

Southwestern Crown of the Continent Forest Restoration Collaborative

CHARTER

Amended February 14, 2012

The Southwestern Crown Collaborative (SWCC) is a diverse group of citizens, landowners, entrepreneurs, natural resource professionals from both the public and private sectors, and scientists from a variety of backgrounds and interests who have come together to help plan, implement and monitor restoration of the large landscape in western Montana known as the Southwestern Crown of the Continent (SW Crown). A map of this landscape is attached to this charter. The SWCC was convened through grassroots efforts. It is not managed or controlled by any Federal agency or by any one entity. The SWCC is a voluntary organization open to all interested participants who support the implementation of the Forest Landscape Restoration Act of 2009 (FLRA) in the SW Crown. The group operates under a principle of transparency, where all its official actions, meetings, and records are open for review and comment by the public.¹

During 2009 and early 2010, the SWCC developed a proposal to be part of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration (CFLR) Program authorized under the FLRA. In August 2010 this proposal was selected as one of ten CFLR projects across the United States to be funded for up to a 10-year period as resources become available to the CFLR Program. This charter describes the manner in which the SWCC will operate and collaborate with the Forest Service as part of the CFLR Program.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the SWCC is twofold: (1) To collaborate with the Forest Service to share information and ideas regarding restoration and natural resource management opportunities on National Forest lands within the SW Crown landscape to fulfill the intent of the FLRA, and (2) To foster public learning on the contributions and consequences of restoration and natural resource management to both local residents and all Americans. The SWCC asserts no authority over the management of National Forest lands, as its role is strictly informational.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership on the SWCC is open and inclusive to all citizens who desire to participate and support the purpose of the group. Once an individual has attended two of the scheduled meetings of the SWCC in person or via teleconference and has submitted a letter expressing his or her support for the implementation of the Forest Landscape Restoration Act of 2009 (FLRA) in the SW Crown and has expressed in writing his or her agreement to abide by the terms of this charter, he or she becomes a full, voting member of the SWCC. New participants will be welcome to join the SWCC at any time, consistent with the process outlined in this charter. First- or second-time meeting participants will be able to engage in all SWCC activities and deliberations, but they will not be able to participate in formal SWCC decision making processes until their third meeting and submittal of their written statement as outlined above. All members are responsible for staying current on SWCC business.

¹ This Charter is consistent with FLRA, which requires CFLR proposals to be developed and implemented on National Forests through a collaborative process that includes multiple interested persons representing diverse interests and is transparent and nonexclusive (Sec. 4(b)(2)(A) and Sec. 4(b)(2)(B)(i).

QUORUM

At any meeting of the SWCC where significant decisions will be made, at least 50% plus one member of the total number of members eligible to cast votes, must be present to create a quorum. For the purposes of calculating a quorum, members who miss three consecutive meetings will not be included in the calculation of the quorum for that meeting. Voting members may assign proxies to other voting members by notifying the Co-Chairs prior to the meeting. A member who has assigned his/her proxy to another voting member will be considered present for the purposes of calculating a quorum.

Meetings may be held where a quorum is not present or where an adequate diversity of SWCC membership is not represented, but decisions made in these low turnout and/or low diversity meetings will not be binding.

LEADERSHIP

The SWCC will elect two Co-Chairs who will be responsible for convening SWCC and Executive Committee meetings, setting meeting agendas, facilitating meetings, providing oversight, and serving as points of contact for communications. The Co-Chairs, who will not be Forest Service representatives, will supervise the preparation of SWCC documents, take attendance at meetings, and strive to ensure that all relevant duties are accomplished. The Co-Chairs will be nominated and approved by consensus of a quorum of the full SWCC. The term of the Co-Chairs will be two years, with alternating terms for each Co-Chair typically running from October 1 – September 20. The Co-Chairs may seek re-election and will not be subject to term limits.

The SWCC Executive Committee shall include and will be managed by the two Co-Chairs. The Executive Committee will consist of three additional members of the full SWCC – two Forest Service representatives and one non-federal representative. The two Forest Service representatives will be appointed by the Forest Service to ensure collaboration during implementation and monitoring of CFLR projects, in keeping with the intent of FLRA². The third, non-federal representative will be nominated and approved by consensus of a quorum of the full SWCC. Other Forest Service employees may also participate in the SWCC and its committees. The term of the Executive Committee members will be two years, with staggered terms typically running from October 1—September 30. Executive Committee members may seek re-election and will not be subject to mandatory term limits. The Executive Committee will be responsible for ensuring the SWCC remains open to the public, transparent, and inclusive; conducting an annual assessment of SWCC effectiveness; annual reporting; and other duties as approved by the SWCC. The Executive Committee will not make binding decisions on behalf of the full SWCC.

DECISIONS

Decisions made by the SWCC will be input that may or may not be adopted by the Forest Service. A formal decision process will be used to generate official SWCC input.

² The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Report on FLRA, dated June 16, 2008, clarifies the intention of Forest Service participation in the collaborative development and implementation of CFLR projects, specifically in the following sections: Sec. 4(b)(2) – Committee Report page 9; Sec. 4(b)(6)(B) – Committee Report page 10; Sec. 4(d)(2)(C) – Committee Report page 12; and Sec. 4(g)(2)(B) – Committee Report page 14.

The SWCC will make official decisions by a consensus process that applies the “thumbs-up/thumbs-sideways/thumbs-down” signaling for levels of agreement. When all voting members have shown full support for a proposal (thumbs-up), or moderate support (thumbs-sideways), or any combination of full or moderate support, then a decision is taken. When one or more voting members of the SWCC disapprove of a proposed decision (thumbs-down), a decision has not been made and additional discussion will be necessary. Those who disapprove of a decision will be required to identify the specific reasons for disapproval so others may understand the reasons behind a negative vote. Any individual who expresses disapproval will work together with other interested members of the SWCC to develop a solution and present an alternative suggestion or suggestions to the full SWCC at the earliest possible juncture.

Decisions will be called for by the SWCC Co-Chairs. On some very straightforward, simple matters, the Co-Chairs may simply ask verbally for consensus, and if no objection is raised, a decision will be taken. Decisions of the SWCC will be recorded in the meeting notes or proceedings. Voting members may assign proxies to other voting members by notifying the co-chairs in writing prior to the meeting.

Although the SWCC always strives for consensus – if consensus cannot be reached on any given decision, both the majority view and the minority view on the question(s) at hand will be documented in writing and provided as input to all interested parties. The SWCC may vote in between regularly scheduled meetings by use of a mutually agreed upon online voting mechanism within a timeline established by the Co-Chairs. All online votes will be held consistent with other provisions in this charter.

RECORD KEEPING

Official record keeping and communication functions will be the responsibility of the SWCC Co-Chairs or his/her designee. It is the intention of the SWCC to make all its official proceedings openly accessible to all interested parties and all meetings will be announced in advance on the SWCC website. All official SWCC committees should provide a written summary of decisions made at each of their meetings.

Attendance at each meeting will be recorded by the designated record keeper for the meeting. Records of attendance will be brought to each meeting of the SWCC.

Official notes (or proceedings) of each meeting shall be compiled and circulated to members at the first practical date after a meeting. Notes from a prior SWCC meeting will be approved at the following SWCC meeting. All official SWCC committees should provide a written summary of decisions made at each of their meetings to the SWCC.

Minor revisions to notes prior to the next meeting may be made through independent contact with the Co-Chairs or their record-keeping designee, although any changes from original drafts may be subject to discussion from other SWCC members during the subsequent meeting where notes are approved.

COMMITTEES

The SWCC may form unofficial subcommittees or working groups to advance tasks necessary to fulfill its purpose. At a minimum, the SWCC will support the workings of a SWCC Monitoring Committee and the Forest Service to fulfill the responsibilities of collecting, analyzing, and reporting information regarding the effectiveness of restoration and land management treatments in the SWCC landscape.

FUNDING

The SWCC will not receive funds from any federal agency.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All SWCC members will annually sign the attached conflict of interest form.

AMENDING THIS CHARTER

This charter may be amended according to the decision-making process outlined above.

DISSOLUTION

The SWCC may at any time receive a call for dissolution from one of its voting members. The decision to dissolve the SWCC will use the same consensus decision process as is used in all other decisions.