

Smokey Bear Collaborative Operating Principles

Overview

These operating principles establish membership, governance and communication procedures for the Smokey Bear Collaborative, and norms for meetings and decision making.

The Smokey Bear Collaborative is an informal association of interested parties formed to discuss issues and make recommendations to the Smokey Bear District Ranger and the Lincoln National Forest that enhance the well-being of the national forest and nearby communities and landscapes.

Vision of the Smokey Bear Collaborative

The Smokey Bear Collaborative envisions that the landscape of the Smokey Bear Ranger District and nearby communities will be prosperous, healthy, resilient and sustainable. As stewards of this landscape, the Smokey Bear Collaborative seeks to promote ecological, social, cultural and economic values.

Purpose of the Smokey Bear Collaborative

The purpose of the Smokey Bear Collaborative is to build and sustain relationships that draw together diverse perspectives to identify and address issues and to form a foundation for collaborative action. We do this by bringing together groups with interests and stakes in the landscape and communities on and near the Smokey Bear Ranger District, to share knowledge and provide input to the District on management decisions.

Structure of the Smokey Bear Collaborative

The Smokey Bear Collaborative is an informal association consisting of organizations and stakeholders who are **partners** in the Collaborative. Each organization or constituency is represented by one individual at meetings of the Collaborative. The partner determines who will be the **representative** at each meeting. The representative speaks on behalf of the partnering organization or constituency.

The Collaborative can add new partners, bearing in mind these criteria for accepting new partners: Partners must be organizations that agree to support the vision and purpose of the Smokey Bear Collaborative and must have a reasonable and expressed interest in the Smokey Bear Ranger District and surrounding areas. Any organization that meets these criteria can apply to join the Smokey Bear Collaborative by submitting a letter to the facilitator, and their membership will be determined by the Collaborative on a case-by-case basis.

The Smokey Bear Collaborative also maintains a **contact list** of partners and parties who have expressed an interest in the work of the Collaborative. Periodic email announcements will go out to the contact list. Any individual can sign up to be included on the contact list.

Smokey Bear Collaborative

Meetings of the Smokey Bear Collaborative will occur on quarterly. Special meetings may be called by the facilitator to address issues requiring deliberation or action that cannot wait until the next regular meeting. Partner requests for special meetings will be submitted to the facilitator, who will schedule and announce the meeting.

Meetings of the Smokey Bear Collaborative are directed by a **facilitator**, who determines the agenda and manages the progress of the meeting. Anyone can attend a meeting, including multiple members of a partner organization, and can participate in discussions. The facilitator shall ensure that representatives of the partner organizations have preference in speaking during discussions. Each meeting will include a period of time for non-partner members of the public who are in attendance to raise issues and, if appropriate, discuss these issues.

As needed, the Smokey Bear Collaborative can form an **ad hoc committee** to address any issue before the Collaborative. An ad hoc committee determines its own means of operation, and reports back to the Collaborative. Anyone, including members of the public, can observe the meetings of ad hoc committees, and can participate in the meetings if the committee determines this is appropriate.

Communications

Communications are fundamental to the organization of the Smokey Bear Collaborative.

Regular and special meetings of the Smokey Bear Collaborative will be the primary venue for sharing information and making decisions. Partners, contacts, and participants in meetings of the Smokey Bear Collaborative agree to engage with others in a manner that is respectful, and consent to the facilitator's decisions in managing the flow of the meeting.

Each meeting will be announced in advance, and an agenda will be made available. Meeting notes will be kept and will be sent to the contact list following each meeting. The facilitator is responsible for ensuring a meeting announcement and agenda are distributed prior to the meeting, and that notes are distributed following the meeting.

The e-mail contact list will be used as the primary means of distributing information pertinent to the operation of the Smokey Bear Collaborative to partners and contacts.

The Smokey Bear Collaborative will maintain a website, which will be used to communicate information about the activities of the Collaborative and will also include an archive of meeting agendas and notes, as well as other documents of the Smokey Bear Collaborative.

Partner organizations are authorized to use the Smokey Bear Collaborative name in their own publicity, as well as fundraising related to the purposes of the Smokey Bear Collaborative. Partners should notify the facilitator when using the Smokey Bear Collaborative name, but do not have to seek permission from the facilitator nor the Collaborative to use the name for responsible purposes.

Correspondence issued on behalf of the Collaborative will be signed by the facilitator.

Smokey Bear Collaborative

Governance and Decision Making

All business will be conducted during regular or special meetings, or in meetings of ad hoc committees formed by the Collaborative.

Smokey Bear Collaborative partners are voting members of the collaborative. One partner representative is designated by the partner organization at each meeting. Only the designated partner representative may vote on matters brought before the collaborative.

Matters requiring a vote will be placed on the meeting agenda. Items requiring a vote that arise during meeting discussions will be scheduled for a vote at a future regular or special meeting, as appropriate. Partner representatives will be provided a reasonable amount of time to obtain guidance or approval from the organization they represent.

Decisions will be made by consensus. Consensus has been reached when all partner representatives agree they can accept what is proposed and after every effort has been made to meet the interests of all partners. Consensus decisions will be documented in the minutes and in correspondence, as appropriate.

If consensus on an issue cannot be reached, the matter may be tabled and an ad hoc committee formed to discuss the issue and find a resolution to bring back to the collaborative for a vote. If an ad hoc committee cannot resolve an issue or a consensus decision or recommendation cannot be achieved after final deliberation among partner representatives, divergence will be presented through a majority and minority view. The views and reasons for the divergence will be documented in the minutes and other correspondence, as appropriate.

Amending the Operating Principles

These operating principles can be modified, as needed, with consensus agreement by the Smokey Bear Collaborative.

Meeting Ground Rules

These are just some “Best Practices” guidelines when participating in an effective collaborative effort. We value your participation, and want this group to be a vital resource to public land managers.

1. Show up on time and come prepared

- Be prompt in arriving to the meeting and in returning from breaks.
- Be prepared to contribute to achieving the meeting goals.
- Come to the meeting with a positive attitude.

2. Stay mentally and physically present

- Be present, and don't attend to non-meeting business.
- Listen attentively to others and don't interrupt or have side conversations.
- Treat all meeting participants with the same respect you would want from them.

3. Contribute to meeting goals

- Participate 100% by sharing ideas, asking questions, and contributing to discussions.
- Share your unique perspectives and experience, and speak honestly.
- If you state a problem or disagree with a proposal, try to offer a solution.

4. Let everyone participate

- Share time so that all can participate.
- Be patient when listening to others speak and do not interrupt them.
- Respect each other's' thinking and value everyone's contributions.

5. Listen with an open mind

- Value the learning from different inputs, and listen to get smarter.
- Stay open to new ways of doing things, and listen for the future to emerge.
- You can respect another person's point of view without agreeing with them.

6. Think before speaking

- Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
- Avoid using idioms, three letter acronyms, and phrases that can be misunderstood.
- It's OK to disagree, respectfully and openly, and without being disagreeable.

7. Stay on point and on time

- Respect the groups' time and keep comments brief and to the point.
- When a topic has been discussed fully, do not bring it back up.
- Do not waste everyone's time by repeating what others have said.

8. Attack the problem, not the person

- Respectfully challenge the idea, not the person.
- Blame or judgment will get you further from a solution, not closer.
- Honest and constructive discussions are necessary to get the best results.

9. Close decisions and follow up

- Make sure decisions are supported by the group, otherwise they won't be acted on.
- Note pending issues and schedule follow up meetings as needed.
- Identify actions based on decisions made, and follow up actions assigned to you.

10. Record outcomes and share

- Record issues discussed, decisions made, and tasks assigned.
- Share meeting reports with meeting participants.
- Share meeting outcomes with other stakeholders that should be kept in the loop.

From The Harvard Business Review:

- **State views and ask genuine questions.** This enables the team to shift from monologues and arguments to a conversation in which members can understand everyone's point of view and be curious about the differences in their views.
- **Share all relevant information.** This enables the team to develop a comprehensive, common set of information with which to solve problems and make decisions.
- **Use specific examples and agree on what important words mean.** This ensures that all team members are using the same words to mean the same thing.
- **Explain reasoning and intent.** This enables members to understand how others reached their conclusions and see where team members' reasoning differs.
- **Focus on interests, not positions.** By moving from arguing about solutions to identifying needs that must be met in order to solve a problem, you reduce unproductive conflict and increase your ability to develop solutions that the full team is committed to.
- **Test assumptions and inferences.** This ensures that the team is making decisions with valid information rather than with members' private stories about what other team members believe and what their motives are.
- **Jointly design next steps.** This ensures that everyone is committed to moving forward together as a team.
- **Discuss undiscussable issues.** This ensures that the team addresses the important but undiscussed issues that are hindering its results and that can only be resolved in a team meeting.