



June 23, 2020

Northern Blues Forest Collaborative
401 NE 1st Street
Enterprise, OR 97828

Dear Members of the Northern Blues Forest Collaborative:

It is with some regret I write today to submit Greater Hells Canyon Council's formal withdrawal from the Northern Blues Forest Collaborative. GHCC has long-held concerns with the functionality and focus of our local collaboratives, now the NBFC. We have evaluated the merits of our engagement on numerous occasions, ultimately each time determining our engagement is meaningful and worthwhile if the projects that come through the collaborative process end up being more ecologically sound than they may have been without our involvement. And, we've been proud to have successfully worked within the collaboratives on active management such as the East Face WUII project.

On May 26th, I sent an email to the collaborative facilitator, Jeff Costello, to let him know GHCC's position on the NBFC taking on the Regional Office's amendment process to the Eastside Screens' 21" Rule; and, I approved Jeff's sharing my email with the steering committee. In part, that email said,

"For purposes of forest management, we believe collaboration should focus on areas where the ecological need is greatest and public support is the strongest (e.g. roaded and previously managed dry forests) rather than taking on highly controversial issues, such as the proposed amendment to the Eastside Screens. GHCC strongly opposes the USFS process to amend the 21" Rule and we are actively working with many conservation groups around the country who share our perspective.

Not only do we believe the USFS process to amend the 21" Rule is deeply flawed, we believe it is entirely inappropriate for the NBFC to engage in this process due to the fact it is such a controversial and divisive issue with the potential of grave outcomes for the large and old trees that are such a vital component of Eastside National Forests. We assert, there is no common ground to be found on this issue within the collaborative and continued engagement on the issue within the NBFC will only serve to further erode tenuous trust among members."

I also noted we would not attend the May meetings due to our unwillingness to lend credibility to the NBFC's engagement in the Screens process.

Our clearly conveyed concern with the collaborative's engagement on the USFS process to amend the 21" Rule, was not given meaningful consideration by the members in attendance in the May 27 and 28th NBFC meetings. Unfortunately, this marked the final tipping point for GHCC.

GHCC's mission is to protect, connect, and restore the lands, waters, native species, and habitats of the Greater Hells Canyon Region, ensuring a legacy of wild ecosystems for generations.



We believe active management on public lands has a role in achieving our mission. We know true collaborative partnerships, with diverse perspectives equitably included, are the right bodies to advance mutual conservation and restoration interests. Accordingly, GHCC will continue to invest in other collaborative arenas where our values are respected and our work can bear fruit.

GHCC (then Hells Canyon Preservation Council, and the only place-based environmental organization involved) was deeply engaged in our regions' collaboratives well before the groups formalized. We do not make our decision to withdraw from the NBFC lightly. I hope the remaining NBFC members recognize and acknowledge that GHCC, as a founding and active member of both the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman forest collaboratives, engaged in good faith devoting considerable time, effort, and resources to these groups and the projects that came out of them.

Going forward, we welcome and look forward to working with many of the NBFC members and regional USFS personnel on issues and projects important for the conservation and restoration of public lands in the Blues.

Sincerely,



Darilyn Parry Brown
Executive Director

Cc:
NBFC Steering Committee
Tom Montoya, USFS
Eric Watrud, USFS
Glen Cassamassa, USFS
Senator Wyden
Senator Merkley
Governor Brown