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## MEMORANDUM

August 25, 2023

**TO:** TFW Policy Committee (Policy)

**FROM:** Lori Clark, Adaptive Management Program Administrator (AMPA)  
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**SUBJECT:** CMER Reform Recommendations

The Forest Practices Board approved the State Auditor's Office (SAO) Response Plan, [Recommendation 5<sup>1</sup> \(Net Gains Option 5\)](#), which directs engagement with Cooperative Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research Committee (CMER) on potential reforms and changes for Adaptive Management Program (AMP) efficiency and reform; including CMER membership, process improvements, and other relevant topics. Per the request of Policy, I met with each Policy caucus representative individually to collect input on areas in need of CMER reform and potential improvements. This memo summarizes the input and highlights areas of shared agreement on options to be considered for improvements to support a more efficient and science centered CMER. Policy will need to decide which of these options to advance to address this SAO recommendation.

It is noteworthy that, in addition to the SAO audit, several reviews of the AMP have been completed over the years which suggest a need for improvements to CMER: the [Stillwater Report](#), [Furman thesis](#), [Lean process review](#), and [MDT report](#). These reports show that the AMP program has become increasingly laden with process, disputes, policy discussions infiltrating CMER, and lack of collaboration. These issues delay the implementation of projects, contribute to the breakdown of relationships and accountability in the program and resulted in several staff and participants leaving the program over the past few years.

CMER reform options for Policy discussion:

1. Revising CMER membership was noted in the board-approved Net Gains Options and was shared consistently in the Policy interviews as a solution to promote CMER being balanced and focused on science rather than engaging in policy issues. Neither the Board Manual Section 22 nor WAC 12.222.045 limit the number of participants for CMER. Adjustments to CMER membership can, therefore, happen voluntarily. Two suggestions are highlighted as areas of agreement for this recommendation:
  - Limiting voting membership in CMER to one member per caucus. The broader scientific community can continue to participate in CMER and its associated Scientific Advisory Groups (SAGs).

<sup>1</sup> **SAO Recommendation 5:** Implement a "net gains" approach to each proposal, project, and decision that benefits more than one caucus by considering packages of projects instead of individual projects. 5 Net Gains Options were approved.

- Establishing minimum requirements for CMER membership to meet the needs of CMER. Require a certain level of scientific expertise/experience to participate in SAGs or CMER.
- In the Board-approved Net Gains Options, a related proposal aimed to modify the structure of CMER as the science arm of the program by replacing the current committee with an independent research organization. This would be a fundamental change to the AMP. Policy caucus representatives expressed that by implementing a change in CMER membership, along with other SAO action plan responses, this proposal could be shelved until there is time to observe incremental improvements.
2. Annual CMER and Policy interaction/conference were recommended in the Net Gains Options. The CMER and Policy Committee co-chairs began meeting monthly in 2022 to help improve communications between the committees. In addition, a transmission memo template was approved by Policy and CMER to assist with clearer transmission of communications between the committees. There may be an opportunity for a topic-based joint Policy/CMER conference, as needed.
  3. Increase accountability in meeting timelines as well as adhering to policies, and guidelines established in the Protocols and Standards Manual (PSM), including coming to meetings prepared and adhering to comment deadlines. Deliverables and deadlines are necessary and need to be adhered to by all participants in the AMP. The following suggestions are highlighted as areas of agreement for this recommendation:
    - Build in accountability where possible. AMP participants should be held accountable for following established ground rules and protocols, adhering to agreed deadlines and deliverables, and conducting themselves and treating others in a respectful and professional manner. If a member could not or would not adhere to ground rules, the AMPA will inform their caucus as a first step. Subsequent and continued deviations would need to be reported to the Forest Practices Board with a request to relinquish the individual's membership on CMER. If a replacement can't be found, then that caucus is not represented but also cannot hold up progress. A clear process for participant accountability and removal, if needed, needs to be established and added to the PSM.
    - Include AMP member participant accountability metrics in AMP biennial audit to inform the upcoming biennial contracts.
    - Institute term limits for SAG co-chairs. Rotate terms between caucuses so there is a staggering of new participants. SAGs need to be a balance of scientists, people with historical knowledge, and people that bring new ideas and perspectives.

To make progress on timeline accountability AMP staff have improved the 23-25 biennium contracts to standardize expectations, deliverables-based agreements, and level of detail for Personal Service Contracts, Inter-Agency Agreements, and cooperator contracts.

We all have the same desire to see the AMP improve its performance, increase its relevancy and be successful over the long term. Thank you for your attention to this matter and feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments.