

# **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; maintain and improve biodiversity and recreational uses; and 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 watershed by taking a holistic<sup>1</sup> approach to the lake and river and seeking not to cause 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, marginalizing opinions, or blaming others
- Try to stay on track and avoid digression and grandstanding
- No side conversations – give your full attention
- Start and end on time to be respectful to everyone's time

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

## **Conflict Resolution**

- Members should first seek to resolve issues between themselves as individuals.
  - If a member feels someone has violated the protocols, respectfully address them and attempt to find resolution.
  - Group members should always conduct themselves with *maturity, transparency, and honesty* when addressing each other.
  - A member may contact the facilitator if they feel unable to address another Steering Committee member.
- If a resolution cannot be found between individuals, the issue should be brought to the attention of the PRWG Steering Committee for discussion, with the intention of finding a resolution.
- The following key triggers can help to indicate when an issue needs to be brought before the Steering Committee for group review:
  - If the action of a member is preventing the group from moving forward
  - If a situation cannot be resolved between two individuals
- If a group member decides to bring an alleged issue to the group, it should be shared with the facilitator so they can add it to the agenda.
  - Conflict resolution items automatically require an executive session for private review by the Steering Committee
  - When the item is added to the agenda, it is the responsibility of the parties to provide relevant, contextual information so the group is involved and aware ahead of time.
  - Members should be prepared to suggest a possible solution to any conflicts.

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 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.

Individuals may become Steering Committee members by one of the following procedures:

1. Nomination by Existing Members:
  - *Current Steering Committee members may nominate individuals for membership. Nominations must be approved by consensus of the Steering Committee, with the goal of maintaining broad representation of stakeholder groups.*
2. Self-Nomination:
  - *Individuals who have attended at least three meetings of the Steering Committee may self-nominate for membership. These self-nominations will also be considered for approval by consensus of the Steering Committee.*

In addition, an individual may become a proxy by nomination of that group or individual's primary representative, and approved by the Steering Committee.

### **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**

The Steering Committee may establish Working Groups, either Subcommittees or Task Forces, as it deems appropriate to carry out the goals of the Group. Subcommittees will address long term projects and a Task Force will address short term projects which may have a defined due date. All such groups or committees shall report to the Steering Committee at regular meetings and shall take no action without approval of a consensus of the Steering Committee. A list of approved Subcommittees and Task Forces will be documented. Working Groups will follow the same protocols as the Steering Committee.

## 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 primary Steering Committee member's, organization, business, or community.

## 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 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 shall be conducted by a facilitator who shall coordinate with the PRWG Coordinator. In the absence of a facilitator, the PRWG Coordinator will preside over the meetings or the Steering Committee shall elect a representative. If a representative is selected, that

individual shall confer with the PRWG Coordinator with regard to the content and structure of the meetings.

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. Time may be set aside after the meeting for public comments. Any members of the public wishing to add an item to the agenda for a meeting should reach out to the facilitator.

### **Decision Making**

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

To determine if consensus has been reached, the Steering Committee will utilize a gradient of agreement scale instead of formal voting during deliberations. This approach allows the committee to assess readiness for closure on proposals. The gradients of agreement include:

1. Support: Strongly support the proposal (thumbs up).
2. Live With: Decision is acceptable (thumbs sideways).
3. Disagree or Conditional Disagree: Oppose the proposal but willing to discuss or require a condition to allow the decision to go forward (thumbs down).
4. Do Not Support: Strong opposition to the proposal (fist).

Both “strongly support” (thumbs up) and “live with” (thumbs sideways) indicate acceptance of a proposal. The committee will evaluate whether the level of support is sufficient to move forward based on the specific decision at hand. If the Steering Committee believes they are ready to reach closure on a proposal, the meeting minutes will document the level of agreement expressed by all members. Any consensus reached on a particular issue will remain tentative until the committee formulates the entire proposal for a final vote and achieves agreement on all issues identified as related by the Steering Committee.

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/vote at the next Steering Committee meeting unless waived by the member. Non-present members will be notified of the action of the Steering Committee within two business days. Only absolute concerns (at the veto/block level) will keep the agreement from moving forward.

### **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 groups, other public meetings) and made publicly available as soon as they are approved by the Steering Committee. Notes shall be available to Steering Committee members when the agenda is posted and should be officially approved at the next meeting.
- 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 pre-suppose 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.

### **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.

## **APPENDIX A.**

### ***Current Steering Committee Members:***

- Idaho Conservation League – Jennifer Ekstrom and Brad Smith (proxy)
- Inland Empire Task Force – Paul Sieracki
- The Kalispel Tribe of Indians – Mike Lithgow and Eric Berntsen (proxy)
- Priest Lake residents:
  - Eric Johnson
- Priest River boaters – Sean Stash
- Priest River Fishing Guides – Hank Jones and Jeremy Patterson (proxy)
- Priest River residents:
  - Betty Gardner
  
- Selkirk Conservation Alliance – Amy Anderson and Jon Quinn Hurst (proxy)
- Sportsmen/women – Cody Montgomery and Kyle Maki
- Stop the Priest Lake Siphon – Allan Songstad
- Trout Unlimited – Erin Plue and Cathy Gidley (proxy)





