



The National Whitebark Pine Restoration Plan: Data Call 2B and Supporting Information

Dear Colleagues:

The **National Whitebark Pine Restoration Plan** is a collaborative multi-agency strategic planning effort led by the U.S. Forest Service in partnership with American Forests and the Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation. The development of the National Whitebark Pine Restoration Plan depends on cooperation and input from federal and state agencies and tribal governments that have management responsibility for whitebark pine. We are pleased to report that response to Data Call 2A is complete for the NPS and BLM and in progress for the USFS and tribal jurisdictions.

On December 2, 2020, whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) was proposed for listing as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The four threats to whitebark pine identified in the listing proposal are white pine blister rust, mountain pine beetle, altered fire regimes, and climate change, with white pine blister rust identified as “the main driver of the species’ current and future conditions” (U.S. F&WS 2020). The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has committed to incorporating the National Whitebark Pine Restoration Plan into the whitebark pine recovery plan. This provides an important incentive for moving the National Whitebark Pine Restoration Plan along in a timely fashion.

The purpose of this letter is to announce the official release of Data Call 2B to all agencies and tribal representatives. We are requesting that all NWPRP Liaison Committee representatives convey the announcement of Data Call 2B to appropriate administrative units.

The information requested for Data Call 2B: Target Deadline May 15, 2021

1. Proposed restoration action(s) for each nominated polygon or combined set of polygons. See attachment, *Restoration and Management Treatments for Whitebark Pine Communities*.
2. Estimated implementation costs for restoration actions and monitoring by polygon or combined set of polygons. See attachment *Whitebark Pine Treatment Pricing List*.
3. General outline of combined monitoring and adaptive management protocols for each type of restoration treatment. See attachment for a workflow process and also see *Restoration and Management Treatments for Whitebark Pine Communities*.

Support information for Data Call 2B includes (1) *Restoration and Management Treatments for Whitebark Pine Communities*, an overview of restoration management practices for whitebark pine, including a synopsis of best practices for monitoring and adaptive management; and (2) *Whitebark Pine Treatment Pricing List*, a restoration action price list, with some regional variation, and (3) *Recommended Work-flow Steps for Responding to Data Call 2B*, which is a suggested

step-by-step process for responding to Data Call 2B and devising a monitoring and adaptive management strategy for each type of restoration treatment planned.

For technical questions or support for Data Call 2B, please contact Julee Shamhart at Julee.Shamhart@whitebarkfound.org or 406-925-9545, or Diana Tomback at Diana.Tomback@whitebarkfound.org

Rationale for Data Call 2B

Data call 2A required submission of nominated core areas representing 20 to 30% of whitebark pine distribution within an administrative unit, criteria for nomination, and health status for each nominated polygon. The definition and scale of the administrative unit varied among agencies. In addition, nominated polygons also differed in size and scale by agencies.

We require information on the costs of restoration for nominated core areas so that agencies may plan and implement restoration and leverage funding opportunities and partnerships. American Forests is currently helping facilitate this effort by fund-raising through corporate partnerships and as a working partner in the Global Trillion Tree Campaign.

We anticipate that proposed restoration projects will begin as soon as feasible, with most jurisdictions completing their proposed treatment plans within a 10-to-15-year timeframe. For those jurisdictions that have a relatively larger portion of whitebark pine's distribution, the timeframe may be somewhat longer.

As restoration treatments are planned, a monitoring and adaptive management component for each restoration project is critically important, and the development of a statistically sound monitoring plan and its implementation should be included in the pricing of each project. For each project, clear objectives articulating measurable expectations of treatment are required in order to assess the effectiveness of treatment outcome over time. Most restoration treatments require an assessment of both treatment implementation and outcome. A detailed plan for each project is impractical at this stage, but we would like a general plan described for the different treatments to be implemented. Well-designed monitoring is essential not only to determine whether project objectives were met, partly met, or not met, but also to provide clarity as to the reason. This information enables managers to improve treatments and align them better to specific community characteristics for future work, which is the adaptive management component.

The National Whitebark Pine Restoration Plan subscribes to adaptive management. This approach is relevant to both core area nominations and treatment practices. As more information is learned about whitebark pine distribution, health, and ecological status in different management jurisdictions, we expect that core area nominations and restoration plans will be updated over time by jurisdictions. We view the information that we request from you as a starting point in the process, so that we may begin the hard work of on-the-ground restoration without delay.

Some considerations for responding to Data Call 2B

- If neighboring polygons share similar whitebark pine community and health attributes, they may be considered together for Data Call 2B. Polygons vary considerably in size and number among agencies. If you combine polygons— that is, consider multiple polygons

together with respect to treatments—you must let us know the specific identifiers for each group of polygons so we can track their identity from information you submitted for Data Call 2A.

- We strongly support the designation and screening of “plus trees” to identify genetic blister rust resistance in whitebark pine in geographic regions where more of this work is needed or in areas where little work to date has been undertaken. The goal is to provide adequate genetic diversity among seed sources for seedling planting or seed sowing.
- More than one restoration action may be planned per polygon or group of polygons. For example, there may be seedling planting in a recent burn as well as silvicultural thinning or prescribed burning within a given set of polygons. There may also be plus tree identification and screening. Each of these actions requires its own monitoring and adaptive management strategy.

Thank you for your support

The National Whitebark Pine Restoration Plan is moving towards completion. We recognize the critical role of all liaisons and their agencies and tribal governments to the ultimate success of this effort. We are grateful for your support and dedication to restoring whitebark pine and look forward to receiving your contributions to Data Call 2B.

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