

# Ground Rules – Forest Futures Technical Steering Committee

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In processes where groups of people come together to discuss difficult issues it is easiest to hold productive dialogue and deliberation where the group adopts a set of behavioral and decision making norms at the outset of the discussion. The goal is to create mutually shared expectations and a common understanding and vocabulary for interactions and decisions. These proposed ground rules are ones that are common to group processes. They are intended to assist the committee in performing its work and act as a model for other groups involved in the DCR Forest Futures process.

## Ground Rules Governing Behavior of Participants

1. One person speaks at a time, no interruptions.
  - a. Use tent cards to cue, try to defer to an existing discussion thread.
2. Avoid dominating the discussion so as to provide everyone with an opportunity to contribute.
3. Express your own views and do not speak for others at the table.
4. No personal attacks. Challenge ideas but not people. Listen as an ally, focus on the merits of what is being said and seek to understand. Ask clarifying questions.
5. Make every effort to stay on track and on task to move deliberations forward.
6. Avoid surprises by sharing information and concerns.
7. Take into account information and advice from stakeholders and technical advisors and make recommendations based on the best available scientific information that will result in improved implementation and the use of best management practices.
8. Seek to identify options or recommendations that represent common ground, without glossing over or minimizing legitimate disagreements. Should a member have a serious disagreement, they will work with the facilitators to develop methods for productively bringing forward and addressing or resolving the disagreement with the Committee as a whole. Each participant agrees to take into account the interests of the participants, stakeholders, general public and the forest environment.
9. Meetings of the Technical Steering Committee will be open to the public. Any member may request that the Committee meet in closed session to discuss or deliberate. Work Group meetings will be held as needed and may be closed to the public at the discretion of the Members. A brief summary of the deliberations of any closed Committee session must be prepared and made available within a reasonable time.
10. Each person will speak to the public or others only about their own views. No member will speak on behalf of other participants or the group as a whole. The facilitators will establish a Google Group for the Committee to email ideas and review documents prior to discussion at meetings and agreed not to forward or share these messages with others.

11. Members of the public and other observers may attend open meetings when the Committee is in working session and must abide by these ground rules. Other public forums and stakeholder engagement processes will be utilized to gather input and feedback from interested parties. At the discretion of the chair and the facilitators, and as time is available, the public may be recognized to raise questions that they would like the Committee to consider as the process moves forward.

## Ground Rules for Group Decision Making

1. Each person agrees to fully and consistently participate in the process unless that person withdraws. If a person is thinking of withdrawing, they agree to explain their reasons for doing so and provide others with an opportunity to accommodate their concerns.
2. Consensus is reached when the participants agree they can “live with” the package of recommendations being proposed. Some participants may not agree with every feature of the package as proposed, but they do not disagree enough to warrant opposition to the whole package.
3. The facilitators will use the following scale to test whether consensus has been reached. Using straw votes, participants will express their level of comfort and commitment by indicating:
  - a. Wholeheartedly agree
  - b. Good idea
  - c. Supportive
  - d. Reservations – would like talk
  - e. Serious concerns – must talk
  - f. Cannot be part of the decision

If all participants fall between a and c, consensus on the item is assumed. When someone falls between d and f, that person must state their concerns clearly and offer a constructive alternative.

4. If consensus is not reached, the participants agree to document the consensus reached, clarify the reasons for disagreeing, and indicate how the remaining disagreements might be resolved.

## Role of the Facilitators

The facilitators will manage the meetings and assist the Chair. They will work with all of the Members to ensure that the process runs smoothly. The role of the facilitators usually includes developing draft agendas, focusing meeting discussions, working to resolve any impasses that may arise, preparing meeting summaries and a draft of consensus work products, assisting in location and circulation of background materials and documents the Committee and its Technical Coordinator develop, and other functions as the Committee requests. The facilitators and the Committee’s Technical Coordinator will work together to support the work and deliberation process of the Committee.

The facilitators will also be facilitating and managing meetings of the Advisory Group of Stakeholders and the Public Forums and will coordinate communication and information flow among the groups. The facilitators will be responsible for coordinating with DCR the posting of meeting summaries and other information on a portion of the DCR website dedicated to the Forest Futures Vision Process. Meeting summaries will contain brief overviews of any presentations and summarize the central elements of discussions and articulated issues, interests and recommendations. In general the summaries will not attribute comments to specific individuals in order to focus on the content of the discussion.

### **Role of Steering Committee Technical Coordinator**

The Steering Committee Technical Coordinator will provide support as identified by the Committee chair, including conducting independent research to inform the committee in fulfilling its charge and working with DCR to provide the Committee with timely information concerning plans, policies and other information desired by the Committee. The Technical Coordinator will liaise with the facilitators in assisting the work of the Committee.

### **Role of Advisory Group of Stakeholders**

The role of the Advisory Group of Stakeholders is to engage in a dialogue to surface and discuss the issues, develop ideas and suggestions for the Technical Steering Committee and provide feedback to the Technical Steering Committee on draft recommendations. The Group will brainstorm ideas and make suggestions based on the framing questions agreed up by the Committee and other specific questions which may be posed by the Committee and may pose questions that they believe should be addressed by the Committee in its deliberations.