

PRIEST RIVER WATERSHED GROUP PROTOCOLS

Adopted June 26, 2023 by full consensus

Purpose

The Priest River Watershed Group (PRWG) provides a collaborative opportunity for the community who live, recreate, work, or are connected to the Priest River Watershed to:

- (1) Build a shared understanding of current conditions in the watershed
- (2) Identify and pursue actions that protect and conserve the watershed; rehabilitate ecological integrity; and maintain and improve biodiversity, and beneficial and recreational uses Increase the community's connection to and appreciation of the watershed

Principles

We will:

- Strive to utilize trusted data, information, and best practices by seeking advice and council from those with expertise in the system, including from local, traditional, scientific, and practitioner knowledge
- Work to find common ground and build relationships, come to the effort in good faith, and be respectful and transparent
- Improve the watersheds by taking a holistic¹ approach to the lake and river and seeking to do no long-term adverse impacts with our projects – including from unintended consequences – and weighing risks and gains of actions
- Take positive action and maintain forward momentum
- Share information with the wider population and consider their input
- Ensure that proposed actions have defined and measurable outcomes
- Involve the community in stewardship work

Ground Rules

Steering Committee members, proxies, and meeting participants agree to follow the Ground Rules. Ground Rules will be reviewed at the start of each meeting and all attendees are expected to follow them at all times. Participants who repeatedly violate the ground rules will be asked to leave.

- Only one person will speak at a time
- Strive to listen well, and be open minded, and maintain a positive outlook
- Be ready to engage in respectful, constructive dialogue
- No personal attacks or blaming others for actions or outcomes
- Try to stay on track and avoid digression and grandstanding
- No side conversations – give your full attention
- Start on time and end on time to be respectful to everyone's time

¹ Characterized by the belief that the parts of something are interconnected and can be explained only by reference to the whole (Oxford Languages Dictionary).

Participants are expected to communicate their concerns, interests, and ideas openly and make the reasons for their disagreement clear. If a participant is unable to speak about their concerns directly to other members, they can contact the facilitator (by phone or email) and the facilitator can serve as a channel for those concerns.

Representation/Organization

Watershed Group Members

The Priest River Watershed Group is a dynamic collective comprised of individuals who have an interest in the Priest River Watershed and the activities of the PRWG. Anyone can join the group and participate in its activities and events. To become a member, individuals can share their email directly with the PRWG coordinator or facilitator, add their contact information to a sign-up sheet at in-person meetings, or register for PRWG webinars.

Steering Committee

The Priest River Watershed Group is guided by a Steering Committee. Steering Committee members provide active and collaborative guidance to the watershed group, represent core stakeholder groups and interests in the Basin, and will ensure communication and engagement with their communities. The Steering Committee is currently the decision-making body for the PRWG; decisions may be made with input and guidance from PRWG members when feasible.

Steering Committee Membership

Members of this group agree that the Steering committee will be composed of a broad representation of stakeholder groups including the Kalispel Tribe, boating and fishing interests, conservation groups, Priest Lake and Priest River community members and property owners, recreationalists/outdoors people.

The Steering Committee currently consists of 14 positions filled by individuals and organizational representatives who were either invited by the PRWG coordinator or self-nominated to participate.

Technical Advisory Team

The Technical Advisory Team is an informal and willing group of advisors with scientific or technical expertise who can provide support and input to the PRWG to help them make informed decisions. The PRWG Coordinator will maintain a list of interested agencies, organizations, and individuals. When technical advice or guidance is needed, the Steering Committee will discuss the type(s) of experts needed, sources of candidates, and a selection process (if required).

Working Groups

Working groups may be established as needed to carry out discreet tasks or engage in more in-depth discussions. Working groups will meet between meetings of the Steering Committee and will report back when requested.

Responsibilities of Steering Committee Members

Steering Committee members and their proxies agree to:

- Attend all regularly scheduled meetings (see *Attendance* and *Proxy Participation* below)
- Arrive at each meeting fully prepared to discuss the issues on the agenda. Preparation may include reviewing meeting summaries, technical information, or drafts distributed in advance of meetings.
- Share their views and the views of the communities they represent on the issues being discussed. Committee members should consider how best to engage with their stakeholder communities and share information on the process to ensure that they are acting as an effective representative.
- Commit to the goal of achieving consensus and agree to work in good faith towards the success of the group.
- Take ownership for the success of this process and its outcomes.

Attendance

Steering Committee members will strive to attend all meetings or send a proxy. Committee members missing more than two meetings in a row or three over the calendar year without proxy representation will lose their seat unless their absence is approved by the committee chair(s).

Proxy Participation

Steering Committee members can identify an alternate attendee to stand in as a proxy if they cannot participate. Proxies are welcome to attend all meetings in an observational role, and need to be well informed on the activities and discussions of the Steering Committee before attending in an active role. Proxies need to be affiliated with the individual's organization, business, or community. There may only be one individual defined as the proxy each calendar year unless some unforeseen event makes their replacement necessary.

Meetings

Watershed Group Meetings

The Steering Committee may identify topics for periodic Watershed Group Meetings that are of interest to the full Watershed Group; these may be for informational and educational purposes, or to consult or involve the broader community in watershed group decisions.

Steering Committee Meetings

The Steering Committee will meet monthly or as often as needed to conduct business and make progress on important issues. To facilitate consensus building, the Steering Committee will reschedule their meetings if less than 80% of the members or representing proxies (11 people) can participate.

- Steering Committee meetings will be scheduled for a recurring time that works for the group. Meetings that need to happen outside the regular time will be determined at least two weeks in advance unless otherwise agreed to by the committee.

Steering Committee members will receive a draft agenda at least 2 weeks before the meeting for input. Final agendas will be circulated at least 1 week before the meeting.

Steering Committee meetings are open to the public. Conversations and discussion will be limited to Steering Committee members, unless the facilitator sets aside time for others to speak.

Decision Making

The Steering Committee will operate using a consensus process, seeking full unanimity except as a last resort. Consensus has been reached when everyone agrees that they can accept whatever is proposed and every effort has been made to meet the interests of all participants.

No formal votes or tallies will be taken. To determine if consensus has been reached, the Steering Committee will use a gradients of agreement scale instead of formal voting during deliberations to determine if they are ready to reach closure. Both “strongly support” (thumbs up) and “decision is OK” (thumbs side) constitute acceptance of a proposal, but the committee will determine if the level of support is strong enough to move forward depending on the decision at hand. If the Steering Committee thinks they are ready to reach closure on a proposal, the meeting minutes will include the level of agreement expressed by all members. Any consensus achieved on a specific topic will be tentative until the committee reaches agreement on all issues being considered.

Members should not withhold consensus unless they have serious reservations about the proposal. If members disagree with a proposal, they are encouraged to express their concerns and should make every effort to offer alternative solutions that are satisfactory to all stakeholders.

Any consensus reached on a particular topic will be considered provisional until non-present Steering Committee members are able to provide their input; however, only absolute concerns (at the veto/block level) will keep the agreement from moving forward as agreed on by members who were present. Non-present members will have 10 business days to provide their input.

Failure to Reach Consensus

If unanimous consent cannot be reached, points of agreement and disagreement will be noted and the Steering Committee will discuss how to best proceed given the situation. Committee members who disagree with a decision will always have the opportunity to document and express their dissent.

Support for Consensual Agreements

If unanimous consensus is reached, Steering Committee members will support agreements or decisions.

Information Sharing

- An email list will be maintained for ongoing communication with the Priest River Watershed Group (see *Representation/Organization* section above).
- A website for the Priest River Watershed Group will be maintained for storing and sharing meeting agendas and minutes, resources, and events.
- The Steering Committee facilitator will serve as the first point of contact for PRWG.

Record Keeping

- Notes will be taken at all meetings (e.g., Steering Committee, Watershed Group, working group, other public meetings) and made publicly available as soon as they are approved by the Steering Committee.
- Participants and their affiliation will be included in the notes.

Media

All meetings, except operational Steering Committee meetings, will be open to the public and the media. The Steering Committee facilitator and PRWG coordinator may produce materials to keep the media and public informed of the process or the group's official positions on issues – all materials will be approved by the Steering Committee. The PRWG Coordinator will serve as the main public face of the effort for interviews and will notify the Steering Committee of these situations in advance. Steering Committee members will use the same information as the coordinator to share information about the activities of the group with their communities (for example, on social media, newsletters, or email lists).

Members are free to make statements to the press regarding their own opinions, but agree not to attribute statements to others involved in the process or disparage the work of the group. To ensure that the Steering Committee speaks with one voice, no member should presuppose to speak for the whole group.

Amendments

The Steering Committee may revise these protocols and Steering Committee positions at any time, as long as they follow the existing rules during the process. It is recommended that the committee revisit this document at least once a year during 2023-2024.

AGREEMENT

Steering Committee members will individually strive to uphold this agreement rather than relying on the facilitator(s) or coordinators to enforce principles of conduct.

Current Steering Committee Members:

- Idaho Conservation League – Jennifer Ekstrom and Brad Smith (proxy)
- Inland Empire Task Force – Paul Sieracki and George Gehrig (proxy)
- The Kalispel Tribe of Indians – Mike Lithgow and Eric Berntsen (proxy)
- Priest Lake residents:
 - Jill Cobb
 - Ken Hagman and Bill Neumayer (proxy)
- Priest River boaters – Sean Stash
- Priest River Fishing Guides – Hand Jones and Jeremy Patterson (Proxy)
- Priest River residents :
 - Pam Duquette

- Betty Gardner
- Liz Johnson-Gebhardt
- Selkirk Conservation Alliance – Amy Anderson and Jon Quinn Hurst (proxy)
- Sportsmen/women – Cody Montgomery and Kyle Maki
- Stop the Priest Lake Siphon – Allan Songstad and Eric Johnson
- Trout Unlimited – Erin Plue and Walt Grows (proxy)