

Agenda Item No.:	6
Work Plan:	Private Forests, Partnership & Planning
Topic:	Board Updates
Presentation Title:	Coordination to Develop Landscape Scale Projects that Serve Private Landowners and Advance Restoration on Public Lands
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Contact Information:	Ryan Gordon, Family Forestland Coordinator Private Forests Division 503-779-5278 Ryan.P.Gordon@oregon.gov
	Katie Morrison, Federal Forest Restoration Program Partnership & Planning Program 503-945-7409 Katherine.Morrison@oregon.gov
	Jeff Burns, Federal Initiatives Unit Manager Partnership & Planning Program 503-945-7346 Jeff.D.Burns@oregon.gov

SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda item is to inform the Board of emerging opportunities for coordination between all Divisions and Programs to increase the pace and scale of restoration on both private and federal forestlands. Staff will provide an overview of the technical and financial assistance programs available to family forest landowners, the authorities and programs supporting increased restoration on federal lands, and efforts within the Department to align these opportunities to address multiple resource needs across ownerships. At the field level, these landscape scale projects are built through broad partnerships with other agencies and local community organizations. Such partnerships are best supported through synchronization of resources in the Private Forests, Protection, and State Forest Divisions, as well as the Partnership and Planning and Federal Forest Restoration Programs. A new staff-driven working group has formed in Salem to help facilitate this synchronization, and support the needs of an emerging business model around this collaborative work in the field.

CONTEXT

Collaborative work around natural resource management, particularly at the community level, is not a new concept in Oregon. The “Oregon Way” has long been encouraged by policymakers and agency leaders, and is often used as a model in other states. At the federal level, there has been a slow shift over the past two decades to an increased reliance on this model. Oregon has benefitted from investments in building strong relationships at the federal, state, and local levels, particularly now that many federal funding programs put a premium on broad partnerships that effectively focus investments on key landscape scale resource needs.

Relationships are the currency for collaborative work. The Department, particularly through its network of Stewardship Foresters, is well positioned to play an active and

central role in large scale collaborative projects. Stewardship Foresters are the Department's primary year-round point of contact with landowners for most Private Forests and Protection Programs. In recent years, district coordinators working as part of the Federal Forest Restoration program have provided a new nexus for federal land managers and local collaborative groups. The Department has for decades leveraged these relationships to accomplish its core mission. Yet, it takes a sustained commitment of time and resources to support and grow key partnerships. As the collaborative model becomes increasingly important to our core business, the Department is working to ensure we have the necessary structure to support these relationships at the local, regional, and statewide levels.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Private Landowner Assistance Programs

Technical assistance for nonindustrial private forest landowners has long been part of the Department's mission, though it has been difficult to fund. The Woodland Management Act of 1979 (ORS 526.425) provides guidance for such assistance, but state funding has been inconsistent. Federal funds, primarily through the US Forest Service State and Private Forestry Program, have largely been used to help support this work, but they have waned over the past decade.

Landowner assistance programs through the Private Forests Division are grounded in the federally funded Stewardship Program, which enables us to provide technical assistance to family forest landowners. The program is complemented by a suite of cost-share opportunities that come through both the Private Forests and Protection Divisions. These federally-funded cost-share programs have different objectives (e.g., fuels reduction), but generally focus on improving forest health and maintaining a working landscape.

More recently, the Department has partnered with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to help deliver landowner assistance programs available through the Farm Bill. The statewide ODF-NRCS Agreement has increased our capacity to provide technical assistance, while offering more opportunity to family forest landowners. The Agreement has also opened the door to ODF engagement with Joint Chiefs' Initiatives, which leverage funds for forest treatments on both federal and adjoining private lands.

Federal Forest Restoration Program

In 2013, the Oregon Legislature took an innovative step to fund the Federal Forest Restoration Program (FFR) with the intent of building partnerships with federal land management agencies and forest collaboratives. These partnerships work to increase the pace, scale, and quality of restoration on federal forestlands, create consistent opportunities to support local economies, and engage local communities through collaboration. For the last two biennia, FFR funding has consisted of one time lottery funds, however during the 2017 legislative session FFR was allocated \$3 million in general fund for the 2017-2019 biennium and was made a permanent part of the Department's budget.

The Federal Forest Restoration Program has two primary components – forest collaborative support helps collaborative groups engage with stakeholders and increase

the scale of their agreements on restoration treatments, and the state/federal implementation partnership seeks to build a new business model with the Forest Service (FS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) by leveraging resources across agencies.

An additional tool the Department is using to partner with the FS and the BLM is the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA). In 2014, Congress authorized GNA, which allows the FS and BLM to pass federal funds through to state agencies to implement forestland, rangeland, and watershed restoration. Using this tool we are seeking to increase the pace of implementation by utilizing ODF staff or administering contracts on projects approved by federal land managers. We currently have five signed GNA agreements across the state for project coordination, and the implementation of noncommercial and fuels reduction thinning projects. We are on the cusp of signing a GNA agreement on a timber removal project on Paddock Butte. ODF will offer and administer the timber sale and utilize revenue to recoup costs and implement other components of restoration such as noncommercial thinning and prescribed burning.

Cross-Program Coordination Working Group

Districts have worked to build strong local partnerships, and these have led to new and innovative opportunities that build capacity to get work done on both private and federal lands. The field is seeking enhanced assistance from Salem to support the needs of these partnerships. Additionally, new federal programs and authorities like those described above have come online. There is a pressing need for better communication and coordination across the agency to ensure we are strategically pursuing these funding opportunities, in addition to a desire for more statewide support.

The Cross-Program Coordination Working Group is staff-driven and provides an open forum for discussion and problem solving within the agency. Initial conversations have centered on connecting internal programs, identifying constraints, and understanding how to best manage, coordinate, and support a growing focus on multi-agency collaboration at a landscape scale.

RECOMMENDATION

This agenda item is for information purposes only.

NEXT STEPS

The Cross-Program Coordination Working Group seeks to support the effective and efficient use of limited resources to address landscape level needs. This work begins by supporting the field's engagement with external partners who look to us for technical skill and leadership around complex forest management issues that cross ownership boundaries. Clear priorities, improved communications, better coordination among programs, and hands-on field support all help build the underlying structures that make the Department a successful, reliable partner.

ATTACHMENTS

- (1) Cross-Program Coordination Working Group Overview