

Columbia River Gorge Commission
Vital Signs Indicators Project
Joint Advisory Team Meeting
Meeting Notes
December 13, 2007 – 2:00 to 4:30 pm
White Salmon, Washington

Community Advisory Team Members Present: North Cheatham, chair, Robert McCormick, Carol York, Don Morby, Andrew Brahe, Julie Reynolds, Phyllis Thiemann, Robert Liepper, Mary Repar, Ron Carroll and Susan Crowley.

Technical Advisory Team Members Present: Rich Davis, Todd Cornett, Brian Bainson and Randy Bluffstone.

Staff: Jill Arens, Brian Litt, Angie Kenney, Diana Ross, Tom Ascher, Michele Dailey, Jeff Tryens, indicators consultant, and Jimmy Kagan, technical advisor to the technical advisory team.

Other Attendees: Peter Cornelison

This was the first joint meeting of the community and technical advisory teams. The purpose of the meeting was to allow the technical team to brief the community team members on the work they have done on the development of indicators so far. The meeting began with introductions from the teams. It was suggested that name tags be worn at future meetings to prevent mix ups and any unnecessary confusion.

On behalf of Bill Weiler, who was unable to attend, Jimmy Kagan delivered an update from the natural resources sub-group. He explained that the natural sub-group had only had one meeting so far. He said that the group was very interested in measuring habitats independently from species and looking at aquatic resources all by itself. He explained that although species are not a very good indicator of natural resources as a whole, species health should not be ignored or left out of the list.

Todd Cornett and Brian Bainson updated the group on the work of the scenic resources sub-group. They explained that they had just met for the first time earlier that day. They went over the goals and objectives and spent a large amount of time discussing what data sources were currently available. The sub-group had several discussions about focusing on the Act, and not getting too involved with looking to the Management Plan. The sub-group decided that they would be modifying their objectives although they were not final at this point.

The changes include removing the "(key viewing areas)" from the end of objective 1.1 and a possible removal or replacement of the words "existing" and "diversity" from objective 1.2. Jeff Tryens, who had attended the scenic sub-group meeting, said that the group had discussed how to address air quality and had decided that the issue should be addressed by its own sub-group or team at a different time, independently from the indicators project. They said that the group would be continuing their discussions over the wiki throughout the holidays and would be meeting again in early January.

Rich Davis provided an update from the recreation sub-group. He explained that the group had met only one time but that they had some very good ideas. He said that they were able to identify baseline data and were in the process of creating a timeline from which to pull draft indicators. Rich also said that they feel that they should be looking at the recreation opportunities and facilities that exist in the urban areas because several of the projects have been funded through the Scenic Area Act. He explained that the group had a pretty good handle on recreation diversity, but that they struggled with how recreation quality should be measured. He said that measuring quality actually gets to the sociology of recreation and they may be recommending a study or survey as a result of this project. The group seems to be leaning towards using "limits of acceptable change" for draft indicators, but they had not reached an agreement yet.

Randy Bluffstone gave an update for the economic sub-group. He said that the group had met one time and have approved the three objectives. They discussed the tradeoffs of economic development in the Scenic Area and focused on urban-rural economic activities. They were able to put together a list of draft indicators. The list is not complete, but is a good starting place. He said that there is a lot of data available to look at the economy and that the group would continue their discussion over the wiki until the next meeting is scheduled.

Susan Wolff, chair for the technical advisory team, passed out a copy of an email from Greg Griffith with an update from the cultural resources sub-group (attached). She explained that the team had met once so far. They had primarily discussed the parameters of the indicators project and discussed what data or work had already been compiled. The group will be continuing their discussion on the wiki and in a second meeting in early January. The group's second meeting has been scheduled for January 8, 2008 at 10:00 am at the Commission office in White Salmon.

Both chairs encouraged the teams to use the wiki for indicator discussions before and after each meeting. North Cheatham, chair of the community advisory team, reminded the teams that the purpose of this first meeting is not to define the final indicators, but to allow the community team to get a rough idea of what is going on and to get some preliminary feedback. Susan Wolff explained to the community team that the technical team and their sub-groups are not as far along as they have assumed. She said that it has taken a long time to organize the sub-groups, schedule meetings and have them all meet at least once. She said that this meeting was actually a very good time in the process to have the two advisory teams meet because the technical team finally has a firm grasp and has generated some rough ideas for the community team to digest. Jeff agreed and said that this is a good time for the teams to identify early issues or major concerns/questions.

The teams began discussing natural resources. The sub-group had voiced that sensitive species was not a good representative for all natural resources (which is the current trigger for new surveys and other protective means associated with new development). They had discussed that sensitive species are often identified for political reasons and may not be telling the story we need to see. They decided that habitat was the only thing that could represent the quality of natural resources and that they should focus their attention in that direction. Julie Reynolds asked whether sensitive species measurements could show anything about the condition of non-sensitive species. She asked whether any data existed that might show species diversity instead. She also asked how sensitive and non-sensitive plant species would be evaluated or measured. It was discussed that this might also fit within the context of looking at habitat health. Susan Wolff reminded everyone that whatever we decided, it must be

measurable – and possible. Rich reminded everyone to keep things simple and not to get too wrapped up in the details at this point. Bob McCormick said that species and habitat are moving targets. He thinks the teams should take a look at what it means to measure these things before moving ahead too quickly.

Mary Repar questioned whether water table issues were being addressed. Jimmy explained that objective 2.3 focuses on water resources but that the sub-group had not discussed it yet in detail. Mary also questioned whether or not the teams had been in contact with federal level fish and wildlife representatives. Angie Kenney explained that Bill Weiler, a Washington fish and wildlife representative had expressed that he had access to the federal database –and that no federal level fish and wildlife employees had expressed interest in the project. She also said the sub-groups are always looking for additional input and members. She asked Mary to provide her with the name of the federal fish and wildlife agent she had spoken with.

North asked the teams how or if they wanted to address invasive species; they can be very difficult to measure. Susan Crowley said that she liked the direction that the natural group was taking, but would like to discuss economic resources. She said that the objectives do not have the same language as the Act, and that it was far too aggressive. Mary asked whether or not invasive species corridors could be a potential indicator. She asked if there are maps containing this or similar information. She said that it would be interesting to see whether humans bring invasive species with them as development occurs. Jeff suggested that that particular “what” would require a very high level of “why” and could include researching the methods of introduction of humans and invasive species.

North suggested that many indicators may cover more than one resource. For example, river nose may be an indicator for water quality and recreation quality. Julie asked whether or not noise pollution from trains and planes or even the transport of garbage or hazardous materials passing through the area would be evaluated. Don Morby suggested that we not go into so much detail at this first meeting, but merely get the basics of the project, its progress to date and take some time to digest it a bit.

Jeff interjected and asked the teams to think about how many indicators they want or need. He asked them to focus on what story they are trying to tell – what questions they are trying to answer. He suggested that the teams try to get the larger indicator that can tell the story without having to evaluate several smaller indicators.

Mary questioned whether cumulative impacts or changes are high level indicators. Carol York asked how this project might fit within other projects such as air quality studies conducted by other agencies. Jill Arens explained that there are several studies being conducted by other agencies on air quality right now, and that the sub-groups probably won't be able to tackle such a large issue/study for the indicators project at this point in time. Angie explained that the technical team will be creating a list of developmental indicators. If they put air quality related indicators on the developmental list, the results of those agency reports can be used as a data resource for the next indicators report and it could be addressed then.

Jimmy stated that one of the difficulties the teams will deal with is finding the important scientific data and then putting it in terms that the public will understand. For example, IBI stands for the Index of Biological Integrity. This term is very important to the experts, but the average citizen might not understand it. He warned the teams to stay away from too much

jargon. It was suggested that the gap in knowledge is actually indicator that we might find to be an important measure or awareness.

Brian Litt said that it is helpful for the technical team to hear the community team's input. He added that the objectives must be agreed upon first because they will drive the indicators developed for this project. Susan Wolff asked the teams to review the Scenic Area Act and finalize the objectives. She said that she would like to see a revised outline of goals and objectives by the middle of January to allow everyone a chance to review the results. She explained that she didn't want us to shoot ourselves in the foot by not allowing ourselves some time to reflect on the changes before they are approved. She said that we need to be absolutely comfortable and confident with what is selected. Carol asked whether we were locked into our current timeline. Jill explained that the teams are not locked into any actual dates, but that we need to have a list of indicators with data by the end of 2008 to ensure funding for the continuation of the indicators project.

Mary asked Jeff what the difference between a high level indicator and an agency performance measure is. He explained that a high level indicator is the "what" and the agency performance measure is the "how" or "why". He reminded the teams that they are looking at the "vital signs" which are the "what" and that commission staff are looking at the agency performance measures; the "how or why".

Upcoming meetings were then discussed. They are as follows:

January 7, 2008: community advisory team meets at 3:00pm at Commission Office in White Salmon, Washington (may be moved to a larger room).

January 8, 2008: cultural resources sub-group meeting at 10:00am at the Commission Office in White Salmon, Washington.

January 9, 2008: scenic resources sub-group meeting at 9:00am at the Commission Office in White Salmon, Washington.

January 11, 2008: recreation resources sub-group meeting at 9:00am at the Commission Office in White Salmon, Washington.

The next joint advisory team meetings have been scheduled for:

- **January 28, 2008 at 2:00pm**
- **February 25, 2008 at 2:00pm**
- **March 24, 2008 at 2:00pm**

All meetings will be tentatively scheduled to be held at the Commission Office in White Salmon, Washington unless larger accommodations are needed. In which case, the teams will be notified of the change in location.

Attachments

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