

# Local Meeting Framework for PCT Project Planning

The partnerships that get things accomplished on the PCT are complex and regionally different. They often involve irregularly overlapping multi-level, multi-agency agency jurisdictions, PCTA regions, and a variety of unique volunteer-based groups. These volunteer groups operate in a number of different ways: some have taken responsibility for overall maintenance for a trail section; some do occasional trail projects in a given region; some groups only do packing for other groups doing the trail work; some organize corps crews on a project basis. PCTA has tried to reduce the issues by having its regional offices end and begin on agency unit boundaries, but even this has proven difficult where long sections of trail crisscross agency boundaries. PCTA also encourages volunteer organizations to be involved in areas bounded by agency boundaries (forests or districts). Given the unique regional differences, it is difficult undesirable to standardize a framework for locally-based meeting.

Every year after the high season for trail work, usually the late fall, PCTA regional representatives schedule meetings, usually on a Forest by Forest basis, to review work done during the previous year, to share information about priority needs, and to plan the program of work for the upcoming year. These meetings may be followed up with fieldwork (scouting), phone calls or project specific meetings to nail down the project specific logistic details. Each player naturally hopes that they will have one meeting that covers all the areas where they are involved, but that inevitably means that the other three to five agency offices and volunteer groups will end up with multiple meetings, some of which they may attend when they are interested in only a very small portion of the agenda.

BCHC members are often involved with PCT projects in one of three ways:

1. They are involved as members of a PCTA volunteer maintaining group like the Trail Gorillas and participate within the structure of those groups while also belonging to a BCHC unit.
2. They are involved as a maintaining organization as a unit doing trail maintenance projects on the PCT as a group, like the Top of the State Unit which has been working on a specific section of the PCT for many years.
3. They are involved as individual packers, providing support for crews in remote locations.

Currently only one of these situations is organized under the BCHC unit system organizationally (#2).

BCHC members working within an existing PCTA group (#1) should already be involved in project planning through the planning done by that group, and PCTA staff should be contacting those groups to set up annual agency coordination meetings. For example, some BCHC units are section stewards for a PCTA group and would be invited to planning meetings on the Forests where they work. Some of PCTA's Trail Gorilla Section Chiefs are also BCHC members.

In much the same way, BCHC units doing ongoing trail work on a specific section of the PCT should be attending the annual PCTA/Forest meetings to help with planning as they are functioning as PCTA maintaining group (#2).

The last and perhaps the largest trail-wide group of volunteers are individual packers who are BCHC members (#3) but volunteer unaffiliated with a PCTA group or a BCHC unit. BCHC wishes for PCTA to interact with BCHC members providing packer services as volunteers through BCHC units. BCHC will provide unit contacts and PCTA will involve those contacts in our agency unit meetings. These meetings will identify projects for the coming year and will ask the participating agencies and groups to take responsibility for various tasks involved with specific projects. In that way, BCHC units may take on organizing packing for particular projects, and would then move forward at the local level to work with the partners on a project to make each project a success. It would also be an opportunity for BCHC units to take on maintenance or reconstruction projects as a group if they want to be involved in that way.

PCTA continues to be open to individual packers having working relationships as PCTA volunteers and will use that format if they provide that service as a part of a PCTA maintaining group, if a BCHC unit wishes members to be involved in that way rather than through the BCHC unit, or if PCTA has BCHC volunteer packers who are not associated with a particular BCHC unit.

The remaining difficult spot is what PCTA refers to as the “Orphan Region” from Kennedy Meadows north to the northern boundary of Yosemite National Park. This is the only area of the PCT that is not covered by a PCTA regional office, and as such PCTA deals with essential needs and coordination in the region on an informal basis through various staff and volunteers. Until a regional office is established, PCTA is not in the position of sponsoring annual agency meetings and dealing with coordination as we do on the rest of the trail. When an office is established, it will follow the protocol used on the rest of the trail.

BCHC units working on the PCT should each appoint a lead contact to serve as the first point of contact in planning work on the PCT for PCTA regional offices and agency partners. A list that includes contact information for all the partners in a PCTA region will be maintained by the PCTA and available on the PCTA website. Updates and new information should be sent to PCTA’s Trail Operations Manager at the PCTA’s Sacramento office.