

Custer Gallatin Working Group (CGWG)

Operations Manual Version 1.3

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

1. Purpose and Process

We will work together to:

Restore* or maintain the landscapes of a nine county** area of southern Montana that contains the Custer Gallatin National Forest to desired conditions that will sustain the productive interrelationships of the physical, economic, ecological and social environments of the region.

We will identify, advocate and facilitate the implementation of actions that will maintain or restore desired conditions:

- in forests and human communities and their necessary infrastructures that will increase their resiliency to fire and ecological disturbances to conditions that will sustain viable populations of wildlife and fish.
- in forests and rangelands while recognizing historic segments of the regional economy in order to retain the traditional social, economic and cultural systems of the region, and while providing an environment conducive to appropriate new economic sectors and social systems.
- that utilize science-based forest and range management practices actively applied on the landscape.
- that protect and enhance the wild character of the landscape.
- that protect and provide for high quality watersheds.
- that provide recreational activities across a wide spectrum of preferences.

We will accomplish this by:

- Identifying zones of agreement among diverse interests for restoration and develop recommendations for implementation to restore desired conditions within Ecological Site Descriptions or other appropriate area designations.
- Expanding the population of individuals and groups within the identified zones of agreement who are willing to commit to their continued development.
- Advocating recommendations to federal, state, and local entities to gain support for their implementation.
- Advocating recommendations to those that reside and work within the region and those with interest in the region, soliciting their support for implementation.
- Procuring human, financial, and informational resources for the successful development and implementation of recommendations.
- Promoting the passage of local regulations, and state and federal legislation that will enhance the implementation of recommendations.

*Consistent with the Montana Forest Restoration Committee (MFRC), we define restoration as “the intentional process which initiates the recovery of an altered ecosystem to a state of ecological integrity.” Restoration activities includes timber harvest, tree planting, thinning, prescribed burning, fertilization, grazing, weed control, improving wildlife habitat, stream channel reconstruction, erosion control, decommissioning of roads, trail and road maintenance and construction, and recreation resource maintenance and improvement. And, as per the MFRC, we define ecological integrity to mean, “The quality of a natural unmanaged or managed ecosystem in which the ecological processes are sustained, with genetic, species and ecosystem diversity assured for the future. An ecosystem has integrity when it is deemed characteristic for its natural region, including the composition and abundance of native species and biological communities, rates of change and supporting processes.”

**Montana Counties that contain or are contiguous to the Custer Gallatin National Forest include Madison, Gallatin, Park, Sweet Grass, Stillwater, Carbon, Big Horn, Rosebud and Powder River.

2. Organizational Structure, Leadership and Membership

The CGWG will function as a nine southern Montana county area committee, and will govern itself and its members.

Relationship with Local Project Efforts

The Group's relationship with local project efforts is to identify local interests that may want to be engaged at the local level and provide consensus based input regarding issues in the nine county area.

Membership

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

The CGWG will be chaired by a current member of the Working Group and shall be elected annually by the member Commissioners representing these counties. The Working Group will provide membership and voting rights to organizations and individuals representing key interests and perspectives, geographic, economic and social balance, and knowledge of the lands and resources within the nine county area. Members may represent specific organizations or participate as individuals. Identified interests and number of voting board seats available include:

<u>ORGANIZATION/INTEREST</u>	<u>Number of Board seats</u>
County Commissioners	9
Conservation NGO's	4
The skiing industry	1
Agriculture/Ranching	1
Quiet recreation	1
Motorized recreation (summer/winter)	1
Multiple Use	1
Fishing and Hunting	1
Commercial outfitters (permittee)	1
Mining and mineral development	1
Recreational Development	1
At Large	2
Wood Products	1
Community and Economic Development	1
<u>University</u>	<u>1</u>
Total Seats	25

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. Designated alternates may attend in lieu of a regular member's absence. 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, but caution will be exercised if a decision directly affects an absent member's interests. Members will be replaced if too many meetings are missed, as determined by the Working Group.

Standing and ad hoc committees may be appointed as necessary to work on specific issues or tasks and report back to the full Working Group. CGWG may request persons to serve on committees who are not members of CGWG. 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. The Chair will schedule public comment in each agenda as appropriate. 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

Standing and ad hoc 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. All committee meetings shall be announced via electronic mail and the CGWG's website at www.cgwg.org a minimum of three working days in advance of meeting.

Leadership

Annually, the Commissioner members will nominate and approve a Chair who shall be a current member of the CGWG , and the full membership will nominate and approve a Vice-chair who shall be a current 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.

<p>No Consensus, but majority vote approval (Some members have such strong reservations that they vote against approval; reasons are recorded in minutes)</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Majority vote disapproval</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>The CGWG will inform the Forest Service and/or other appropriate land management agencies that the CGWG does not support the project and recommend the Forest Service and/or other appropriate land management agencies 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</p>

*In media or elsewhere

4. External Communications

Information about the CGWG will be made available to external stakeholders via the website at www.cgwg.org 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 and other appropriate entities on specific issues.

Custer Gallatin Working Group Code of Conduct

A member of the CGWG 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 or their motives.***
- ***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 CGWG.*** 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.***