

Greater Santa Fe Fireshed Coalition Operating Principles

The Greater Santa Fe Fireshed Coalition (GSFFC) is a collaborative partnership of organizations, advisors, and supporters in the community who are working to restore resiliency and forest health in the mountains and watersheds east of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The following operating principles guide the GSFFC in its collaborative planning, discussions, deliberations, and work.

Purpose

(1) The purpose of the collaborative is to support and enhance the work of its partners, not to hinder, obstruct, disrupt, or replace partners' work. To the extent possible, the GSFFC will organize its work schedule, meetings and activities so that they integrate into the flow of work of its partners and advisors.

(2) The GSFFC is a learning organization, and strives to adapt and evolve to changing circumstances, technologies, processes and challenges. The organization strives to broaden the perspectives and possibilities of its partners and advisors, for the benefit of the human and ecological communities in the Fireshed.

(3) The GSFFC supports transparency in all of its decisions, activities, and plans. The operations of the organization will be carried out in public forums, and all activities and products are available to all partners, advisors, contacts, and other interested members of the public. All parties are encouraged to offer feedback to the collaborative, and feedback will be thoughtfully considered by the partners and advisors, with changes made as appropriate.

(4) The GSFFC recognizes and upholds the independence of its partners and advisors, and supports independent and critical thought.

(5) The GSFFC coordinates forest health, resiliency and restoration activities among partners within its working area, and partners should use the Greater Santa Fe Fireshed brand in advertising and discussing work carried out in the defined Fireshed working area, to solidify in the public's mind the collaborative work being conducted in the Fireshed.

Structure

As a collaborative organization, the GSFFC operates under an informal structure with the purpose of facilitating collaborative interactions and operations. The structure includes leadership, levels of participation, and committees and coordinators that carry out specific functions.

Chair

The **Chair** is the titular leader of the GSFFC. The chair facilitates meetings of the Coalition, implementing the GSFFC guidelines for decision-making. The chair can assign tasks to partners and advisors, ensures that action items are completed in a timely fashion, and oversees the activities of GSFFC committees and coordinators.

The chair serves a one-year term, beginning in January each year. The chair position will rotate through partnering organizations, with each partner given an opportunity to serve as chair. At the last general meeting of the Coalition each year, a new chair will be selected for the next year by general consensus of the partners present. The new chair will be selected from a partner organization that has not served as chair in recent years. If more than one partner is willing to serve as chair in a given year, the organization that has gone the longest without a representative as chair will serve as the next chair. If a consensus cannot be easily reached, the Coalition can take a vote at the meeting among the partners who are present to select the next chair.

Participants

The GSFFC has three categories of participation: partner, advisor and contact. The criteria are:

(1) A **Partner** is an organization that is supportive of the vision and mission of the GSFFC, and that has signed the Coalition's plan and strategy document, and that agree with the operating principles. Partners are willing to commit time to participate in GSFFC meetings and to serve on committees. Partner organizations will have voting status on formal decisions made by the Coalition. Founding organizations that participate regularly and that support the plan, strategy and operating principles are the initial partners. Organizations that will add to the Coalition's capacity and that are willing to sign onto the plan and strategy and support the operating principles can join the Coalition as partners with the approval of existing partners. New organizations should be encouraged to join the Contact List first, and then express an interest in becoming a partner. Existing partners will discuss petitions to join as a partner at a regular meeting of the Coalition, and will agree to admit new partners by consensus, or by a vote of all partners present if necessary.

Each partnering organization should select one member to represent the organization in formal decisions. For larger organizations with several members who participate regularly, the organization can choose how they wish to be represented. For example, the entire organization may be a partner, represented by one member, or different ranger districts may each be a partner, with one person selected to represent the district. If the organization chooses the latter option, the selected representatives are expected to participate regularly in Coalition activities, primarily representing their district.

(2) **Advisors** are individuals or organizations that are supportive of the vision and mission of the GSFFC that are willing to commit time to participate in GSFFC meetings. Advisors may participate on committees as well. Advisors can participate in and contribute to Coalition meetings and activities but do not have voting status on formal decisions made by the Coalition. Advisors may be individuals who are participating actively but who do not represent a partner organization, or advisors may be representatives from organizations that want to participate actively in Coalition activities but do not want to sign onto the Coalition's plan and strategy, or do not want the commit to partner status.

(3) The **Contact List** consists of community members who have expressed an interest in the activities of the GSFFC and who have provided contact information. The GSFFC will communicate periodically with Contacts to keep them updated on Coalition activities and to solicit their support when necessary. Joining the Contact List is also the first step for organizations interested in joining the GSFFC as partners or advisors.

Committees

The GSFFC operates through a committee structure. Each team has a chair who coordinates the committee's activities. Currently, the GSFFC has three committees. New committees can be created as necessary by proposal and affirmation at a meeting of the Coalition.

The GSFFC committees include:

(1) **Resiliency and Assessment Team** – responsible for the substantive aspects of GSFFC planning and strategy. The Resiliency Team coordinates actions of partners to reduce the risk of wildfire in the Fireshed and to improve forest health. The Resiliency Team coordinates risk assessment and values protection in the Fireshed to assist partners in prioritizing treatments, and coordinates with partners to improve the processes for carrying out treatments. The Resiliency Team should coordinate with the Communications Team to ensure information about projects are communicated to the public and with the Implementation Team to ensure the outcomes of the projects are monitored.

(2) **Communications Team** – responsible for procedural aspects of GSFFC planning and strategy. The Communications Team coordinates public relations, internal communications among partners and advisors, communications with Tribal communities, and communications with other collaborative organizations. The Communications Team coordinates participation and collaboration processes, to assist in implementing treatments according to the priorities established by the Resiliency Team. The Communications Team also ensures that information such as meeting agendas and minutes are properly archived and easily available to both GSFFC participants and the general public. The Communications Team should coordinate with the Resiliency and Implementation Teams to ensure that information on treatments, prescribed burns, wildfires, and GSFFC activities and events are communicated to the public in a timely fashion.

(3) **Implementation Team** – responsible for procedural aspects of GSFFC planning and strategy. The Implementation Team coordinates fundraising for treatments, as well as monitoring the treatments in accordance with the strategies and priorities identified by the Resiliency Team. The Implementation Team should coordinate with the Resiliency Team to ensure priorities for treatments are applied and opportunities for collaboration among partners are not overlooked, and with the Communications Team to ensure information is properly shared among partners and with the public.

Meetings

Meetings of the Coalition will be scheduled by consensus, based on necessity. Ordinarily, a date for each meeting will be agreed upon at the previous meeting, or will be announced at least one month prior to the scheduled date. Generally, the Coalition should meet at least quarterly (four times per year) in order to keep all partners and advisors updated and to move projects forward.

Meetings of committees will be scheduled by the committee chair as necessary to discuss information and decide on issues pertinent to their purposes.

Decision-making

As a collaborative organization, one of the primary functions of the GSFFC is to provide a forum for partners and advisors to share information about the activities of their organizations, and to coordinate activities with a common purpose. At times, the GSFFC will make decisions about the operations of the collaborative organization, and decisions should be guided by the following values and processes.

The values and processes for decision-making apply to the activities and operations of the GSFFC as a collaborative organization, and not to independent decisions and plans made by any of its partners or advisors.

Decision-making Values

Decisions regarding GSFFC operations should be:

(1) **Participatory and Collaborative:** The Chair should ensure that all partners have an opportunity to provide meaningful input to plans and decisions of the collaborative. Advisors also should be given a chance to provide input to decisions at meetings and activities.

If the GSFFC will make a decision that is of extraordinary importance to the communities in the Fireshed, to the City or County of Santa Fe, or to the State of New Mexico, partners should consider seeking input from the public that will be affected as well.

(2) **Strategic:** The GSFFC should aim to make decisions that are strategic, that represent the values and capacities of the partners, and that provide optimal outcomes.

(3) **Enabling:** Decisions made by the GSFFC should enable positive actions by partners and communities in and near the Fireshed.

Decision-making Process

(1) **Consensus:** When possible, the GSFFC should strive to make decisions by consensus, and should carefully consider dissenting views and work to incorporate dissent into the decisions and plans of the Coalition.

(2) **Majority:** If consensus is impossible, the GSFFC will make decisions by a majority vote, after discussion and debate on the issue at hand. All partners should strive to conform to the final decision.

(3) **Representative:** The GSFFC should strive to make decisions that are representative of the partnering organizations, and should avoid decisions or plans that contradict the goals, purposes, or policies of any partner.

Conflict Resolution

- (1) If a disagreement or conflict arises among partners regarding an activity, process, policy or decision of the GSFFC, the partners should first attempt to resolve their differences through a discussion among the parties.
- (2) If they cannot resolve their differences, the issue should be brought before the most relevant committee for a discussion in which partners can consider the effects of the conflict on the mission and goals of the GSFFC and on communities in the Fireshed, and work to resolve the conflict among partners
- (3) If a discussion before a standing committee is unacceptable to parties to the dispute, the Chair of the GSFFC can appoint a committee of mediators to facilitate a discussion among the parties to try to resolve the dispute.
- (4) If the conflict persists, the issues will be brought before the entire Coalition of partners for debate and discussion, followed by a vote (either public or by secret ballot as circumstances dictate) of all partners on how to resolve the dispute.
- (5) The parties should abide by the decision made by the Coalition.