



**OREGON WILD**

Date: March 8th, 2022

To: Scott Aycock, Facilitator  
Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative Executive Committee

Dear OFRC:

After over a decade of good-faith participation, we are writing to notify you that Oregon Wild has decided to formally withdraw from the Ochoco Forest Restoration Collaborative (OFRC). First represented by our dearly missed staff member Tim Lillebo, Oregon Wild was a founding member of this, and numerous other collaboratives. Unfortunately, in recent years, conservation groups at the collaborative table have been met with indifference on the best days and hostility on the worst.

Since Tim's passing, Oregon Wild has continued to dedicate countless staff hours to OFRC's work, with 3 additional employees participating in various capacities over the years. Throughout that time, the logging proposals for the Ochoco National Forest have become larger and more aggressive. The collaborative is embracing increasingly divisive discussions and environmentally destructive activities, including steep slopes logging, logging in riparian areas, and removing protections for large and old trees. Meanwhile, the collaborative is not giving serious attention to equally-important values like fish, clean water and wildlife habitat.

Good collaboration does not always feel efficient. However, when done right, it can lead to better and more durable outcomes as well as learning that can be applied elsewhere. Individuals and organizations from a broad range of interests are welcomed to the table. Their input is valued and meaningfully incorporated. Good collaborators also recognize the validity and standing of everyone, including those who are not able to be at the table. At its best, collaboration brings all of these stakeholders together to identify issues and design projects that will benefit all members of our community and public lands.

Rather than develop projects with the collaborative and other members of the public, the Forest Service brings OFRC pre-determined projects. The collaborative has essentially become a rubber stamp, blessing controversial commercial logging that otherwise would not receive public support. Pro-conservation voices that primarily focus on ecological concerns

and broadly held public values have been marginalized in favor of extractive interests.

Our decision to withdraw from this collaborative is due to concerning actions including but not limited to:

- Actively undermining protections for old-growth and large trees on public lands
- Conflicts of interest, including the fiscal sponsor having undue influence on the collaborative's goals, work, and focus
- Cynical discussions regarding how to best exploit the public's concerns of fire near communities to promote backcountry logging projects
- Approving commercial logging projects and not following through with monitoring that would better inform future decisions and ensure accountability
- Requiring new and existing collaborative members to sign an agreement endorsing all past decisions as a condition of continued participation
- Despite rhetoric to the contrary, resource extraction and economic exploitation of public lands have come to dominate OFRC's discussions, while conservation concerns such as overgrazing, road densities, water quality, cumulative effects, climate mitigation, proforestation, public lands protection, and agency funding are rarely if ever seriously considered.
- Frequent contradictions between the best available science on forests and ecological conservation and collaborative positions/recommendations and treatment applications on the ground.

Unfortunately, the problems we are identifying with OFRC are not isolated to this collaborative. Oregon Wild has participated in more forest collaboratives than any other NGO in the state. We have won awards from the Forest Service for our contributions. Despite our good faith efforts, these negative experiences have become common across the state - from the McKenzie watershed to the Northern Blue Mountains.

Though we are leaving OFRC, we will continue to engage in efforts to protect and improve the ecological well-being of the Ochoco National Forest and the health of our communities. We hope the USFS will reach out to us and other members of the public to ensure we and they have no less opportunity to make timely and meaningful contributions than the collaborative does. These are, after all, public lands. To the extent they belong to any of us, they belong to all of us, equally, regardless of whether or not we are able to participate in formal collaborative groups.

While OFRC was once an opportunity for diverse interests to find common ground and guide the Forest Service to better outcomes, it has become another place to create a mirage of public support for increasingly controversial logging practices and projects. We can no longer allow Oregon Wild's name to lend credibility to these efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie Dawson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "J".

Jamie Dawson  
Public Lands Campaigner  
Oregon Wild