

Draft Communication Protocol

External parties are increasingly interested in our collaborative forest restoration work on the Malheur National Forest. Additionally, in order to promote our work, we must share it with both internal and external stakeholders and the broader public. Thus BMFP recognizes the need for media outreach as one means of communicating with the broader public and enhancing understanding about: 1) the scope our work and the processes we employ as we undertake it, 2) the value of our work to forest resilience and community well-being, and 3) opportunities for public engagement and participation.

We recognize four types of distinct contexts which warrant different processes and approaches to media outreach. These include situations where:

- BMFP has full group agreement about an issue and where time constraints are not a concern;
- Breaking news touches on our work and requires a quick turn-around in order to be timely and relevant;
- BMFP does not yet have agreement about an issue, but our deliberations may be of interest to stakeholders; and
- BMFP is responding as a group to an urgent issue that requires a quick turn-around as well as full group agreement regarding the content of the message.

The following Communications Protocol addresses these situations and describes the processes BMFP utilize within each context.

Communications when there is group agreement:

The Executive Director (ED) may engage in written or verbal media outreach about any topic for which the group has clear agreement. This includes the content of documents, such as the Zones of Agreement. This also holds true for topics such as project work and regular group activities, such as field trips.

Communications about breaking news:

In situations where there is breaking news and publication requires a quick turn-around, the ED will draft an article and submit it to the communications committee for review. The ED will then integrate these comments, provide the opportunity for a second review, and submit the article.

In order to ensure a timely turn-around, the ED will clearly communicate deadlines for receiving feedback. These deadlines will be appropriate for the media and issue involved. If feedback is not received within the established timeline the ED will take this as tacit approval of the draft document.

Communications when areas of agreement are unclear or do not exist:

The ED will discuss any possible media outreach with the communication committee to gather input on messaging and the range of views and associated issues. In consultation with the communications committee, the ED will make a decision about whether or not to proceed with media outreach.

In these instances, the ED (or appropriate group member) will write an initial draft which will be reviewed by the media committee, which will provide feedback, comments, and suggested revisions. This will occur iteratively until there is committee consensus to move forward.

When appropriate, a copy will be shared with the Full Group for a designated comment period (appropriate to the relevant media timeline) for comment. The author will revise with these comments in mind and submit for publication.

In order to ensure timeliness, the ED will establish and communicate deadlines for receiving feedback from both the communication committee and, when appropriate, the Full Group. These deadlines will be appropriate for the media and issue involved. If feedback is not received within the established timeline the ED will take this as tacit approval of the draft document.

Generally, in the case of media coverage of complex issues (such as the 10-year Stewardship Contract), all media outreach should:

- Should clearly reflect the diverse opinions of the full group;
- Characterize the dynamic exchange of ideas within the group and highlight the process of members working toward consensus;
- Focus on the group's objectives and highlight what we would like to see emerge and what we hope will be accomplished; and
- Focus on facts and avoid editorializing (e.g. focus on numbers, timelines, etc.)

Communication in situations of urgency:

Urgent situations include those in which the Full Group must respond to a critical concern within a compressed time period, and must do so with Full Group agreement regarding the content of the message. In these urgent situations, the Full Group will formally agree that a written response is needed. When time-urgency dictates a more prompt response, an emergency meeting of the Full Group will be called with the opportunity for members to dial in via conference call or video conference. At that time, members will together: a) clarify the objective of the communication, b) identify the key issues to be addressed, and c) clarify the audience/recipient of the message. Ideally this will be done at a Full Group meeting, where people can talk in person, but compressed timelines may require truncated procedures.

At this meeting, a timeline for next steps will clearly be identified. At the earliest opportunity (within 12 hours) the ED will upload the agreed upon timeline for next steps to the BMFP listserve.

The ED (or in rare circumstances the appropriate member) will draft an initial response using the information provided by the members. The ED will submit this to the communication committee for revision and feedback. Working together with the ED as the lead, the committee will redraft the document until all comments are addressed.

This working draft will be uploaded to BMFPs listserve for comment by the Full Group in accordance with the timeline agreed upon by the Full Group at the initial meeting. In the rare event that the committee requires additional drafting time, the ED will use the listserve to notify the group of this change and post an updated timeline.

The Full Group will have a minimum of **24 hours** to provide comments and feedback on this working draft. The ED will revise the document integrating group comments and submit this revision to the communications committee for final review. The document will then be submitted for publication and shared in its final form with the Full Group.

Responsibilities:

- Members are responsible for checking the listserve and providing comments at the agreed upon times if they would like participate in drafting the document;
- The ED is responsible for posting the agreed upon timeline to the listserve;
- The communications committee and ED are responsible for completing the working draft by the agreed upon timeline;
- The communications committee and ED are responsible for ensuring that the final draft reflects the full range of members' concerns comments; and
- The ED is responsible for submitting the final draft to the appropriate audience.