

# Zones of Agreement (ZOA): Forest Restoration

## South Zone Planning Area, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

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### Overview

The South Gifford Pinchot Collaborative (SGPC) encourages the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to apply a broad landscape and temporal perspective to proposed restoration activities across the South Zone Planning Area of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. We recognize that much of this area has in recent times been fragmented and simplified for human resource extraction needs, leaving a disturbed but recovering forest ecosystem facing significant challenges in biodiversity, structure, functionality, and heterogeneity. We also acknowledge that large-scale disturbances, such as fire, have long been part of our forests and have diversified forest structure throughout the landscape by creating areas of early seral habitat.

To facilitate recovery of a mature and diverse forest, science-based interventions can be beneficial in some circumstances and provide ecological, economic, and social benefits. Though these interventions cannot perfectly replicate natural processes, we recommend that critical structures, dynamics, and components of ecological recovery be protected and/or encouraged as appropriate. If critical components are missing or delayed, they may also be simulated. For example, instead of waiting for large-scale natural disturbances such as fire to diversify natural structure, active management to recover early forest stages may be appropriate. Such management may incorporate various treatments including mechanical (e.g., timber harvest) and natural (e.g., fire, wind, insects, and disease) methods. All forest successional stages should be managed to support current and evolving structural diversity.

In addition, any landscape level recovery and restoration effort must include the riparian component and address the same issues of biodiversity, structure, functionality, and heterogeneity. Specifically, we recommend that the USFS consider these activities where appropriate: beaver reintroduction/beaver dam analogues,<sup>1</sup> meadow restoration, floodplain reconnection, and active riparian forest management.

Based upon the best scientific understanding of the current ecosystem and how it is likely to naturally recover, the USFS should develop and implement measurable management goals and actions that are informed by the historic range of variability for forest types in the region; what similar, less impacted systems can reveal; and the anticipated effects from climate change. We also encourage the USFS to apply an adaptive management approach that continuously monitors, evaluates, and adjusts efforts to accelerate natural recovery.

In summary, the Collaborative supports a comprehensive, landscape-scale approach to restoration across the South Zone Planning Area. The sections that follow describe our Zones of Agreement for early seral habitat creation and the Upper Wind Vegetation Project, in particular. While we acknowledge that the devil is often in the detail, we invite the USFS to approach Upper Wind vegetation planning as an opportunity, call it a pilot

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<sup>1</sup> Beaver dam analogues (BDAs) are channel-spanning structures that mimic or reinforce natural beaver dams. Source: Pollock, M.M., G.M. Lewallen, K. Woodruff, C.E. Jordan and J.M. Castro (Editors) 2018. *The Beaver Restoration Guidebook: Working with Beaver to Restore Streams, Wetlands, and Floodplains*. Version 2.01. United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon. 189 pp. Online at: <https://www.fws.gov/oregonfwo/Documents/2018BRGv.2.01.pdf>.

perhaps, to accelerate the recovery of a complex forest ecosystem. We are committed to working with our Forest Service partners to meet this end, and look forward to ferreting the devil out of the details with you.