

ODF-FFR Program "A to Z" Planning Assistance Project Funding Decisions - 2025-27 Biennium

Applications awarded funding					
National Forest	Project Title / Name	Submitted By (Name & Title)	Funds Requested	Funds Awarded	Project Overview
Rogue River-Siskiyou	Grayback	Matt Timchak, District Silviculturist	\$ 850,000	\$ 500,000	The project proposes thinning and fuels reduction on approximately 4,000 acres to improve forest resiliency, reduce fuel loading, and improve public and firefighter access in a high-risk wildfire landscape. Treatments include plantation thinning and fuels reduction along strategic fuel management zones, with opportunities for associated road maintenance. Partners intend to support planning and prioritization (including landscape modeling) to maximize risk-reduction benefits. Estimated to generate 20-40 MMBF.
Mt. Hood	The Dalles Watershed	Marin Palmer, Forest Strategy Staff Officer	\$ 750,000	\$ 500,000	The project is a landscape-scale restoration effort identified as a high priority for wildfire-risk reduction in Oregon's 20-year Landscape Resilience Strategy and the Mt. Hood area all-lands Strategic Action Plan. It is responsive to local partnership priorities identified through the Wasco County all-lands group, Hood River All-Lands Partnership, the City of The Dalles, and the Hood River and Wasco County Forest Collaboratives.
Malheur	Bogue Gulch	Chase Bloom, District Ranger	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 600,000	The project intends to implement forest health and resilience treatments under Good Neighbor Authority on up to 7,623 acres. The project builds on prior work and investments completed through the Southern Blues Partnership.
Umpqua	Thunder Cat	Ryan Siebold, Silviculturist	\$ 850,000	\$ 650,000	The Thunder Cat Vegetation Management Project proposes an "A to Z" planning effort to refine and analyze a large vegetation management and fuels project across approximately 31,240 acres (adjustable based on the refined proposed action). The Forest Service's initial proposal includes approximately 4,600 acres of managed plantations for commercial treatment and 50 miles (~2,400 acres) of shaded fuel break installation and maintenance, with associated activities such as prescribed burning and potential road access work.

Wallowa-Whitman	Unity Point	Will Bredecke, Forest Project Manager	\$ 1,350,000	\$ 750,000	The Unity Point Project proposes a suite of vegetation, fuels, and watershed treatments to restore forest and watershed resilience in a landscape vulnerable to wildfire, insects, disease, and climate stressors. Current conditions include dense, relatively homogeneous moist mixed-conifer stands, degraded riparian and meadow processes, and high wildfire hazard potential. The proposal emphasizes topography-informed thinning and prescribed fire, riparian/meadow restoration, whitebark pine conservation, and actions supporting tribal traditional uses, wildlife habitat, and community values.
		Total award		\$ 3,000,000	

Priorities for additional funding, if available					
Willamette	Oakridge Airport	Sarah Altemus-Pope, Executive Director, Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative	\$ 250,000	\$ -	The proposal requests ODF-led NEPA planning assistance for an approximately 170-acre integrated vegetation management project in close proximity to the Oakridge–Westfir communities and critical infrastructure. The planning effort would support development of a signed NEPA decision to enable implementation of commercial thinning, non-commercial fuels reduction, and prescribed fire, with the intent that treatments would largely be implemented under the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA).
				\$ -	

“A to Z” Planning Assistance Project Application Evaluation

Project Name: Grayback Restoration Project

Applicant: Matt Timchak, District Silviculturist, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest

Funds Requested: \$850,000

Application Summary

Location:

Grayback Creek watershed on the Rogue River–Siskiyou National Forest, immediately north of Oregon Caves National Monument.

Project overview:

The project proposes thinning and fuels reduction to improve forest resiliency, reduce fuel loading, and improve public and firefighter access in a high-risk wildfire landscape.

Treatments include plantation thinning and fuels reduction along strategic fuel management zones, with opportunities for associated road maintenance. Partners intend to support planning and prioritization (including landscape modeling) to maximize risk-reduction benefits.

Project purpose and need:

To reduce hazardous fuels along roads and ridgelines by creating and maintaining shaded fuel breaks and other defensible features that improve suppression probability of success.

The project is intended to protect Oregon Caves National Monument and nearby private lands, improve safe ingress/egress for the public and firefighters (including the Monument’s official evacuation route), and restore forest structure and composition to be more resilient to fire and other natural disturbance.

Proposed action and services to be contracted:

NEPA planning and implementation support associated with plantation thinning, thinning in natural stands, fuels reduction along strategic fuel management zones, and road maintenance. The application identifies the following contracted needs to support required surveys and analysis prior to implementation and to inform the EA:

- Archaeology surveys
- Wildlife surveys (including northern spotted owl)
- Botanical surveys
- Harvest analysis
- Roads and engineering
- Stand exams

- Hydrology/aquatics
- Soils
- Environmental Assessment development

Schedule and expedited timeline:

The project is anticipated to advance the NEPA decision by approximately 48–60 months (4–5 years), with a target decision by September 2027.

Treatments and expected outputs:

Approximately 4,000 acres total (about 2,000 acres of shaded fuel breaks along strategic ridgetops/roads and 2,000 acres of plantation thinning). Estimated timber output is 20–40 MMBF.

Budget:

\$850,000 requested. The applicant indicates the request is scalable down to \$500,000. At the \$500,000 minimum, the scope would likely be limited to plantation portions of the landscape (approximately 2,000 acres and ~20 MMBF), reducing the ability to include strategic fuel management zones and more complex natural stands.

Leveraged funding:

The application notes that if additional costs are needed to complete planning, revenue generated from the current ODF/USFS GNA agreement could be used to get the project to the finish line.

Review Team Assessment**Strengths**

- Strong partner support, including engagement from Rogue Forest Partners and the Illinois Valley Fire Resiliency Oversight Group, with planned use of landscape modeling to prioritize treatments for maximum risk reduction.
- Clear purpose and need tied to landscape resilience and wildfire risk reduction, including creation/maintenance of shaded fuel breaks along strategic roads and ridgelines to improve suppression success.
- Meaningful NEPA acceleration: anticipated to advance the decision timeline by ~4–5 years, helping align planning with the urgency of treatment needs in this landscape.

- Addresses a documented capacity gap: the forest/ranger district lacks staffing and funding to plan this project on its current trajectory, and the application indicates the project is not presently on the 5-year plan.
- Located within a 20-year priority landscape and identified as having high wildfire risk; the project area is described as highly departed from historic conditions and in need of treatment before a stand-replacing fire.
- Protects high-value assets and public safety: helps defend Oregon Caves National Monument, nearby private lands, and an official evacuation route that runs through the project area.

Concerns

- Limited linkage to prior ODF Federal Forest Restoration Program investments in the area; the application describes the project as a new FFR effort, which may reduce opportunities to build on existing program momentum or prior planning/products.
- Presence of O&C controverted lands within the project area may complicate implementation and should be addressed early.
- Potential availability of alternative funding sources to support NEPA planning and/or required surveys.

Overall Assessment

The Grayback Restoration Project is a high-urgency, high-value planning effort in a priority wildfire landscape adjacent to Oregon Caves National Monument. The application makes a strong case that additional NEPA planning capacity is needed to accelerate action in a landscape where delaying treatments increases the probability of stand-replacing fire and associated risks to public safety and national-monument values.

Review Team Recommendation

Recommendation: Fund

Recommended Amount: \$500,000

“A to Z” Planning Assistance Project Application Evaluation

Project Name: The Dalles Watershed EA

Applicant: Marin Palmer, Forest Strategy Staff Officer, Mt. Hood National Forest

Funds Requested: \$750,000

Application Summary

Location:

City of The Dalles Municipal Watershed (Mill Creek-Columbia River watershed) on the Mt. Hood National Forest, adjacent to City-owned inholdings and lands.

Project overview:

The project is a landscape-scale restoration effort identified as a high priority for wildfire-risk reduction in Oregon’s 20-year Landscape Resilience Strategy and the Mt. Hood area all-lands Strategic Action Plan. It is responsive to local partnership priorities identified through the Wasco County all-lands group, Hood River All-Lands Partnership, the City of The Dalles, and the Hood River and Wasco County Forest Collaboratives.

Project purpose and need:

To maintain shaded fuel breaks and previously thinned areas and reduce hazardous fuel loading and stand density in untreated areas within the City of The Dalles Municipal Watershed. The project is intended to reduce the risk of uncharacteristically severe wildfire, protect municipal water quality and quantity, and move the landscape toward more historic open conditions in a forest type that has become denser and more multi-storied, increasing risk from high-severity fire and insect/disease outbreaks.

Proposed action and services to be contracted:

NEPA planning support for a landscape-scale hazardous-fuels and restoration project within the municipal watershed, including development of silvicultural prescriptions, effects analysis, and Environmental Assessment preparation. The project anticipates contracting for the following surveys and technical analysis to support NEPA and implementation planning:

- Cultural/heritage (archaeology) surveys
- Wildlife surveys and analysis
- Botanical surveys
- Hydrology/watershed analysis (municipal water supply focus)
- Soils analysis
- Stand exams and silvicultural prescription support

- Timber sale/harvest analysis (commercial thinning design)
- Engineering/roads analysis (as needed for access and treatments)
- Environmental Assessment development/NEPA contractor support

Schedule and expedited timeline:

The project is included in the forest's 5-year vegetation management plan with an existing completion date of November 2028. A-Z funding is anticipated to expedite the NEPA decision by approximately 12–16 months, with a possible decision by June 2027.

Treatments and expected outputs:

Approximately 10,000 acres total (about 6,000 acres of commercial thinning and 4,000 acres of non-commercial thinning/maintenance of previously thinned areas), with prescribed burning applied across treatment areas. Estimated sawlog timber volume is approximately 30 MMBF.

Budget:

\$750,000 requested (leveraging an additional \$750,000 in existing GNA timber revenue). Total survey and NEPA contract cost is estimated at \$1.5M; the project is scalable, and the Forest Service would identify remaining funding needs. The minimum acceptable amount is >\$150,000, with \$500,000 or more described as ideal for planning assistance.

Leveraged funding:

Existing GNA timber revenue (25-GN-11060600-299) will be leveraged up to \$750,000 to support surveys and NEPA contract costs, with ODF cost recovery anticipated through administration of up to 30 MMBF in timber sales.

Review Team Assessment**Strengths**

- Located within the City of The Dalles Municipal Watershed (Mill Creek-Columbia River watershed) and within a 20-year Landscape Resilience Strategy priority landscape; adjacent to City-owned lands, supporting an all-lands approach.
- High public-value and high-visibility project focused on protecting a municipal water supply and reducing risk of uncharacteristically severe wildfire in a dense, departed forest condition.
- Strong partner network and local collaborative engagement (Wasco County all-lands group, Hood River All-Lands Partnership, City of The Dalles, Hood River and

Wasco County Forest Collaboratives) positioned to support implementation and communication.

- Commercial component (approximately 30 MMBF) can help offset costs of non-commercial treatments and prescribed fire, improving overall project affordability.
- Builds on ongoing shared stewardship work and prior ODF FFR investments on the Mt. Hood east zone, supporting continuity across planning and implementation efforts.

Concerns

- Purpose and need and the proposed action may evolve through forest collaborative involvement, potentially adding elements beyond what is described in the application and increasing NEPA complexity or schedule risk.
- The project may be able to receive alternative funding sources, including existing GNA timber revenue and other potential program funding.
- This area already has significant restoration funding and capacity relative to other high-need landscapes, which may reduce the marginal benefit of additional planning assistance dollars.

Overall Assessment

The Dalles Watershed EA is a high public-value, partner-rich project in the Mill Creek–Columbia River municipal watershed and a 20-Year Landscape Resilience Strategy priority area. The proposal leverages a substantial commercial component to help cover the cost of non-commercial fuels work and prescribed fire, and it is adjacent to City-owned lands—creating strong opportunities for coordinated treatments and durable outcomes. While the collaborative process may evolve the purpose and need or add elements beyond what is described in the application, and while other funding sources and local capacity likely exist, the project’s visibility, watershed values, and ability to use timber sale revenue to support follow-on restoration investments justify supporting NEPA planning assistance. On balance, the review team recommends funding to help maintain momentum and coordination for this highly public project, with an award amount of \$500,000.

Review Team Recommendation

Recommendation: Do Fund

Recommended Amount: \$500,000

“A to Z” Planning Assistance Project Application Evaluation

Project Name: Malheur NF Bogue Gulch A-Z Project

Applicant: Chase Bloom, District Ranger, Malheur National Forest

Funds Requested: \$1,500,000

Application Summary

Location:

Approximately 11 miles southeast of Prairie City, Oregon on the Malheur National Forest, within the Deardorff Creek sub-watershed (Bogue Gulch project area).

Project overview:

The project intends to implement forest health and resilience treatments under Good Neighbor Authority on up to 7,623 acres. The project builds on prior work and investments completed through the Southern Blues Partnership.

Project purpose and need:

The purpose is to reduce hazardous fuels, enhance forest structure, return fire to the landscape, support the local economy, and improve habitat for native plants and wildlife. The project is intended to reduce wildfire risk for adjacent small forest landowners and enable future cross-boundary prescribed fire and treatment efforts. The Forest Service Road 13 corridor is designated Wildland Urban Interface in the Grant County Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Proposed action and services to be contracted:

Proposed treatments include noncommercial thinning, commercial thinning, prescribed burning, and road maintenance. ODF would complete NEPA planning using contractors. Once a decision is signed, ODF would implement under GNA using timber sale contracts, thinning contracts, and joint prescribed fire operations with the Forest Service. The application anticipates contracting support for required surveys, analysis, and documentation to inform the CE or EA.

- Treatment development and layout to support noncommercial and commercial thinning prescriptions
- Biological surveys and support for wildlife/botanical needs; contractor-prepared biological assessment for Forest Service review
- Specialist report writing and project analysis to support CE or EA documentation
- Cultural resource survey coordination (noting some surveys are underway within portions of the project area)

- Roads/engineering support and road maintenance planning
- Decision document development (CE or EA) and associated planning support

Schedule and expedited timeline:

The project is anticipated to advance the NEPA decision by at least 36 months (3 years), with an anticipated decision date of May 30, 2027. The project is otherwise associated with a broader Headwaters Planning Area decision timeline no earlier than FY 2030.

Treatments and expected outputs:

Up to 7,623 acres of thinning (commercial and noncommercial), prescribed burning, and road maintenance. Estimated sawlog volume is 7 MMBF.

Budget:

\$1,500,000 requested. The applicant indicates the request is scalable; a scaled-down option could pursue a categorical exclusion covering up to approximately 3,000 acres. The minimum acceptable amount identified is \$600,000, which would complete NEPA planning on a significant portion of the project area.

Leveraged funding:

The application identifies potential additional funding sources (including CFLN, Joint Chiefs, other Forest Service appropriations, and other state funds), but it is unclear what match/leverage is secured and available on a defined timeline.

Review Team Assessment**Strengths**

- Located within the Grant County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Wildland Urban Interface corridor and supports hazardous fuels objectives for local wildfire stakeholders.
- Adjacent to non-industrial private ownership, increasing opportunity for cross-boundary coordination and future prescribed fire or treatment linkage.
- Meaningful NEPA acceleration: additional investment is anticipated to advance the decision timeline by approximately 3 years.
- Addresses a documented capacity gap: the forest/district has limited capacity to complete NEPA planning on the current trajectory.
- Project is scalable: a reduced-scope approach (e.g., CE up to approximately 3,000 acres) could move forward if full funding is not available.

- Potential to leverage other federal funds and investments to support planning and implementation.

Concerns

- The ability to offset state costs may be limited if product values/markets are constrained; commercial volume is identified, but realized value may be uncertain relative to treatment and implementation costs.
- Only a portion of the project area is within the 20-Year Landscape Resilience Strategy priority landscape, which may affect prioritization relative to proposals fully within priority geographies.
- Match/leverage is referenced, but it is unclear whether it has been secured and available on a defined timeline.

Overall Assessment

The Bogue Gulch A-Z Project supports high-priority fuels reduction and forest resilience objectives in a Grant County CWPP Wildland Urban Interface corridor and offers cross-boundary benefit given adjacency to non-industrial private lands. The application identifies a clear NEPA planning capacity constraint on the Malheur National Forest, and funding would accelerate the decision timeline by approximately three years. While there are outstanding questions regarding secured leveraged funding and the net economic value of commercial material, the project is scalable and can be paired with other federal resources to complete planning and position the landscape for implementation and future prescribed fire. On balance, the review team recommends funding at the applicant's minimum scalable level to deliver near-term NEPA progress and maintain momentum in a high-risk landscape.

Review Team Recommendation

Recommendation: Fund

Recommended Amount: \$600,000

“A to Z” Planning Assistance Project Application Evaluation

Project Name: Thunder Cat Vegetation Management Project

Applicant: Ryan Siebold, Silviculturist, Umpqua National Forest

Funds Requested: \$850,000

Application Summary

Location:

Western boundary of the Umpqua National Forest along the North Umpqua River and Oregon Highway 138, within the Middle North Umpqua River subwatershed (HUC10: 1710030108). Portions of the area were affected by the 2020 Archie Creek Fire and other recent fires.

Project overview:

The Thunder Cat Vegetation Management Project proposes an “A to Z” planning effort to refine and analyze a large vegetation management and fuels project across approximately 31,240 acres (adjustable based on the refined proposed action). The Forest Service’s initial proposal includes approximately 4,600 acres of managed plantations for commercial treatment and 50 miles (~2,400 acres) of shaded fuel break installation and maintenance, with associated activities such as prescribed burning and potential road access work.

Project purpose and need:

Reduce wildfire risk to public and nearby private lands while improving landscape resilience and creating economic opportunities through timber sales and restoration services.

Proposed action and services to be contracted:

ODF would manage project development and NEPA planning to refine the proposed action based on current vs. desired conditions and treatment need. Early project development would rely on contracted surveys and technical work to inform unit feasibility, mitigation, and environmental effects analysis, potentially including road access log-out for initial entry. Contracted services identified/anticipated include:

- Stand examinations
- Stream surveys
- Road and culvert evaluations / engineering support
- Botanical and rare plant surveys
- Wildlife surveys (including Survey and Manage where applicable)
- Heritage / archaeology surveys

- Road access work (log-out/clearing) as needed
- Harvest analysis / silvicultural prescription support
- Environmental Assessment development (analysis, writing, and reporting)

Schedule and expedited timeline:

If funded, the project could expedite the NEPA decision by up to 6 months. The anticipated decision date is December 2027 (assuming required surveys are completed).

Treatments and expected outputs:

Variable Retention Harvest (VRH) up to 1,250 acres; Variable Density Thinning (VDT) approximately 3,350–4,600 acres (depending on VRH extent); and shaded fuel breaks on approximately 2,400 acres. Estimated timber volume is up to ~35 MMBF from VRH and ~33–45 MMBF from VDT (depending on VRH extent).

Budget:

\$850,000 requested. The applicant indicates the project is scalable and identifies \$650,000 as the minimum acceptable amount. Potential scaling options include excluding Oregon and California Railroad (O&C) controverted lands (which may require separate Forest Service implementation/analysis) and/or removing VRH components to reduce Survey and Manage survey requirements.

Leveraged funding:

No secured leverage or match is identified at this time. The application notes potential for other funds and Forest Service support (personnel, equipment, time) to contribute as opportunities emerge.

Review Team Assessment

Strengths

- Within 20-Year Landscape Resilience Strategy priority landscapes; purpose and need aligns with program objectives focused on landscape resilience and wildfire risk reduction.
- Opportunity for ODF to shape and refine the proposed action early, improving implementability and alignment with ORS 526.275 considerations.
- High potential for economic benefit to the state given proximity to Douglas County mills, good access, and strong commercial value in portions of the area; timber receipts can support implementation and future investments.

- Large number of treatment acres with high potential impact, including substantial commercial treatment acres and strategic fuel break installation/maintenance with associated prescribed fire.
- Forest has low NEPA capacity; planning assistance would directly address a capacity constraint and improve the likelihood of completing analysis on schedule.
- High urgency in a landscape affected by recent wildfire (including the 2020 Archie Creek Fire) where timely restoration and fuels work can reduce the likelihood of future stand-replacing fire and associated impacts to watershed values and communities.

Concerns

- No adjacency to non-federal lands, limiting near-term cross-boundary opportunities compared to projects that interface directly with adjacent ownerships.
- No synergy with prior Federal Forest Restoration Program investments reducing opportunities to build on existing planning products or program momentum.
- No secured leverage/match identified; funding plan relies primarily on the request, with only general potential for other funds.
- Contains Oregon and California Railroad (O&C) controverted lands, which may complicate NEPA and/or implementation and will require Forest Service-led components.
- Expedites the NEPA decision by only up to 6 months, which is comparatively modest acceleration for the requested investment.

Overall Assessment

The Thunder Cat Vegetation Management Project is a large, high-impact planning effort in a 20-Year Landscape Resilience Strategy priority landscape on the Umpqua National Forest. The proposal aligns well with program objectives and offers an opportunity for ODF to shape a refined, implementable proposed action that supports wildfire risk reduction and landscape resilience while generating substantial commercial volume. Given limited forest NEPA capacity, planning assistance would help complete required surveys and analysis and improve the likelihood of delivering timely NEPA for a treatment program of meaningful scale. Although the timeline acceleration is modest (up to 6 months), leverage has not been secured, and O&C controverted lands add complexity, the expected treatment footprint and economic benefit potential support funding at a scaled level.

Review Team Recommendation

Recommendation: Fund

Recommended Amount: \$650,000

“A to Z” Planning Assistance Project Application Evaluation

Project Name: Unity Point Integrated Vegetation Management Project

Applicant: Will Brendecke, Forest Project Manager, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest (La Grande Ranger District)

Funds Requested: \$1,350,000

Application Summary

Location:

La Grande Ranger District, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest; approximately 14,000 acres in the Unity Point planning area.

Project overview:

The Unity Point Project proposes a suite of vegetation, fuels, and watershed treatments to restore forest and watershed resilience in a landscape vulnerable to wildfire, insects, disease, and climate stressors. Current conditions include dense, relatively homogeneous moist mixed-conifer stands, degraded riparian and meadow processes, and high wildfire hazard potential. The proposal emphasizes topography-informed thinning and prescribed fire, riparian/meadow restoration, whitebark pine conservation, and actions supporting tribal traditional uses, wildlife habitat, and community values.

Project purpose and need:

Improve forest resiliency by restoring forest structure, composition, and diversity—and associated riparian communities—to conditions more resilient to natural disturbance processes, including wildfire. Key needs identified include reducing ladder and surface fuels (including along POD lines), restoring degraded stream and floodplain processes, maintaining habitat for old-growth dependent species, improving upland water developments to reduce riparian impacts, and supporting social/tribal values and local wood-products and employment opportunities.

Proposed action and services to be contracted:

The project anticipates developing an Environmental Assessment (EA) and supporting analyses/surveys through a contracted interdisciplinary team (IDT) to enable implementation of thinning, prescribed fire, riparian/meadow restoration, and associated range/access improvements. The application indicates contracting would provide specialist capacity to prepare required reports, surveys, and documentation to move the project through NEPA and toward implementation within program timelines.

- NEPA/Planning support and EA development

- Cultural resources / archaeology surveys
- Wildlife and sensitive-species analysis
- Botany / invasive species surveys
- Fisheries, hydrology, and aquatic analysis
- Soils analysis
- Silviculture prescriptions and stand exams
- Engineering/roads and range improvements support
- Fuels and prescribed fire planning support

Schedule and expedited timeline:

The application notes national direction to complete an EA within approximately one year of initiating scoping, with a target to complete planning within the program timeframe (through June 30, 2027). While the project has been identified in forest planning work, it has remained in an ‘idea phase’ due to competing priorities; additional capacity would bring the project forward for timely decision and implementation.

Treatments and expected outputs:

Project area: ~14,000 acres. The proposal anticipates commercial harvesting on approximately 6,000 acres as part of a broader integrated vegetation, fuels, and watershed restoration program. Estimated timber volume is at least ~30 MMBF, with additional non-commercial and restoration-focused actions (including prescribed fire and riparian/meadow work) proposed to improve resilience and reduce risk of high-severity fire.

Budget:

The application requests up to \$1.35M to contract a full interdisciplinary NEPA team; estimated NEPA needs are described in the \$950k–\$1.35M range. For this review, the recommended award is \$750,000 to support a scoped, priority set of IDT functions sufficient to initiate and complete core NEPA products and de-risk implementation.

Leveraged funding:

The proposal anticipates cost recovery and implementation support through commercial timber outputs and indicates that Forest Service staff time and other federal funding streams may support coordination and follow-on implementation. Additional receipts and/or federal funds could be leveraged to complete remaining planning elements or expand implementation as appropriate.

Review Team Assessment**Strengths**

- High-impact, landscape-scale proposal (~14,000 acres) with an integrated suite of vegetation, fuels, and watershed treatments, including prescribed fire and riparian/meadow restoration.
- Strong case that the project would stall without added capacity: the forest has limited NEPA/IDT bandwidth and the project has remained in an 'idea' phase due to competing priorities.
- High level of detail in the application regarding desired outcomes, treatment approach (topography-informed), and the range of specialist needs required to move the EA forward.
- Clear linkage between NEPA investment and implementation readiness, including the ability to phase/scale the project and align commercial activities to help cover non-commercial restoration costs.
- Potential for meaningful economic benefit through commercial volume (estimated ≥30 MMBF) supporting local wood products and employment, with a pathway to reinvest receipts into additional restoration work.
- Opportunity to use targeted funding to assemble a functional IDT and complete core surveys/analyses within required timelines, positioning the project for timely implementation.

Concerns

- The application does not clearly describe whether (and to what extent) ODF would implement commercial components under GNA versus the Forest Service; roles and responsibilities should be clarified early to avoid schedule/contracting delays.
- High overall NEPA cost estimate relative to typical EA planning assistance; scoping and phasing should be used to ensure the recommended \$750,000 focuses on the highest-risk, must-have compliance items.
- The schedule benefit is not fully quantified beyond meeting a one-year EA expectation; the applicant should identify specific milestones (scoping, specialist reports, draft EA, decision) and how funding changes the critical path to implementation.

Overall Assessment

Unity Point presents a high-impact, landscape-scale opportunity to accelerate restoration planning on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest where NEPA capacity is a documented

constraint. The proposal is detailed, aligns with program objectives for increased pace and scale, and includes a substantial commercial component that can help finance non-commercial restoration and prescribed fire. At the same time, the request reflects a high-cost approach and the extent of schedule acceleration is not yet clearly defined. A \$750,000 award is recommended to complete core interdisciplinary analyses and EA documentation, with an expectation that the forest will (1) clarify ODF/USFS implementation roles for commercial work, (2) provide a milestone-based schedule, and (3) use phasing to keep planning focused on the highest-priority treatment units and compliance needs.

Review Team Recommendation

Recommendation: Fund

Recommended Amount: \$750,000

“A to Z” Planning Assistance Project Application Evaluation

Project Name: Oakridge Airport Thinning and Fuels Reduction Project

Applicant: Sarah Altemus-Pope, Executive Director, Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative

Funds Requested: \$250,000

Application Summary

Location:

Laurel Butte on the Willamette National Forest (Middle Fork Ranger District), bisecting Oakridge and Westfir and adjacent to the Oakridge State Airport (Oakridge–Westfir WUI).

Project overview:

The proposal requests ODF-led NEPA planning assistance for an approximately 170-acre integrated vegetation management project in close proximity to the Oakridge–Westfir communities and critical infrastructure. The planning effort would support development of a signed NEPA decision to enable implementation of commercial thinning, non-commercial fuels reduction, and prescribed fire, with the intent that treatments would largely be implemented under the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA).

Project purpose and need:

To develop a comprehensive NEPA decision that enables integrated vegetation management—including commercial harvest—designed to reduce wildfire risk to the Oakridge–Westfir communities and critical infrastructure, including the Oakridge State Airport (a frequent wildfire suppression base). The need is driven by overstocked stand conditions, high ignition risk in the WUI, and the absence of a current NEPA decision that evaluates combined commercial and non-commercial treatments and long-term maintenance.

Proposed action and services to be contracted:

ODF would contract and manage third-party planning services to support development of an EA and decision for commercial thinning, small-diameter fuels reduction, and prescribed fire (including design features/mitigation). The application identifies contracted support for required surveys, interdisciplinary technical support, environmental analysis, alternatives development, and preparation of NEPA documentation, coordinated with Forest Service staff through milestone reviews.

- Archaeology/cultural resources surveys
- Wildlife surveys and effects analysis

- Botanical surveys
- Silviculture/stand exams and harvest analysis
- Fuels and fire planning support (including prescribed fire feasibility)
- Roads and engineering / access and control-feature assessment
- Hydrology/aquatics
- Soils
- EA development and documentation support

Schedule and expedited timeline:

The project is currently not included in the forest’s five-year vegetation management plan. If funded, the application anticipates a signed NEPA decision by 2027 (accelerating an otherwise unscheduled timeline).

Treatments and expected outputs:

Proposed treatments include approximately 112 acres of commercial thinning, roadside treatments, fuels reduction with pile burning across ~100 acres, and ~5 acres of meadow enhancement. Estimated sawlog volume is approximately 2.24 MMBF.

Budget:

\$250,000 requested. The applicant indicates the budget is scalable down to \$75,000 by reducing the number of acres analyzed/treated in the planning scope.

Leveraged funding:

The application notes adjacent implementation funding and related work through a USDA Community Wildfire Defense grant, a pending Small Forestland Grant Program award, and potential implementation support from ODF South Cascades fuels crews.

Review Team Assessment

Strengths

- Located within a 20-Year Landscape Resilience Strategy priority geography and identified wildfire-risk priority; directly adjacent to the communities of Oakridge and Westfir.
- Synergy with prior ODF and Forest Service investments in the Laurel Butte/Oakridge area, strengthening continuity of fuels reduction and WUI risk mitigation.
- Relatively low total request compared to other projects, with potential to generate an implementable NEPA decision that is additive to the forest’s current five-year plan.

- High public value and visibility: immediately adjacent to critical infrastructure including the Oakridge State Airport and nearby private residences.
- Located within a 20-year priority landscape and identified as having high wildfire risk; the project area is described as highly departed from historic conditions and in need of treatment before a stand-replacing fire.
- Protects high-value assets and public safety: helps defend Oregon Caves National Monument, nearby private lands, and an official evacuation route that runs through the project area.

Concerns

- Limited overall treatment footprint (approximately 170 acres), resulting in lower landscape-scale impact relative to other proposals.
- Existing funding and implementation capacity in the broader Oakridge area may reduce the marginal benefit of additional state investment for planning assistance.
- High cost per acre for NEPA planning support given the small footprint, particularly when competing proposals would produce substantially more NEPA-ready acres per dollar.

Overall Assessment

The Oakridge Airport Thinning and Fuels Reduction Project is well aligned with community wildfire-risk reduction priorities and builds on prior investments near Oakridge and Westfir. However, the proposed NEPA effort covers a relatively small footprint and yields limited treated acres compared to other applications, while the cost per acre remains high. Given the substantial funding and capacity already present in the Oakridge area and the lower marginal benefit of additional planning assistance in this context, the review team does not recommend funding through this investment cycle.

Review Team Recommendation

Recommendation: Do Not Fund

Recommended Amount: \$0