

National Whitebark Pine Restoration Plan: Progress Report

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Background

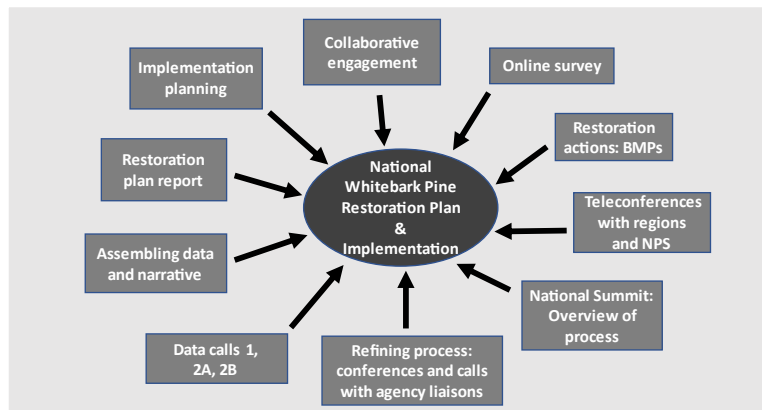
The National Whitebark Pine Restoration Plan (NWPRP) was first proposed to the U.S. Forest Service in 2016 jointly by the Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation (WPEF) and American Forests as a strategic approach to saving a keystone and foundation species in peril. The plan focuses on the identification of 20 to 30% of whitebark pine's range within the jurisdictions of federal agencies and tribal governments for restoration priority. After the National Whitebark Pine Summit in November 2017, the WPEF assumed the lead for the plan development phase. American Forests will assume the lead for the fund-raising and implementation phase of the plan. <https://whitebarkfound.org/our-work/national-whitebark-pine-restoration-plan/>

In addition to the U.S. Forest Service, federal partners in this effort include the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and, in an advisory capacity, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Funding, leadership support, and collaboration for the plan comes from the U.S. Forest Service, with additional funding and support provided by the National Park Service. Federal agency and tribal partners have had the opportunity for input through the NWPRP Liaison Committee. The proposed listing of whitebark pine as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act, announced December 2, 2020, has brought additional interest and attention to the plan, with a commitment from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to incorporate the NWPRP into the Whitebark Pine Recovery Plan. U.S. Forest Service Washington Office key collaborators in this effort include Bruce Moltzan, Forest Health Protection, and David Gwaze, National Forest System.

Progress and Current status

The steps to organizing and completing the NWPRP are illustrated in Figure 1 and started with the box *Collaborative Engagement*. The plan was initiated in May 2017 with a roll-out letter signed by then Deputy Chief, National Forest System, Leslie A. C. Weldon. At this time, we are finalizing Data Call 2A and just issued Data Call 2B with the help of Bruce Moltzan on March 23, 2021.

Fig. 1. Steps in process



Data call 2A, first issued in late 2018, requested core area nominations representing 20 to 30% of a jurisdiction's whitebark pine distribution, the criteria used for nominations, and health status information for nominated core areas from federal

agencies and tribal governments. We have all core area nominations in hand from the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Regions 1 and 6 of the Forest Service, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Core area nominations are in progress for Regions 2, 4, and 5 of the Forest Service and the Blackfoot Tribe. We are conducting outreach for Data Call 2A to several other tribal governments whose lands include whitebark pine.

Data Call 2B requests that agencies and tribes propose appropriate restoration projects and management actions for nominated polygons for a 10 to 15 year management timeframe, based on the health and successional status reported. Polygons that share similar health and community characteristics could be combined for convenience of reporting. We also requested that the costs of restoration and management actions also be reported and include the cost of long-term monitoring. In order to emphasize the importance of monitoring and adaptive management, i.e., the possible need to supplement or re-apply treatments, we also requested that each type of restoration project or management action, including identification and screening of plus trees (trees potentially with genetic resistance to blister rust), include a monitoring and adaptive management protocol.

Support information for Data Call 2B includes a document summarizing restoration and management actions for whitebark pine (*Restoration and Management Treatments for Whitebark Pine Communities, Best Management Practices, version 3.15.21*), a restoration and management action pricing list, and guidelines for responding to Data Call 2B (*Recommended Work-flow Steps for Responding to Data Call 2B*). The target deadline for Data Call 2B is May 15, 2021.

We look forward to starting work on the technical report that integrates the contributions from all agencies and tribes and lays out the plan for the implementation phase. We are pleased to announce that American Forests is already helping to raise funding for some of the first nominated core areas.