

2024 Federal Forest Restoration Program Report



Background

The Oregon Department of Forestry’s (ODF) Federal Forest Restoration (FFR) Program continues to make progress toward its statutory responsibility to promote shared stewardship, reduce wildfire risk, and expand critical activities such as forest thinning, prescribed burning, and habitat restoration. Guided by Oregon’s 20-Year Landscape Resilience Strategy, the FFR Program is concentrating efforts on 10-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC 10) watersheds identified as having the greatest need for ecological restoration. These efforts aim to bring forest systems within their natural range of variability while ensuring resilience to climate-amplified disturbance events in the future. Oregon has treated more acres than any other western state, and this prioritization framework enhances the state’s ability to efficiently allocate resources to achieve the program’s statutory objectives and fulfill the strategy’s goals.

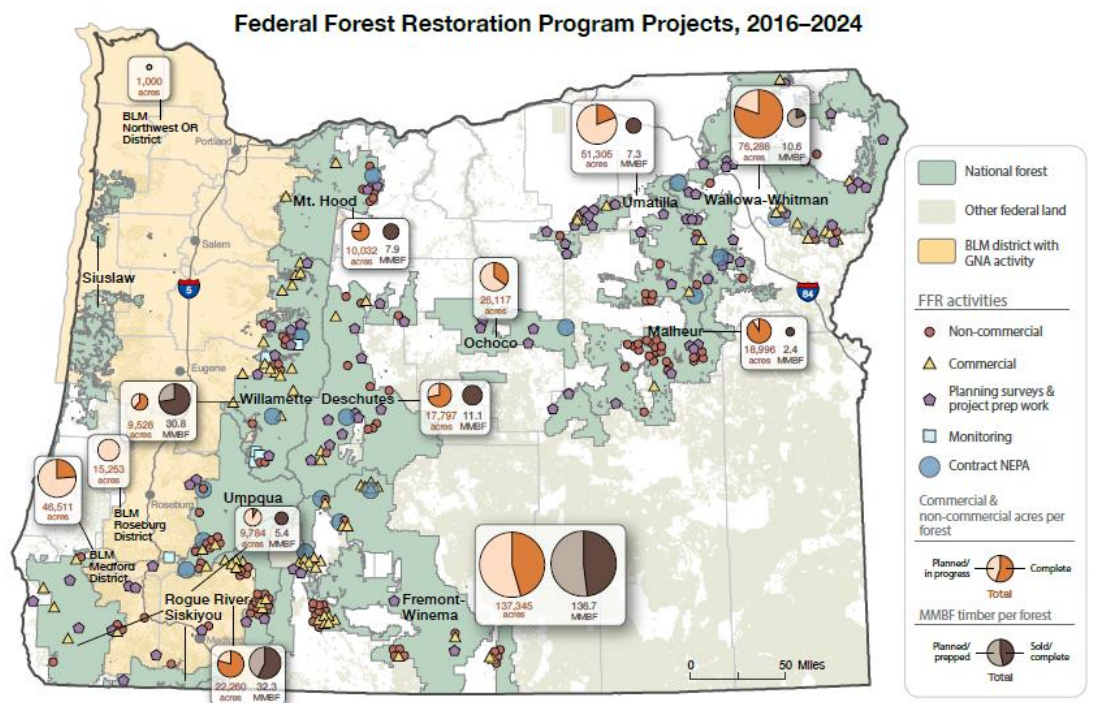
Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 526.275 establishes the state’s policy on pursuing projects under the Good Neighbor Authority Agreement (GNA). The FFR Program uses the GNA as a tool, in addition to other tools such as Cooperative Agreements, to work with federal forest management agencies in Oregon. The GNA is a tool in the toolbox to achieve the State’s vision for federal forestlands. ORS 526.276 requires ODF to report the outcomes of projects pursued under the GNA in even-numbered years. This report reflects the FFR Program’s work on federal forestlands in Oregon.

FFR Projects

The FFR Program currently has forty-three (43) agreements in place, thirty-five (35) of which are spread throughout ten (10) national forests, five (5) of which are across three (3) Bureau of Land Management districts and three (3) agreements with the U.S. Forest Service PNW Regional Office. FFR Projects can include commercial projects such as timber harvests, contract NEPA projects, or restoration service projects. Restoration service projects can include a wide array of activity types including planning surveys and project work, non-commercial work and monitoring work.

Project Spotlights

Post-Fire Restoration in South-Central Oregon: Following the third-largest wildfire in Oregon’s history, the 413,765-acre Bootleg Fire in 2021— FFR Program staff and other ODF staff, Fremont-Winema National Forest personnel, and private landowners recognized the urgent need to replant burned areas to prevent their conversion



from forest to shrubland or grassland. However, in south-central Oregon, there was a critical shortage of seedlings and tree seed required for reforestation, particularly in areas where the fire burned most intensely. In response, a large-scale cone collection effort was launched to gather sufficient seed to produce the seedlings needed for replanting.

This effort brought together non-industrial and industrial private landowners, as well as state and federal agencies, to achieve the shared goal of collecting as many cones as possible across all land ownerships. FFR Program staff partnered with NW Tree Climbers, a second-generation family-owned business based in Ashland, Oregon, to collect 801 bushels of cones. Of these, 594 bushels are designated for the Fremont-Winema National Forest, expected to yield 594 pounds of seed and potentially produce 4.1 million seedlings. These seedlings could reforest approximately 14,000 acres damaged by the wildfire.



Forest Restoration Monitoring on the Willamette National Forest- Jim’s Creek savanna restoration assessment: Jim’s Creek assessment and monitoring began in 2003, funded by USFS, University of Oregon (UO), and the Joint Fire Science Program. Monitoring the effectiveness of the treatments associated with the project was a high priority for the Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative in order to build consensus for future projects, therefore the FFR Program made an investment of GNA timber sale revenue totaling \$95,793 (\$74,668 in 2020 and \$21,125 in 2022). Led by UO Prof. Bart Johnson, data was collected by UO faculty and students, and USFS personal, both pretreatment (2003-2005) and post-treatment (2011-22). Prior to Euro-American colonization, the site was largely a native grassland with scattered oak, pine and Douglas-fir. Rapid forest infill began circa 1850. By 2005, most of the site was forested and half the legacy oaks and pines were dead.

The prescription for the 433-acre Jim’s Creek restoration project aimed to shift the site to a state closer to that of the oak-pine-fir savanna that existed prior to Euro-American settlement. Tree harvest and related activities began in 2007 and were completed by 2010, including planting young oaks throughout the site. Native grasses and forbs were seeded in 20 randomly selected permanent plots in fall 2010. Portions of the site received prescribed burns in 2010 and 2018-20. Pre- and post-treatment site images below show locations of monitoring plots and associated 30-m wide belt transects. The Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative monitored the progress to help shape their perspective on the 6,600-acre Youngs Rock Rigdon project, which involved similar treatments in a comparable ecosystem. Observations from the Jim’s Creek project supported agreement and consensus-building efforts for the Youngs Rock Rigdon project.



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Key lessons included 1) Recruiting the next generation of oaks and pines is crucial to vegetation recovery and renewal, 2) Seeding native grasses and forbs is essential following thinning and 3) Prescribed fire is a two-edged sword for savanna recovery after dense forest infill. The specific findings relative to each key lesson are detailed in the “ODF FFR Update Report December 2024” available on the FFR Program’s webpage.

For more information: Visit the [FFR webpage](#) on the ODF website or contact [Nicole Stapp](#), ODF Forest Resources Division Policy Advisor or [Derrick Wheeler](#), ODF Legislative Coordinator.