Oregon Federal Forest Restoration Program
Call for Planning Assistance and Categorical Exclusion (PACE) Projects
Supporting Federal Forest Restoration Efforts of the Forest Service in Oregon

Overview

The goal of Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) Federal Forest Restoration (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, in a manner that leverages collaborative efforts and contributes to the long-term vitality of regional economies and rural communities.

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.

The Oregon State Legislature, through the FFR Program, has already invested $600,000 of state General Funds in two comprehensive Contract NEPA projects for the current biennium, SW Tiller EA on the Umpqua National Forest (NF) and 54 North EA on the Umatilla NF. Also, there is $1.2 million invested in Contract NEPA work on the Willamette NF, made possible through a grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA); Kinney CE and Humbug CE are the initial projects slated to receive these funds.

In addition to the existing projects already in progress, ODF, through a statewide agreement with Forest Service Region 6, has up to **$1,500,000 to contract services to support Planning Assistance and Categorical Exclusion (PACE) projects**. Eligible projects should fit into one of three types:

- **Contract CE/EAs:** ODF procuring 3rd party comprehensive data collection, analysis, and documentation to assure NEPA compliance for a commercial restoration project (public involvement, scoping, surveys, assessments/reports, etc.). For these projects, ODF would work with local Forest/District staff to develop a scope of work to be executed through a state contract. ODF-FFR staff may assist with some aspects of the project (reconnaissance, roads assessment, stand exams, logging plan, etc.)
- **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. 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 has time-sensitive data and analysis needs to keep NEPA planning projects moving forward. The FFR program seeks to help the Forest Service 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:

- Testing Environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling as a viable alternative to traditional Red Tree Vole and listed-fish species sampling methods
- 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 this 2023 Call for Projects 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 in planning faster, for more acres, or for more complex projects are encouraged. Innovation proposals are strongly encouraged.

Administrative Structure of PACE projects

The source of funds for these PACE projects is federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds and are provided to ODF via a statewide Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) Supplemental Project Agreement (SPA). ODF will manage and procure the contractors that will provide the planning assistance services using state contracting systems. These funds are not intended to be used to pay for federal employees, federal contractors, or Forest Service Enterprise Teams.

Submission and Review Process

Forest Service staff should work directly with ODF Federal Forest Restoration Program Unit Foresters/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 staff while developing your project concept. While FFR staff can provide insights on program priorities and help to develop project concepts, writing and submitting a project proposal is the responsibility of the applicant. **Project concepts are due by 5 pm PST on December 15th**.

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

To apply for PACE funds, complete an application form at the link here: https://forms.office.com/g/MKdz12J45G

Time Line for PACE Project Solicitation, Award, and Implementation

October 13, 2023	Call for Projects Released
Mid-October to Mid-December	Discuss Project Ideas with FFR Program Staff, Develop Proposal
December 15, 2023	Proposals Due
January 2024	Review of Proposals
February 2024	Contracts developed and executed
February 2024 to June 2025	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.

Criteria	Maximum Points
Project tests new business practices that will result in cost and/or time efficiencies (produces, transfers, or documents new learning)	20
Project expedites current NEPA planning area timeline, as shown in Forest 5-year plans, by one federal fiscal year or more	20
Project addresses community wildfire protection concerns or falls within Oregon's Landscape Resilience Strategy landscapes	20
Projects that support future commercial vegetation management, particularly Good Neighbor Authority projects	20
Project is adjacent to Tribal or non-industrial private land (>5,000 ac.) or leverages adjoining treatments to Forest Service land	10
Project is complementary to existing or previous FFR Program investments	5
Projects that demonstrate match or leverage	5

Federal Forest Restoration Program Contacts:

Team Member	FFR Program District	Phone	E-mail	Federal Jurisdiction
Mike Billman	Northeast	541-362-6760	mike.e.billman@odf.oregon.gov	Wallowa-Whitman NF Umatilla NF
Cameron Scott	Central	541-903-0532	cameron.t.scott@odf.oregon.gov	Deschutes NF Malheur NF Ochoco NF Prineville BLM
Matt Anspach	South Central	541-880-6911	matt.s.anspach@odf.oregon.gov	Fremont-Winema NF Lakeview BLM
Chris Rudd	Southwest	541-471-4245	chris.c.rudd@odf.oregon.gov	Rogue-Siskiyou NF Umpqua NF Medford BLM Roseburg BLM Coos Bay BLM
Jennifer Erdmann	Northwest	503-934-8150	jennifer.erdmann@odf.oregon.gov	Willamette NF Mt. Hood NF Siuslaw NF Northwest Oregon BLM
Kyle Sullivan-Astor		541-285-8685	kyle.m.sullivan@odf.oregon.gov	Salem – Program Lead