

Eighth Western Annual Policy Meeting  
 Troutdale, Oregon ~December 9-12, 2008  
**Participant Evaluation Summary**

**Background**

Of the 120 APM participants (including speakers and guests who may not have stayed the whole time), 55 people completed the comprehensive participant evaluation form. Sixteen people completed paper evaluations and 39 people completed the online survey. The following report provides a summary of the meeting evaluations completed by APM participants.<sup>1</sup>

**Overall Trends and Changes from Last Year**

The meeting structure and flow continue to be well liked by the majority of participants. There is still a tension between providing enough background information and policy education so that newcomers can participate and accomplishing all of the goals of the meeting. There was an increase this year in the percentage of people who thought the meeting was effective at providing an opportunity to network (85%).

**Summary of Evaluation Results**

**Meeting Structure:**

1a. How effective was the meeting structure and “flow”?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Very Effective	<b>55%</b>	<b>29</b>
Effective	43%	23
Fairly Effective	2%	1
Not Effective	0%	0

b. Would you have switched activities, added or removed any?

Out of the 29 people that answered the question, 15 would not have switched, added or removed any activities. Respondents were positive about the speed and flow of the meeting. Five people requested more time in working group sessions and many suggested shortening the plenary sessions to free up time.

2. What were your TWO primary reasons for attending the Annual Policy Meeting?

	Response Percent	Response Count
<b>Networking with other organizations on policy issues</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>32</b>
Advancing the policy effectiveness/ strategies of RVCC	<b>25%</b>	<b>24</b>
Advancing my own/ my organizations knowledge of policy issues	24%	23
Building my own/my organizations policy engagement skills	13%	13
Other (See below)	6%	6

<sup>1</sup> **Notes on survey source information:** In some cases, percentage totals do not equal 100% because: 1. Survey respondents gave more than one answer to a single question; 2. Not all respondents answered every question; or 3. Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

In the online evaluation respondents were given an additional option to answer questions #8-20 and could choose *Sort of* in addition to *Yes*, *No* and *I didn't attend*. *Sort of* was not an option in the paper evaluation.

3. What was your level of engagement in RVCC policy activities during 2008 (e.g. working groups)?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Low	<b>49%</b>	<b>24</b>
Moderate	27%	13
High	24%	12

4. How effective was the meeting in:

	<b>Very Effective</b>	<b>Effective</b>	<b>Fairly Effective</b>	<b>Not Effective</b>
Providing an opportunity to network	<b>85% (41)</b>	17% (8)	2% (1)	0% (0)
Identifying common ground on policy issues for RVCC?	<b>50% (24)</b>	42% (20)	8% (4)	0% (0)
Advancing the policy strategies and organization of RVCC?	38% (18)	<b>60% (29)</b>	0% (0)	2% (1)
Providing information about relevant policy issues	38% (18)	<b>46% (22)</b>	15% (7)	2% (1)
Preparing new participants to engage in RVCC?	23% (11)	<b>54% (26)</b>	23% (11)	0% (0)
Building national policy skills among participants?	10% (5)	42% (20)	<b>44% (21)</b>	4% (2)

5. In general, what about the meeting worked?

Many people commented positively about the round robin sessions and liked the participatory/interactive nature of the session that gave everyone a chance to engage and learn, finding common threads and raising the level of understanding across the coalition (12). A handful of people also praised the working group sessions. Four people commented on the facilitation – capturing ideas, keeping discussion productive and geared toward maximization of results from the short time the participants can spend together. Many people praised the schedule overall and appreciated the smooth transitions, time keeping, flow and productivity (9). Some respondents like the networking opportunities (7). A couple of people said that developing the platform helped to structure and focus the working group sessions.

6. What did not work so well?

Many respondents requested longer working group sessions and suggested cutting down the plenary discussions and presentations to allow working groups to have more substantive discussion and planning time together (10).

Some people commented that as new members they felt lost (5). Some respondents referenced the “confusing jumble of acronyms and jargon” and others said that they lacked the policy background or issue expertise making it difficult for them to participate. One new member said that although they were not always able to follow they recognized that it may not be in the interest of the coalition to spend too much time bringing new members up to speed. Another new member recommended a more extensive review of the evolution of the policy frameworks for newer participants.

A couple of people commented that the first day was confusing and didn't integrate well into the rest of the meeting. Two respondents recommended restructuring or rethinking the caucus exercise. One person recommended using crosscutting issues that can meet more than one objective as a prioritization strategy. One person commented that the steps and hills and multiple meeting spaces made navigating the meeting difficult.

7a. Was the facilitation at this year's meeting:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Very Effective	44.80%	22
Effective	<b>48.90%</b>	<b>24</b>
Fairly Effective	6.10%	3
Not Effective	0%	0

b. Why or why not?

Overall, participants were very pleased with the facilitation at the meeting. Respondents were impressed by the effort, enthusiasm and knowledge of the facilitators. One respondent commented that it was clear the meeting was well planned. A couple of people said that the facilitators kept the groups focused and on time.

Three people gave recommendations for improvement that included: better time management and focus and more accurate recorders. Some participants recommended less structure and introduction while other would have liked less.

***Panels and Presentations:***

8. Did the ***History and Orientation to RVCC*** presentation give you an understanding of who the RVCC is, what we believe in, and what we've accomplished in the past?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>71%</b>	<b>31</b>
*Sort of*	13%	6
No	0%	0
I didn't attend	16%	7

9a. Did the ***Messages for the Next President: Video Presentations from Enterprise High School Seniors*** inspire you?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	17%	8
*Sort of*	<b>41%</b>	<b>19</b>
No	13%	6
I didn't attend	28%	13

Many people commented on the technical difficulties in the video and suggested further editing. Some respondents were inspired by the presentation, "*Youth that want to return to their hometown but feel they can not due to a lack of economic opportunity seems to be a common dilemma in rural communities. But the fact that they want to return and that they value their place is inspiring to me.*" A couple of people said it would have been nice to hear from more rural youth and liked the parts of the video when the youth were expressing their own opinions. In this same vein, one participant was more inspired by the Q&A session with the students than to the video itself.

b. Did it provide a good way to involve youth in the meeting?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>51%</b>	<b>24</b>
*Sort of*	21%	10
No	2%	1
I didn't attend	26%	12

c. Do you have other ideas of ways to inspire participants at the beginning of the meeting?

A couple of people said they would have liked an interactive format better. Specific suggestions for inspirational presentations included the following:

- LCRI monitoring crew members,
- meeting participants telling their stories, cross-section of new and old attendees (4),
- success stories (2),
- college students,
- keynote on community based conservation in the U.S. “Where we’ve been and where are we going”,
- students from different areas,
- dynamic experienced speaker,
- something creative – poetry, song, excellent speech,
- slide show presentation of RVCC participants in their communities,

10. Did Marvin Brown’s keynote address, *State Forestry and Federal Lands Management: Collaboration Opportunities for Communities and State Foresters* help inform your participation in the meeting?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>29%</b>	<b>14</b>
*Sort of*	27%	13
No	16%	8
I didn't attend	<b>29%</b>	<b>14</b>

11. Did Mary Wagner’s keynote address, *Restoration, Stewardship, and Community Collaboration in the West* help inform your participation in the meeting?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>48%</b>	<b>28</b>
*Sort of*	27%	17
No	16%	0
I didn't attend	29%	13

The comments about Mary Wagner’s speech were very positive. Participants appreciated her enthusiasm and ability to rally the group. “*She provided a much needed emotional connection for the group and created a safe space for the agency people to truly engage and participate in the meeting.*” “*To hear her speak of the RVCC so highly led me to understand from the beginning that this group is getting things done! That translated into pure motivation for me to stay plugged in for the rest of the week!*”

12. Did Sally Collins’ keynote address, *The Future of the Forest Service: Opportunities and New Directions in Federal Land Certification, Climate Change, and Ecosystem Services* help inform your participation in the meeting?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>62%</b>	<b>28</b>
*Sort of*	20%	9
No	2%	1
I didn't attend	16%	7

The comments about Sally Collins speech were also very positive.

13. Was the *Overview of the Annual Policy Meeting Process* presentation helpful in understanding how the meeting was structured and what we hoped to accomplish?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>82%</b>	<b>41</b>
*Sort of*	8%	4
No	0%	0
I didn't attend	10%	5

14. Did the *Political Realities Roundtable* give you a good understanding of the post-election landscape and the opportunities RVCC has advance our issues?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>76%</b>	<b>37</b>
*Sort of*	14%	7
No	4%	2
I didn't attend	6%	3

The majority of participants responded favorably towards this panel. One person requested panelists from other Western states.

15. Did the *Building Effective Political Strategies and Actions to Support Community Conservation* panel give you an understanding of what approaches are most effective for coalitions to effectively influence federal legislative and administrative decision-making processes?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>45%</b>	<b>25</b>
*Sort of*	38%	21
No	14%	8
I didn't attend	3%	2

16. Did you enjoy watching “*Are We Safe from Fire*” and “*Keeping Energy Dollars Local*”, and having the option to learn about what other RVCC participants have been doing?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	14%	7
*Sort of*	0%	0
No	2%	1
I didn't attend	<b>84%</b>	<b>43</b>

Many people were unable to attend the video because of its place in the agenda. Respondents recommended showing it at a different time.

17. Did the *Issue Report Out from the Round Robin Sessions* help inform your participation in the meeting?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>80%</b>	<b>38</b>
*Sort of*	8%	4
No	8%	4
I didn't attend	4%	2

One person thought that it helped build a connection to the working group sessions the next day. Another person recommended that this session be combined with the Platform Previews.

18a. Did *The Rural Compact—Education, Health Care, Stewardship of Natural Resources, and Investment* panel give you an understanding of what the National Rural Assembly is?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>76%</b>	<b>40</b>
*Sort of*	13%	7
No	2%	1
I didn't attend	9%	5

One person suggested that we need to find ways to follow up with this connection because it wasn't completely clear. A couple of respondents liked the panel because it grounded the meeting in rural areas and provided a good opportunity to broaden the rural movement. *"I was inspired by the inclusion of the Rural Compact folks and think that there are a lot of opportunities to grow our network and make a national effort around allied issues."*

b. Did it give you an understanding of how RVCC could collaborate with the National Rural Assembly to integrate their messages with the 2009 RVCC Platform?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>79%</b>	<b>38</b>
*Sort of*	6%	3
No	6%	3
I didn't attend	8%	4

19. Was the *Platform Previews* session helpful in informing you about each plank of the policy platform?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>68%</b>	<b>34</b>
*Sort of*	14%	7
No	8%	4
I didn't attend	10%	5

20. Was the *Working Group Caucus* session helpful in refining and coordinating the planks of the policy platform?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>46%</b>	<b>23</b>
*Sort of*	26%	13
No	12%	6
I didn't attend	16%	8

Participant's comments were split, some people said that more time would have been nice, but others said that this session was unproductive and devolved quickly into down time / networking time.

21. Did Congressman Peter DeFazio's keynote address, *Rural Communities, Natural Resource Stewardship: What does the future offer?* help inform your participation in the meeting?

Congressman DeFazio was unable to attend the meeting because of an obligation in Washington, D.C.

22. Did the *Platform Presentations and Discussion* session help inform your selection of priority items within the policy platform?

This session was cancelled. We were able to address this discussion in other fora.

23. Was the **Platform Prioritization and “Initial” Ratification** session an effective way to prioritize elements within the planks of the policy platform?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>64%</b>	<b>30</b>
*Sort of*	11%	5
No	2%	1
I didn't attend	23%	11

24. Was the **Working Group Meeting** session helpful in determining our next steps for collective action?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>64%</b>	<b>28</b>
*Sort of*	21%	9
No	0%	0
I didn't attend	16%	7

Many participants said that this session was too rushed.

**Break-out Sessions:**

25a. How effective were the round-robin sessions in generating ideas and identifying priority and common ground issues with which to develop the 2009 RVCC Policy Platform?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Very Effective	40%	18
Effective	<b>49%</b>	<b>22</b>
Fairly Effective	5%	2
Not Effective	7%	3

b. Why or why not?

A couple of people commented that the Round Robin provided space to hear new ideas and let new people participate in dialogue. Others said that the sessions didn't generate very many new ideas, but helped to brief the entire group about the issues and highlighted emerging priorities (2).

26a. How effective were the working group platform development sessions?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Very Effective	18%	8
Effective	<b>62%</b>	<b>28</b>
Fairly Effective	13%	6
Not Effective	7%	3

b. Why or why not?

Two people commented that it was hard for their groups to stay focused. One person said that their group came up with a very clear product to work off of in the coming year.

**Homework:**

27a. Did you like the on-line survey format we used this year?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>86%</b>	<b>38</b>
Somewhat	14%	6
No	0%	0

b. Why or why not?

The majority of people said that the survey was easy to fill out. A couple of people said that it was too long.

28a. Did the structure and format of the homework provide an adequate opportunity for you to fully express your own policy issues, concerns and priorities for this year's annual policy meeting?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>68%</b>	<b>30</b>
Somewhat	32%	14
No	0%	0

b. Why or why not?

One person said that the homework was thought provoking and inspired them to come to the meeting.

29. Did you read the homework synthesis in advance of the meeting?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>52%</b>	<b>24</b>
Part of it	30%	14
No	17%	8

30. Did the homework synthesis help prepare you to engage in policy dialog at the meeting?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>47%</b>	<b>21</b>
Somewhat	36%	16
No	18%	8

31. What can we do to make the homework more useful and effective in future meetings?

A couple of people asked that we send the homework synthesis to them earlier. A few people recommended that the working group chairs use the homework results to frame the working group sessions. One person suggested allowing people to skip some areas and focus more of their time on issues that they were more familiar with.

32. How long did it take you to complete the homework?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Under 1 hour	<b>61%</b>	<b>27</b>
1-2 hours	34%	15
2-3 hours	2%	1
More than 3 hours	2%	1

**Outcomes:**

33a. Do you think the meeting will lead to greater policy effectiveness and organization among the participating groups?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>93%</b>	<b>43</b>
Somewhat	7%	3
No	0%	0

b. Please explain:

Participants were very positive about the meeting and enjoyed the opportunity to come together and plan face to face. One respondent quoted Henry Ford, "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." People said that the meeting provided a venue to connect, identify areas of agreement, and get involved creating greater action, more knowledgeable positions and thus greater effectiveness as a coalition. People gave the following positive comments:

- *I know I come back extremely energized to get more involved in policy and interacting with my elected officials.*
- *I left the meeting with a lot of hope for our collective work in the upcoming year. That sentiment, in part, comes from the excellent organization of the meeting and in part from the transition to an administration that will be more open to new ideas.*
- *There is an excellent closeness and understanding throughout the whole group.*

One person was unsure about how we would be able to turn the ideas generated into action and another respondent said that our effectiveness is dependent on our follow-up and commitment.

34a. Will you focus your policy work around the identified priority issue areas?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>52%</b>	<b>23</b>
Somewhat	39%	17
No	9%	4

b. Please explain:

Many respondents said that they would focus their policy work around the identified priority issue areas where there was overlap with their organizational mission and priorities for the coming year (5). One person said that some of the issues are too narrowly defined around forests and natural resources.

35a. Are there issues that are NOT priority issue areas for RVCC that you will focus on in the coming year?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>37%</b>	<b>14</b>
Maybe	32%	12
No	32%	12

b. If yes, what are these issues?

- Carbon markets
- Cooperation/collaboration among federal agencies and tribes
- Economic analysis
- Local and state policy, possibly telecomm for rural communities
- Sustainable ag/ Farm Bill issues
- Federal lands certification and green building.
- Travel Management, Wilderness designation
- Promoting legislation for a Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement

c. Will you work on these other issues with groups that participate in RVCC?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>50%</b>	<b>18</b>
I don't know	31%	11
No	19%	7

36. Will you use the strategies developed during the meeting?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	<b>53%</b>	<b>21</b>
Somewhat	45%	18
No	2%	1

37. Which of these are you likely to do:

Promote priority issue areas identified during the meeting with other organizations/practitioners in the area	<b>74% (31)</b>
Use the priority issue areas when working with policymakers	<b>71% (30)</b>
Show meeting report to other groups, practitioners in my area	<b>57% (24)</b>
Attend an advocacy/policy training session if offered by RVCC	55% (23)
Seek to liaison with the full group when making important policy decisions	48% (20)
Organize policy training activities in my region/sub-region	14% (6)

**Next Steps:**

38. What follow-up activities should take place?

Development of information for policy makers	<b>87% (39)</b>
Continued communication with the larger policy group	<b>81% (34)</b>
Development of a tangible work plan (who does what, and when)	<b>78% (35)</b>
Policy grassroots outreach, and organizing	68% (30)
Policy trainings (communication, lobbying info, media training)	56% (25)
More regional organizing meetings	42% (19)

**Venue:**

39a. Rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the meeting venue:

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
*Facilities overall*	<b>59% (19)</b>	31% (10)	9% (3)	0% (0)
Seating in the meeting rooms	30% (14)	<b>64% (30)</b>	6% (3)	0% (0)
Meeting room temperature	15% (7)	<b>53% (25)</b>	28% (13)	4% (2)
Lighting in the meeting room	19% (9)	<b>43% (20)</b>	34% (16)	4% (2)
Arrangement of the meeting room	23% (11)	<b>64% (30)</b>	13% (6)	0% (0)
Breakout rooms- overall comfort	19% (9)	<b>72% (34)</b>	9% (4)	0% (0)
Hotel Rooms	37% (15)	<b>49% (20)</b>	7% (3)	5% (2)
Meals	<b>49% (23)</b>	38% (18)	13% (6)	4% (2)
Free time options	<b>48% (21)</b>	39% (17)	11% (5)	2% (1)
*Meeting location*	<b>61% (19)</b>	32% (10)	7% (2)	0% (0)

b. Please provide us with any comments about the meeting venue:

Comments about the meeting venue were overwhelmingly positive. Respondents said that the venue offered great opportunities to network and interact during their free time. A couple of people encouraged the hotel to adopt energy saving measures such as replacing incandescent bulbs.

40a. How was the service at the facility?

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
Overall	<b>54% (25)</b>	35% (16)	4% (2)	0% (0)
At the front desk?	<b>63% (27)</b>	37% (16)	0% (0)	0% (0)
In the meeting rooms?	<b>61% (28)</b>	33% (15)	4% (2)	0% (0)
Food service?	<b>62% (28)</b>	31% (14)	7% (3)	0% (0)

***Anything else you want to tell us? Feel free to elaborate, we love feedback!***

We received the following comments:

- *I don't have the time to spend four days at a meeting except for RVCC. I say this because in my mind RVCC is very effective and worth the time.*
- *Thanks for such a smooth running, well organized meeting!*
- *I loved the working sessions, the plenaries left a bit to be desired.*
- *I appreciated the opportunity to attend and feel like there is a lot of potential in our working with the RVCC.*
- *There are a lot of policy areas where our goals are the same, but these did not make it into priorities this year. I feel with process improvements and greater understanding of these complex issues our combined priorities may shift.*