

OPERATING PROTOCOLS
Spirit Lake-Toutle/Cowlitz River System Collaborative
Version 4 – February 10, 2022

These Operating Protocols accompany and expand on the concepts and commitments articulated in the 2022 Declaration of Cooperation for the Spirit Lake-Toutle/Cowlitz River System Collaborative (SLTCRC or “the collaborative”). The document’s purpose is to provide an organizational structure; roles and responsibilities for nongovernmental participants; and governance, meeting, and communications protocols for the group.

The SLTCRC Vision

The following vision statement represents a set of ideal conditions to guide the collaborative:

Healthy Ecosystems – Safe Communities – Healthy Economy

Mission

The SLTCRC developed and agreed on the following Mission Statement in late 2021 and early 2022, to guide the first five years of the group’s efforts:

To share information, build understanding, and develop and coordinate management solutions to address sediment transport and flood protection in the Spirit Lake, Toutle/ Cowlitz River system while enhancing ecological benefits and serving the many needs of the communities within the system.

Shared Values

- Safety for downstream communities
- Restored, healthy ecosystems
- Access: increasing for recreation; maintaining for research & education
- Securing sufficient funding for planning & implementation
- Managing for multiple functions & benefits
- Reducing intervention via engineered structures in favor of natural processes

Roles and Commitments

SLTCRC membership is comprised of those entities signing the Declaration of Cooperation and are listed in that document. Members are expected to contribute as benefits the entities’ missions, goals, resources, expertise, etc.

The collaborative may opt to appoint a Chair or Co-Chairs, create a Steering Committee, or create subcommittees or workgroups to further the work of the committee.

These Operating Protocols are subject to change to meet the needs of the collaborative as it evolves. Each entity can at any time let the group know of their ability to participate in discussions and or projects or actions the collaborative chooses to engage in, based on their agency rules.

Ground Rules

- Open discussion: Participants may express their views candidly, but without personal attacks. Time is shared because all participants are of equal importance.

- Transparency: Members agree to avoid surprises, keep open communication, and exchange information on their entities' work.
- Members commit to attend all meetings if possible, and scheduling of meetings will be as inclusive of all members as possible.
- Organizational representation: each participating entity will have one primary representative and one alternate. Other staff from each entity can and should attend to provide technical or other information.
- Members will identify and agree upon an annual work plan. Discussion and revisions to drafts will occur considering member input to arrive at a final work plan.
- SLTCRC will not make decisions for any existing agency or organization. The collaborative may provide information for consideration by local, state, tribal, and federal entities
- Members will strive for agreement on collaborative work and every effort will be made to explore options that meet the interests of all members. Each member shares the responsibility to propose ideas and solutions to meet others interests as well as their own. Collaborative agreement is most successful when members agree that their major interests have been considered meaningfully and that members have made every effort to address all members interests.
- Agreements to advance the collaborative's actions or initiatives will occur via consensus, with the facilitator asking the collaborative "Can everyone live with this?" or "Can anyone NOT live with this?" and giving participants time to reflect and assent. If any member cannot live with the proposed action or agreement, they will be asked to answer the question "What CAN you live with, that addresses the underlying issue or need?" Consensus is achieved when everyone can live with the action going forward.

Meeting Conduct

- Be Constructive
 - State your piece: Be concise so all have a chance to speak
 - Overall: focus on mutual gains/solutions that work for ALL attendees
- Virtual & In-Person Meetings
 - Keep yourself on mute unless speaking (Virtual)
 - Keep video on (as bandwidth & personal situations allow) (Virtual)
 - One primary representative (and one secondary representative) from each organization in speaking roles (unless technical or other needed support staff) (Virtual & In-Person)
 - Raise your hand and/or wait to be recognized before speaking (Virtual & In-Person)
- Be Respectful, and Honest
 - Respect everyone's expertise; this is an important and complex discussion
 - Listen carefully so that you and ALL your colleagues can be heard
 - One voice at a time
 - Recognize: each party brings legitimate interests
- Show Leadership
 - Focus on the future and encourage one another to look forward
 - Look first for areas of agreement then use disagreement to build understanding

Meetings, Facilitation, and Communication:

- The collaborative will meet at least quarterly (with exceptions as needed and agreed upon by members). Subcommittees and ad hoc workgroups will meet as needed.
- All collaborative meetings are open to the public and attendees are invited to participate within the meeting protocols and ground rules.
- Meeting agendas and materials will be shared one week in advance of the meeting.
- The Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG) will serve as the SLTCRC administrative coordination entity. An impartial facilitator will:
 - Plan and facilitate meetings
 - Prepare meeting materials and agendas
 - Invite guest speakers with input from members
 - Ensure meeting notes are recorded and disseminated
 - Maintain timely communications with the collaborative including meeting notices and agendas
 - Develop information and materials to highlight collaborative work
 - Develop grant proposals as identified by collaborative
 - Maintain a contact list
 - Develop and maintain a website if the collaborative determines one is needed
- Communications to and from the collaborative will go through the facilitator unless otherwise agreed by the SLTCRC.

Committees

Subcommittees or workgroups can work on a task-specific basis (e.g., Finance Committee that might convene to look at funding opportunities such as grants or partnerships for a project or purpose) or on a continued, ongoing basis (e.g., a Technical Committee or Steering Committee). Collaborative members may choose to participate in the subcommittees/workgroups, and membership in these can change as needs dictate. Non-governmental or other interested parties may contribute at subcommittee or workgroup meetings as tasks and needs are defined. The subcommittees/workgroups will provide regular updates to the collaborative.

Participation by Non-Governmental and Other Interested Parties:

Collaborative meetings are open to the public. Meeting participation by non-members provides the collaborative opportunities to work with individuals and entities that have interests or are affected by management decisions in the system. Opportunities may exist to pursue grants and other funding opportunities that can further the goals of the collaborative.

- Participants will follow ground rules and operating protocols identified by the collaborative.
- Participants will engage in ways befitting their missions and resources (e.g., supplying information resources, entering mutually beneficial partnerships).
- Participants can also assist with broader public outreach and education on issues of importance to the collaborative.

Funding

Funding will be needed for administrative and facilitation support. Opportunities to secure funding will be explored by the collaborative and there is acknowledgement that federal and state agencies have constraints with regards to seeking funding, e.g., are not allowed to lobby for funding at their respective levels of government.

Appendix A
Spirit Lake-Toutle/Cowlitz River System Collaborative
DRAFT WORK PLAN (Spring 2021-Spring 2022)

Indicators of Success for this phase:

- Signed Declaration of Cooperation by all governments.
- Develop and agree upon shared vision for the whole basin and a mission statement for the collaborative.
- Agree upon a set of common interests or shared values.
- Develop working list/database of agency authorities, roles and commitments, projects and timelines, legally binding agreements, existing metrics and what should be updated (e.g., flood protection levels).
- Identify collective issues and risk concerns.
- Increased trust, stronger relationships, deeper understanding of each other's needs, and agreement to act with awareness of others' perspectives.
- Recognition by the U.S. Congressional delegation, Washington State Legislature, and Governor of the need for a successful, long-term collaborative group to comprehensively address the challenges associated with long-term sediment management in the system.
- Identify paths to continue collaborative group long-term.
- Prioritized list of actions to pursue that contributes to the long-term management of the system and the safety and economic wellbeing of downstream communities.
- Pursue at least one action as a group during this phase of developing a collaborative.
- Acquisition of operational funding to support the collaborative over a three-year period.