

**Custer-Gallatin
National Forests
Management Working Group
(CGWG)**

Operations Manual

Approved September 10, 2014

This operations manual is a living document and will be changed as necessary.

1. Purpose, Tasks and Functions

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Custer-Gallatin Forests Working Group (CGWG), is to develop agreement around priority areas and approaches for project work on the Custer-Gallatin National Forests and to help facilitate completion of those projects at the local level. Overall objectives include:

- Developing common understanding among diverse stakeholders and serving as a bridge to broader constituencies
- Reaching agreements that will lead to more efficient and effective forest management projects
- Increasing understanding of Forest Service processes and approaches
- Offering and supporting innovations
- Identifying management efficiencies and priority projects supporting multiple use
- Fostering broad public support and ownership of proposed Forest Service actions
- Supporting forest management projects that are both financially and ecologically sustainable
- Implementing Montana Department of Natural Resources, Best Management Practices for forest health to provide for watershed protection and fire resistant forests

Tasks and Functions of the Working Group

- Work with the Forest Service to identify/prioritize landscape projects
- Provide advice on resource questions, such as fish key watersheds, for example
- Serve as a bridge to broader constituencies and interests
- Provide the Forest Service a broad constituency of people and interests to engage at the project level, i.e. act as a general “sounding board” for the Forest Service
- Identify and Prioritize funding opportunities to be pursued
- Provide insight at the project level regarding issues of priority in assessments; Assist in determining financial trade-offs
- Help to “think outside the box”; act as “ambassadors” for projects/decisions the group supports

2. Organizational Structure, Leadership and Membership

The CGWG will function as a forest-wide committee, and will govern itself and its members.

Relationship with Local Project Efforts

The Group’s relationship with local project efforts is to help identify local interests that may want to be engaged at the local level and ask for input on forest-wide issues.

Membership

The CGWG was originated and organized by the Carbon, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Park, Gallatin, and Madison County Commissioners in southern Montana, whose charge and over-riding priority is public safety, health and general welfare within their counties. Each of these counties provide access to the Custer-Gallatin National Forests within their boundaries.

The CGWG will be chaired by a Commissioner serving in these member counties. The Working Group will provide for membership and voting rights to organizations and individuals representing key interests and perspectives, geographic and economic balance, and knowledge of the Custer-Gallatin National Forests. Members may represent specific organizations or participate as individuals. Identified interests and number of voting board seats available include:

ORGANIZATION	Number of Board seats
• County Commissioners	7
• Conservation NGO's	4
• The skiing industry	1
• Agriculture/Ranching	1
• Quiet recreation	1
• Motorized recreation (summer/winter)	1
• Hunting	1
• Fishing	1
• Commercial outfitters (permittee)	1
• Mining and mineral development	1
• Timber	1

Members may be added to the group as the need arises by nomination and approval of the Working Group.

Members shall comply with the Code of Conduct. In order to avoid potential conflicts and controversy, members are expected to communicate with their constituencies and to keep the Working Group informed of organizations or individuals who may be affected by the decisions of the Working Group.

Members shall attend all meetings of the Working Group and assigned committees. If unable to attend, members shall notify the Chair or Vice-Chair in advance of the meeting. There are no alternates. Recognizing that there are inevitable conflicts in scheduling that may prevent full attendance, the member will seek to be informed of actions taken at meetings at which the member is absent. Decisions made in a member's absence are binding. Members will be replaced if too many meetings are missed, as determined by the Working Group.

Committees may be appointed as necessary to work on specific issues or tasks and report back to the full Working Group. Committees shall function according to the CGWG Code of Conduct and Operations Manual.

Meetings

The CGWG will meet on the Second Wednesday of every month unless otherwise agreed.

Members shall come prepared to all meetings. The member will read materials submitted in advance of meetings and complete assignments accepted.

Members shall participate actively in meetings. Only through constructive dialogue among diverse stakeholders can the CGWG achieve its purpose.

Meetings shall be open to the public who are encouraged to voice their views and opinions within the framework of the Working Group meeting structure. The Chair will schedule public comment in each agenda as appropriate. Public comment will be taken following the presentations and discussion of each topic by the Members. In addition, time will be allowed at the end of the meeting for the public to bring new issues or comments to the Working Group. Potential participants are also encouraged to notify the Chair of the Working Group in advance of the meeting if additional time or a presentation to the Working Group is necessary. The meeting schedule will be posted on the CGWG website, once established.

Code of Ethics

The Working Group members will adhere to the Code of Ethics and Open meeting laws of the State of Montana; MCA 2-2-101; MCA 2-2-203; MCA 7-5-2125

Committees

Committee meetings are open to the public and comments will be taken in the same format as the Working Group meetings. The Working Group may select non-members to participate in committees based on their knowledge or experience on specific issues.

Leadership

The full group will nominate and approve a Chair who shall be a current member County Commissioner, and Vice-chair who may be any member of the CGWG. Responsibilities include:

- Setting meeting agendas
- Managing internal communications
- Representing the CGWG to the media
- Managing funds
- Working with a fiscal sponsor if necessary

3. Decision-making Process

The membership shall strive for consensus on all decisions. Consensus means the willingness to go along with the decision either in active support of it or in not opposing it.

- Tentative agreements may be made at meetings pending the opportunity for members to consult with their necessary constituencies. This will be done on a timely basis.
- The commitment to work for consensus means that members will:
 - Participate in the give and take of the process in a way that seeks to understand the interests of all
 - Actively generate proposals thought to be workable for all, and
 - Work together to reach consensus.

- If the group is in general agreement on an issue with the exception of one or two members, the dissenting members are responsible for proposing alternatives they believe might achieve group consensus.

It is assumed that the Custer-Gallatin Working Group will make every effort to achieve full consensus, and that a project may be voted on, tabled, and revisited any number of times before the attempt to reach consensus is superseded by a popular vote.

The objective of this protocol is to provide a clear definition of the implications of various levels of support for a given project.

Board Vote	Support Level	Member commitment
Consensus w/o Reservation (All members vote for approval without recorded reservations)	High	All members will express support for the project* and work to resolve any issues raised later by non-Working Group entities if the opportunity arises.
Consensus w/ Reservation (All members vote for approval but some have their reservations recorded in meeting minutes)	Medium	Members who had reservations recorded may express those reservations* if the opportunity arises; however, all members agree that any statements expressing reservations about the decision will <u>not</u> be directed at the collaborative process itself.
No Consensus, but majority vote approval (Some members have such strong reservations that they vote against approval; reasons are recorded in minutes)	Low	Members who voted against approval reserve the right to express their reasons for voting against approval* and may actively pursue opportunities to do so; however, all members agree that any statements expressing reservations about the decision will <u>not</u> be directed at the collaborative process itself.
Majority vote disapproval	None	The C-G & B-D Working Group will inform the C-G and B-D NF that the Working Group does not support the project and recommend the C-G and B-D NF drop the proposal. All members reserve the right to express their reasons for voting recommendation to drop the proposal* and may actively pursue opportunities to do so; however, all members agree that any statements expressing reservations about the decision will <u>not</u> be directed at the collaborative process itself.

*In media or elsewhere

4. External Communications

Information about the collaborative will be made available to external stakeholders via a website when developed, and other venues as appropriate. Press releases and talking points will be approved by the full CGWG. The Chair, Vice-Chair or a member of the Working Group may be designated to talk to the media on specific issues.

Code of Conduct
Custer-Gallatin Working Group
Collaborative

A member of the collaborative will:

- *Help create a respectful and productive working climate.* We will speak our minds freely, but be brief and to the point so others may also speak. We will not rant or get on a soapbox. We will respect and comply with the behavior directions given by the facilitator. We will use a good faith effort to resolve differences through a peaceful process.
- *Endeavor to attend all meetings of the Collaborative and assigned committees.* Recognizing that there are inevitable conflicts in scheduling that may prevent full attendance, the member will seek to be informed of actions taken at meetings at which the member is absent.
- *Come prepared to all meetings.* The member will read materials submitted in advance of meetings and complete assignments accepted. We all value the importance of time well-spent in meetings.
- *Participate actively in meetings.* Only through constructive dialogue among diverse stakeholders can we achieve our purpose.
- *Participate in and commit to complete committee work.* It's where the rubber meets the road.
- *Challenge ideas, not people.*
- *Give the same priority to solving the problems of others as your own.*
- *Speak with candor.* We need to be forthright with each other, avoiding the creation of false expectations, even as we strive to find points of agreement.
- *Treat others with respect, and listen carefully.* We each bring different perspectives and histories to the Collaborative. No member and no viewpoint is less deserving than another to be heard.
- *Value one another's experiences.* We will actively seek out differences of opinion. Disagreement can improve the group's opportunity to create better decisions.
- *Support the decisions of the Collaborative.* Each member will report faithfully to third parties about the activities of the Collaborative and support the decisions of the Collaborative among colleagues and the public, even (especially) when it involves risk-taking beyond the comfort zone of one's core constituency.
- *Hold oneself and other members accountable to adherence to the purpose, convening values and goals of the Collaborative.*