

Columbia River Gorge Commission
Vital Signs Indicators Project Community Advisory Team
Meeting Notes
3:00 – 5:00 pm – December 6, 2007
White Salmon, Washington

Community Advisory Team Members Present: North Cheatham, Chair, Mark Zoller, Mary Repar, Don Morby, Victor Schmidt, Ron Carroll, Andrew Brahe, Susan Crowley, Catherine Whalen, Julie Reynolds, Phyllis Thiemann, Jaime Tolfree, Robert McCormick, Simon Sampson and Carol York.

Commissioners Present: Jim Middaugh*

Staff: Jill Arens, Brian Litt, Angie Kenney, Jessica Metta and Jeff Tryens, indicators consultant.

Other Attendees: Peter Cornelison

The meeting began with a welcome by Jill Arens, Executive Director for the Gorge Commission and was followed by a round of introductions. Gorge Commissioner Jim Middaugh joined the meeting via teleconference and thanked the team members for their participation in the Commission's Vital Signs Indicators Project. Jim stressed that the Commission would not be able to do this project without the help of the community advisory team and community involvement. Jill also explained that the project would not result in a simple report on a shelf– that it is a long term project that we will utilize and continue to work on for many years to come.

Jill gave a brief overview of the Vital Signs Indicators Project and that the community advisory team members will be helping us get it off the ground. She explained that we are looking for the teams to help us identify the most important high-level indicators. And that throughout the project, agency staff will be working with the two advisory teams, consultants, independent third party advisors, partner agencies and pursuing feedback from the public to ensure a broad perspective and an un-biased process. She explained that the technical team will be producing draft indicators based on scientific and statistical information and that we will be looking to the community advisory team members to instill their values and broad community perspectives. She stressed that the purpose of having two teams is to balance the scientific side of the equation with the reality of Gorge communities.

Jeff Tryens delivered a presentation titled, "*Columbia River Gorge Vital Signs – a Short Primer on Strategic Planning*" (Attached). Jeff explained that there are two things team members must keep in mind as they develop indicators: (1) every measure measures something you care about – something that matters, and (2) every measure is understandable – it makes sense. Jeff discussed the parameters of the project and

explained that the purpose of the project is to get an idea of how well the SNECRs (scenic, natural, economic, cultural and recreation resources) are being protected. He noted that we are only looking at those things the National Scenic Area Act has given the Commission the authority to regulate. He then clarified that the advisory teams will help with the creation of the very high-level indicators of gorge health and that Commission staff would be creating agency performance indicators at a later point. He added that we need the community team to focus on results – not how hard the commission is trying.

Susan Crowley asked how the performance measures would be developed. Jeff explained that the first step is to get the indicators developed, the second step is to create a strategy to carry out that vital sign and then the third step is to determine what that tells about our performance – producing an agency performance measure.

Robert McCormick asked how long the project would be going for. Jeff explained that the teams would only be involved in this first phase, but that the project would be continuing in perpetuity. The process of reviewing and analyzing indicators should take place every couple of years to ensure that a report could be issued every five to ten years to assist the agency in plan review and other forms of adaptive management. He also mentioned that just because the community team's role has ended in the first phase of the project, doesn't mean that they can't continue to be involved in the project or continue to host meetings and provide feedback to the Commission and their Assessment Committee. Regular feedback from the community and its citizens will be essential to the long term success of the project.

Jamie Tolfree questioned who was actually creating the indicators. Angie Kenney explained that the technical team would be creating a set of draft indicators grounded in science for each SNECR and that we would be relying on the community team to make sure that the values and needs of the communities were addressed in them. The two advisory teams will be working together to discuss what is important both scientifically and socially. Jeff and Brian Litt commented about the limitations of the project based off of the National Scenic Area Act (the Act). Brian explained that as long as the measurements or indicators relate to the Act, they will be usable. We are not limited to the scope of the Management Plan, but we are limited to that of the Act.

Jeff discussed that the biggest challenge will be to determine a strategy for the teams to work together effectively. He explained that the community team will be providing feedback and input to the technical team about their draft indicators. He clarified that the community team will not be the only source for public feedback and weigh-in. He said that the purpose of the community team is to engage with the technical team to ensure that what is measured or selected encompasses community values and will accurately reflect the communities of the Gorge.

Angie presented the goals and draft objectives developed by staff with the help of Jeff and the approval from the Commission and Assessment Committee. She discussed the five goals and their draft objectives. They were derived from the first and second purposes of the Act. She explained that the technical and community advisory teams would be able to modify the objectives to ensure their efficacy. She explained that the goals and objectives

were taken from the Act but have some terminology currently used in the Management Plan. The goals have been approved by the Assessment Committee and Commission, but the objectives are still flexible. We are looking to the teams to refine the objectives and create the indicators. The final objectives and indicators will be limited to the scope of the Act, not the Management Plan.

The issue of Urban Areas was then raised. Commission staff explained that the Act does not provide the Commission with any authority to regulate new development or protect the scenic, natural, cultural or recreation resources inside the urban areas. It was discussed that the economic sub-group of the technical advisory team would obviously need to evaluate the economic health of the urban areas pursuant to the second purpose of the Act but that the other sub-group teams should be looking at only those areas outside the urban areas.

Looking at the diagram containing the goals and draft objectives, Susan Crowley suggested that Goal 3 should be more like the language used in the second purpose of the Act. She explained that the terms "allow" and "protect and support" do not mean the same thing. Carol York suggested that Goal 3 (economic) should be moved to Goal 5 and take the order that is currently provided by the purposes of the Act. Phyllis Thiemann said that there is a difference between growth and economic development. She explained that we need to be sure that we don't only measure new buildings and visible growth rates but to also include new economic development that is occurring in existing buildings and even part of existing companies. Jeff suggested that we be very careful before we start trying to explain the intent of the Act. He explained that we do not want to interpret anything, we simply want a literal view of the Act with no spin what so ever and to just look at the issues in a simple straight forward, black and white, manner. Jill reminded everyone that we have a set of advisors to assist the teams and to ensure that the work is overseen by an independent third party and is done without bias.

The team then went through the draft objectives and began to ask questions. Examples of cultural properties were discussed and defined. They include such resources as in lieu fishing sites, burial grounds, areas that contain culturally significant and/or important plants and animals, and other sites traditionally used for cultural practices. It was suggested that these were more like 'resources' than 'properties'. Angie explained that the terminology 'traditional cultural properties' was taken from the Management Plan and is open for discussion.

Susan questioned why only sensitive species were measured – or considered to be a good indicator. Mary Repar noted that it shouldn't be limited to just species and that we should be looking to the habitat as well. Many members agreed that the phrase "sensitive" is too limited in regards to measuring natural resources. Angie mentioned that the Technical Advisory Team Natural Resources Sub-Group had discussed the same issues and seemed to be leaning towards replacing it with "at risk species". It was suggested that sensitive species be replaced with critical habitats, to cover a more broad level of natural resources information. Jeff encouraged team members to continue this discussion and others like it, with the technical team. Both Jeff and Jill reminded everyone that we shouldn't get too bogged down in the details, and that we are only looking for the very high level information - the critical few, not an extensive list.

Mary questioned whether baseline data was even available for the information that they might feel is important. Jeff explained that data and other resources will be different for every indicator. Some will have a lot to go off of, others won't have anything. It is preferred to have indicators from which baseline data is available, but not necessary.

Angie briefly clarified what is expected from the teams and went over a handout titled: *Vital Signs Indicators Project – a Different Kind of Timeline* (attached). She explained that the advisory teams are only being asked to participate in the first phase of the indicators project. In this first phase, the teams are being asked to work together to create a set of very high level indicators. The indicators should be measurable and should be able to tell us how the health of gorge resources is being protected. We are only asking for the “what” is important, not the “why” it's important or the “how” it got to its current state question. We are asking the teams to keep things simple and not get too wrapped up in assessing the causality of it all.

Angie also explained that staff is expecting there to be three kinds of indicators. The first list will contain indicators with existing data and analysis and are ready to use. The second list will contain indicators that may have some data but still need some work and are moderately available. The third list will contain indicators that both teams agreed to be important, but that don't currently have any data or analysis information available. This third kind of indicator will be considered developmental indicators. All three types of indicators have varying levels of information available, but are all important.

Victor Schmidt questioned the timing of the community team's involvement. He said that he feels as if the team has come into the process too late to provide feedback to the technical team. North, Jeff, Angie and Jill assured him that it was not too late – it's actually just right. The technical advisory team has met a few times, but has not had a chance to draft lists of indicators or get very deep into the process. In fact many of the sub-group are just forming and will be holding their first meetings in the following week. All of the teams will have met just once before the two advisory teams meet for the first time next week (December 13, 2007). This schedule will give the technical team a chance to organize their groups and delve into the issues at hand so that they can be prepared to meet with the community team. Catherine Whalen mentioned that when she worked with Jeff on the Oregon Benchmarks, it was very useful and efficient to start with a technical team to build an un-biased framework for the community team to review and build upon.

North reminded everyone that the community team is not being asked to create the indicators. They are being asked to provide feedback to the indicators being drafted by the technical advisory team. He explained that the team should be aware of the pressing timelines and the need to be efficient with everyone's time and provide feedback that will be of use to the Commission.

Jill noted that the Commission will be hosting several small Future Forum events in all of the Gorge communities, beginning mid-February to continue the visioning that began last October at the Columbia Gorge Future Forum event at The Dalles Discovery Center. She explained that these events might serve the team as an opportunity to reach out to their communities, talk about the indicators project and hear what they have to say.

Angie gave a brief introduction to the wiki site and handed out instructions (attached). She explained that the site was created for the two advisory teams and the sub-group members to collaborate on draft documents without having to make every single meeting or commute long distances. The wiki contains discussion forums to facilitate a conversation about draft indicators as well as a wiki for editable documents and a resource page to view existing documents and resources. The wiki should prove to be a very valuable asset to the groups as they begin the drafting of the indicators.

North reminded everyone that the next meeting is scheduled for December 13th at 2:00pm. The meeting will serve as the first joint advisory team meeting between the technical and community advisory teams and will give the community advisory team members their first real look at what the technical team has been working on. North advised community team members to attend as many meetings as possible to stay informed and understand the process. North also scheduled the community advisory team's second team meeting for December 17, 2007 [this was canceled and will be rescheduled in early January].

Meeting adjourned.

Attachments:

- Vital Signs Indicators Project summary
- Diagram showing the Community Advisory Team members
- Community Advisory Team Charter
- Jeff Tryens' PowerPoint presentation
- Diagram containing the goals and draft objectives
- Outline containing the goals, draft objectives and potential indicators
- Indicator criteria
- Indicators clarification – and example for team members
- Tentative quarterly timeline
- A different kind of timeline – three phases
- Wiki (moodle) instructions

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