



Juniper Group, Oregon Chapter Sierra Club  
c/o Environmental Center  
16 NW Kansas Avenue  
Bend, OR 97703

8 March 2022

Executive Committee  
Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative

Dear Executive Committee:

I am writing to inform you of the decision to withdraw the Sierra Club from participation in the Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative (OFRC). We have participated in OFRC since 2017 and have learned a lot about the forest, the management practices by the Forest Service (FS), the needs of the local industries, and the needs of the community. I participated in order to contribute what I know to influence the work of OFRC in ways that benefited the big picture of long-term forest health in conjunction with the needs of the local communities.

As a general statement, I believe the OFRC has failed in its Mission and Vision as follows:

- The membership has never been a diverse group of stakeholders. Members with a strong interest in environmental and conservation concerns, and members with a strong interest in recreation, have not been actively recruited or adequately represented in OFRC.
- Information presented to the group has been biased toward the extractive industries, mostly timber.
- Expert opinions about forest management that diverge from historic FS practices or from those of the timber industry have not been presented to the membership.
- Issues to be voted on are often presented with an immediate request for a vote without any chance for members to do research on their own.
- Decisions about what happens at meetings and field trips are decided with minimal input from membership.

I have noted that many of my ideas, views, and requests have been largely ignored over the years. It has been very hard to overcome the coordinated efforts by industry which increases attendance at meetings where votes of importance to them will be taken. Their influence on this collaborative vastly outweighs the desires of the majority of the local residents and makes true collaboration difficult if not impossible.

The operations of OFRC have mostly been made at the Executive Committee level, without adequate input from membership. The selection of educational programs and outings has always focused on the desires of industry, with no alternatives presented for less destructive practices. As an example, we were recently asked for an immediate vote on changes to the Operations Manual.

In 2021, we were asked to approve changes to the Operations Manual regarding requirements for voting membership. However, at the same time, other changes were made in the document, including to the Vision statement. The vision statement from April 2017 reads:

The Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative (OFRC) represents a broad constituency of stakeholders interested in healthy forest ecosystems, economic vitality and quality of life in Crook County, Oregon. We provide the US Forest Service (USFS) with proposals for management of National Forest (NF) lands, and we support the utilization of forest resources and related opportunities to strengthen local communities.

The changed vision statement from February 2021:

To create a vibrant Ochoco National Forest and surrounding community through a restored and resilient forested landscape which supports strong job and economic opportunities, and social harmony across the region.

This change, which de-emphasized the concept of a healthy forest ecosystems and made greater emphasis on short-term economic opportunities, was made without collaborative discussion.

While the Sierra Club could continue to try to work within this collaborative, we have come to the conclusion that such efforts are wasting our time. Our continued presence on this collaborative has often been interpreted incorrectly as approval of decisions that have been made. Recent changes to the operations manual also require that current and new “voting members” agree to all previous collaborative decisions, which requires extensive analysis of those documents. This and other operations in OFRC are not conducive to collaboration and participation by organizations with broader views of what it takes to achieve forest health. This collaborative has failed to provide a collaborative workspace.

The recent changes between OFRC and Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC) also helped reveal the influence of Central Oregon Forest Stewardship Foundation (COFSF) on the decisions and operations conducted by OFRC. That is, OFRC is not really an independent collaborative, but is strongly influenced by the economically driven COFSF. Thus, the management structure of OFRC would have to change to make Sierra Club participation tenable.

We regret how this affects the FS staff who have been working with us and hoping for our continued participation. We understand the multiple directions in which you are pulled to properly manage a multi-use forest, with public input from many constituencies. We will continue to provide our comments to you through other channels, and encourage you to continue seeking input from many users by using many forms of outreach. We, the Sierra Club, will continue our work for a healthy forest ecosystem that will be around for many generations to come.

Signed:

*/s/ Mathieu Federspiel*  
Executive Committee  
Juniper Group Sierra Club