**Southwestern Region Regional Leadership Team**

**CHARTER DRAFT**

**1. Purpose**

On behalf of the Southwestern Region (Region), the Regional Leadership Team (RLT) informs the highest-level decisions of the Region to foster collective success, providing direction through the Strategic Plan and the allocation of resources.

**2. Background**

The Region operates in the diverse landscape of the southwest, spanning parts of four states, with shared borders with tribal lands and Mexico. To meet the diverse demands of this land, the Region is comprised of 11 Forests and 4 Grasslands, a wide variety of programs, and approximately 2000 permanent employees. The RLT represents the broad range of perspective and expertise necessary to create alignment and capitalize on opportunities.

**3. Scope**

The RLT’s scope is the land it stewards, the communities served by it, and the workforce that implements the Region’s activities. The RLT's purview covers all regionwide, strategic-level issues and content. The RLT identifies and acts upon cross-cutting issues, opportunities for optimization and efficiency, and establishment of Regional priorities. The RLT also serves as the filter for the interpretation and communication of Agency policy and initiatives for regional implementation.

RLT deliverables come in the form of the Strategic Plan, effective governance, and delegation of actions.

**4. Authority**

The RLT is authorized and convened by the Regional Forester (RF). Since the RLT exists in perpetuity, its charter endures beyond any one RF tenure. Therefore, amendments to the RLT Charter are considered and approved by the RLT, which includes the RF and Deputy Regional Foresters (DRFs). The RLT's authority extends over the entire region, and its deliverables are to be implemented by all RLT members.

Given that the RLT is an intentionally large body that represents the range of perspectives within the Region, the decision authority of the RLT is to identify the breadth of any given issue across the Region and make resulting decisions as to the delegated action. The RLT has the collective authority on its issues to delegate to the Strategic Plan Coordinating Group, Forest Supervisors, the Regional Directors Forum, ELT, and other Regional entities that it charters.

Delegated activity from the RLT is brought back to the RLT to verify that the result aligned with its delegation and then ensure understanding and ownership of the result. In some instances, the RLT will ratify the resulting product/decision; in most cases, the Regional Forester will do so. RLT delegated activity, if to be ratified by the Regional Forester, is presented to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to inform the Regional Forester’s decision. The ratifying entity is made clear in the RLT agenda.

**5. Membership Composition**

Recognizing the need for full representation of the Region, membership is comprised of the following:

Principal Members

The Region's Executive Leader positions, Forest Supervisors, and Regional Program Directors are each mandatory RLT members with voting privileges. Each RLT member brings corporate knowledge of their area to inform the RLT for the benefit of the entire region, rather than advocating for their area.

If a principal member must miss an RLT meeting, this is communicated to the Chief of Staff. The absent member prepares her/his alternate, who acts in all capacity of the absent member (with voting rights). Further, the member who missed the meeting is responsible for upholding decisions made at the meeting.

Standing Advisory Members, non-voting

Official deputies and/or Assistant Directors attend RLT meetings to ensure alignment, without voting privileges, unless acting for their Forest Supervisor/Director.

In addition, Program Managers who report to a DRF are also Standing Advisory Members who attend RLT meetings, without voting privileges.

There may be occasions when the RF convenes principle voting members only; this will be made clear in the agenda.

Other Participants: non-voting, by invitation

Non-voting – Advisory to RLT on subjects as identified, by invitation

SMEs are assigned a Point of Contact (POC) from the RLT who provides to the SME: Agenda, time, topic, pre-work, their purpose at the meeting, and any other pertinent information to ensure the SME is contributing to the RLT.

**6. Membership Roles**

RLT Principal Members have the same role, responsibilities, and decision-making authority. There are additional roles designated for the purpose of supporting the work of the RLT, as follow:

Coordination of the Strategic Plan implementation and development of the RLT Meeting Agendas: Strategic Plan Coordinating Group (see Charter)

Orientation of new RLT members: Chief of Staff (see Role Description)

Governance Gatekeeper: Chief of Staff (see Role Description)

Social Coordinator: Office of Communications (Role Description)

The RLT reviews the above roles and the positions that fill them for their effectiveness at minimum one time per year. Individual performance in these roles is accomplished through regular performance appraisals.

**7. Operational Norms/Procedures**

Leadership Stance

The RLT’s conduct aligns with the US Forest Service Leadership Stance and Habits [link] direction, specifically, the four leadership abilities:

* steward the whole place;
* see opportunity;
* share leadership with peers, subordinates and cooperators;
* and build community.

Decision Process

RLT decisions are made, to the greatest extent possible, by full agreement among Principal Members.

In cases where the RLT does not achieve full agreement in the time allocated, one of the following options below is selected. Any decisions made utilizing these options are considered official decisions of the RLT, upheld as such by all members.

1. Table: postpone the issue indefinitely or postpone the decision to a future meeting and assign RLT member(s) to prepare further information on the issue to aid the RLT in reaching a decision.
2. Majority Rule: In this case, each RLT member has one vote and the simple majority rules.

The RLT may allow Principal Members with strong reservations about the decision the opportunity to present new information at the next RLT meeting supporting her/his viewpoint. The decision will stand as decided unless a majority of the RLT members agree that the new information is compelling (those Principal Members presenting the new information are non-voting).

1. Elevate: The issue is elevated by the RLT for decision-making by the Regional Forester.

Some issues will be the purview of the Regional Forester (RF) alone; such issues will be identified in the RLT agenda, so as to alert RLT members that on these issues they act as advisors to the RF.

Charter Revision

Recommendations for revision of the RLT Charter may be made throughout the year to the Chief of Staff for consideration and action at the annual review of the Charter.

Meetings (TO BE DETERMINED)

RLT meetings are a venue in which cross-pollination and integration are fostered among regional units and programs that are the foundation of RLT decision-making.

Quarterly RLT Meetings

The RLT meets in-person each quarter the first week of the month (Feb, May, Aug, Nov). The quarterly meetings follow an annual cycle of focus based on the Strategic Plan.

Monthly RLT Meetings

The RLT meets virtually each month for a half day on the fourth Friday. These meetings are devoted to emerging issues affecting the Region. These meetings also support the identification of issues for quarterly RLT meetings.

Meeting Facilitator: Deputy Director of OCE. Assist with agenda development, prework, and meeting facilitation. Supported through cadre of facilitators [address in Meeting Process below]

Notetaker: Chief of Staff or delegate [address in Meeting Process below]

Meeting Logistics Coordinator: Administrative Officer, [address in Meeting Process below]

Topic Sponsor: RLT member serves as topic sponsor to ensure appropriateness of topic and adherence to protocols [address in Meeting Process below]

**8. Performance Assessment**

After each meeting, the RLT evaluates its performance based on following five established criteria:

1. How well the RLT followed the Charter
2. How well the RLT addressed issues of the Strategic Plan
3. How well did the RLT document the decisions made
4. How well did the RLT deliberate as a collaborative leadership body
5. Other pertaining to specific topics of the meeting

The RLT performance is evaluated on an annual basis. The process for RLT performance rating is described in the Appendix.

**Signatories: Principal & Standing Advisory Members**

**Principals (List)**

**Standing (List)**

**Authorizing Signature: The RF**