

# PACIFIC GREEN PARTY OF OREGON

Proposal to Change Our Structural and Operations  
– December 5th, 2021

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## Executive Summary

**“Natural rights inherent in people.** We declare that all [people], when they form a social compact are equal in right: that all power is inherent in the people, and all free [institutions] are founded on their authority, and instituted for their peace, safety, and happiness; and they have at all times a right to alter, reform, or abolish [them] in such manner as they may think proper<sup>1</sup>.

The PGP has been around for more than 25 years now. While we have an amazing history and some significant accomplishments, we continue to create outcomes that fall far short of our individual and collective aspirations. Over these past 25 years, somewhere between 100-1,000 outstanding individuals have been actively involved with the PGP and then left the party, usually frustrated by the problems (culture, decision making, conflict, focus, action/inaction, ...) they encounter within the party and their inability to make meaningful progress or change within the party.

Each person who joined and left was an event. Stringing those events together patterns begin to emerge. Systems Thinking shows us that patterns are caused by systemic structures and the mental models that create and support those systemic structures. My goal is to help us rewire the PGP by changing the systemic structures and mental models that are holding us back from achieving our lofty goals.

The changes being proposed here are small but profound. It is important to note that the changes we hope will be adopted at our December 5, 2021 convention are a new starting point, and not the final destination. They likely aren't perfect (if such a thing exists) though they don't need to be perfect to be adopted. They just need to provide systemic solutions that will change the patterns of events we hope to alter. And we can alter or abolish these changes in the future as we see fit.

Our problems are systemic (caused by our systemic structures) and accordingly, will require systemic solutions.

The current proposal is to:

- Elevate the importance, development, and activity of members and chapters,
- Create an active network based on the theory of Complex Adaptive Systems<sup>2</sup>
- To change the role (and perhaps name) of the State Coordinating Committee (SCC)

What is not changing:

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<sup>1</sup> Oregon Constitution, Article 1, Section 1 [as modified].

<sup>2</sup> For an introduction to Complex Adaptive Systems, watch the first 1:15 of this introduction to a free video course on the subject <https://youtu.be/vzfrhH9KcXE>. For those wishing to take a deeper dive, the free, 14-part video course takes about 2 hours to complete.

- Our Mission Statement or Statement of Principles
- Candidates elected at conventions
- Bylaws changes at conventions
- Statewide fundraising to statewide PAC
- A convention elected, centralized statewide body (currently known as the SCC) to handle important tasks/duties (TBD)

In this report you will find a collection of ideas that support the changes being proposed.

## The Wake-Up Call for Transformation

Why change? What pattern of events are causing concern?

- Declining registration numbers<sup>3</sup>
- Declining registration percentages<sup>4</sup>
- Declining active members: People join, get engaged, then vote with their feet and leave.
- Declining financial resources<sup>5</sup>
- Declining relevance in the political system
- Competition from other parties
- Declining active chapters
- Internal conflict rather than cooperation (This is true throughout all levels of the GP across the USA)
- Leadership burnout: Leaders get chewed up and eventually move on and change parties.
- More online action than in the streets direct action.

## The Results Expected from the Proposed Changes

- Increased member activity, involvement, and engagement
- Member empowerment
- Conflict reduction
- Ability to work on many fronts and issues simultaneously
- Increased organizational flexibility
- Increased innovation from the grassroots
- More grassroots initiative

## Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action

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<sup>3</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/su4du86v>

<sup>4</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/9dsx6pbv>

<sup>5</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/ywucz8w6> and <https://tinyurl.com/ptr9nfyn>

If someone asked you about the PGP what would you say to them? My guess is it would be something like this: The PGP is a political party. We nominate and run candidates for elective office to make the world greener. We'd tell them *what* we are (a political party), *how* we do things, and then conclude with *why* we do it.

Simon Sinek, author and inspirational speaker, suggests that the most successful organizations start with 'Why'<sup>6</sup>. He recommended the "Golden Circle" perspective to inspire people to take successful action by thinking from Why -> How -> What.

Applying this approach, here is what we might tell someone who asked about the PGP in the future, after we've made these changes:

## **WHY DO WE EXIST, WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE?**

The Pacific Green Party is established to provide a new voice in the political system, to decentralize political and economic power, and to work for peace, justice, self-determination, and an ecologically sustainable society.

## **HOW?**

Through the grassroots. Using people power. We work within present institutions while simultaneously creating new ones. We encourage activism and promote self-determination. We strive for cultural diversity and gender balance while infusing the present system with accountability, future focus, and ecological wisdom.

## **WHAT DO WE DO?**

We empower people to create a green society by working both inside and outside the political system. A green society will have Green citizens, educational institutions, government processes, businesses, recreation, healthcare, etc. To get the Green society we want and need, we work on all fronts at once. We spread the Green message and grow our movement through organizing and outreach. We help everyone become Greener by teaching, learning and growing through personal connections and development work.

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<sup>6</sup> Start with 'Why' TED Talk, 2009, edited version. <https://youtu.be/2Ss78LfY3nE>

## Mental Models

To be a good problem solver, it's important to be aware of and identify our ingrained mentality and prejudiced perceptions. These biases lead to assumptions. Assumptions can get in the way of gathering and processing information when trying to solve problems.

We constantly make assumptions. We must make assumptions in order to get anything done. We assume the water will run when we turn the faucet, the grocery store will have food when we go shopping, and the chair you are about to sit in will support your weight and not collapse. Mental models serve as a shortcut to actual thinking though complete reliance on them can allow problems to persist and the real cause to go unexamined.

The PGP was organized in active, decentralized chapters prior to becoming an official, ballot qualified party. We held conventions, supported candidates, changed laws, hosted community forums, created new institutions like Portland Cop Watch, the Hawthorne Harm Reductions Zone, the Bicycle Transportation Alliance, and a weekly cable access show called THE Pacific Party Presents. We had outreach events to gain new members and regular petitioning events to get the necessary signatures to get ballot access.

Along the way the “Political Party” mental models took over our collective thinking. It could have been when we officially became a “Political Party” and got ballot access. It could have been when the Socialist Party lost their ballot access and decided to “merge” with us bringing their structure and beliefs to our party. Or it might have happened after one of Nader’s campaigns. It is hard to pinpoint exactly when it happened, but the political party mental models took over and our creativity and flexibility was lost in the process.

### Mental Models impacting the PGP

What mental models are we using? Can we change them and use different ones?

- That we are a political party and politics is the only reason we exist.
- How political parties are organized
- What they do
- How they operate
- How they make decisions
- How the political party decisions flow down to members
- Party Structures: Conventions, caucuses, committees, geographic boundaries and hierarchy, Robert’s Rules of Order, platforms,
- Parties win with money
- Candidates aren’t drafted, they present themselves
- Candidates run individual campaigns and when they win, they go about their electoral business disconnected from the party
- That the party must have a single position on matters
- If the party votes on something, the “losers” will unify with the winners.
- Two party system mental models

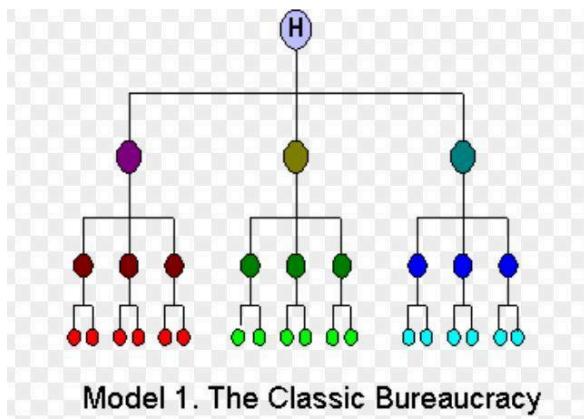
- Politicians have power but people don't
- The system changes by electing people

These are just a sampling of the mental models we use and share. Where did we get these mental models? Are they congruent with our values? Do they serve us?

**"The Pacific Green Party recognizes that our society and government are plagued by inequality, militarism, poverty, and pollution. We envision and strive to create a local-based grassroots democracy that will overcome these societal ills."**

## Current Hierarchy and Structure

Does this structure look anything like a local-based grassroots democracy?



The Federal structure is above states, states are above counties, counties are above cities, and cities are above everything in their locale. Federal Committees are more important (Powerful and authoritative) than state committees which are more important than county.....

Mental models exist in the mind, are resistant to change, and affect actions. Our thoughts proceed our actions. While mental models resist change, they are easy to change once exposed and challenged. Who says we can't change unwritten beliefs to better serve our needs and aspirations?

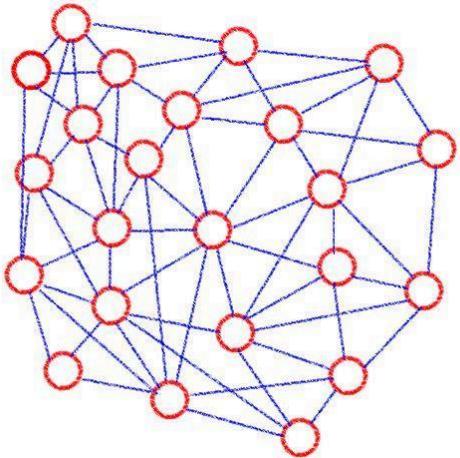
By examining our mental models, changing them by choice, and then operating with new beliefs, we will get different actions and outcomes.

Assuming that the PGP has to be the way it is, or that our problems aren't related to our structure, or that the way we operate now is the way we will continue to operate and function forever, can lead to poor choices and decision making.

As Greens, we would be a better organization by adopting different mental models.

## The Proposed Structure

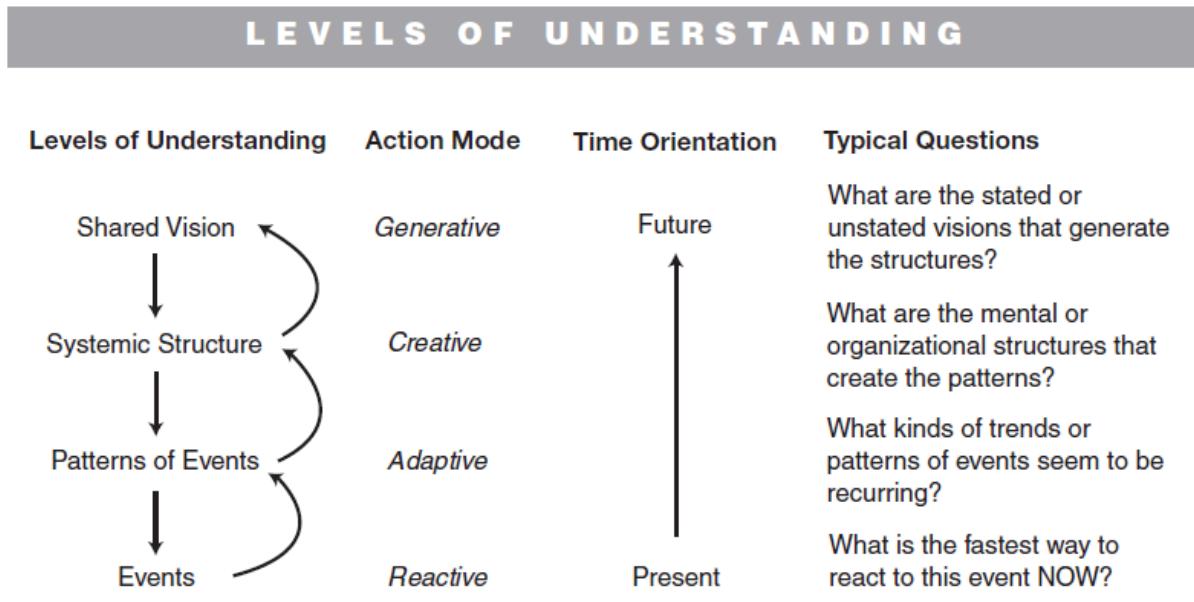
Using the new mental models, I propose a structure like this distributed network (Complex Adaptive System)



Advantage of a distributed network:

- There are multiple nodes that interact with each other but are also capable of functioning on their own.
- Each member/cell has autonomy to be able to work independently and yet join with others when it is advantageous and withdraw when it isn't
- The ultimate shape of the network is unpredictable and constantly evolving to meet the group's needs.
- <https://netchange.co/whats-the-difference-between-distributed-and-decentralized-organizing>
- Scalability. Because the load is distributed, new cells can easily be added. In our centralized structure, it doesn't take too many new players to overwhelm the system.

## Our Structure Will Evolve from Our Level of Understanding



Essentially, we propose changes that would have us organize, behave and act as a networked group of Green activists and change agents, organized and operating something like a murmuration of starlings.

<https://phys.org/news/2019-02-starling-murmurations-science-nature-greatest.html>

Murmurations evolve from simple rules to create complex structures that meet the evolving needs of the individual members. These are effective, essentially leaderless organizations driven by the power of self-organization, cooperation, and purpose.

The rules by which the PGP structure will ultimately operate will need to be developed, tested, and then changed over time as we learn and grow.

Examples of some basic operating rules:

- Join with at least two others to create a PGP Cell.
- Connect (communicate, support, socialize....) your cell with at least two other cells.
- Talk about your visions, hopes and dreams. These are what will pull us into a sustainable Green future.
- Favor action over inaction
- Listen to the feedback from other cells
- Work to grow more cells
- Cells can create and join hierarchy, but no hierarchy has inherent authority over cells

## Action vs Planning

“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four hours sharpening the axe.” ~ Abraham Lincoln

“If I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and five minutes thinking about solutions.” ~ Albert Einstein

When faced with a problem, Einstein said he'd spend 95 percent of his time thinking about the problem and the remainder solving it. As Greens, we spend almost no time thinking about the problem.

Our society values action. We have strong mental models that tell us the way we get things done is by acting and conversely, planning is wasting time that could otherwise be used towards action. Accordingly, when we encounter problems, we almost always leap to action rather than leaping to thought and analysis. We almost always operate at the surface level of the Iceberg Model, responding from event to event to event to event.

If you honestly look at your life, your work, and any groups you participate in, my guess is that nearly 100 percent of the time you respond to events with solutions arrived at quickly based on your existing mental models.

When was the last time, if ever, the PGP spent a significant amount of time thinking about a problem (Lack of chapters, declining membership, declining candidates, insignificant political action, infighting, over burdensome bureaucracy, inactive membership, insufficient resources, etc., etc.)

## PGP Mission and Vision

The Pacific Green Party is established to provide a new voice in the political system, to decentralize political and economic power, and to work for peace, justice, self-determination and an ecologically sustainable society.

Achieving peace, justice and a sustainable environment will require that people work within present institutions while simultaneously creating new ones. The Pacific Green Party respects the diversity of approaches necessary to attain these goals.

The Pacific Green Party has been created because of the unwillingness of existing parties to address the fundamental problems of our region and the legitimate needs and aspirations of its people. We accept the challenge of infusing the present system with accountability, future focus, and ecological wisdom.

## Strategy

“If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.”

We need a strategy that works. One that allows us to get ahead of change and create the change we want to see rather than compete in an environment that others have shaped to their advantage. We need a strategy that helps us grow and achieve our mission. Our current “strategy” is not working.

A good strategy can be communicated in 35 words or less. Part of our change proposal is a new strategy.

### Current Strategy

Although we don’t have a formal strategy, this is my take based on how we operate:

With the goal of creating a greener society, the PGP identifies as the Green Party in Oregon and will:

- Maintain and control PGP ballot access for partisan offices in Oregon
- Maintain some communication channels (Facebook, Twitter, Groups.io, newsletters, etc.)
- Nominate members to serve at the national Green Party level on various committees.

And will occasionally:

- Endorse candidates based on self-selection,
- Provide ballot access to candidates,

Endorse ballot measures, actions, fusion candidates, movements, etc.

Most of this is accomplished by the State Coordinating Committee or at semi-annual conventions.

### Proposed Strategy

The proposed strategy is to create a vibrant, action orientated, decentralized PGP:

“The PGP will advance Green Values on all fronts, in Oregon, using the power and resourcefulness of Greens and the green community, working mostly through interconnected cells of supporters.”

Three critical components of a good strategy statement are objective, scope, and advantage.

**Our new objective:** Create a Green Society

**Our new scope:** We operate on all fronts according to the interest and autonomy of our members

**Our new advantage:** Interconnected network of active cells.

## New Vision, Goals, and Purpose

“The Pacific Green Party is established to provide a new voice in the political system, to decentralize political and economic power, and to work for peace, justice, self-determination, and an ecologically sustainable society.”

All Greens and PGP members basically want the same thing: A community/society/world that operates on green values and our commitment to peace, justice, sustainability, and democracy. We worry that if we don't succeed, there may not be much of a world left for the next seven generations, including other beings.

People have long supported these goals and had these worries. Prior to the formation of the German Greens, there were groups all over the globe dedicated to peace, ecology, justice, and democracy. However, it was Petra Kelly and others who formed the German Green Party out of the independent peace, justice, sustainability, and democracy movements by appreciating the intersectionality of these movements and, by pointing out that this movement lacked one vital tool: Ballot access.

While these groups could march, boycott, provide political pressure, finance causes, etc., etc., they couldn't run their own candidates. Getting ballot access added another tool to their toolbelt. Gaining ballot access separated Greens from other groups as we saw the necessary efforts to change the world needing support both inside and outside the system from uncompromised people not professional politicians.

Without ballot access, these movements had to seek support from parties and their professional politicians who often didn't share their values. People in these movements usually had to choose the best among the worst, or as we like to say, “The lesser evil.”

The goal is not the party. The goal is not about nominating and electing candidates. While they are important, the party and the candidates we might elect are the means. Nobody who joins our party thinks political action and electoral participation are irrelevant. However, to be successful, we must embrace more than just “political” action. We must embrace both the inside and outside the system strategy. The personal is profoundly political.

“Achieving peace, justice and a sustainable environment will require that people work within present institutions while simultaneously creating new ones. The Pacific Green Party respects the diversity of approaches necessary to attain these goals.”

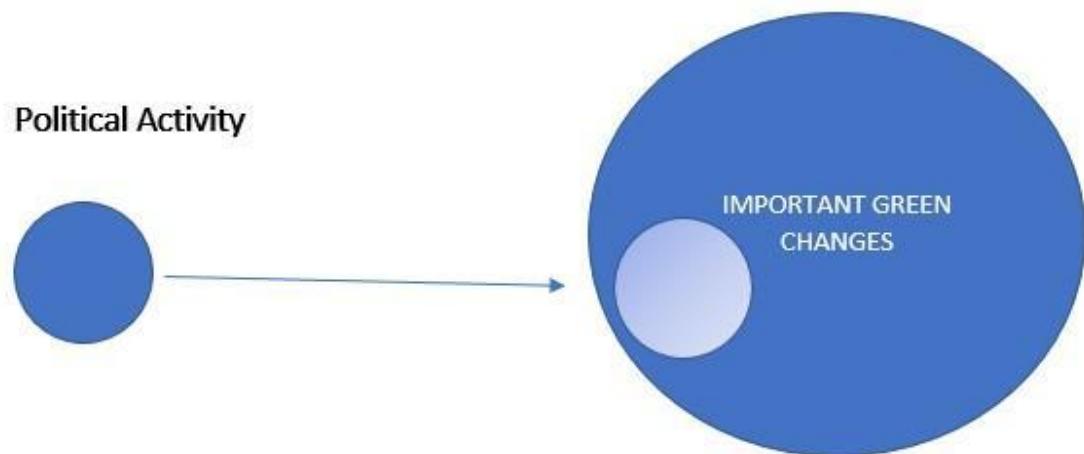
We make the world Green by:

- Spreading Green values: Peace, justice, sustainability, democracy
- Working within present institutions while creating new ones
  - Working within present institutions means working with the current political and economic systems
  - Creating new institutions is about creating new structures, relationships, and institutions

Our ultimate task is to change our entire system. If there are humans here 100 years from now, I guarantee they will not be living like we are. They will be thinking differently (Green) and living differently (Green) because if they keep on thinking and living like we are, we will not survive.

Because we are challenged with changing everything, there is no singular place to start. The belief that we will successfully get to our goal following a plan starting with Step A, Step B, ..... is mythical thinking. The Green society we want will not be the result of a plan. Because the world will not unfold according to a plan, we can and must simultaneously operate on all fronts at once.

The problem with focusing exclusively on political action is the cyclical nature of campaigns, the cliff-like ending to campaigns, and the asymmetric advantages of the established, corporate parties.



## Summary

Our proposal is for the PGP to change our organizational and operating structure from the centralized hierarchy we now use, where all the power and authority seem to reside with the SCC or the National

Green Party, and to shift our mental models away those of a political party by replacing them with the mental models of a networked grassroots action orientated organization.