

PRWG Steering Committee Meeting
February 6, 2023
Virtual

Attendees: Erin Plue, Jennifer Ekstrom, Amy Anderson, Jon Quinn-Hurst, Allan Songstad, Eric Johnson, Hank Jones, Sean Stash, Paul Sieracki, Cody Montgomery, Kyle Macki, Mike Lithgow, Ken Haagman, Jill Cobb, Betty Gardner, Pam Duquette, Bill Neumayer, Eric Berntsen, George Gehrig

Facilitation: Alexis Gibson

Next steps:

- The Committee will meet again in March
- The standing meeting time for future meetings will be the first Thursday of the month

Agenda:

1. Welcome
2. Discussion: where are we now as a collaborative?
 - a. Building bylaws
3. Purpose statement
4. Next steps

Discussion: Where Are We Now As A Collaborative?

- a. The group spent time sharing how they are feeling as a member of the collaborative after the last few weeks.
- b. Members shared a range of emotions from optimism to concern about the potential for the collaborative to move forward effectively.
 - i. The main concern raised by members was that other members are on the Steering Committee only to prevent or advance specific actions and that this makes it difficult to fully trust their participation. Several people expressed that they are participating without any agenda, and others felt that just hearing where everyone stands on these issues would begin to build trust.
 - ii. Several members strongly advocated for the rights of individuals and organizations to advance their interests outside the collaborative in the ways they feel is best.
- c. Members didn't feel they could develop agreements around notifying the Steering Committee about outside actions or what constitutes unacceptable outside actions for committee members until they developed a purpose/mission statement.

Developing Purpose/Mission Statement

- a. The committee broke into small groups to discuss why the work of the PRWG is important to them and their community. Small groups were asked to identify common themes and dig into deeper reasons why this work is important.
- b. Small groups then shared their common themes:

- At some point, the group should identify what we think needs to occur in the lower river
 1. Habitat, conditions
 2. Explore alternatives
 3. What do we think the lower river needs to improve?
 - Preserve and protect the entire Priest River watershed
 - Biodiversity
 - Riparian habitat around lake and on tributaries
 - Maintain and recover the bull trout
 - Pathways
 - Improve fishing and recreational opportunities
 - Proposing solutions with unintended consequences in mind
 - Establish and agreed upon finding of fact about the watershed
 - Durable solutions that protect the health of the river
 - Looking at the whole river system and the geomorphology of the river
 - Trying to understand the bigger picture, not just focusing on one aspect but the whole river
 - Increasing recreational opportunity for anglers
 - Duty to protect, the river is inherently important
 - Making sure we're looking at the physical needs of the river
 - Increasing community understanding of the river
 - Create connection with the river
 - Create a dialogue between different parts of the river
 - Benefit the whole basin
 - Reversing the ill health
 - Restoring holistically
 - Address invasive species, temperature, sediment and flow,
 - Swimmable, fishable, and drinkable for people and animals
 - Identify the myriad problems – conditions and ecological needs
 - Prioritize which problems should/can be fixed
 - Do so without adversely affecting other parts of the watershed
 - Restore the ecological system
 - No harm to any part of the watershed
 - Restore the ecological health and integrity of the river
 - Hunting, fishing, outdoors
- c. Several groups shared proposed language:
- Mission statement: Reverse ill health and restore Priest River watershed holistically to address invasive species, temperature, sediment and flow, to ensure it remains swimmable, fishable, and drinkable for people and animals now and in the future, without doing harm to any part of the watershed.

- Finding of fact: Any "theories, methodologies, approaches, assumptions, positions etc." put forth by the group or individual(s) must be based on needs of the water body, good science, ecological principals and documented logic and studies that address the specific theory/method, etc. put forth. Without this backing, theories etc. will be considered "contrary to fact".
- d. These themes **will be referenced to aid in building** a final purpose/mission statement at the March meeting.

Next Steps

- a. The next committee meeting will be held in-person in March. From the survey responses, the second Wednesday of the month from 4-6 PM appeared to be the time with the least existing conflicts for main members.
 - i. Unclear where a standing meeting location would be given that date and time in Priest River.
 - ii. Some members expressed that they would like to continue to have a virtual/hybrid meeting option, while others supported the need for the group to start meeting in person.
 - iii. Some members asked if the meeting time could be shifted earlier (3-5 PM).
- b. The March meeting will focus on finalizing the purpose, principles, and other agreements that will underpin the bylaws.

Addendum

- a. After the meeting, the convenor determined that the Priest River Library was the best location for a standing meeting location (due to cost and availability to the group); however, the library is only open past 5pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- b. Via email, the group agreed on temporarily shifting to a 3-hour meeting length to make more progress.
- c. Given these conditions, the standing meeting was shifted to the first Thursday of the month from 3-6 PM.