



Partnerships on Every Forest Mt. Hood National Forest Partnership Assessment

**Compiled by the National Forest Foundation and the U.S. Forest Service
National Partnership Office**

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Executive Summary

This report presents the results of a Partnerships on Every Forest (PEF) assessment completed by staff at the National Forest Foundation and National Partnership Office with the Mt. Hood National Forest (Forest) from January 2023 to March 2024. The goal of this assessment was to help the Mt. Hood National Forest understand the strengths, challenges, and opportunities of their partnership program and incorporate the input of their partners into a partnership strategy. To achieve this goal, PEF staff conducted interviews with 33 existing and potential partners and Mt. Hood National Forest staff to get firsthand knowledge of their experiences and investigate how the Forest staff can strengthen their partnership program. Forest Leadership and staff identified specific focus areas of partnerships surrounding wildfire and recreation in the Zigzag Ranger District. These are priorities for the Mt. Hood National Forest due to high visitor use in the Zigzag Ranger District and the increasing risk and prevalence of wildfire. Forest staff wanted to better understand other groups and partners contributing to wildfire mitigation and response and recreation management, and the intersection of those topics. This information will help the Mt. Hood National Forest build capacity and coordinate with local communities.

PEF staff used qualitative coding to identify themes from interview notes and analyzed the results to create suggestions for the Mt. Hood National Forest to respond to what their partners and staff shared. Participants noted many positive aspects of the Mt. Hood National Forest partnership program, including effective communication with partners, engagement in wildfire partnerships, and partnerships that contribute to education and training. Participants also noted challenges they face in partnering with the Mt. Hood National Forest. Challenges included competing priorities between agencies and among partners, lack of capacity to engage in partnerships, and navigating Forest Service bureaucracy and policy.

Participants also had many suggestions for ways the Mt. Hood National Forest could improve partnerships, including providing consistent communication and engagement opportunities, creating a shared partnership strategy and vision, continuing to support partnerships surrounding wildfire mitigation, creating an inclusive partner network, and creating shared stewardship opportunities. Many partners included in this assessment participate in the Highway 26 Wildfire Partnership group that meets monthly to coordinate wildfire mitigation and response and share information. This group was frequently pointed to as a success that could be used as a model for effectively sharing information and providing a structured space for partners to interact with agency staff.

Program Overview

Partnerships are an integral part of National Forest System management. They add capacity and integrate the needs, interests, and values of local communities into public land management. Within the Forest Service, partnerships are broadly defined as voluntary relationships with mutual benefits between people, organizations, agencies, and communities that work together and share interests. Partnerships may be formalized through an agreement or contract or may be informal. Partners may include community groups, nonprofit organizations, local governments, state and federal agencies, Tribes, local businesses, academic institutions, and recreation groups.

The [Partnerships on Every Forest \(PEF\)](#) program is jointly managed by the U.S. Forest Service National Partnership Office (NPO) and the National Forest Foundation (NFF). The NPO works to augment the Forest Service's relationships with citizens, communities, non-governmental organizations, and others to add capacity and engage the public in the management of National Forest System lands. These relationships are built through training and education, Forest-level stakeholder engagement, and agency-wide support for partnerships through the PEF program. PEF supports the growth of the agency's partnership program and provides insight and tools to improve and develop partner relationships at the Forest and agency levels.

The National Forest Foundation (NFF) is the USDA Forest Service's Congressionally chartered nonprofit partner. The NFF is an experienced convener of stakeholders and acts as a neutral entity that serves as a bridge between nonprofit and community partners and the Forest Service. The NPO and NFF are working in collaboration to build partnership strategies that increase land management and stewardship capacity. The PEF program identifies challenges and opportunities faced by partners, potential partners, and the Forests. The NPO and NFF will work with Forest Service units to address findings by developing partnership strategies that support the Forest's and partner's desired outcomes. The assessment process and findings will be documented to share insight into partnerships nationally and to create tools that can be used to assess and improve partnerships across different Forests and regions.

Mt. Hood National Forest

The Mt. Hood National Forest encompasses 1.1 million acres in northwestern Oregon. About one-third of the Forest is designated Wilderness. The Forest offers year-round recreation opportunities, and its watershed provides drinking water to 1 million people in the greater Portland area. Due to its proximity to Portland, the Forest is a popular recreation destination with high visitor use. It has also seen increased fire activity in recent years, which has resulted in more resources allocated for fire mitigation, adaptation, and response.

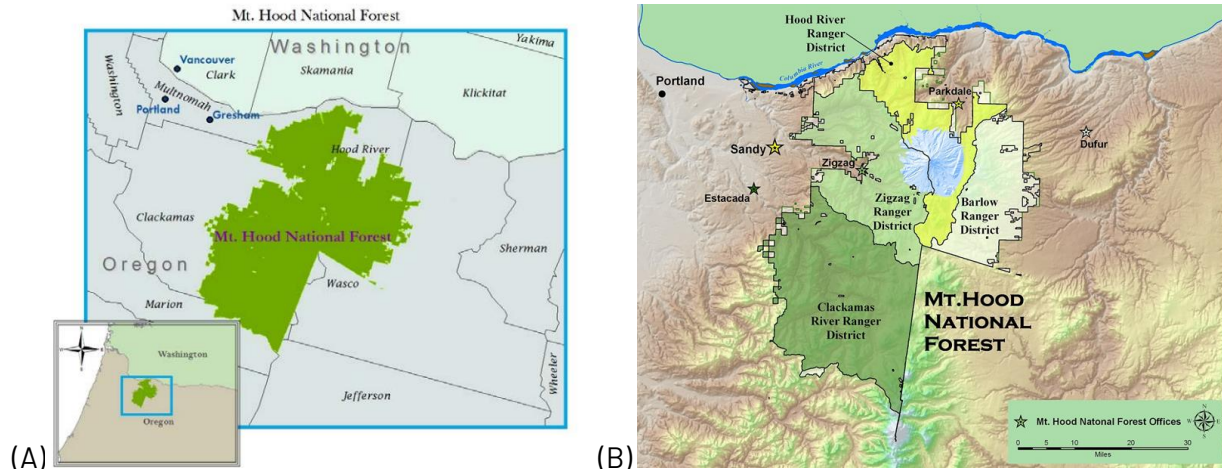


Figure 1. Maps of the Mt. Hood National Forest. (A) The Forest is in northwestern Oregon to the east of Portland. (B) There are four ranger districts, with the Zigzag Ranger District being the closest to Portland. Maps from USFS.

NFF staff began meeting with Mt. Hood National Forest staff in January 2023 to identify priorities regarding partnerships and develop a workplan. Priorities included assessing partnerships focused on recreation and wildfire in the Zigzag Ranger District. Mt. Hood National Forest, NFF, and NPO staff worked together to review the outcomes of the assessment and develop a strategy based on the results. The NFF and NPO will host additional report-out conversations with Forest Service staff and facilitate partner conversations to review the findings and create space for shared learning.

Methods

A partnership assessment is a qualitative approach to identifying and understanding the perspectives of individuals and organizations that have a vested interest in a Forest. The methodology used in these assessments is similar to that of a stakeholder analysis as described in the literature (Bendtsen et al., 2021). Authentically including partners in public lands management supports the Forest Service in achieving their mission and ensures accountability, transparency, and inclusion (Reed, 2008 and Quick & Bryson, 2016). See Appendix A for more background on our methodology.

Partnership assessments are conducted using the following methods:

1. Application process
2. Focus group conversations to identify desired outcomes and clarify expectations
3. Semi-structured interviews and snowball sampling
4. Qualitative interview coding
5. Finalize partnership strategy
6. Shared learning

1. Application Process

Any Forest Service unit in the country can apply to participate in the PEF program. The NPO and the NFF conduct outreach to ensure that all units are aware of the program with sufficient time to apply. Criteria that make a Forest a strong candidate for PEF include established partnership staff with the capacity to engage in the planning and execution of the assessment, clear goals and desired outcomes, support from their Forest Leadership Team, and a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. PEF assessments are best suited for Forests that have specific goals and ideas for how they would like to expand their partnership program.

2. Focus Groups

After a forest is selected, PEF staff meet with the Forest Leadership Team (FLT) and partnership staff to identify specific goals of the assessment and develop interview questions. Together, they develop a work plan which identifies the project tasks, timeline, and capacity needs. This process includes the development of interview questions, which are specific to each unit. The questions used for the Mt. Hood National Forest assessment can be found in Appendix B.

3. Semi-Structured Interviews and Snowball Sampling

The Forest provides an initial list of internal staff and external partners to be interviewed. This list is expanded as PEF staff ask each interview participant who else should be included, known as snowball sampling. PEF staff conduct interviews and meet with Forest staff ~bi-weekly to check in regarding interview and assessment progress. All interview responses are confidential and there is no attribution of specific responses to an individual. This report includes broad themes that were heard in interviews, not individual answers. Names of participants and the organizations they represent are listed upon individual approval. The list for the Mt. Hood National Forest can be found in Appendix C.

The goal of PEF assessments is to include all interests relevant to the focus area within a Forest Service unit. However, certain groups may be intentionally included or excluded to meet the individual goals of each PEF assessment. Snowball sampling and focus groups are approaches to identify these interests and individuals that can represent them. However, there are limitations in this work that result in the exclusion of some perspectives.

4. Qualitative Interview Coding

After the interview process is complete, PEF staff code interview notes to provide structure to the observations and allow for interpretation and organization. PEF staff used the ATLAS.ti coding software to systematically categorize excerpts from interviews and identify themes and patterns. The coding process makes analysis more objective by accurately representing participants, increasing validity, and decreasing bias. There are many different tools and approaches for coding qualitative data; further details regarding the coding process can be found in Appendix D.

5. Finalize Partnership Strategy

PEF staff share the results of the interviews with Forest Service staff and discuss how to incorporate them into the partnership strategy. This includes facilitating conversations about the results with relevant Forest Service staff and working together to identify approaches to strengthen their partnership program.

6. Shared Learning

PEF staff facilitate meetings with all partners involved with the assessment to share results, ensure that voices were accurately captured, and communicate the work accomplished. This is an opportunity for continued discussion between partners and Forest staff.

Results

In total, 33 interviews were conducted, including ten Mt. Hood National Forest staff, nine staff from agencies other than the Mt. Hood National Forest, nine nonprofit representatives, three recreation representatives, one university representative, one local resident, and one industry representative. See appendix C for a full list of interview participants.

Through qualitative coding, PEF staff categorized results from the interviews into values, strengths, challenges, gaps, and opportunities. The results are described below by category with the most common answers being listed first. The number in parentheses indicates the number of times each response was mentioned throughout the interview process.

Values

Understanding the values that partners and Forest Service staff associate with the Mt. Hood National Forest helps PEF staff understand what is important about the Forest to those that live and work in the area. Values can be personal or professional and help demonstrate what the Forest means to people included in PEF assessments. Asking about values can help people think creatively about their relationship with the Forest.

Recreation and access (47). Participants valued that the Forest is close to Portland and said that having access to public land increased their quality of life. They noted the year-round recreation opportunities, including skiing, trails, sustainable recreation, off-roading, and climbing.

Conservation and stewardship (41). Participants valued and appreciated the forest ecosystem, fish and wildlife habitat, ecological restoration, sustainable management, connection to nature, diverse and unique landscapes, historical values, and ecosystem services including water quality and quantity and traditional foods and medicine.

Scenic (8). Participants said that the mountain and surrounding landscape is beautiful and dynamic.

Cultural and spiritual (6). Participants said that Mt. Hood is the icon of Oregon and is symbolic for the community. Participants also mentioned that they have spiritual ties to Mt. Hood and that the area has Tribal and heritage resources.

Wilderness (5). Participants mentioned Wilderness as a value, pertaining to designated Wilderness areas that comprise about one-third of the Forest.

Economic benefits (5). Participants said they value the economic benefits of the Forest, including jobs it provides, timber resources, support for rural economies, tourism revenue, and the recreation industry.

Mt. Hood National Forest Staff (4). Participants valued the positive relationships they have with the Forest staff and said that staff are dedicated, passionate, have integrity, are friendly and proactive, build trust and collaboration, and are accessible.

Community engagement (3). Participants valued collaboration between Forest Service staff and the community, relationships that the Forest Service staff build with local communities, and services that the Forest staff provide for the public.

Wildfire management (2). Participants mentioned the value of wildfire management, specifically pertaining to the value of wildfire planning and mitigation.

Education (2). Participants valued education, as mentioned in the context of wildfire, trail maintenance, forestry, and stewardship.

Strengths

Strengths show what the Forest Service staff is doing well and provide positive feedback and reinforcement from partners.

Communication and engagement (24). Participants said the Mt. Hood National Forest staff interact with the public, communicate their values, have engaged leadership, practice inter-agency communication surrounding resources and training, make themselves available to partners, articulate their goals, and have effective communication surrounding fire and the new climbing permit system. Partners appreciated monthly meetings that bring diverse partners together, generate ideas, distribute information, and build community.

Wildfire partnerships (13). Participants said that partnerships surrounding wildfire are going well, and specifically mentioned the Highway 26 Corridor Wildfire Partnership as a strength. Participants noted that this group has enthusiasm and energy surrounding fire planning and response. The group shares values of risk surrounding fire and is committed to finding consensus on solutions and conducting outreach and education.

Education and training (6). Participants appreciated it when the Forest staff hosted and sponsored training for volunteers on safety and efficiency. Trail ambassadors and stewards were also acknowledged for their role in educating the public on safe and responsible recreation. Partners also appreciated having access to the Zigzag North Training Compound facility as a venue to host trainings.

Recreation partnerships (2). Participants said that recreation partnerships are going well, specifically re-opening areas for recreation after fire and establishing partnerships with recreation organizations.

Mt. Hood National Forest staff (2). Partners said that Forest staff are skilled, sophisticated, competent, and great team members. These traits contribute to effective partnerships.

Challenges

Challenges can highlight obstacles that partners face in working with the Mt. Hood National Forest and help Forest staff understand how to create stronger relationships with their partners.

Competing priorities (21). Participants said that there are competing priorities and a history of conflict between the Forest Service and some groups. Several examples were controversy surrounding active management, including thinning and burning, disputes surrounding property rights, frequent litigation of Forest Service projects, distrust of the federal government, controversy surrounding Wilderness designations, and the Forest Service not following through with commitments.

Staff capacity (14). Participants said lack of staff capacity within Mt. Hood National Forest makes it difficult for staff to engage with and manage all partnerships, that staff can be difficult to get ahold of, that there is not an internal strategy for managing partnerships, that funding opportunities are missed when there are not enough staff to apply for them, that communication lines with partners are lost when no one is championing them, and that lack of capacity contributes to staff burnout.

Forest Service bureaucracy and policy (14). Participants said that agency bureaucracy and policy can stall projects and result in lengthy timelines. Partners said that it is challenging to adhere to the permit processes and volunteer requirements when implementing projects on the Mt. Hood National Forest, that outdated management plans result in lack of transparency, that the NEPA process is complicated, and that there is internal disagreement over management in some circumstances. Several partners mentioned that there is an apparent disconnect between the regional and national Forest Services offices and the local offices and that they wanted more transparency about the direction coming down from higher offices.

Lack of consistent communication (13). Partners felt that there was a lack of transparency around workplans and initiatives such as the Wildfire Crisis Strategy, that it is hard to know who to contact at the Forest Service, that the website is difficult to navigate, that the Forest staff do not communicate needs and are unresponsive, that inter-agency communication is challenging, and that there is a general lack of outreach and engagement.

Staff turnover (12). Staff turnover makes it difficult to maintain connections and relationships between partners and Forest staff, stalls projects when staff go on detail or positions are left open, and there can be a lack of follow through on agreements if they don't have a champion within the Forest.

Sustainable funding (7). Partners were concerned about a lack of sustained investment in partnerships, that the Forest and partners do not have money to bring to the table, and that there is a lack of funding allocated from the Regional and Washington offices relative to the amount of use and recreation on the Mt. Hood National Forest.

Over-use (4). Due to its proximity to Portland, the Zigzag Ranger District in particular experiences heavy visitor use. This can result in ecological degradation and degrade the user experience.

Environmental challenges (3). Partners shared concerns surrounding wildfire and climate change. These challenges require constant adaptation and innovation.

Tribal engagement (1). This participant felt that the Forest experiences challenges adhering to treaty rights and obligations.

Gaps

Asking about gaps, or who the Forest is not partnering with that should be included, provides a critical analysis of who is not included in the management of the Mt. Hood National Forest. This can help identify groups that would benefit from more targeted engagement. Many participants said they did not know of gaps in partnership due to being unaware of who else the Mt. Hood National Forest is partnering with. The responses below suggest groups that would benefit from more targeted outreach and engagement.

Tribes (8). Partners acknowledged that engaging with Tribes in the Zigzag Ranger District is difficult due to a lack of federally recognized Tribal land on the west side of the Forest. However, the Grande Ronde, Warm Springs, and Siletz Tribes were noted as lacking engagement, and the Warm Spring Tribe was indicated as having an interest in overuse management.

Other agencies (6). Partners said that the Mt. Hood National Forest could more effectively engage other agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS), and the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

Economic interests (6). Participants said that economic interests, including private timber holders, Chamber of Commerce, and tourism groups, would benefit from more engagement.

Historically underrepresented groups (4). Partners said that Forest Service programs do not reflect the diversity of Portland and that there is a lack of accessibility partnerships and partnerships focused on underrepresented and disadvantaged groups

Local communities (2). Participants said that local communities, including towns in the Highway 26 Corridor and other small communities on and around the Forest, are lacking engagement.

Environmental groups (2). Partners said that there is a general lack of engagement with environmental groups, specifically those that are anti-logging. Some people feel that there is a history of contentious relationships between the Mt. Hood National Forest and environmental groups.

Schools (1). One person mentioned that there could be more opportunities for schools in Portland to visit the Forest and learn about nature and history

Opportunities

Opportunities are suggestions from interview participants for the Mt. Hood National Forest to address challenges and improve their partnership program.

The Mt. Hood National Forest can provide consistent communication and engagement with partners (31). Suggestions related to communication and engagement included providing regular communication outlets and hosting regular meetings, scheduling shared field days with partners and other agencies to showcase projects, having more proactive engagement early on in project planning, attending partner events to build relationships, providing opportunities for continued feedback throughout projects, sharing more communication from the Regional Office, following up on projects, hiring more Public Affairs staff, messaging in a way that is digestible for the public and manages their expectations, being transparent about short term and long term plans, utilizing social media to share updates, and have more engagement from leadership.

The Mt. Hood National Forest can create a partnership strategy and vision (23). Participants suggested that a strategy that is shared with Forest staff and partners could increase transparency and help partners understand the best way to engage. A partnership strategy could include a long-term vision and goals for the Forest and outline how partners can support those goals, outline how the Forest engages in cross-boundary and large landscape work, create strategies for more direct consultation and engagement with Tribes and fulfillment of cultural and treaty obligations, and identify a framework for partners that empowers them to make decisions. A strategy can also provide support and transparency for internal Forest staff through empowering all staff to engage in partnerships, providing more consistent staffing to build capacity, ensuring that agreement requirements are being met, helping with transition planning, creating a partnership network to share information and resources efficiently, increasing intra-agency coordination, and including a strategy to communicate needs and priorities to partners.

The Forest can continue to support wildfire partnerships (9). Partners wanted the Mt. Hood National Forest to continue to support the Highway 26 Corridor Wildfire Partnership. Recommended support for this group included providing both financial and logistical resources that maintain information flow, ensuring that there is a paid facilitator, creating a contact chain for fire incidents, providing education around evacuation routes, mitigating impacts of wildfire on communities, supporting wildfire prevention through public education, creating a strategy for cross boundary wildfire work, educating the public on the importance of fuels work, and utilizing the science that partners have available.

The Forest can create an inclusive partner network (9). Partners suggested the Mt. Hood National Forest create partnership networks and groups that include all interests. Partner networks are a way to share information and provide opportunities for partners to participate in management decisions. Bringing partners together can also create opportunities for relationship building that can mitigate conflict and identify zones of agreement. Specific recommendations included facilitating conversations with environmental groups about active forest management, bringing in more partners to existing groups, and creating groups focused on resiliency and recreation to complement the Highway 26 Wildfire Partnership.

The Forest can create shared stewardship opportunities (8). Many partners included in this assessment are invested in stewardship of trails and natural areas. Partners are interested in more opportunities to engage in stewardship, including projects that utilize shared stewardship models, events focused on volunteer trail maintenance and stewardship, increased utilization of trail stewards, and creating a shared facility for education and training. Shared stewardship can help

incorporate diverse interests into land management and provide clear direction for partners on stewardship opportunities.

Discussion

The results of this report demonstrate the complex nature of National Forest management. The experience of each partner is unique and, in many cases, depends on their individual relationships with staff at the Mt. Hood National Forest. However, we can draw on common themes outlined in this report to support a strategy that will help Mt. Hood National Forest staff strengthen their partnership program. The assessment's overarching goal, as identified by Forest Leadership and staff, was to assess partnerships focused on recreation and wildfire in the Zigzag Ranger District. The results of the assessment demonstrate that wildfire partnerships are a strength in the Zigzag Ranger District. This is largely due to the Highway 26 Corridor Wildfire Partnership that was initiated in 2023. Due to the enthusiasm and energy of this group, many participants highlighted it in the interviews. Recreation partnerships were more varied and not as coordinated. Several participants suggested that the Mt. Hood National Forest would benefit from a group focused on recreation to provide support and coordination for partners in a similar way to the wildfire group does.

Navigating Challenges

The most common challenge mentioned by partners in their work with the Mt. Hood National Forest was competing priorities. National Forests are mandated to be managed for multiple uses, including recreation, grazing, timber, watershed, and fish and wildlife purposes. This mandate inherently results in conflicting priorities and controversy over management. However, effective education, communication, and transparency surrounding Forest goals and projects can mitigate this challenge. Partners want the opportunity to engage in the management of the Mt. Hood National Forest through clear and consistent communication about Forest goals and priorities, and opportunities to provide feedback that they feel is genuinely incorporated into management activities.

Mt. Hood National Forest staff can look to the strengths that partners mentioned in this assessment for examples of how to achieve effective communication and engagement. Partners appreciated it when Mt. Hood National Forest staff were available for discussions, engaged in public interaction, and shared information in an accessible and transparent manner. The Highway 26 Corridor Wildfire Partnership is an example of how this is effectively being achieved. This group meets monthly, with an in-person and virtual option, to share information about wildfire mitigation, adaptation, and planning. Partners liked this regularly scheduled opportunity to come together, hear updates from multiple agencies, ask questions, voice their concerns, and share their knowledge and expertise. Partners working in wildfire-related fields are happy with this model, and it could be replicated for other topics like recreation or forest health.

Other notable challenges were lack of staff capacity, Forest Service bureaucracy and policy, lack of consistent communication, and staff turnover. These are common challenges across many of the Forests that have participated in Partnerships on Every Forest and stem from how the Forest

Service is managed at the national level. However, there are approaches to help mitigate these challenges at the Forest level. Partners should feel empowered to engage with the Forest Service, which requires having a consistent point of contact and support in navigating bureaucracy and drafting partnership agreements. Some partners said that due to staff turnover, they have lost their point of contact, and it is difficult to know who to reach out to at the Forest to build an effective partnership. Mt. Hood National Forest could include an organizational chart and contact information on their website to help make staff more available and help with staffing transparency. Additionally, creating a webpage for partners with information such as how to find the best contact for a specific question or request and a breakdown of regulations and necessary permits could be a great resource for new partners. To alleviate the burdens of turnover, the Forest Service staff could incorporate transition planning. Transition planning can help maintain relationships between the Forest Service and partners when the Forest Service point of contact leaves their position. Transition plans ensure that partners are aware of their new point of contact and that there is an internal system in place for relationship management to alleviate challenges associated with staff turnover within the agency. For more information on transition planning, see page 17 of the NFF's [Partnerships on Every Forest Resource Guide](#), "Adapting to Staffing Transitions," and the USFS [Handover Memo](#). At a national level, the Forest Service is beginning to level out in hiring and shifting to a culture of promoting in place, which will increase staff retention.

[Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging](#)

The National Forest Foundation and the National Partnership Office value diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) and strive to incorporate these values into our programs. An overarching goal of the Partnerships on Every Forest program is to help Forests examine their efforts to incorporate DEIB into their partnership work. Although this was not a specific goal identified by Forest Leadership for this assessment, the PEF team does have recommendations for how the Mt. Hood National Forest can continue to integrate these values into their partnership program.

Be Mindful of Historical Context

Stewardship and conservation are loaded terms with a complicated history. Limited conceptualizations of conservation and the outdoors have historically excluded Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), disability communities, immigrant communities, Tribal governments, and LGBTQIA+ communities and can deter underrepresented groups from engaging. Centering the voices of underrepresented communities through empowering them to lead programs and projects is critical for engagement and progressing public land management.

Empower Underrepresented and Marginalized Communities

In the assessment, partners noted that the diversity of the Portland metro area is not represented in the management of the Mt. Hood National Forest. Partners with existing connections to underrepresented communities are a resource for the Forest to develop relationships with and engage different communities. Inviting groups in and asking how the Forest Service can support their programs and goals can help build mutually beneficial relationships. Hosting social

opportunities to build trust and relationships, including attending partner events, is critical to understanding partner needs and priorities.

Trail Accessibility and Safety

Recreation was one of the focus areas of this assessment, but accessibility was rarely mentioned during the interview process, and no groups focused on accessibility were included. This suggests that the Mt. Hood National Forest has yet to build effective partnerships with recreation groups focused on access and inclusion. People who have been excluded from traditional conceptualizations of nature and conservation, do not have access to transportation, do not speak English as their first language, are part of a marginalized community, live in poverty, or live with a disability experience significant barriers to visiting and recreating on National Forests. Providing resources and information about access in different formats is one way to empower these groups to visit the Mt. Hood National Forest. This can include providing information in multiple languages and graphical formats, providing information on public transportation options, including information about the location of restrooms and benches along trails, uploading updated photos of trail conditions, and including details about trail surface, width, and grade on the Forest website to allow the public to get a better sense of trail accessibility and empower them to recreate within their abilities.

Partnership Strategy and Vision

Having a clear strategy and vision for the Mt. Hood National Forest partnership program that can be shared with staff and partners will create mutual expectations and transparency. Partners expressed a desire to be included in long-term planning, which is challenged by frequent turnover within Forest staff. Co-creating a strategy, vision, and plan with partners can help create consistency when there is staff turnover by empowering new staff to come in with an understanding of the ongoing work and future trajectory. A plan should identify near-term and long-term priorities of partnership work, have a vision statement, and outline achievable and measurable goals. This plan should be revisited at regular intervals to ensure that milestones are being met and to adapt as needed.

Conclusion

This assessment, focused on wildfire and recreation partnerships in the Zigzag Ranger District, demonstrated that the Mt. Hood National Forest is invested in building and improving their partnership program to increase capacity and make their work more inclusive. With new staff in leadership and partnership positions it is a timely opportunity for the Forest to reassess their partnership program, identify priorities, and develop a strategy that will effectively carry them forward. With ample partnership opportunities the Forest would benefit from a strategy to help prioritize and communicate with partners. Partners desire clear and consistent communication from Mt. Hood National Forest staff and the opportunity to actively participate in management and decision making. Forest staff can achieve this by increasing opportunities for engagement through regular meetings, consistently coordinating with partners and communities on both short-term and long-term projects and goals, and conducting targeted outreach to groups and communities that are lacking engagement.

PEF staff recommend creating metrics to measure the impacts of partnerships and having a clear plan to share with partners and Forest staff. This report can be revisited in six months and one year to reflect on how the results and suggestions have been incorporated.

If you have any questions about this report, or the Partnerships on Every Forest program, please contact:

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Appendix A: Interview Methods

For more background information on different interview methods, please refer to Reed et al., 2009, which identifies the rational typology, and nine methods for stakeholder analysis in the natural resource management realm. One of the primary aims of these partnership assessments is to identify partners, so we focus on Reed's first typology, identifying stakeholders, which is achieved through focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and snowball sampling.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Language was adapted depending on whether speaking to a Forest Service employee or partner.

1. To start, can you share your position title and your role with your organization/agency?
2. When you think of the Mt. Hood National Forest, what are some values that come to mind?
 - a. What is your favorite thing about the Mt. Hood National Forest?
3. What types of partnerships are you involved with in the Zigzag Ranger District? What kinds of projects or agreements do you participate in?
4. In your partnership work, what is going well?
5. What challenges do you face in your partnership work? Is there anything you are particularly concerned about?
6. Do you feel that there are opportunities for the Forest Service to improve partnerships in the Zigzag Ranger District?
7. Are there any gaps in who the Forest Service is partnering with in the Zigzag Ranger District? Any interested parties that you feel should be included that are not currently? If so, who?
8. Do you think that the Zigzag Ranger District would benefit from more structured communication and coordination among partners and other interested parties?
 - a. What tools do you think would be beneficial in the Zigzag Ranger District to help partners and other interested parties coordinate and communicate?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share about the Mt. Hood National Forest and partnerships, either your own relationship or that of other interested groups?
10. We are trying to speak with as many existing and potential partners as possible. Can you recommend other individuals or groups we should speak with about partnerships in the Zigzag Ranger District?
11. Are you comfortable with me sharing your name and/or organization on a list of interview participants? Your identifying information will not be tied to anything in the report other than listing you as a participant.
12. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix C: Interview Participants

Thank you to all interview participants for their time, insight, and dedication to their communities.

Name	Organization
Amanda Hoffman	Bureau of Land Management, Northwest Oregon District
Anna Buckley	Portland Water Bureau
Brent Olson	Clackamas Fire District
Brentwood Reid	Highway 26 Corridor Wildfire Partnership
Carolyn McDonald	Timberline Lodge
Cliff Agocs	Timberline Mountain Guides
Dylan Kruse	Sustainable Northwest
Erik Fernandez	Oregon Wild
Gar Abbas	Mt. Hood National Forest
Greg Wanner	Mt. Hood National Forest
Jeff Jaqua	Friends of Timberline
Jen Warren	Oregon State Fire Marshall's Office
Jeremy Goers	Mt. Hood National Forest
Jim Austin	Clackamas County Tourism
Jim Price	Hoodland Fire District
Jordan Latter	BARK
Kayla Bordelon	Oregon State University Extension Fire Program
Lizzie Keenan	Experience Mt. Hood and the Gorge Regional Destination Management Organization
Lorelei Haukness	Mt. Hood National Forest
Lorie Hutton	Mt. Hood National Forest
Mark McCollister	Freshwater Trust
Meta Loftsgaarden	Mt. Hood National Forest
Mike Quinn	Mt. Hood Skibowl
Neal Hatley	AntFarm Youth Services
Nick Seibel	Mt. Hood National Forest
Patrick Shannon	National Forest Foundation
Rachel LaMedica	United States Forest Service, Region 6 Office
Scott Kline	Hoodland Fire District
Steph Noll	Oregon Trails Coalition
Steve Kruger	Trailkeepers of Oregon
Vito Perrone	Trailkeepers of Oregon
Walt Mayberry	Community Planning Organization
Zach Littlefield	Portland General Electric

Appendix D: Coding Methods

The coding methods for this assessment are adapted from Saldana, 2009; Given, 2008; and Braun, 2013. These webpages summarize these methods and are readily accessible: "[The Essential Guide to Coding Qualitative Data](#)", "[Themes Don't Just Emerge – Coding the Qualitative Data](#)", and "[Qualitative Data Coding 101](#)".

These methods were evaluated and adopted to meet the goals of this PEF assessment.

1. Develop an initial code set
 - a. Read through interview notes to develop an idea of what the overall data looks like.
 - b. Make comments/notes on themes and repeated words to develop a codebook, a reference guide that is created and continuously updated through the coding process. Each assessment will have its own codebook to avoid categorizing responses into predefined categories, which could lead to missing a unique theme or conclusion.
 - i. Continue to add new codes, creating and re-organize categories, as needed.
2. Line-By-Line Coding
 - c. Look through interview notes with a close eye, coding each interview statement in detail.
3. Categorization
 - d. Line-by-line coding will produce a large collection of codes. Group similar codes into the same categories that best reflect the analysis.
 - ii. Categorizing codes will reveal consistent and overarching themes.
 - iii. Quantitative results can be pulled from the codes (e.g. 80% of interviewees identified communication as a strength).
4. Identify strengths and barriers.
 - e. Sort overarching themes into strengths and barriers.
 - iv. Begin to write, applying categories, codes, and strengths and barriers to the assessment.

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