DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

OFFICE OF THE COMMISIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS
1111 WASHINGTON STREET SE
OLYMPIA WA 98504

360-902-1000
WWW.DNR.WA.GOV

MEMORANDUM

August 5, 2025

TO: Forest Practices Board

FROM: Lori Clark, Adaptive Management Program Administrator (AMPA)
lori.clark@dnr.wa.gov | 360-819-3712

SUBJECT: CMER Reform

This memo is bringing forward an important issue that needs the Board's attention to ensure that the Cooperative Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research Committee (CMER) continues to function as intended by the Board in WAC 222-12-045(2)(i). Without refining and then imposing improved measures of accountability – as are called for in the WAC referenced above – this committee of the Adaptive Management Program (AMP) will continue to languish and very likely to reach a point where it no longer serves the Board's intended purpose for CMER.

Background

In October 2022, the Board approved the Timber, Fish, and Wildlife (TFW) Policy workgroup & AMPA recommendations in support of the SAO action plan recommendation #05, adopting a Net Gains model for TFW Policy. One of those options is for CMER to initiate dialogue with TFW Policy on CMER reform options including CMER membership, process improvements, and other relevant initiatives.

In 2023, at the behest of Policy, the AMPA met with each Policy caucus representative individually to collect input on areas in need of CMER reform and potential improvements. A memo was delivered to TFW Policy summarizing the input and highlighting areas of shared agreement on options to be considered for improvements to support a more efficient and science-centered CMER. There was no consensus at TFW Policy to advance any of the options that were identified to address the SAO recommendation. Therefore, the AMPA worked with CMER to make improvements to the Protocol & Standards Manual (PSM) to improve meeting management and decision-making, and increase accountability and transparency. The AMPA reported to the Board in February of 2024 that should the PSM revisions not make progress on improving these issues at CMER, further actions would need to be taken. It is my assessment now that the PSM revisions are not sufficient and that further actions are needed.

Situation Report

Despite PSM improvements, CMER continues to experience issues that result in meeting management issues, persistent relationship conflicts, and delays with AMP priorities. Lack of respectful meeting decorum and relationship breakdowns hinder collaboration and consensus decision-making. As noted in the SAO audit, participants do not hold to deadlines, behavioral expectations, or deliverable standards and there are no consequences, censure or sanctions for noncompliance with AMP ground rules and standards. As a result, and on occasion, CMER meetings have devolved into a disruptive and contentious meeting environment. To address this concern, I have implemented the following changes that are within my control/authority or that of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR):

1. AMP participants must adhere to the DNR Safe and Respectful Workplace Policy. All AMP participants are encouraged to attend the DNR Safe & Respectful Workplace training. Any participant who receives funding

through the AMP is required to attend the training and will be held to the standards in the Safe & Respectful Workplace policy.

2. Deliverables based contracts will enforce deadlines and deliverables—no payment for missed obligations.
3. The following language is included in all participation contracts for AMP participants, outlining the process that will be triggered if ground rules are violated or on failure to adhere to principles of safe and respectful workplace: 1. a letter to the caucus principal and contract signatory describing the violations; 2. if the behavior is not adjusted the DNR may withhold payment for this participant and/or it will be elevated to the Forest Practices Board or a combination of both.
4. Co-chair facilitation training will be offered and required for all AMP participants who are serving as chairs or co-chairs. DNR may require that participants sign an agreement that affirms they have attended the training and understand the ground rules for meeting engagement.

Not all CMER participants receive funding or enter into a participation agreement with DNR. For these measures to remain effective, the Board should consider enumerating them in the Board Manual, Section 22 (BM22). I am bringing these issues to your attention and seeking your support to work with Board staff to provide revised BM22 language for your review and approval clarifying the AMPA and Board roles and responsibilities in addressing behavioral expectations – along the lines of bullet point number 3 above. In addition, BM22 needs to have a process established for removing, under certain conditions approved by the Board, a CMER voting member or Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) member.

CMER Reform Options

Should the initiatives put into place for the current biennium not improve the working environment at CMER, the Board may consider directly assuming the responsibility of implementing the SAO action plan recommendation #05:

1. Limiting voting membership in CMER to one member per caucus. The broader scientific community can continue to participate in CMER and its associated SAGs. The intent is to allow CMER to sharply focus on science and not engage in policy issues in that committee.
2. Restructure CMER to function as a science review body only. Modify the science function to be carried out independently by a research organization.

The Board could consider exploring these options with limited scope to evaluate improvements before full adoption.

As the AMPA, I have the desire and responsibility to support the AMP in meeting its intent outlined in WAC and RCW. It is important that the Board revisit and then impose new and refined measures of accountability and of formality of process as intended in WAC 222-12-045(2)(i).

I look forward to discussing these issues with you at your upcoming regular meetings. Please reach out to me if you have any questions or want additional information.

Attachments:

- DNR Safe and Respectful Workplace Policy

SAFE AND RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE

POLICY Document # PO01-051	Approved: 1/19/2023	Revised: N/A	Next Review Date: 1/19/2025	Page **1** of **4**

SCOPE STATEMENT:

At the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), we believe one of the tenets of inclusion (see our DEI policy) is creating a work environment anchored in respect, dignity and civility. This policy outlines DNR's firm commitment to ensuring a positive, healthy and professional work environment in which all people, irrespective of their position, are treated with respect, civility and dignity in alignment with DNR Core Competencies and Values.

A truly respectful workplace requires the cooperation and support from each and every employee of DNR. We all have a responsibility to model interactions and behave in a manner that will foster civility and respect and discourage uncivil, rude or discourteous behavior. Each employee is responsible for his/her/their actions and expected to contribute to building trust and respect in our professional relationships.

This policy applies to all DNR employees, partners, volunteers, contractors, stakeholders, and individual(s) doing business with DNR.

POLICY:

DNR is committed to providing a safe and respectful workplace free from uncivil, disrespectful, and abusive behavior. The goal is a work environment where employees are treated with civility and respect; in order to improve employee morale and engagement in the agency, increasing overall work productivity, and fostering a culture of highly professional collaborative and cooperative partnerships.

Civility and respect are present in a work environment where thoughtful and considerate interactions between team members, stakeholders and community members are frequent and observable. Respect and civility are demonstrated by acknowledging the inherent dignity and value of others and empathy, compassion, consideration and humility are present.

Respectful behavior includes, but is not limited to:

- Engaging others with an open and cooperative approach.
- Valuing the diversity and the human rights of others regardless of their race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, veteran status, body shape/size, or any physical or mental disability.
- Recognizing the dignity of a person through respectful conduct.
- Committing to learn and develop an understanding of differing social and cultural norms.
- Taking responsibility for one's actions, displaying humility with mistakes and offering

others grace and forgiveness for theirs.
- Emphasizing positivity and commonality rather than opposition or right and wrong.
- Finding ways to be constructive in providing feedback to others.

Workplace incivility is characteristically rude and discourteous behavior; displaying a lack of regard for others. Displays of workplace incivility can be both subtle and obvious. Rude and uncivil behavior can affect the work environment and employee experience and eventually degrade the workplace culture. These behaviors can lead to dissatisfaction, conflict, and, ultimately, inequities. Rude and uncivil behavior is a performance issue. These behaviors, if left unchecked, can lead to more egregious behavior along the continuum. (The Continuum of Workplace Behavior provides examples of typical behaviors and is incorporated as an attachment.)

Disrespectful behavior includes, but is not limited to:
- Offensive or inappropriate remarks, jokes, gestures, material (electronic or otherwise) or behavior
- Yelling
- Belittling
- Reprimanding in the presence of others
- Aggressive or patronizing behavior
- Embarrassing or humiliating behavior
- Intimidation and/or coercion
- Damaging gossip or rumors
- Bullying
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Covert behavior (inappropriately withholding information, undermining, underhandedness)
- Micro-aggressions
- Discrimination
- Harassment
- Sexual harassment
- Behavior that is inconsistent with creating a work environment anchored in respect, dignity, equity, civility and inclusion.

Supervisors and managers exercising appropriate supervisory authority is not a violation of this policy. This includes but is not limited to: setting employee expectations, addressing job performance or employee misconduct, and providing work assignments.

Roles and Responsibilities

A. Employees, Volunteers, and Contractors are expected to:

1. Be respectful and civil in day-to-day interactions with co-workers, supervisors, and members of the public (explore tools for bystander interventions and crucial conversations).

2. Ask for assistance when faced with uncivil/disrespectful or abusive behavior.

B. Supervisors, Managers, and Appointing Authorities are expected to:

1. Champion and model a safe and respectful workplace including fostering an atmosphere of open communication where employees can share concerns.

2. Set expectations for employees to engage in a safe and respectful workplace and hold them accountable for any behavior that deviates from those expectations.

3. Support and model bystander interventions and crucial conversations.

4. Intervene quickly and effectively to address uncivil, disrespectful or abusive behavior.

5. Support any employee, volunteer, contractor, or member of the public who asks for assistance when faced with uncivil, disrespectful or abusive behavior.
    a. Refer employees to available resources including the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) where appropriate.
    b. Contact the Human Resources Division for assistance where necessary.

Reporting Options:
Any individual may report uncivil, disrespectful or abusive behavior to any of the following:

- Any Appointing Authority, manager, or supervisor (even outside of the employee's chain of command)
- Human Resources phone# (360) 902-1150 or email HRD@dnr.wa.gov
- Union representative, if the employee is represented by a union

Corrective Action:
Any employee (including managers and supervisors) or contractors found to have engaged in uncivil, disrespectful or abusive behavior or an act of retaliation will be subject to appropriate corrective action up to and including termination of employment or contract.

Education and Training

All DNR employees are required to complete mandatory training as identified by the agency.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The department will provide training and attestation implemented and tracked by Workplace Culture and Development.

Approval Date: **January 19, 2023** **Approved By:** **/S/**
Month-Day-Year
Kathryn W. Taylor
Chief Operating Officer /
Department Supervisor

DEFINITIONS:
None

REFERENCES & CITATIONS:
PO01-001 Equal Employment Opportunity Non-Discrimination
PO01-031 Violence in the Workplace
PO01-037 Harassment Prevention
PO01-042 Discipline
PO01-046 Employee Investigations
PO01-052 Sexual Harassment
PO26-002 DNR Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
PO26-003 Employee Training and Development
DNR Core Competencies

DOCUMENT BACKGROUND:
Policy changes incorporated in this document are a result of the "Recommendations for Addressing and Prohibiting Sexual Harassment at DNR" report presented on November 5, 2018 to DNR's Executive Management Team.

REVISION HISTORY:

Date	Comments/ Summary of changes
1/19/2023	New.