0	0
1/18/2024 9:04:09	JoAnn Fly	JOANN FLY BOOKKEEPING INC			
1/18/2024 9:05:40	Rick Tholen	Society of American Foresters			
1/18/2024 9:13:27	Cameron Carsley	Payette NF			
1/18/2024 9:14:42	Mike Reggear	Idaho Forest Group			
1/18/2024 11:59:34	Gloria Pippin	Heartland Back Country Horsemen	gloriapippin51@gmail.com		

Basic Conditions of Collaboration

To be in good-standing (a voting member), Members agree to commit to the following conditions designed to improve and maintain the collaborative environment of the PFC. A voting PFC member who “cannot live with” a proposal has an obligation to offer solutions/new information rather than simply opposing the majority vote.

The partner commits to:

- Support the Coalition recommendations in their interactions with the media and general public
- If a member votes in support of the PFC’s consensus recommendation, that person shall forgo the option to 1) file an objection in the pre-decision process contrary to the PFC’s recommendations or 2) engage in subsequent litigation, if the proposed action is consistent with the Coalition’s recommendations
- Continue constructive participation as a member of the collaboration. This commitment means that the partner will not independently lobby the Forest Service to change the proposed action by adopting priorities that conflict with the Coalition recommendations
- Every PFC member has the right and responsibility to critically review the actions and recommendations of the PFC. Disagreements are an inevitable component of forest collaborations and each member will represent minority opinions. When a PFC member represents a minority opinion, the member retains the ability to voice critical opinions. However, to ensure the integrity and spirit of collaboration, a PFC member in good standing will not engage in activities that undermine the mission of the PFC.
- From time to time, Coalition partners will encounter new information and ideas that suggest refinements to the Coalition’s recommendations. Sources of new information include credible scientific research, case studies of other forest landscape restoration collaboratives, issues raised through the NEPA scoping process, and analytical results published in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Forest Service action. Proposed refinements will be presented to the group in an open discussion format. Consideration of new information and ideas for inclusion by the Coalition will engage the consensus decision process.

When violations of the BCCs occur, the Steering Team shall consider what actions will be taken on a case-by-case basis.

If a member votes in good faith to support a recommendation and their constituency later decides to support a different alternative or recommendation, that member is expected to inform the PFC so that the group can decide what to do.

By signing these conditions, the partner acknowledges that the purpose and strength of a collaborative body is that its decisions represent hours of hard work done by multiple groups representing different interests and different priorities. The strength of the group's recommendations or decisions is eroded when members submit comments that contradict the group's comments, because it leaves decision makers and potential challengers to wonder which opinion the dissenting member actually holds. It is therefore expected that when a member participates in, and votes to support, a given decision, that that member will not submit comments that contradict that support, so as not to diminish the strength of the collaborative's recommendation.

Eligibility to Vote - Amendment adopted August 15, 2019

11 voting members present. 10 in support, 1 can live with it.

Voting on whether to support a Proposed Action (and content of a corresponding comment letter) and what the PFC will support in regard to a DEIS (and content of a corresponding comment letter) shall be limited to those members who voted on that project's recommendations. Any subsequent decision-making and voting in regard to that project shall be open to all voting members of the PFC regardless of whether 1) the decision alters previous decisions, 2) the decision is a recommendation to the Forest Service (consensus of members present minus 1), or, 3) the decision is an intermediate (80% supermajority) decision.

Signatures are accepted online by [entering your name and organization on this form](#).

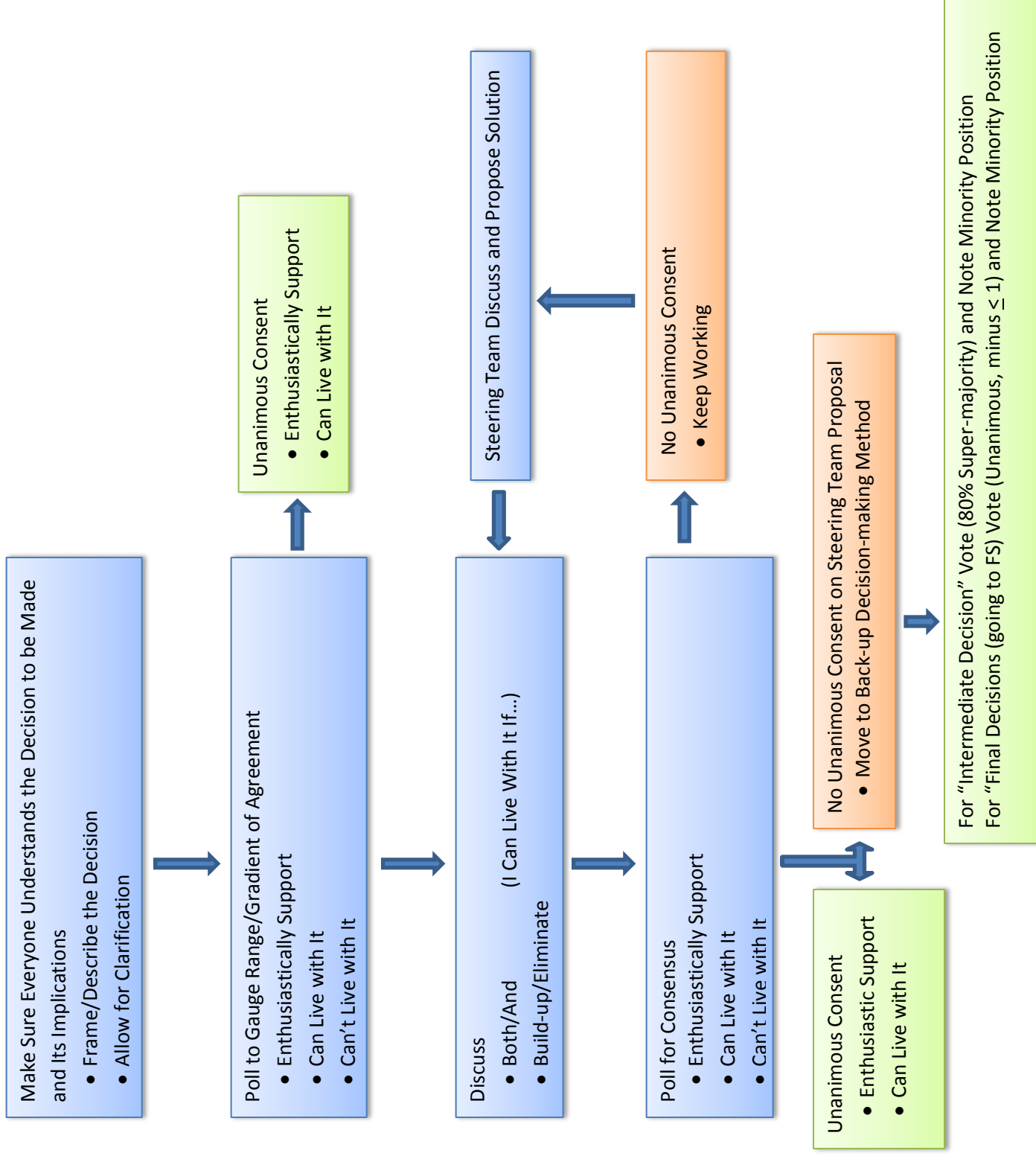
GRANITE GOOSE PROJECT

WHY RESTORE A LANDSCAPE?	ROLE OF THE PFC	PROJECT GOALS	WHERE ARE WE GOING?
<p>Current forest conditions depart from those desired.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current conditions depart from the historical range of landscape structure and function • The conditions may be an outcome of past management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timber production goals & harvest methods • Fire suppression • Road network design • The desired conditions are defined based on data and analysis, and referenced in the current forest plan and pending amendments, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetation conditions & Wildlife Conservation Strategy (Appendix A) • Aquatic conservation strategy (Appendix B) • Watershed Condition Framework • The conditions compromise the resiliency of the forest to recover from disturbance and adapt to climate change. • Restoration actions will help restore ecosystem function by altering forest structures, composition and their distribution (pattern) on the landscape. 	<p>We provide recommendations to the line officer on all phases of restoration.</p> <p>Project Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend treatment strategies, priorities & sideboards/guidelines. <p>National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in scoping meetings • Review scoping comments • Comment on draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) <p>Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review contract type and specifications • Recommend priorities for retained receipts of Stewardship Contracts <p>Multi-party Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the design & implementation of project monitoring. • Conduct site review of completed contract services, and document the review. 	<p>Our recommendations will reflect the members' diverse interests.</p> <p>Wildlife</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve habitat for terrestrial and aquatic species, as appropriate by need. <p>Wildfire</p> <p>Improve forest resiliency to wildfire by restoring Potential Vegetation Groups (PVG) toward their respective historical range of structure</p> <p>Return fire to the landscape as an ecosystem process.</p> <p>Improve the ability to manage wildfire and protect surrounding communities.</p> <p>Watershed Health</p> <p>Improve water quality and watershed health</p> <p>Forest Access & Recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the road and trail network to support access for resource management, outdoor recreation, and public safety. <p>Restoration Economics</p> <p>Recommend actions which are financially responsible and contribute to the economic vitality of adjacent communities.</p>	<p>We will provide timely recommendations by a consensus process.</p> <p>Payette Coalition Mission</p> <p>Build diverse community support for forest restoration projects.</p> <p>Project Design</p> <p>The PFC will submit project recommendations to the line officer by.</p> <p>NEPA Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping begins • Review comments: DEIS • Record of Decision <p>Implementation</p> <p>Multi-party Monitoring</p>

GRANITE GOOSE PROJECT

KEY MEASURES (Indicators) FOR PFC GOALS			
Wildlife Habitat & Wildfire	Watershed Health	Forest Access	Economics/Finance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acres moved towards desired condition • PVG acres by tree size class & acres by canopy closure class of the large tree size class, with emphasis on PVGs 2, 5, & 6. • Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) acres treated • Acres by fire condition class (before and after treatment) • Change in elk security habitat • Habitat restoration requirements of endangered species recovery plans, including salmon, steelhead, and Northern Idaho ground squirrel (NIDGS) habitat quantity/distribution • Incorporate noxious weed data and weed free areas from the Early Detection Rapid Response Program • Native plants: distribution of native plant communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watershed Condition Class • Apply/review watershed condition indicators (12 indicator model) for each 6th order watershed • Identify condition class for each watershed prior to project • Estimate condition class for each watershed post-treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net change in open system roads • Miles of non-system, closed roads decommissioned • Change in miles of maintained trails – motorized, non-motorized • Forest access metrics will be supported by Transportation Analysis Planning (TAP), and not substitute for TAP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale of restoration (how much should be treated), i.e.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost/benefit of road restoration (miles) • Cost/benefit of stand harvest (acres) • Cost, by watershed, to change watershed condition class • Revenue as % of project cost • Allocation of restoration dollars – i.e., priority of treatment types • Income Contribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job years resulting from project expenditures • Income contribution (dollars) • Note: PFC supports economic activities on the forest that contribute to the vitality of local communities, including activities such as commercial wood products, ecological restoration, livestock grazing, recreation, mining, etc. Project analysis metrics should include both positive (gains in income) and negative (decreases in income, if any) resulting from proposed restoration actions.

Payette Forest Coalition – Decision-making Process



Appendix to PFC Decision Making Process Flow Chart

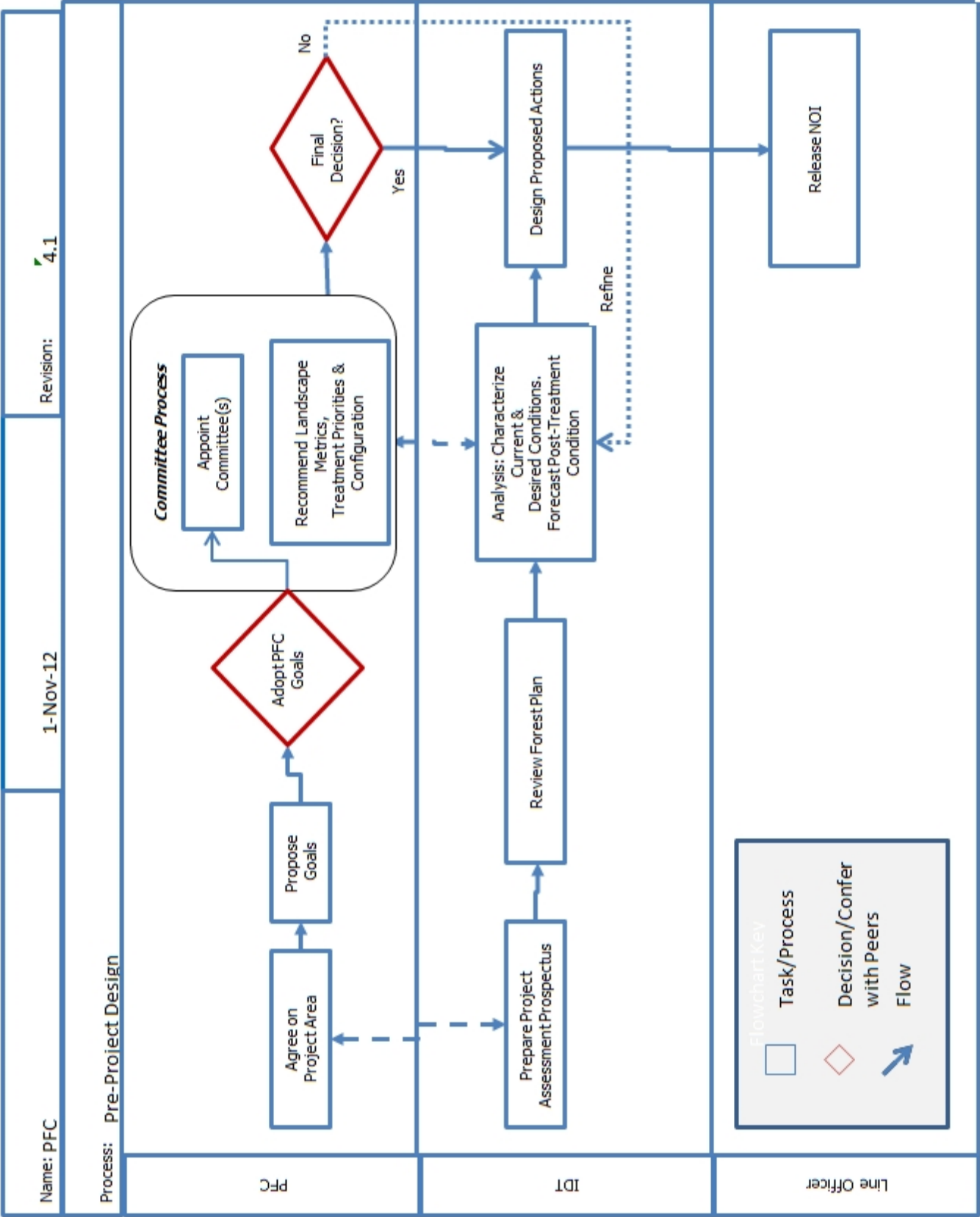
For all PFC review processes that will result in a “Final Decision” (i.e., final PFC recommendations, drafting a letter that explains the PFC’s preferences on a DEIS, or drafting a letter in support of an FEIS and Record of Decision), the Forest Service and the PFC agree to the following timeline:

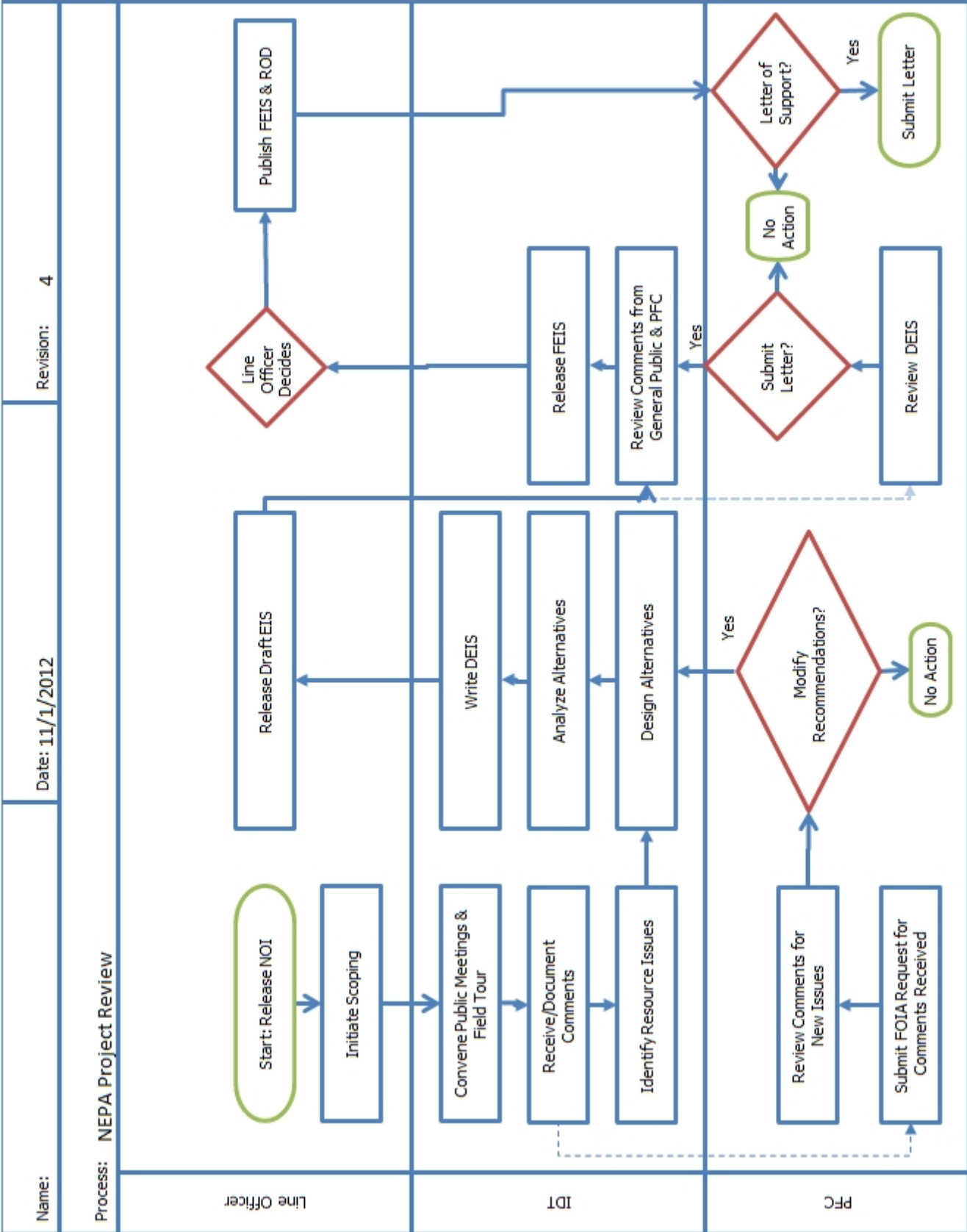
- Discussion of the items under review will occur over no fewer than two PFC meetings.
- PFC members will receive the materials for review at least one week prior to the first of these two meetings.
- The purpose of the first meeting is to ask questions about or clarify items in the document and identify points of disagreement or issues where consensus may prove difficult. At the end of the first meeting, the PFC will take a non-binding “straw poll” vote to assess how much time/work needs to be spent on items of disagreement.
- Between the two meetings, members agree to:
 - Apprise the groups they represent on the details of the document
 - Work with their group to identify “problem areas” and work on developing potential solutions
 - Be prepared to discuss those items at the second PFC meeting
- The purpose of the second meeting is to work towards a document that can achieve full PFC consensus. To this end, during the second meeting members will be expected to:
 - Revisit any problems identified during the first meeting, and discuss potential alternatives/solutions
 - Bring up any additional problems identified by the groups the members represent, and discuss potential alternatives/solutions

At the end of the second meeting, the facilitator will explain any amendments that have been agreed to during these discussions. There will then be a final vote¹ on moving forward with the (perhaps amended) document. To cast a vote, a voting member must be physically present or attending by telephone, skype, or other real-time technology.

If a member with a minority opinion intends to formally object, litigate, or submit comments contrary to the PFC consensus vote, that member is expected to inform the PFC of their intention and submit their minority opinion to the Forest Service and PFC.

¹ Consensus threshold for approval of a Final Decision is the number of voting members present minus 1





Addendum to NFMA and NEPA Project Design Business Processes

New NEPA rules create challenges for the Payette Forest Coalition (PFC) and the Payette National Forest's (PNF) collaborative efforts regarding landscape restoration projects. At its July 2021 meeting, the PFC adopted and submitted a set of guidelines for addressing those challenges and a range of recommendations to the Forest Service¹. Coalition members also considered some recommendations made by the PFC Steering Team which focus on the PFC's NFMA and NEPA Project Design Business Processes (seen in the same place as the above-referenced guidelines) and are intended to be an addendum to the business process.

1. The PFC requests that Forest Service share specific information about projects and (if possible) potential treatments as early as possible during NFMA, ideally up to 60 days before a comment period begins or a PFC decision is needed. This will help the PFC understand what the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) is considering, provide early opportunities for engagement, and decide whether specific recommendations are needed.
2. Because of compressed project timelines, the PFC will not always have two regular monthly meetings to reach a decision. In such cases:
 - PFC members should use the PFC Forum to begin discussions and deliberations before a meeting where a decision point will occur. Documents related to the topic at hand should be posted there beforehand. This could include briefing papers prepared by the Steering Team to help focus discussion.
 - An interim meeting via Zoom (or other online platform) should be held to begin building consensus support or reach a decision. Such a meeting would be 1-2 hours long, have one agenda item, and should be scheduled with as much advance notice as possible. Consideration should be given to holding it in the evening.
 - There should be at least one week between an interim and regular meeting so the Interdisciplinary Team can respond to questions raised and PFC members have time to digest information and check in with constituents.
3. When the Coalition will not have two meetings to reach a decision, the PFC Steering Team should draft and post a comment letter—even if it is general in nature and will need adjustment—for members to consider before the PFC meets.
4. Votes should be held at meetings whenever possible instead of online.

¹ The Guidelines for Project Engagement may be found on the PFC website on the Administration page under [Coalition Business Protocols](#).

5. Under a single-meeting scenario when recommendations are to be considered for adoption, committees should post draft recommendations well before the meeting where a decision will occur. Having such information in hand should help accelerate the decision process and reduce the amount of time and effort needed post-meeting to finalize documents and/or hold an online vote.