



RVCC
Rural Voices for
Conservation
COALITION

OPERATIONS MANUAL

December 2010



Note: The purpose of this document is to serve as a tool for new coalition members and a reference for existing members. RVCC is a flexible and constantly evolving coalition and this will be a living document.

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ORIENTATION

Mission

The Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (RVCC) is comprised of rural and local, regional, and national organizations that have joined together to promote balanced conservation-based approaches to the ecological and economic problems facing the rural West and the nation. We are committed to finding and promoting policy solutions through collaborative, place-based work that recognizes the inextricable link between the long-term health of the land and the well being of rural communities.

Our Vision

The protection, management, and utilization of nature's resources have provided the basis for every human civilization known to history. Even a consumer and technology-based society must recognize this interdependence and the necessity for balancing our human accounts with nature's own budget. RVCC is dedicated to taking up this challenge; to representing the interests of the people and landscapes of the American West in both the policy and practical arenas; to passing on a deeper connection between our region's bounties and beauty, and our responsibilities for their sustainability; to building a legacy of opportunity and understanding for our children and their children; and to uniting and including all those who join with us in subscribing to these core beliefs:

- Interdependence – The health of our rural communities and landscapes are interrelated. Restoration of the environment must occur in social symbiosis with the revitalization of rural communities.
- Resilience and Diversity – Resilience and diversity are the key components that provide for both ecosystem productivity and economic well-being.
- Power Sharing – Collaborative decision-making, investigation, assessment, action, and monitoring are vital to all vibrant and democratic systems of resources management and stewardship.
- Cooperative Processes – Real cooperation is inclusive and based on mutual benefits, and on respect for the strengths, differences and interests that the involved parties bring together.
- Sustainability – Long-term resource security is more dependent on re-investment in the associated ecosystems and rural economies than on the profits generated by their production.
- Our Region – The natural resources, recreation opportunities and cultural attributes of the West make a significant contribution to the Nation as a whole.

Above all, we believe that the future of our region, our country, and our world will depend on how well we are able to manage for the protection and productivity of our landscapes, and on what we leave behind for the generations who will come after us in these places.

Who We Are

The RVCC prides itself on being an inclusive movement that seeks common ground between diverse interests. The coalition is currently comprised of more than 80 nonprofit, public, and private organizations. Our partners include rural community advocates, regional and national conservation organizations, environmentalists, business owners, federal and state land managers, researchers, county and state government, and foundations.

Goals

The RVCC focuses on policy issues that affect rural communities, public and private lands management, and the continuation of a natural resource-based economy in the rural West. The central task of the RVCC is to advocate for political reforms that protect, restore, and manage natural resources. In doing so, the RVCC places a priority on ensuring that rural voices and viewpoints are represented in natural resource policies.

In addition to the activities and actions of the RVCC, the coalition maintains several core goals:

1. Seek and develop ecologically responsible and economically equitable solutions to the systemic problems that inhibit the restoration and maintenance of forests and rangelands.
2. Increase support among decision makers for federal funding of restoration and maintenance of public lands and rural economic development.
3. Advance legislative ideas and influence legislation proposed by others.
4. Strengthen the voices of rural leaders, both non-elected and elected, within conservation and economic development policy.
5. Inform the media of our priority issues and the potential benefits of the solutions we offer.

What We Do

The work of the RVCC is accomplished through multiple activities, including the Annual Policy Meeting, the Western Week in Washington, and Working Groups. Other tools the RVCC uses to disseminate its messages include issue papers, testimony, public comments, sign-on letters, and opinion editorials.

Why the RVCC is Unique

The RVCC is a multi-issue, multi-state coalition of organizations working together to address both short and long-term policy barriers. Therefore the RVCC is committed to:

- Changing what the national policy dialogue is about, and to actually changing federal policies.
- Working together collaboratively.
- Promoting long-term solutions that are politically, socially, and economically durable.
- Making good things happen on the land and in rural communities.
- Adapting our processes and positions as we learn and share with others, within and from outside of the coalition.
- Seeking change incrementally, systematically and through the overhaul of broken systems.

History

The RVCC began in 2001 as a way for community forestry groups across the Pacific Northwest to come together and address policy-related issues of mutual concern. This meeting set the foundation for future Annual Policy Meetings. In subsequent years, the regional focus of the group has broadened to include other areas of the West and considerations including ranching and rangelands, climate change, biomass energy development and other issues affecting rural communities.

The first Annual Policy Meeting was catalyzed by several factors:

- A sense that there were many groups who shared values and objectives.
- Increasing frustration over national policy issues and our limited ability to access related discussions.
- A hope that by working together we could more effectively influence national policy.

COALITION STRUCTURE

The RVCC employs an ad-hoc organizing structure with few formalities. Organizations and individuals engage and participate in the RVCC through working groups and attendance at the Annual Policy Meeting, various field tours, and trips to Washington, D.C. There are no membership, electoral, or voting requirements in our decision-making process, and participating organizations speak for themselves. Rather than selecting a single organization to formally speak for the coalition, we opt to collaborate and support each other to develop a collective and unified voice.

Sustainable Northwest

Sustainable Northwest (SNW) is the convening organization for the RVCC through its policy program. SNW is dedicated to building the capacity of partner organizations to participate in national policy discussions, development, and education, as well as media outreach. As convener, SNW distributes information on policy developments, coordinates the working groups, works with individual partner organizations on various policy issues, raises funds to support the activities of partners, plans and organizes coalition activities, and connects partners with the media. SNW was largely responsible for the establishment of the RVCC when the Policy Program hosted the first policy meeting in Portland, Oregon in 2001. SNW maintains a policy list serve and serves as a “central hub” for issue paper development and working group communications.

RVCC Core Group

The RVCC Core Group is the leadership of the Coalition. The majority of Core Group members chair a working group. Sustainable Northwest asks participants in the RVCC who show commitment and leadership to the coalition, as well as expertise in a certain issue area, to participate on the Core Group. Sustainable Northwest does its utmost to ensure that the Core Group is a diverse group that is representative of the Coalition. Organizations on the Core Group represent local, regional, and national groups from California, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Tennessee, and Washington D.C.

Listed in order by date of their admission, the following organizations make up the Core Group:

- American Forests (www.americanforests.org) (Since 2001)
- Ecosystem Workforce Program (ewp.uoregon.edu) (Since 2001)
- Northwest Connections (www.northwestconnections.org) (Since 2001)
- Sustainable Northwest (www.sustainablenorthwest.org) (Since 2001)
- Wallowa Resources (www.wallowaresources.org) (Since 2001)
- Watershed Research and Training Center (www.thewatershedcenter.com) (Since 2001)
- Forest Guild (www.forestguild.org) (Since 2003)
- Siuslaw Institute (www.siuslawinstitute.org) (Since 2008)
- National Rural Assembly (www.ruralassembly.org) (Since 2009)
- Restore Montana (www.wildlandscpr.org/montana-watershed-restoration) (Since 2009)

Core Group Function

Following is a list of some of the responsibilities and roles performed by the RVCC Core Group:

- Plan and facilitate Annual Policy Meeting, working groups, meetings, media work, and other activities
- Meet annually to discuss strategic direction for the coalition and identify cross-cutting challenges and opportunities faced by RVCC working groups
- Participate in monthly Core Group conference calls
- Make strategic decisions for the RVCC enabling the coalition to respond quickly to new policy developments
- Play a leadership role at the Annual Policy Meeting and the Western Week in Washington

- Promote the RVCC to outside audiences and help to fundraise for the coalition
- Core Group members also tend to be working group chairs and/or long-term leaders that coordinate actions between working groups

RVCC Working Groups

Working groups are developed at the Annual Policy Meeting (APM) after the collective identification of priority policy issues for the year ahead. Meeting participants self-select which working groups they would like to join. Participating in a working group provides the opportunity to work with others in RVCC who are concerned about a particular issue and are interested in taking coordinated action to solve that issue at the local and national level. We encourage everyone to join at least one working group, however, we caution people about joining too many groups as the operative word is—WORK.

Working Group Function

The function of working groups is to hold regular monthly conference calls throughout the year and provide the main venue for carrying out the strategies developed collaboratively at the APM. Working groups communicate and disseminate their policy recommendations by writing issue papers, giving congressional testimony, writing sign-on letters, commenting on federal budgets, legislation, proposed rules and regulations, as well as administrative policy initiatives, and responding to congressional requests and interest group dialogues.

Working Group Participation

There are many ways to participate in the RVCC involving different levels of commitment and contribution. Individuals unable to guarantee a significant time commitment are free to join groups as an “FYI” member so they can stay informed about the working group’s actions, but not participate directly in the working group throughout the year. Below is a description of the responsibilities of the different working group participants:

Working Group Chair Responsibilities

- Develop consensus and/or majority agreement about working group positions.
- Actively initiate, participate, and/or lead conference calls.
- Make sure someone takes notes during conference calls and that notes are distributed within 5 business days of the call.
- Act as primary drafter, editor, and/or synthesizer of issue papers and other written materials.
- Work with group to accomplish the goals of the work plan.
- Contribute to the preparations and follow-up for the Western Week in Washington.
- Attend the Annual Policy Meeting and Western Week in Washington.
- Take a leadership role by providing perspective, ideas and information to the working group from local or other interest groups that you work with.
- Communicate the work, goals and recommendations of the working group to others.

Working Group Participant Responsibilities

- Work collaboratively
- Participate in conference calls as consistently as possible.
- Respond to inquiries from the chairs, providing perspective, ideas and information in a timely manner.
- Initiate and raise ideas and offer to take leadership on projects you are interested in pursuing related to the goals of the working group.

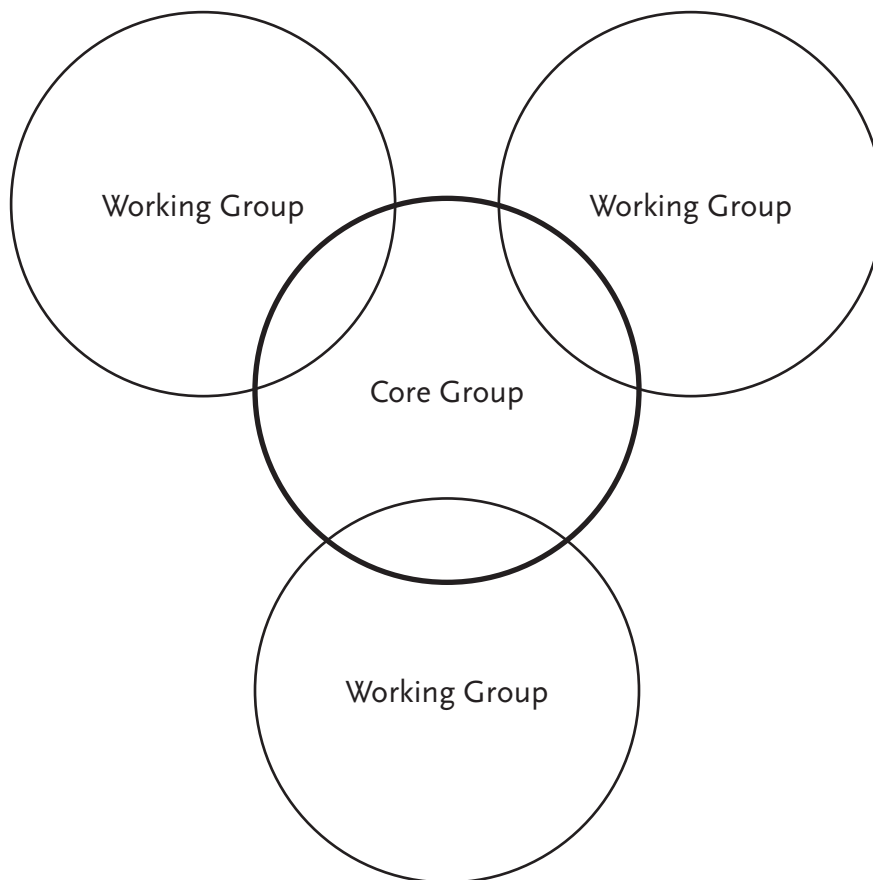
- Attend the Annual Policy Meeting and Western Week in Washington as possible.
- Share local experiences with your working group and communicate the work, goals and recommendations of the working group to others.

FYI Participant Responsibilities

- Stay informed of working group activities.
- Provide perspective, ideas, and information.
- Attend the Annual Policy Meeting.
- Communicate the work, goals and recommendations of the working group to others.

Current RVCC Working Groups

The names and objectives of the RVCC working groups are subject to change over time. A complete description of the current RVCC working groups can be found at the following web page: <http://sustainablenorthwest.org/rvcc/policy-priorities/rvcc-priorities>



For a calendar of RVCC events please see APPENDIX A, page 14.

Annual Policy Meeting

The Annual Policy Meeting (APM) is a working meeting where participants work together to define priority policy issues, messages and solutions. It is typically held over a three day period near Portland, Oregon. The meeting results in new or revived working groups with specific strategies and activities for the months leading up to the Western Week in Washington trips and the coming year.

Meeting Structure

The APM is designed to be a working meeting. Each day includes full group meetings, relevant presentations, and small group break-out sessions. On the first day, participants focus on issue development. On the second day, the focus shifts to the development of messages and solutions. The small working groups use a synthesis of results from the pre-meeting survey (described below), existing issue papers, and related materials to develop ideas, solutions, and recommendations. The full group is informed of developments made in all of the break-out sessions at the end of each day during brief reports from each group. Near the end of the meeting, participants have the opportunity to sign up for working groups.

Pre-Meeting Survey

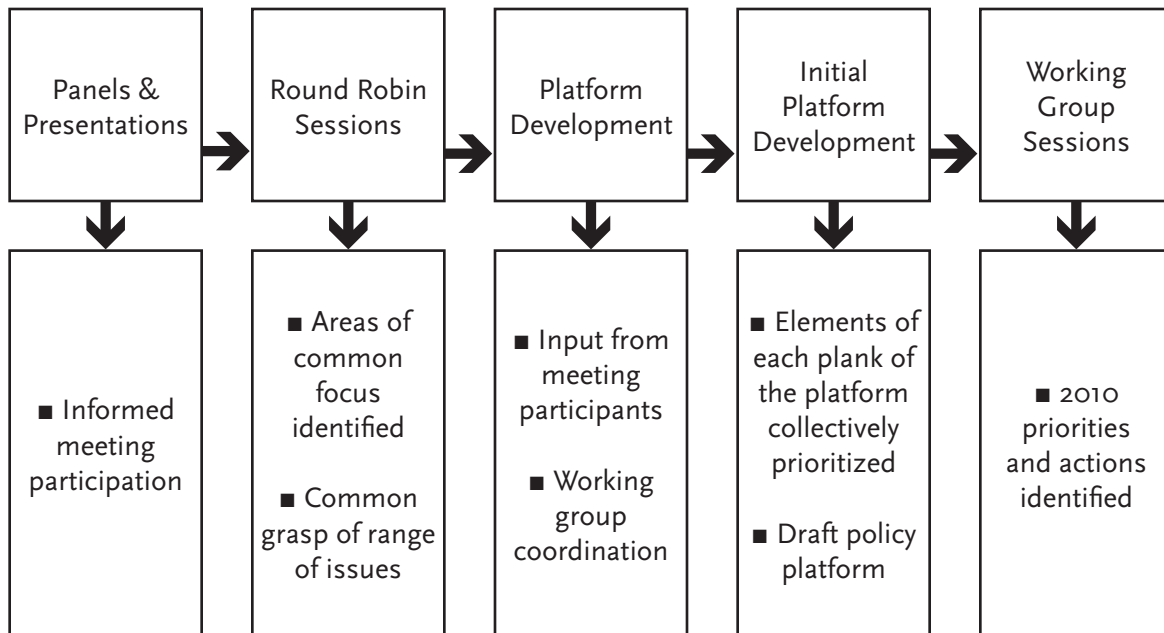
The Pre-Meeting Survey or “homework” is a critical aspect of preparing for the Annual Policy Meeting and gauging the key concerns and priorities among organizations participating in RVCC. Each year, all meeting participants complete this online survey in advance of the meeting. Sustainable Northwest and Core Group members synthesize the survey responses and send it out to all participants prior to the meeting. The synthesis is designed to provide meeting participants with a way to jumpstart discussions, hopefully move beyond initial brainstorming, and maximize the valuable and limited time we have together. It also gives individuals who are unable to attend the meeting an opportunity to shape the RVCC platform. While all of the policy issues brought up by meeting participants are significant, it is important to prioritize those best suited for collective action. When reviewing the synthesis, participants are asked to consider which issues and messages are best suited for the development of a collective platform that can be put into a plan of action for the year.

Meeting Products

The meeting will result in:

- A better understanding of the common ground among our organizations on key issues.
- A platform of policy priorities that we will collectively advance in the national policy arena.
- A suite of working group draft work plans that lay out activities that will be implemented throughout the year to further our policy platform. The work plans draw on the strengths of our collective organizations, and provide a variety of leadership opportunities.
- A set of key messages related to our policy priorities to be used in communicating with Congress, the media, the agencies, the Administration and interest groups.

Meeting Process



Western Week in Washington

Western Week in Washington (WWiW) trips provide RVCC participants with an opportunity to travel to Washington D.C. to convey our shared messages and solutions. The trips are usually held in early spring and summer and focus on appropriations bills and other policy priorities. These extremely busy trips include meetings with members of Congress and their staff, agency personnel, the Administration, and interest groups. The WWiW trips are primarily coordinated by SNW, with help from several partner organizations who work together to plan and implement the week. The majority of WWiW participants pay their own way to Washington, D.C. but SNW raises limited funds to pay for materials and for financial aid to cover travel, lodging, meals, and other incidental expenses.

WWiW Participant Expectations

- Attend meetings with congressional staff, agency representatives, the administration, and interest groups to advocate for policy recommendations using RVCC issue papers.
- All participants' respective organizations are expected to sign on to the issue papers that they will be discussing in D.C.

State Delegation and Decision-Maker Visits

Each year the RVCC seeks to conduct comprehensive education and outreach to congressional delegations and agency decision-makers at the local, regional, and national levels. Briefings and meetings are conducted with state and regional offices of Congress and the land management and economic development agencies. Often these state or regional-level efforts are scheduled to coincide with Western Week in Washington, so that those who cannot travel to D.C. can reinforce messages and help to magnify the impact of the RVCC. However, state or regional-level outreach can occur whenever a group of RVCC participants would like to coordinate it. Sustainable Northwest may provide support in terms of printed materials, assistance in setting up meetings or briefings, and limited financial assistance to defray the costs of travel and lodging if it is needed.

Funding

Sustainable Northwest raises funds to support the infrastructure and activities of the RVCC. However, the costs associated with convening the coalition, maintaining and managing working groups, creating and distributing written materials, maintaining the content on the web page, and traveling to meet with decision-makers far exceed the amount of money Sustainable Northwest is able to raise. Several members of the Core Group work in coordination with Sustainable Northwest to raise their own funds to support their participation in RVCC activities.

Over the years the following foundations have supported the development, activities, or some aspect of the RVCC:

- Surdna Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Flintridge Foundation
- Compton Foundation
- Liz Claiborne Art Ortenberg Foundation
- Brainerd Foundation
- The National Rural Assembly through their Kellogg Foundation grant

The RVCC also periodically receives small donations from individuals, which it generally targets towards scholarships for the Annual Policy Meeting or Western Week in Washington.

In some cases, Sustainable Northwest is able to provide small subcontracts to defray the costs of working group chairs who take on significant leadership and work loads to accomplish the work of the coalition. Rarely do these subcontracts fully cover the costs incurred by these organizations, and significant in-kind support is donated from the organizations participating on the RVCC Core Group. In other cases, some Core Group organizations have taken leadership roles in raising funds to support not only their own participation in RVCC events, but coalition activities as a whole.

The following organizations have provided financial support:

- The Watershed Research and Training Center
- American Forests
- The Ecosystem Workforce Program at the University of Oregon

There is no fundraising requirement for Core Group members, as there is no guarantee of available funds to assist participation. Each situation is handled on a case by case basis.

Financial Aid

In certain circumstances, Sustainable Northwest is able to provide individuals with financial aid to attend and participate in RVCC events. The financial aid may be applied to costs such as travel, lodging, and meals. Financial aid may not be used to pay for an individual's time and participation at an event. Financial aid allotments are handled on a case by case basis, and there is no guarantee that they will be awarded.

ISSUE DEVELOPMENT

RVCC Communications Policy

Because of the informal structure of RVCC, we maintain general policies that respect the autonomy of each organization and avoid misrepresentation in communications:

- Once a document is distributed for sign-on, it becomes a formal RVCC document.
- We do not speak on behalf of RVCC in press releases. We only invoke the RVCC name when a document has been circulated for sign-on.
- It is at the discretion of individual organizations to choose to sign on or not to sign on to a document.
- In order to avoid misrepresentation, individuals may not represent RVCC as a whole. If asked about RVCC's position on an issue, individuals are to speak only for their individual organization.
- If the coalition is approached by other entities asking for support for an issue, we will distribute the request to RVCC through the listserv, enabling individual coalition organizations to sign on as they wish. We do not sign on "RVCC" as a stand alone entity to any document.

Issue Papers

The primary purpose of an issue paper is to explain the RVCC perspective on a problem and introduce proposed solutions. Issue papers are the primary communication materials of the RVCC and are distributed throughout the year at meetings with interest groups, congressional staff, agencies, the media, and others. RVCC issue papers have proven extremely effective throughout the years. To access RVCC issue papers online visit: <http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/quick-links/resources/rvcc-issue-papers>

Below are the most recent issue papers produced by the RVCC:

Issue: Sustainable Rural Development

- *Transition Proposal for a New Administration and Congress*

Issue: Investment in Natural and Social Assets

- *2011 Appropriations*

Issue: Green Jobs, Green Infrastructure and Green Markets

- *Rural Natural Resource Green Jobs*
- *Economic Stimulus Proposal*

Issue: Climate Change

- *Climate Change Adaptation in Rural, Natural Resource-Dependent Communities*

Issue: Integrated Woody Biomass

- *Policy Recommendations to Promote Renewable Thermal Energy as an Essential Component of U.S. National Energy Policy*
- *Thermal Energy uses of Woody Biomass*
- *Woody Biomass*

Issue: Fair and Accessible Federal Contracting and Labor Practices

- *Stewardship End-Result Contracting*
- *Workforce and Labor Issue Paper*

Issue: Public Lands Restoration and Community Stewardship

- *Community-based Organizations: Strategic Assets for Western Conservation*
- *Building Community Capacity Issue Paper*
- *Collaboration Issue Paper*

Issue: Working Landscapes and Stewardship

- *Private Working Lands*
- *Sustainable Ranching to Support Rangeland Conservation*

Issue Paper Development

The ideas presented in issue papers are generally based on priorities identified during the Annual Policy Meeting (APM). The content of each paper is written, revised, vetted, edited, formatted, and finalized through a working group or other collaborative effort. Generally, working groups have a chair(s) who takes on the role of primary drafter, consolidator of comments, facilitator, and reminder of key dates. The primary “authors” of the issue papers are listed as resources at the end of each paper. As these papers reflect the integration of the discussions at the APM, they are not authored in the traditional sense and are not designed for academic publication. If a working group identifies a need and the desire to develop an issue paper, whether or not it has been discussed at the APM, they are free to do so. They are also responsible for the collaborative writing of the paper, the sign-on process, and for working with Sustainable Northwest to finalize the paper. Sustainable Northwest serves as the “hub” of issue paper production; coordinating the writing, editing and formatting of the papers, and handling the sign-on process and issue paper distribution.

Development Steps:

1. APM pre-meeting survey results reveal current issues and subjects for discussion.
2. APM discussions address subject matter that is relevant to the RVCC community.
3. Working Group conference calls further refine APM discussions.
4. Working groups or collaborative efforts across groups develop issue papers and come to agreement on content.
5. Issue papers circulated to the Core Group to address cross-cutting issues.
6. Completed issues submitted to SNW for formatting and sign-on process.

Sign-on Process

Once an issue paper is drafted, discussed and edited through a working group, it is sent out to the larger RVCC network for sign-on. It is okay for an organization to elect to sign-on to one RVCC paper and not another. RVCC participants and individuals outside of the coalition can sign-on to the letters and issue papers. All supporting organizations are listed in the final document.

Sign-on Steps:

1. Complete issue papers are sent to SNW for editing and formatting.
2. SNW sends out completed issue papers to RVCC network for sign-on.
3. Groups sign-on: Organizations are permitted to sign-on to all or selected papers. This allows organizations to participate in certain issue areas even if they do not agree with the full spectrum of RVCC issues.
4. Distribution of issue paper in venues such as WWiW.

For a more complete description of issue paper development and an issue paper template please see the RVCC Tool Box.

Background Papers

Background papers are used as a way to educate organizations within RVCC about a particular issue. They are effective in building a common understanding of definitions and context and explain why the issue may be of importance to RVCC. Background papers are not intended to make policy recommendations, though they may provide support to issue papers developed in the future. Background papers are generally circulated internally within RVCC, though they may be used by administrative and legislative audiences seeking to gain a better understanding of the issues.

Sign-on Letters

Sign-on letters are an effective tool when a working group needs to respond quickly to a piece of draft legislation or a request for support from a staffer, without waiting to include their recommendations in an issue paper. Much like issue papers, sign-on letters are circulated on the RVCC listserv for sign-on by entities and organizations. Unlike the RVCC issue papers, sign-on letters do not have the RVCC banner and may or may not go through the extensive working group vetting and development process. It is not permitted to sign onto something as the “Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition.” RVCC participants and individuals outside of the coalition can sign-on to the letters and issue papers.

Testimony and Public Comments

Some of the most effective and unique methods RVCC members employ to advance its agenda are official testimonies and public comments. Since the conception of the RVCC, members of its collective organizations have provided critical testimony for congressional hearings on federal legislation and programs. Testimony and comments provide beneficial information to U.S. legislators and can have a direct impact on the legislation produced by congressional committees. For a complete list and text of public testimonies and comments delivered by RVCC members, please visit the SNW resource page at: <http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/quick-links/resources/Testimony/>.

RVCC Policy Platform

The RVCC 2010 Policy Platform contains the RVCC’s legislative, administrative, and appropriations policy priorities. The platform is made up of a number of issue area “planks” that are combined to reflect the breadth of issues we work on.

Policy Platform Development

The Policy Platform is developed during the Annual Policy Meeting using information from our existing issue papers, the pre-meeting survey results, and ideas generated during APM working sessions. After the APM, working groups finalize their “planks” of the platform.

How the Policy Platform is Used

The Policy Platform is a public document that guides our work. It is used to prioritize RVCC work in the coming year, and as a cohesive way of expressing our policy interests to decision-makers and other organizations.

Difference Between the Policy Platform and Issue Papers

The Policy Platform combines in one place the main policy issues the RVCC will focus on in the coming year based on each issue area and related RVCC issue papers. Issue papers focus specifically on one topic or issue area, and are a comprehensive exploration of its challenges and our proposed solutions.

Policy Platform Changes

The Policy Platform will change over time. While the basic tenants of what the RVCC believes in and works for will stay the same, each year participants re-evaluate the specific policy priorities in the platform, and modify them at the Annual Policy Meeting and through the development of new issue papers or modifications of existing papers.

How to Support the Policy Platform

Everyone who attends the APM or participates in a working group in the months following the APM has an opportunity to shape the content of the platform. Once it is finalized, everyone in the RVCC network is given the option of signing on in support of it. If you decide to sign on, your organization's name will be listed on the document. If you decide not to sign on, you are still welcome to participate in the RVCC and sign on to individual issue papers, rather than the whole platform.

APPENDIX A

RVCC Calendar of Events

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
<p>WWiW invitations Invite RVCC individuals to participate in WWiW and begin planning strategy for the event.</p> <p>Pull together the working groups' appropriations asks.</p>	<p>Appropriations trip to Washington D.C.</p>	<p>Issue Paper production and sign-on Issue papers are finalized and circulated on the policy listserv for sign-on by the coalition.</p>
APRIL	MAY	JUNE
<p>Western Week in Washington Convey shared messages and solutions directly to members of congress, their staff, agency personnel, members of the administration, and interest groups. Focus on appropriations bills and policy priorities.</p>	<p>Delegation and decision maker visits</p>	<p>Core Group Retreat Evaluate the coalition's effectiveness and develop an overarching strategy for the coming year. Create a rough work plan and schedule for the working groups.</p>
JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
	<p>Annual Policy Meeting Recruitment Determine which groups and individuals to invite to the APM and start to recruit participants and speakers.</p>	
OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
<p>APM pre-meeting survey synthesis Gather ideas and opinions prior to the APM to help shape the Coalition's platform and identify common ground before the meeting.</p>		<p>Annual Policy Meeting Develop the RVCC Policy Platform for the coming year. Develop working group work plans and a strategy to advance RVCC policy asks.</p>

Below are some of the most commonly asked questions about the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (RVCC). Each subject is further delineated and explained in the manual.

What is the RVCC?

The RVCC is comprised of western rural and local, regional, and national organizations that have joined together to promote balanced conservation-based approaches to the ecological and economic problems facing the rural West. It is committed to finding and promoting policy solutions through collaborative, place-based work that recognizes the inextricable link between the long-term health of the land and well being of rural communities.

How does RVCC membership work?

The RVCC employs an ad-hoc organizing structure with few formalities. There are no membership or financial contributions necessary to participate in the Coalition. Participating organizations speak for themselves and choose to support the collective voice of the group.

What are the requirements to participate in the RVCC?

Although there are no official requirements to participate in the RVCC, participants are expected to:

- Attend the Annual Policy Meeting
- Participate in working groups
- Attend the Western Week in Washington
- Help develop, sign-on to, and support the content of RVCC publications
- Advance the policy priorities of the RVCC

How does the RVCC make decisions?

The RVCC Core Group makes strategic decisions on process and overarching tactics and tone of the Coalition. Sustainable Northwest manages the Coalition and makes decisions that relate to operations, fundraising, financial aid awards, events, and other activities necessary to sustain the Coalition. However, there are no membership, electoral, or voting requirements in our decision-making process, and participating organizations speak for themselves. We opt to collaborate and support each other to develop a collective and unified voice. That being said, participants may not always agree with the consensus developed by the Coalition, and are free to respond to issues in their own manner.

Who represents RVCC?

Sustainable Northwest acts as the convening organization for the Coalition through its policy program and manages the bulk of RVCC related activities. SNW is dedicated to building the capacity of partner organizations to participate in national policy discussions, development, education, as well as media outreach. The RVCC Core Group, comprised of a variety of organizations, makes strategic decisions and works to maximize coordination between the working groups that drive RVCC issues and positions. That said, there is no single formal voice or figurehead that speaks on behalf of the whole RVCC. Working groups develop issue papers collaboratively and individual organizations choose which issue papers to support or not. RVCC strives to maintain a decentralized and informal structure in which each organization speaks for itself. Other organizations and individuals may also take a greater role in coordinating and organizing the actions of the RVCC in coordination with Sustainable Northwest and the RVCC Core Group.

What is the RVCC Core Group?

The Core Group is largely comprised of the working group chairs and organizations that have provided strategic advice

or partnership to the coalition. Sustainable Northwest serves as the Chair of the Core Group.

How does someone become a working group Chair or join the Core Group?

This is a relatively organic process. However, in general Sustainable Northwest consults with existing working group chairs about emerging leaders in their working groups, and when additional leadership or new issues arise that necessitate adding expertise, geographic, or other diversity to the Core Group, Sustainable Northwest in consultation with existing Core Group members, invites a new organization to join.

How are the activities of the RVCC paid for?

Generally, RVCC participants are expected to finance their own way to RVCC events. However, in some cases Sustainable Northwest and other RVCC organizations are able to supply limited funding to alleviate the costs of participants' attendance. Sustainable Northwest also conducts the majority of fundraising for RVCC activities.

How do I get involved?

To join a working group contact Alaina Pomeroy, apomeroy@sustainablenorthwest.org with the following information:

- The name of the working group you would like to join.
- Your contact information (telephone number and email address)
- Your membership preference (full member or FYI member of the group)



**Sustainable
Northwest**

813 SW Alder Street, Ste 500
Portland, Oregon 97205
MAIN LINE (503) 221-6911

The Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition is a policy initiative of Sustainable Northwest.
For more information about RVCC visit www.sustainablenorthwest.org/rvcc

