

"Increasing Pace, Scale, and Quality"



FEDERAL FOREST RESTORATION PROGRAM UPDATE



ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

FACT SHEET 35 • JULY 2025

This update comes as the Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) Federal Forest Restoration (FFR) Program wraps up its work for the 2023-25 biennium and looks ahead to 2025-27. The FFR Program is on track for achieving its targets for 2023-25, and is on track to double its treatment outputs next biennium; targeting treatment on ~12,000 acres per year compared to the current ~6,000 acre average. This report shares the program's on-going contract National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) projects that allow for a project to be completed from "A to Z" by ODF, a spotlight on a forest health project in Southwest Oregon, and examines how recent federal policy changes may impact milling infrastructure in a region with high restoration needs but limited processing capacity.

In-Progress Contract NEPA Projects

Hootnanny GNA Project:

45.341159, -121.376698

HUC 10 Watershed: Tygh Creek

Proportion of forested area within watershed in need of disturbance: **40%**

Project Description:

- 3,000-acre insect and disease categorical exclusion
- Purpose is to reduce the risk of landscape level disturbance and increase forest resiliency to insect and disease
- Proposed treatments include non-commercial thinning, commercial thinning, prescribed burning, & road maintenance



54 North GNA Project:

45.326752, -118.80689

HUC 10 Watershed: Birch Creek

Proportion of forested area within watershed in need of disturbance: **38%**

Project Description:

- 40,565-acre environmental assessment
- Purpose is to reduce fuels, enhance forest structure, return fire to the landscape, and improve habitat for huckleberry
- Proposed treatments include non-commercial thinning, commercial thinning, and underburning



Southwest Tiller Fuel Break GNA Project:

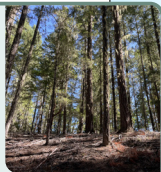
42.789414, -123.033626

HUC 10 Watershed: Upper Cow Creek

Proportion of forested area within watershed in need of disturbance: **50%**

Project Description:

- Approx. 4,500 acre environmental assessment
- Purpose is to reduce the risk of high severity wildfire and create potential control lines following potential operational delineation boundaries
- Proposed treatments are establishing linear fuel breaks, and thinning plantations



Tie GNA Project:

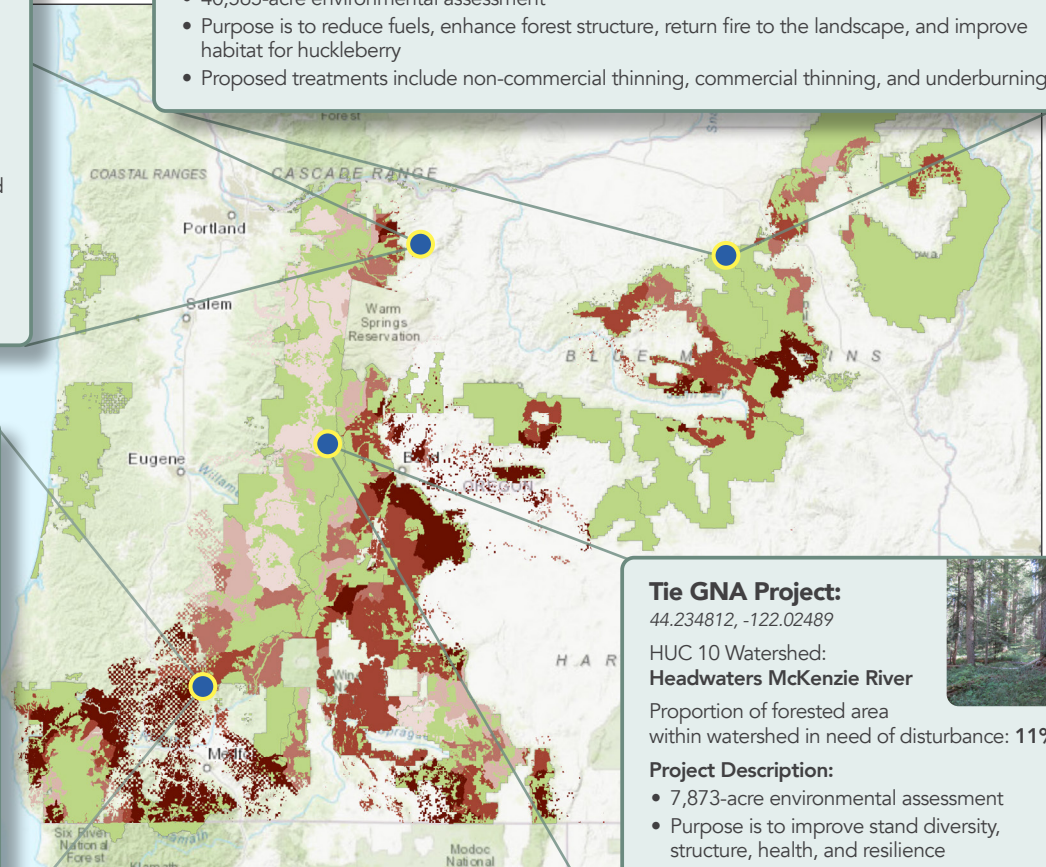
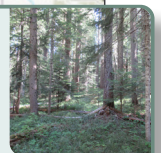
44.234812, -122.02489

HUC 10 Watershed: Headwaters McKenzie River

Proportion of forested area within watershed in need of disturbance: **11%**

Project Description:

- 7,873-acre environmental assessment
- Purpose is to improve stand diversity, structure, health, and resilience
- Proposed treatments are variable density thinning, variable retention harvest, shaded fuel breaks, and road maintenance.



Contract NEPA–What It Is

Contract NEPA is the FFR Program’s mechanism for **hiring environmental consulting firms to complete all surveys, analyses, and decision documents required under federal law¹ for an entire forest health project.** This state-provided, additive capacity allows ODF to complete projects from beginning to end, or “A to Z,” accomplishing work beyond the reach of federal resources alone and allowing federal staff to focus on other priority projects.

How it works:

1. The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) identify a project that serves both state and federal priorities.
2. Using state funds, Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) timber sale revenue, or federal grants, ODF hires an interdisciplinary team of consultants.
3. The consultants complete surveys, analyses, and draft decision documents, then return a complete project package to the USFS line officer.
4. Throughout the process, the USFS retains specific agency functions, reviews consultants’ work, and ultimately issues the decision.



Why ODF uses contract NEPA:

Challenge on federal lands	How Contract NEPA helps
Agency capacity bottlenecks – federal interdisciplinary teams are short-staffed and backlogged.	Puts full interdisciplinary teams under contract, accelerating project clearance by 1-3 years .
8.3 million acres of federal forest identified in need of active management for resilience.	Allows the state to reduce the planning backlog so implementation can keep pace with wildfire risk reduction goals.
Federal forests make up the largest share of Oregon’s wildfire risk	Enables ODF to advance landscape scale resilience efforts across all ownerships , not just state and private lands.

Contracting NEPA compliance is common in other agencies (e.g., the Departments of Transportation and Energy, and the Bureau of Land Management). In some instances, this process is called “third-party NEPA”, where the federal agency partners with a project proponent (in our case, ODF) which hires and oversees the environmental consultant

Decision Authority & Liability:

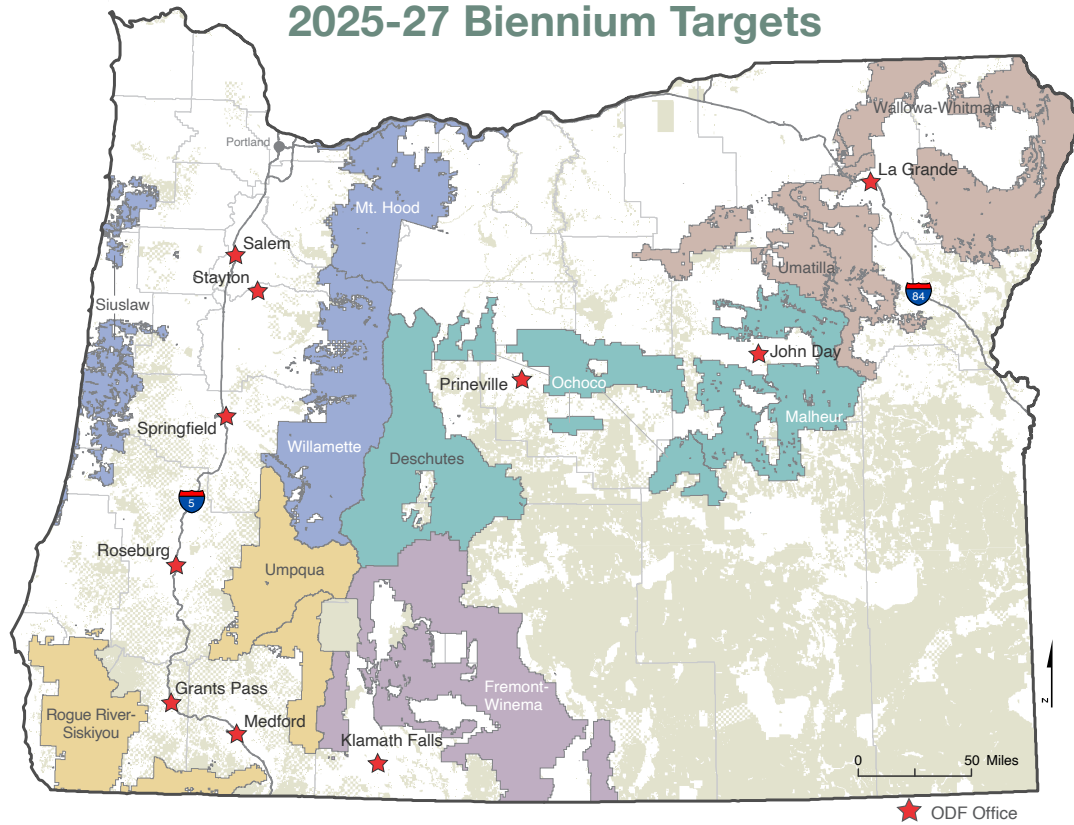
Decision-maker: The USFS responsible official (forest supervisor or district ranger) signs the final decision.

Liability: The USFS bears all legal risk. ODF’s role ends with funding and managing the consultant contract; the state is not a party of record in any subsequent litigation.



¹ National Environmental Policy Act, National Forest Management Act, Endangered Species Act, and National Historic Preservation Act are the primary environmental compliance laws for federal forest projects.

2025-27 Biennium Targets



Northwest

- 7,873 Contract NEPA acres
- 500 non-commercial acres
- 557 commercial acres
- 28,738 MBF timber volume sold
- 75 deferred road maintenance miles

Northeast

- 40,565 Contract NEPA acres
- 5,333 commercial acres
- 21,950 MBF timber volume sold
- 24 deferred road maintenance miles

Central

- 1,903 non-commercial acres
- 56 commercial acres

Southwest

- 12,830 Contract NEPA acres
- 1,778 non-commercial acres
- 4,627 commercial acres
- 27,822 MBF timber volume sold
- 35 deferred road maintenance miles

South Central

- 18,000 Contract NEPA acres
- 4,350 non-commercial acres
- 5,000 commercial acres
- 12,800 MBF timber volume sold
- 120 deferred road maintenance miles

★ ODF Office

79,268
acres
contract NEPA

8,531 acres
non-commercial
treatments

15,573 acres
commercial
treatments

91,310 MBF
timber
volume sold

254 miles
deferred road
maintenance

Northeast Oregon Timber Processing Capacity

Recently issued Executive Order (EO) 14225 ("Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production") mandates an increase in pace and scale of timber harvests on National Forest lands by 25% over the next four years. The EO and new directives by the USFS will generate new opportunities for the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) to act in project implementation on Oregon's National Forests. In recent years, GNA has been a leader in streamlining project implementation timelines through planning tools such as virtual boundaries and designation by prescription, allowing ODF and contractors to complete projects with more effective use of time and personnel.

Log procurement managers at Northeast Oregon mills have noted that existing facilities could process a 25% increase in timber sale volume from federally managed forests, providing them more control over harvest timing and delivery. A steady, expanded log supply would justify adding shifts and could spark additional capital investment. Although some timber industry representatives suggest that federal timber sales are often "inflated due to extensive service work or inaccurate federal cost appraisals", overall, timber processing facilities are interested in purchasing additional timber sales and are optimistic about the GNA as a solution to these issues.

Implementing the EO comes with many challenges as recent lumber mill closures, workforce turnover, and federal agency cuts have created instability in the timber resources industry, especially in Northeastern Oregon. There are currently five timber processing facilities within hauling distance of Northeastern Oregon forests: Heartwood Biomass (Wallowa), Woodgrain (La Grande), Woodgrain (Pilot Rock), Boise Cascade (Elgin), and Pendleton Lumber (formerly Blue Mountain Lumber). Workforce needs are a primary concern. Although, according to one lumber processing facility, turnover rates for their operations have stabilized at around 10% in the last 3-6 months. Increasing hauling distances between projects sites and timber processing facilities have also increased costs in recent years. A typical driving time between a timber processing facility and a project site is around 2 hours according to ODF personnel. However, travel times from project to processing facility can be much longer, up to 6 hours in one case.

Other issues relate to mismatches between lumber markets and tree species in need of harvest on federal forest lands. While Douglas Fir and Western Larch are market-preferred species, these species are not always located in large quantities for areas most in need of thinning. It may be challenging to align timber industry preferences with wildfire mitigation and forest management priorities in ways that support a more sustainable forest products industry for Northeast Oregon.

Project Spotlight: Cathill GNA Project

The Cathill Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) commercial restoration project is located on the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest in southeastern Oregon near Butte Falls. The goals of the 400-acre project are to improve wildlife habitat and restore the area to a healthier condition. Treatments include thinning, removal of understory brush (snowbrush), removal of “off-site” pine,¹ and seeding of native grasses along roads. These treatments will reduce the potential loss of stands in the event of a wildfire and improve wildlife habitat.

The project area burned in the 1910s in a wildfire and was subsequently clearcut. The area was later “windrowed” as part of site preparation for replanting of a Douglas-Fir plantation in the 1960s. This activity involved the use of heavy machinery to clear the ground, moving rocks into rows referred to as “catrows” which are visible from LiDAR imagery (Figure 1).

The Cathill GNA commercial timber sale is comprised of Douglas-fir (2,694 thousand board feet, MBF), White Fir or Hemlock (257 MBF), and Ponderosa Pine (391 MBF). The sale was purchased by Boise Cascade for \$626/MBF. Oregon Department of Forestry invested \$64,000 in state funds to complete heritage surveys, while the expected total return on the project is \$1.6 million. Funds from the sale will go towards future restoration projects on the Rogue including Thompson Creek and Grayback Trail fuels work, in-stream habitat improvement, culvert restoration projects, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Heritage Surveys, Yellow Jacket NEPA Surveys, and towards developing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Woody Eden project.

Timber from the Cathill GNA project will be processed at the two Boise Cascade plants in White City, Oregon. The company employs around 500-600 workers in their regional lumber processing facilities. Cathill GNA was one project of around 30 projects supplying timber to Boise Cascade during 2025. Boise Cascade contracted with Timberland Logging (a Sustainable Forestry Initiative program certified contractor), based in Ashland, OR. The company currently employs 20-25 forest technicians for the Cathill GNA project. Although no new employees were hired for this project, the work was critical to sustainable logging operations and contributed to predictable

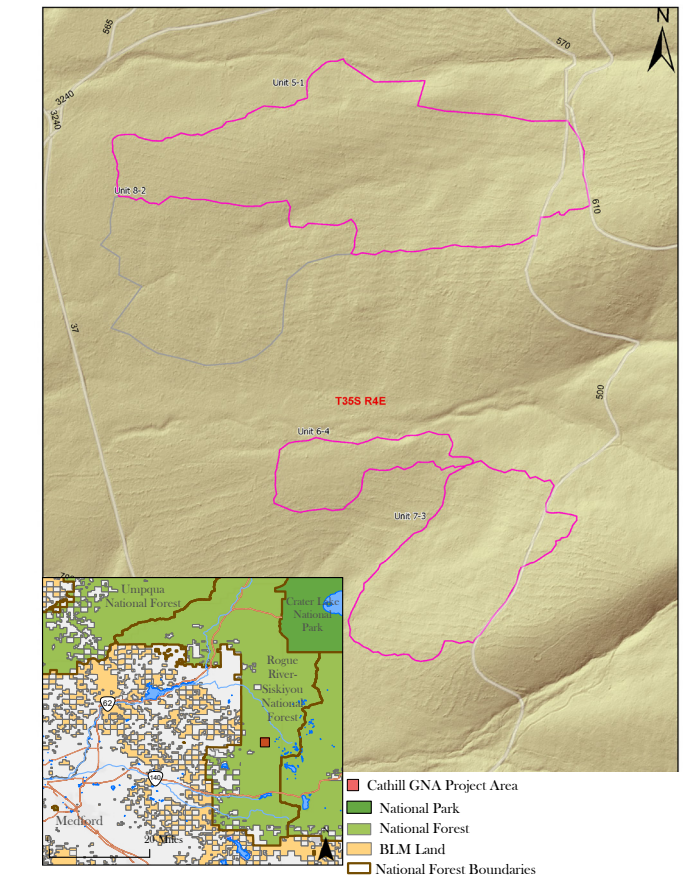


Figure 1: Cathill GNA project area LiDAR

fiber supply for the local lumber processing facility. Timberland Logging typically contracts with state or federal agencies (90 percent), while Boise Cascade’s current timber supply comes from 80 percent private lands.

This project will be completed by mid-late summer of 2025. The types of products produced from the Cathill GNA sale include veneer plywood and structural engineered wood products, such as laminated veneer lumber (LVL) used for structural beams. Final products will be sold to home improvement retailers such as Home Depot and commercial buyers of SFI products.



¹ “Off-site” pines are planted trees that grew from seedlings of unknown origins. These off-site pine often suffer high mortality because they are ill-adapted to the local environment.

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