

# Oregon Federal Forest Restoration Program

## Call for Planning Assistance and Categorical Exclusion (PACE) Projects

### Supporting Federal Forest Restoration Efforts of the Forest Service and BLM in Oregon

#### Overview

The Oregon State Legislature approved continued funding of Oregon Department of Forestry's Federal Forest Restoration (FFR) Program for the 2021-2023 biennium (July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2023) at \$3.6 million (Current Service Level). The goal of the FFR Program is to increase the pace, scale, and quality of forest restoration work to improve the resilience of federal forests managed by the Forest Service and BLM across Oregon.

ODF has supported a wide range of activities through the FFR Program to increase the capacity, efficiency, and effectiveness of federal agencies and collaborative groups in their efforts to restore Oregon's forests. FFR recognizes the availability of NEPA-ready acres as one of the key limiting factors for increasing the pace, scale and quality of restoration.

For the 2021-2023 biennium, ODF has up to \$450,000 to contract services to support Planning Assistance and Categorical Exclusion (PACE) projects. Eligible projects should fit into one of three types:

- **Contract CE's:** Contracting data collection, analysis, and documentation to assure NEPA compliance for small restoration projects which include commercial harvest that are anticipated to be Categorically Excluded from needing to prepare an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. For these projects, ODF would work with local Forest/District staff to develop a scope of work to be executed through a state contract.
- **Data Collection:** Needed resource surveys and/or data collection that significantly accelerate, increase or expand completion of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning for forest restoration projects on federal lands. Projects that seek to expand treatments to complex areas which have previously been hard to treat will be prioritized for this type. Proposals under this category should specify and explain how much faster a NEPA document will be completed and a Decision will be made with a PACE investment versus without.
- **Planning Innovations:** Planning innovations that seek to increase the pace, scale and quality of restoration through new methods or analysis efficiencies. Project proposals should detail the difference in approach from the status quo and forecast the expected efficiency gain in time, cost or other metrics.

#### Types of Projects Considered

The Forest Service and BLM have time-sensitive data and analysis needs to keep NEPA planning projects moving forward. The FFR program seeks to help the federal agencies meet those needs and to also help the federal agencies test new methods, build new capacity, and explore new business models.

Examples of Planning Assistance and Categorical Exclusion (PACE)-type capacity projects previously funded by ODF's FFR Program include:

- LiDAR imagery, data acquisition, and ground-truth plots
- Botany, Threatened and Endangered Species, or Heritage surveys
- Stand exams
- Innovative use of LiDAR data to reduce the need for additional field data collection or analysis
- Contracting the data collection, analysis, and documentation needed for 70 acre commercial thinning and 3000 acre Insect and Disease Categorical Exclusion projects

Proposals for the 2021-23 biennium are not limited to the types of projects listed above, which are only offered as examples. Proposals for other types of projects that assist the Forest Service and BLM in planning faster, for more acres, or for more complex projects are encouraged. Innovation proposals are strongly encouraged.

### **Administrative Structure of PACE projects**

PACE funds were allocated by the Oregon Legislature to the FFR Program for contracting. PACE projects can be administratively structured in either of two ways to adhere with this requirement.

- 1) The Forest Service or BLM can use a contractor that is already under a federal IDIQ or other contract to provide services and can develop a Collections Agreement with ODF to be reimbursed after the contractor has completed work and the federal agency has paid them.
- 2) The Forest Service or BLM can request that ODF procure the contractors to provide the planning assistance services using state contracting systems and act as the contract manager.

The Forest Service and BLM cannot use PACE funds to pay for federal employees to provide services for a PACE project. This restriction includes use of Forest Service Enterprise Teams, who are considered federal employees by the state.

### **Submission and Review Process**

Forest Service and BLM staff should work directly with ODF Federal Forest Restoration Program Coordinators or the FFR Program Lead to submit project ideas. Please see below for the appropriate FFR staff representative based on geography. Please work early and often with your FFR Coordinator while developing your project concept. While FFR Coordinators can provide insights on program priorities and help to develop project concepts, writing and submitting a project proposal in Word format is the responsibility of the applicant. **Project concepts are due to FFR team members by 5 pm PST on November 15<sup>th</sup>.**

The Federal Forest Restoration Program staff will review all proposals in a team setting and prioritize projects for funding in mid-December. In addition to FFR team members, three external reviewers who are familiar with federal forest planning needs of the Forest Service and BLM in Oregon will be recruited to participate in the PACE reviews.

Project proposals can be simple and brief. They should be submitted in Word format and include:

- Contact information for the National Forest of BLM District applicant
- Contact information for any collaborative groups involved in or expressing support for the project
- Name of specific NEPA planning area or restoration project on federal lands that the request is tied to, if any
- Indicate whether this is a Data Collection, Contract CE, or Planning Innovation project
- Indicate whether you would prefer the Collections Agreement or ODF Procurement administrative structure for this PACE project
- Brief statement of need and goals for the project
- Amount of contract funds requested and description of any match or leverage provided
- Brief description of the project activities proposed (what services will be contracted) and how those activities address the need for the project
- Brief description of the anticipated benefit or impact of the project. Please quantify or explain how the pace, scale, or quality of restoration is increased by the project and/or how the proposed activities improve efficiency or lead to innovations.
- For Data Collection PACE projects, please quantify how state support for data collection will accelerate the completion of a NEPA document. When would NEPA be completed without PACE support and how much sooner will NEPA be completed with PACE support?

- For Contract CE projects, please indicate whether and when the Forest Service would initiate and complete planning for the project without PACE support.

**Time Line for PACE Project Solicitation, Award, and Implementation**

Mid-September 2021	Call for Projects Released
Mid-September to Mid-November	Discuss Project Ideas with FFR Program Staff, Develop Proposal
November 15 2021	Proposals Due
Early December 2021	Review of Proposals
Mid to late December 2021	Award Letters Sent
January 2022	Collections Agreements Developed <b>OR</b> ODF Procurements Developed
January 2022 to May 2023	Conduct and Complete PACE Projects (Note: includes 1 full field season)

**Criteria and Priorities for Project Selection**

PACE projects will be evaluated using base criteria and using priorities for the biennium. Proposals must meet all base criteria and will receive special consideration if they meet any or multiple of the FFR biennium priorities below.

Base criteria for PACE projects include:

- Contributes to increasing the pace, scale, and quality of forest restoration in federal forests in Oregon
- Clearly contributes to completing NEPA faster, at larger scales, across more numerous project sites, or of greater complexity
- Supports planning that contributes to or is rooted in collaborative agreement
- Projects for which the Decision would occur prior to June 30, 2023 (first priority) or before June 30, 2024 (second priority)

FFR Priorities for the 2021-23 biennium include:

- Projects that support future Good Neighbor Authority projects (*both timber and restoration services projects*)
- Planning activities that test new business practices and cost/time efficiencies (produces, transfers, or documents new learning)
- Projects that have transferable approaches or results; that have an impact broader than a single planning area; or that demonstrate strategic value
- Projects that include multiple restoration objectives & activities (beyond vegetation/timber alone)
- Projects that address community wildfire protection concerns or that include significant Wildland Urban Interface acreage
- Projects that contribute to All Lands stewardship that crosses multiple ownerships
- Projects that demonstrate match or leverage

**Federal Forest Restoration Program Contacts:**

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