

Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests
Meeting Summary
9:00 to 3:00p.m. September 24, 2009

Location:
Tillamook Room
Oregon Department of Forestry
2600 State Street
Salem, OR

Attendees

Participants: Paul Adams, Jamie Barbour, Paul Barnum, Steve Calish, Susan Chapp, Ron Cease, Mike Dykzeul, Gary Larsen, Janet McLennan, Craig Patterson, John Poppino, Keith Reynolds, and Rex Storm.

Guests: Peter Gaulke, Strategic Planning and Sustainability, USDA Forest Service, Washington D.C.

Oregon Department of Forestry Sponsors: David Morman and Cathy Clem.

Mediator: Mike Schnee

Purpose

The primary purpose of the meeting was to review and comment on the draft proposal, "Concepts and Principles for Developing an Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forest Management". A subcommittee was appointed at the March 6, 2009 meeting to develop the proposal. The proposal is the output of the subcommittee's work.

Invited Guest to Offer Perspectives

Peter Gaulke was invited to open the meeting via conference call and offer some perspectives based on his national and international experiences with implementation of the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators. In particular, Peter discussed the work of the national Roundtable on Sustainable Forests and how the leadership of the Oregon Board of Forestry has been valuable to other states and to the national dialogue on sustainable forest management. He also commented on what the benefits of a successful Oregon Roundtable might be to Oregon and to the national discussion.

Overview of the Day's Discussions

The discussion of the draft proposal revealed that there was a wide range of opinion on whether or not an Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests would be a useful, effective forum to initiate. Of the 13 participants, most indicated that support should first be sought from policy leaders in the state (particularly the Board of Forestry, US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and private forest landowner representatives) and once that support is obtained to further develop the concept.

Important perspectives from those who do not think the Roundtable should be initiated

contributed to the valuable discussion about how to add credibility and meaning to the work of a Roundtable or simply to the quality of the dialogue on forest issues in Oregon.

At the end of the day it was decided that improvements would be made to the draft proposal and that David Morman (Oregon Department of Forestry), with the assistance of several in attendance at the meeting, would approach the Oregon Board of Forestry to determine if the Board would seek agreement with forest policy leaders in Oregon to support and highly value the work of an Oregon Roundtable. Forestry policy leaders could first include land managers or landowners such as the USFS, BLM, private forest landowner representatives, and then perhaps others. If such support exists, then the Roundtable concept could be further developed and the Roundtable could likely provide input to the Board of Forestry on the Oregon Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management as an initial project.

Several ideas for improving the concepts in the draft proposal were developed as a result of the good discussion at the meeting and several concerns about implementing a Roundtable were identified. Those ideas are presented in the following sections of this document. Following the initial expressions of support or opposition to the formation of a Roundtable, the meeting's overall outcome displayed an agreeable compromise and process to proceed.

Subcommittee Panel and Group Discussion

Subcommittee members who participated in the development of the draft paper were asked to present their perspectives on the draft. After the panel presented their thoughts, the other attendees were asked to share their perspectives. The following themes provide a summary of the ideas that were expressed.

1. Draft Proposal, "Concepts and Principles for Developing an Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forest". Is it ready for adopting as complete?

Those in favor of pursuing the Roundtable concept, thought the draft reasonably described the approach and that it was broad enough to accommodate a wide range of approaches to launch a project and allow the Roundtable to function in a variety of roles. However almost all of these people agreed that there were some improvements that should be made. The following are areas for redrafting:

- Add a broader context to the introduction. Gary Larsen has provided language to improve this section.
- Call the Roundtable, the "Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests". This title is more inclusive and may encourage a wider range of the public to participate.
- Define the term sustainable forest management to include the concepts of conservation, restoration, and management. Consider adding utilization to this list. Defining restoration needs more thought. Some prefer dropping the term and replacing it with "enhancement". Consider restoration of function versus restoration to a specific point in time. Another suggestion is to think of

defining restoration as targeting a set of conditions that are desirable. Yet another idea, consider the concept of evolution not restoration - sustainable forest management must be a learning experience whereby humans and the forest evolve together to ensure each other's survival.

- Compatible co-chairs who can share their own interests, look out for the interests of others, and move the process along is a reasonable leadership approach for the Core Group.
- The Core Group should be appointed by the Board of Forestry – at least initially. Ultimately, a broader consortium of agencies and other forest policy leaders may be invited/appointed to take on this role.

2. Potential Concerns Surrounding Initiation of an Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests

Some group members thought that the time may not be right for the Roundtable or that a Roundtable should not be initiated because it would not improve forest management or the public dialogue. Some thought that unfavorable outcomes have been demonstrated in several other forums and that extreme opposing ideals have rarely succeeded in finding compromise.

For those who thought that the time was not right, they pointed out that there has been a very small turnout for the meetings on forming a Roundtable. Those that have come are those who have traditionally been involved and there was not a broad cross section of interests at the September 24th meeting.

For those who thought the Roundtable should not be formed, several specific reasons were presented:

- Oregon already has good approaches. Avoid duplicating other public processes. Adopting the approaches of others could actually lower our standards.
- The Oregon Forest Practices Act already is a sustainable “Brand”.
- We do not need a Roundtable to gather data; we have mechanisms to do that.
- Private forest stakeholders are very weary from decades of agency efforts to gather public input, promote involvement, develop consensus, collaborate and so forth. The perception is the track record for the majority of these agency-driven programs has been costly and dismally poor, having few or no constructive outcomes.
- It is unlikely that the necessary organizations or individuals would sincerely participate. The private landowner community is not fully supportive of the Roundtable endeavor at this time.
- Polarized viewpoints will not go away. It is unrealistic to think that we can develop a shared vision. There will always be those who do not choose to take part in the Roundtable or some who do take part and will still choose to take contrarian positions that would exacerbate further controversy.
- Such a Roundtable process would offer yet another public venue for forest management opponents to attack well-meaning forestry professionals.

- Current economic recession has severely sapped the necessary momentum for such a discretionary and process-oriented endeavor.
- Individual stakeholder participation on the Roundtable could be too costly in terms of budgets and time commitments in these difficult economic times.
- To date, there is no tangible charter from landowning managers that would offer certainty that the Roundtable would have meaningful input to Oregon forest policymaking.
- State agency resources are currently extremely limited and other government functions are a higher priority.

3. Defining Progress - Sustainable Forest Management

Some members of the group think that great progress has been made in moving toward sustainable forest management while others questioned that opinion. It was suggested that we need to develop a common vision of what sustainable forest management means in terms of the “triple bottom line” of economic, environmental, and social values. We must identify the linkages among the three facets. We must look at specific “on the ground” projects to better understand how different approaches affect the “triple bottom line”.

The 2008 Mt. Hood National Forest Monitoring Report was shared with the group as an example of a federal land manager using the *Forestry Program for Oregon* framework of goals and indicators to organize, evaluate, and discuss forest resource information.

4. Discussion to Create Meaning

Various members in the group provided their perspectives on some of the challenges that must be overcome or the principles that must be encouraged if the public dialogue on forest issues is to be improved.

- There is a high degree of enmity, antagonism, or distrust that must be overcome in public dialogue on forest issues.
- The general public appears to be frustrated, fatigued, and or disengaged by the decades of ongoing forest policy battles.
- Outside the U.S., conservationists see human action (management) as a sustaining action. In the U.S. it is often seen as interference.
- To improve the dialogue, we must promote real collaborative discussions. To do so we must honor the viewpoints of others, listen, develop fair and constructive agreements, and share all information that may affect the outcome of decisions.
- Everyone brings something important to the table. We must bring the dialogue to the community level.
- Connecting to the higher levels of government is also difficult to do. We must work on this. The Roundtable could help the people of Oregon take positive steps towards improved, politically-sustainable forest policy decisions..

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- The goal of the Roundtable is not to bring those with extreme, polarizing viewpoints together – that has been the traditional model. The Roundtable is an opportunity to bring those who want to find common ground together. Empowering them may dis-empower the extremes.

5. An Oregon Approach for the Roundtable on Sustainable Forests

If a Roundtable is to be initiated, it must be designed to meet the needs and expectations of Oregonians willing to find common ground.

6. Forest Policy Leadership

Virtually all group members thought that Oregon leaders in forest policy: federal and state government land managers and private land representatives should initially determine if there is a need and viable mission for an Oregon Roundtable. If a need is strongly and visibly supported by these leaders, it should be crafted to ensure this leadership should play a strong role in supporting the work of the Roundtable and actively participate in the Roundtable process.

Closing Discussion

After the morning's discussion about the draft Proposal, the group then moved on to assess an appropriate series of events that would determine whether or not to continue the development of the Oregon Roundtable. The group also discussed some essential ideas to focus on prior to or as part of taking on a Roundtable project.

1. Seek "Top Down" Support

Most of the group thought that it is important to determine if Oregon leaders in the forest sector - first including landowners and managers such as the Board of Forestry, USFS, BLM, private forest landowner representatives, and then perhaps others, would value, support, and listen to an Oregon Roundtable. If so, then the leadership should be asked to set forth a charge for the Roundtable, provide ongoing sponsorship and resources, and have ongoing leadership on the Roundtable.

It was suggested that the Board of Forestry should convene a discussion with leaders from the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, private forest landowners, and perhaps others. If strong and visible support exists for a Roundtable approach, then the leadership could formally recognize and support the Roundtable effort.

2. (If supported in #1 above) Continue to Pursue a Roundtable on Sustainable Forests Approach

Most, but not all, of those in attendance thought it was important to move forward with putting in place some important foundational support for the Roundtable and if this can be done, to initiate a project.

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However resources are limited today so the Roundtable approach must focus on efforts that match the available resources and on those projects that would be most productive.

The current “interim core group” should be retained until the Roundtable is approved and can establish its own charter and governance model.

3. Outreach to a Broader Audience

Thus far those participating in the discussion about forming an Oregon Roundtable have been the same people who have been part of forest policy discussions for many years. To meet the purposes for the roundtable, the group must reach out to others. A broader spectrum of our society should be formally invited to participate.

The lack of people in attendance at the September 24th meeting may not be a reflection of the interest in a new approach such as the Oregon Roundtable but rather, of how we have done our work in the past.

The Roundtable must be structured and conducted in a manner that will encourage others to participate. To do so, the Roundtable must build on the strengths of past approaches but create something new. The Roundtable is intended to find common ground and not allow extreme views to dominate.

4. Whole Systems Thinking to Address Important Societal Issues

Several members stated that it would be important for the Roundtable to encourage integrated thinking about how forests and people affect each other. These are complex natural and societal systems. The Roundtable should pursue a learning approach where information is brought to the table and cause and effect relationships related to economic, environmental, and social indicators are better understood.

It was pointed out that these concepts of integration and interdependence are already central to both national and Oregon frameworks for discussing and measuring sustainable forest management.

5. Oregon Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management

The Board of Forestry decision to use a system of indicators to measure progress in policy implementation was a change in their traditional approach to policy-making. The Board of Forestry needs a “sounding board” for evaluating indicator data against socially negotiated and established desired trends for the indicators.

The Oregon Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management project could be a valid project to begin the work of an Oregon Roundtable on Sustainable Forests. It would be an opportunity to develop a broader understanding of Oregon’s progress in achieving sustainable forest management, as defined by Oregonians, and better understand the impacts of our actions on the indicators and ultimately how to manage toward a desired

balance of economic, environmental, and social targets. If this effort is successful it may lead to discussion of broader topics such as the *Forestry Program for Oregon*.

If the Roundtable is effective at drawing in a larger audience, then the potential for future Roundtable work will be enhanced. If only a small group engages, a future decision may be necessary on whether to continue the Roundtable. However, even a small group could still be beneficial to the Board of Forestry and to advancing the thinking about the Criteria and Indicators.

6. Next Steps

a. Enhance the draft proposal for Board of Forestry review. The next draft will be sent to all those who participated in the September 24th meeting for their review.

- See item 1 above under Subcommittee Panel and Group Discussion.
- Clarify the potential charter. The initial sponsor might be the Board of Forestry, however this would eventually be broadened to a consortium of forest sector leaders. Consider formalizing this consortium through a Declaration of Cooperation with additional agencies and organization signing on over time.
- Clarify how people could participate in the Roundtable.
- Clarify how people get appointed leadership roles in the Roundtable.
- Describe the need for strong “Top Down” charge, commitment and involvement to the Roundtable
- Suggest the initial Roundtable project could be to provide input to the Board of Forestry on the Oregon Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management.
- Look for the opportunity to incorporate language into the paper that would generate a greater sense of urgency about the real Oregon forest issues that the Roundtable would discuss. Sustainable forest management doesn’t necessarily convey the importance or urgency of the work.
- Clarify the connection of the Board of Forestry’s and the Roundtable’s work with the Montreal Process
- Develop a short version of the concept paper, e.g. the one pager.

b. Seek support from the Board of Forestry

- David Morman will submit a January agenda item. David and others in attendance at the September 24th meeting will address the Board.
- Discuss the draft proposal with the Board.
- Highlight the challenges faced by the Roundtable
- Determine if the Board will support an Oregon Roundtable and the concept of convening other forest sector leaders in support of the Roundtable.

References Mentioned During the Discussions

1. *Forestry Program for Oregon* – Strategy A
2. USFS Mt Hood – 2008 Forest Monitoring Report