

***Cherokee National Forest
Landscape Restoration Initiative
Steering Committee Operating Procedures***



Adopted May 7, 2010

Cherokee National Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative Steering Committee Operating Procedures

The processes detailed in this document are intended to serve as guidance for participants in the Cherokee National Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative's Steering Committee. This version was adopted on May 7, 2010.

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<i>I. Role, Mission, Objectives</i>
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The Cherokee National Forest (CNF) Landscape Restoration Initiative Steering Committee (Steering Committee) is comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders who have come together to reach agreement on a science-based process for supporting the ecological restoration and adaptive management of the native vegetation, rare communities, watersheds and aquatic systems of the CNF. The Steering Committee members represent a diverse cross-section of key stakeholder interests, including affected conservation groups, wildlife/hunting organizations, forest product businesses, concerned residents, state and local governments, and others as appropriate. The Steering Committee has agreed to work collaboratively with the Cherokee National Forest to identify and prioritize the needs for restoration and to design and initiate a robust public participation component to this process utilizing a variety of sources including national, regional, and local/community expertise. Results will be compiled and presented as a set of recommendations to the CNF, which can be considered for future management decisions.

The Restoration Initiative’s approach emphasizes public participation and information sharing in order to reach community-supported and science-based methods for forest management and implementing ecological restoration on the ground. The Steering Committee understands that CNF has pre-defined procedures for determining its management decisions. These procedures remain in place and have final authority over all action taken or not taken within the CNF. Recognizing this fact, it is imperative that the management recommendations that emerge from the Landscape Restoration Initiative conform to these procedures.

The Steering Committee's role is deliberative only. While the Steering Committee may make suggestions or requests, those suggestions or requests are not binding on any government agency. Steering Committee meetings are intended to provide an opportunity for all relevant points of view to be discussed constructively and openly.

Steering Committee Goals and Objectives

- Define a common vision for the ecological restoration and management of the CNF.
- Engage/re-engage a diverse group of stakeholders interested in ecological restoration and management of the CNF including stakeholders from the local communities and other individuals or groups who are interested in participating in the process.
- Provide a structured process designed to engage a diverse group of stakeholders.
- Recommend a plan for the implementation of ecological restoration that includes specific measurable objectives and prescribes explicit management actions that are consistent with the mission of the Forest Service.
- Establish a system for monitoring and evaluating restoration activities to allow for adaptive management over time.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Participants

The Steering Committee will be responsible for overseeing all stages of the process, synthesizing information and making recommendations to the participating stakeholder groups. This will include assistance in developing materials in advance of the meetings including agendas and draft documents for review. High quality maps and data, along with expert presentations will be vital to building common ground during this process. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) will assist in preparation of many of these materials by utilizing TNC's science and mapping staff.

The Steering Committee will oversee the gathering and generation of data and information necessary for each meeting and for encouraging expert presentations when appropriate. It will be important for each Steering Committee member to work closely with the stakeholders that they represent to ensure that all points of view are addressed. Most importantly, the Steering Committee will be dedicated to developing common ground and making meaningful recommendations to the Forest Service and will therefore promote adherence to the process and search out common ground rather than focusing on areas of disagreement.

The CNF agrees to assist the Steering Committee in accessing information needed to develop informed input and consider Steering Committee input along with public comments while making decisions about the forest. Steering Committee members agree to consider thoughtfully the information and the needs of the community and its key stakeholders and to provide constructive suggestions and input.

Expectations of Steering Committee Members:

- Attend regular meetings, receive information and training, and complete homework assignments.
- Participate in work group activities, if applicable.

- Openly communicate Steering Committee progress with people or groups with whom they are affiliated.
- Present their concerns and issues as well as those of people and groups with whom they are affiliated at Steering Committee meetings.
- Handle, in a responsible manner, information and materials provided by CNF and other participants.
- Work civilly and collaboratively with other Steering Committee members and strive towards agreement.
- Comply with these Operating Procedures.

Expectations of Facilitators:

A neutral facilitator(s) will lead and coordinate the Steering Committee and Restoration Initiative process and facilitate committee and public meetings. The facilitators will:

- Help maintain a level playing field for all participants.
- Help to clarify roles and purposes of the group.
- Assist parties with identification and prioritization of issues that need to be discussed.
- Help the committee develop and implement meeting agendas, group goals, tasks, and work plans.
- Keep the public and other stakeholders up to date through a publicly available website.
- Intervene, when needed, to redirect non-productive communications, enforcing behavioral ground rules and resolving conflicts.
- Help resolve impasses that develop because of technical complexity, political complications, inadequate communication, personal styles or past history.
- Assist the group in developing/modifying procedural guidelines for the group process.
- Summarize and document agreements to date and track action items.
- Coordinate and build linkages and trust among participants.
- Ensure that all issues are addressed and all parties have an opportunity to be heard.
- Distribute meeting notices and other information to members in a timely manner.

The purpose of the Steering Committee is to foster and lead a public process where a set of recommendations for forest management on the Cherokee National Forest will be developed and delivered to the Forest Service. Therefore, decisions made at Steering Committee meetings will be contained to those that pertain to the facilitation, coordination, administration, and logistics of that public process.

Ground Rules

The Committee has adopted the following guidelines from “Clues to Achieving Consensus” by Mirja P. Hanson.

1. *Help Unite the Group*
 - a. *Require Mutual Respect—Maintain and respect the personal privacy of others and relate to others as fellow human beings.*

- b. *Realize Interdependence—Appreciate diversity and recognize that our success is dependent upon our collective cooperation.*
 - c. *Keep an Open Mind—Make every effort to be present at each meeting, stay alert, seek collective discovery, be willing to accept change and be open to the group outcomes.*
 - d. *Contribute Thoughtful Exchange—Maintain an ongoing and open exchange by practicing active listening, and avoiding hurtful language.*
 - e. *Seek Common Ground—Suspend assumptions and work towards win-win agreements.*
2. *Help Mobilize Solutions*
- a. *Strive for Results--Focus attention on achieving the desired end product and track progress of the group against the stated goals.*
 - b. *Share Responsibility--Enable everyone to contribute equitably by clearly defining roles and responsibilities.*
 - c. *Choose Effective Process--Accept that effective participation takes time and discipline. Do not skip steps in the process by jumping to conclusions. Be an advocate for the agreed upon process.*
 - d. *Help Order Chaos-- Be prepared to face tough situations, ambiguity, and conflict. Evaluate and affirm setbacks and use every experience as a means for constant improvement.*
 - e. *Employ Human Spirit--Maintain a positive attitude and work towards a comfortable atmosphere.*
3. *Honor these rules and be aware of opportunities to improve or change them as necessary.*

Acting in Good Faith

All participants agree to act in good faith in all aspects of the Steering Committee's deliberations. In order to encourage the free and open exchange of ideas, views, and information prior to achieving agreement, participants agree not to use specific offers, positions, or statements made by another participant outside the Steering Committee process. No Steering Committee member will speak for the Steering Committee without the agreement and prior approval of the Steering Committee.

Personal Attacks

Personal attacks and prejudiced statements will not be tolerated. As provided in Section IV. Committee Membership, a steering committee member (or work group member) whose conduct is detrimental to the committee process may be considered for removal by the committee.

II. Steering Committee Meetings

Meeting Structure

Steering Committee meetings will be open to the public. The agenda will provide a timeframe for the public (observers) to make comments or ask questions of the committee. Seating for the public will be provided.

Meetings will be held as scheduled by the Facilitator and Steering Committee members. At any meeting of the Steering Committee, the presence of two thirds of the members then serving shall be necessary to constitute a quorum. Meetings will be held at convenient location(s) determined with input from the Steering Committee at the prior meeting.

Work group meetings will be held as needed (in-person or by conference call).

Agendas

Steering Committee meeting agendas will be drafted by the facilitator in consultation with the Steering Committee. Agenda items should be brought to the facilitator at least one week and one day prior to the Steering Committee meeting to ensure that they may be accommodated within the time constraints of the meeting. If there is an agenda item that is not provided in advance, it can be proposed to be added at the beginning of the meeting if there is adequate time to cover the issue within the timeframe of the meeting. The agenda for the meeting and any information to be discussed at a Steering Committee meeting must be provided to the entire committee (by US Mail or e-mail) at least one week prior to the meeting. Notes from Steering Committee meetings will be made available for review and approval no later than one week after the meeting.

Meeting Attendance

The success of the Steering Committee will depend largely on consistent attendance by the members. Therefore members are expected to make a concerted effort to attend all meetings of the Steering Committee and will endeavor to attend as many of the public meetings as possible. In order to ensure that the committee's members are adequately informed to make the best possible decisions, they need to attend at least three fourths of the Steering Committee meetings (both conference calls and in-person meetings) in order to be allowed to maintain their committee membership.

Observers

All persons attending meetings who are not Steering Committee participants are considered observers. Observers may speak only at times designated for observer comments on the meeting agenda. Members of the public may also offer written comments to the steering committee by submitting comments to the facilitator. The steering committee may schedule

special meetings for extended interaction with members of the public as well as public meetings.

Meeting Summaries

Draft summaries of the Steering Committee meetings will be prepared by the facilitator and reviewed by the committee's members. Initial summary drafts shall be circulated to the committee for review within the week following the meeting. Changes will be made as needed and any revisions will be made available to all committee members at least one week prior to the next regular Steering Committee meeting by email. Final and approved meeting summaries will be posted to the project website for public viewing and download.

III. Decision Making

Agreement

The Steering Committee will endeavor to make substantive decisions or recommendations by agreement. In order for a recommendation to be adopted, it must have unanimous agreement by the members that are present at the meeting.

Agreement is often defined as a decision that all can live with. When there is not unanimous support for adoption of an idea or recommendation, the facilitators will work with the group to uncover the reasons for support or disagreement. They will then ask the participants whether they can support the idea fully, partially, or not at all. In the case where agreement is not achievable, the reasons for not reaching agreement as well as viewpoints of the primary arguments for or against an idea will be recorded in the meeting summary. They may also be noted in the final project report if needed.

Straw polls -- taking a poll of support or disagreement before moving to adopt an idea or position -- may be utilized. The use of straw polls is intended to gauge the strength of the various viewpoints and is for discussion purposes only.

Decision Making Informed by Absent Members

Members who need to be absent from a previously scheduled meeting may wish to write a statement concerning any issue that is scheduled to be discussed. The facilitator or any other member who is asked to do so, may state the absent member's position to ensure that all viewpoints are considered when making a decision at a committee meeting.

Abstention

Any Steering Committee members wishing to abstain from any particular committee position or discussion may abstain and may request that the abstention be noted clearly in the meeting summary and in any documents prepared and submitted by the committee.

IV. Committee Membership

Length of Service and Maximum Number of Members

Terms of membership will be for the duration of the committee process which is expected to last until July 2011. The maximum number of Steering Committee members serving at any one time shall be 12-15.

Right to Resign

Any Steering Committee member may resign from the committee at any time. If the resigning member represented an organization, that organization may suggest a replacement to sit on the Steering Committee. If the organization resigns from the Steering Committee, the Steering Committee will evaluate the need to replace that stakeholder interest or organization. If the Steering Committee agrees to replace the resigning organization, the provisions in subsections on replacement of members (following) should be adhered to.

Removal, Replacement or Addition of Steering Committee Members

If circumstances necessitate the withdrawal of any member of the Steering Committee, the committee will attempt to replace that member by considering individuals that would represent a similar constituency. The committee will consult with the withdrawing member and their organization, whenever possible, to make this decision.

Nominations for replacement of a Steering Committee member should meet, as far as possible, the Steering Committee's existing stakeholder balance and diversity. A list of the current committee members is found in Appendix 1. Nominees for new members should represent a stakeholder interest not represented currently or adequately.

Removal

Any member of the Steering Committee or a work group may be recommended for removal from membership at a regular or special meeting called for that purpose by the consensus agreement of the Steering Committee members then serving. A Steering Committee member whose conduct is detrimental to the Steering Committee or who refuses to render reasonable assistance in carrying out the purpose of the Steering Committee may be considered for removal. Any such member proposed to be removed shall be entitled to at least five days notice in writing of the meeting at which such removal is to be decided and shall be entitled to appear before and be heard at such meeting. The Steering Committee will evaluate the need to replace that stakeholder interest or organization. If the Steering Committee agrees to replace the member who was removed, the following procedures shall be followed.

Replacement of Steering Committee Members

The Facilitator shall announce any and all open Steering Committee membership positions to ensure that the committee is aware of any vacancies. Nominations may be made by Steering Committee members. Nominations shall be accepted in writing by an announced deadline. Nominations shall be submitted to the facilitator only, who will then share those nominations

with the committee. Each nomination shall include the nominee's full name and contact information as well as the nominee's connection to a stakeholder interest that is relevant to the planning process. Nominations shall also include a resume or similar biographical data.

The facilitator shall contact each nominee to confirm that the nominee is willing to serve on the Steering Committee. The facilitator will notify the Steering Committee when a decision process is to be held at the next scheduled meeting and set aside time on the meeting agenda to do so. The facilitator shall circulate the names and background information on the nominees as submitted by the candidate.

If the nominee is present at the meeting where the decision will be made, the nominee will give a two-to-three minute statement or presentation explaining his/her interest in serving on the committee and what s/he can offer to the CNF process based on representation, personal interest and knowledge. Following the statements and presentations and any questions from the steering committee members, the committee may then decide on whether to ask them to join the committee.

Addition of new stakeholder interests to the Steering Committee

Nominations to add new stakeholder interests to the Steering Committee may be made by any committee member, and the nominees should represent a stakeholder interest not currently or adequately represented on the current steering committee. The Steering Committee may elect not to add any new members in the final months of the process, in order to avoid input by a member who has not been informed adequately concerning issues considered to date.

Work Groups

Work groups may be formed to address specific topics or issues and make recommendations to the full Steering Committee. The decision to form (or disband) a work group shall be made by agreement of the committee members present at the meeting where the proposal is made. Work group membership is voluntary. A work group chairperson will be selected by the work group membership.

Work groups may comprise steering committee members. The work groups are not authorized to make decisions or recommendations for the steering committee as a whole. Work group meetings can be held between full steering committee meetings and scheduled at the convenience of the participants. Alternately, work group meetings may be held by teleconference. All steering committee members, alternates, and other work group members will be notified of all work group meetings and will be allowed to attend if they so desire. The work group chairperson will provide notification and written summaries of work group meetings. Work group meetings to be held in person are also open to the public.

V. *Media Relations*

Communication with the media/press will be an important part of the process. No Steering Committee member will speak for the Steering Committee to the media without the agreement of the Steering Committee. Any Steering Committee member who chooses to speak to the media without approval of the Steering Committee must specify that he/she is not speaking on behalf of the Steering Committee. Steering Committee members may develop a specific plan for interacting with media representatives. Members of the committee will respect the timing of press releases and communicate with the press in accordance with any media strategies determined by the group. Until such time as a media strategy is developed, press inquiries should be directed to the process convener, Katherine Medlock of The Nature Conservancy.

VI. *Administrative Support*

The Nature Conservancy as convener and liaison to the facilitation and technical team will assist with the following:

- *Arrange for meeting spaces in central and accessible locations.*
- *Assist in scheduling conference calls.*
- *Advise the facilitators concerning procedures and work plans.*
- *Assist with preparation of maps and technical analyses.*
- *Print final reports or major documents needed by the committee (within budget constraints).*
- *Prepare and place public notices in local newspapers.*

The facilitation team staffed by E² Inc. will assist with the following:

- *Prepare and distribute meeting notices and agenda.*
- *Take notes during meetings and prepare meeting summaries.*
- *Distribute Steering Committee's review comments, fact sheets, and other materials.*
- *Maintain Steering Committee and Stakeholder mailing lists and update operating procedures when necessary.*
- *Create and update the project web site.*

VII. *Amendments to Steering Committee Operating Procedures*

After adoption, these Operating Procedures may be amended only by agreement of all members present at the meeting in which the amendments are presented for adoption. Members shall be given reasonable advance notice of proposed amendments.

Appendix 1 – Steering Committee Membership as of March 2010

<p><i>Mark Shelley</i> <i>Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition</i> <i>Asheville, NC</i></p>	<p><i>Steve Novak</i> <i>WildLaw</i> <i>Asheville, NC</i></p>
<p><i>Joe McGuiness</i> <i>Cherokee National Forest</i> <i>Unicoi, TN</i></p>	<p><i>John Gregory</i> <i>TWRA, Region 4</i> <i>Morristown, TN</i></p>
<p><i>Steve Henson</i> <i>Southern Multiple Use Council</i> <i>Waynesville, NC</i></p>	<p><i>Parker Street</i> <i>Ruffed Grouse Society</i> <i>Jonesborough, TN</i></p>
<p><i>Dennis Daniel</i> <i>National Wild Turkey Federation</i> <i>Clarksville, AR 72830</i></p>	<p><i>Danny Osborne</i> <i>TN Dept of Agriculture, Division of Forestry</i> <i>Elizabethton, TN</i></p>
<p><i>Terry Porter</i> <i>Tennessee Forestry Association</i> <i>Castalian Springs, TN</i></p>	<p><i>Dwight King</i> <i>Piney Flats, TN</i></p>
<p><i>Katherine Medlock</i> <i>The Nature Conservancy</i> <i>Knoxville, TN</i></p>	<p><i>Catherine Murray</i> <i>Cherokee Forest Voices</i> <i>Johnson City, TN</i></p>
<p><i>Facilitators: Karen Firehock & Melinda Holland, E²Inc,</i> <i>http://www.e2inc.com</i> <i>To contact committee email:</i> <i>KarenFirehock@gmail.com</i></p>	