

PFA Mitigation Advisory Committee

Staff Report

October 4, 2023

Meeting Type: Virtual

Meeting Date: October 4, 2023

The purpose of this report is to provide the Private Forest Accord (PFA) Mitigation Advisory Committee and the public with general program updates on the PFA Grants Program and staff efforts.

The PFA Mitigation Advisory Committee has finalized the following important documents:

- ✓ [Advisory Committee Operating Procedures](#)
 - Clarifies the Advisory Committee's basic procedures and roles for Staff, Advisory Committee members, and the public.
 - Adopted in 2023.
- ✓ [Oregon Administrative Rules](#)
 - Implements the PFA Grant Program.
 - Adopted by the Fish and Wildlife Commission on August 4, 2023.
- ✓ [Expenditure Framework](#)
 - Clarifies the Advisory Committee's funding priorities.
 - Adopted in 2023.

PFA Program Staff and the Advisory Committee continue to develop the following documents:

1. Grant Review Process – ***Attached to email.***
 - a. Outlines the grant review and evaluation process, from project submission to award.
 - b. Staff presented the grant review process at the August and September Advisory Committee meetings.
 - c. ODFW will work with the Advisory Committee chairs in October to form regional review teams and continue to formalize the Grant Review Process.
 - d. Advisory Committee review and comments on the Grant Review Process are still welcome. Please send comments to Andy by email by Thursday, October 12, 2023.
2. Grant Guidelines & Attachments
 - a. See agenda item 5 below for an update.

The goal date for releasing the PFA Grant Program's first grant solicitation is the first week of November 2023. This depends on the contractor development of an interim grant management system. More information is below.

The PFA Grant Program is pleased to introduce our newly-hired PFA Staff Assistant, Tiffany Caldwell. Tiffany previously worked for the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission and brings to ODFW many years of experience working with boards and commissions as well as providing administrative support. Tiffany's first day was September 20. She will be supporting the PFA Grant Program, particularly for Advisory Committee meetings, grant agreements, invoicing, and tracking. Please join us in welcoming Tiffany to the PFA Grants Program!

Administratively, Staff are also working on the following:

- A new ODFW PFA web page with more information and links for the grant program
- An outreach strategy in advance of the November grant solicitation has been planned and is to launch in October with an email campaign.
- The interim grant management system for applications, grant review, agreement processing, and reporting is in development by ODFW's contractor.
 - A kickoff meeting was planned for September.
 - The contractor estimates 4-6 weeks to create, test, and implement the grant management system. The goal is to have the system online in early October.

Agenda item: 4. Staff Report

Below is the staff report update.

1. 2024 Meeting Schedule update
 - a. Starting in January, all Advisory Committee meetings will take place on the second Tuesday of the month at 12 pm to avoid conflicts with the Board of Forestry and the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission meetings.
2. In-person 2024 Committee meeting
 - a. The in-person Advisory Committee meeting is set for February 29 through March 1, 2024. The meeting will start at 12 pm on February 29, with lunch being served at 11 am.
 - b. This meeting will have presentations from Regional Review Teams and Advisory Committee review and selection of projects to recommend for funding in the PFA Grant Program's first round.
 - c. The hotel and location is yet to be determined at this time, Portland region is assumed. **For those wishing to travel the day before the meeting, hotel rooms will be reserved for all Advisory Committee members starting the night prior, Wednesday the 28th through Friday morning.** Meals will be provided beginning Thursday at lunch.
3. December 2023 Advisory Committee meeting canceled for holidays
 - a. Andy will send out a meeting cancellation via email to the Committee
4. Public Informational Grant Session
 - a. Staff are developing a public informational webinar for the PFA Grants Program. The recording will discuss the grant program, priorities, how to apply, and application requirements. This will not be a live webinar to avoid technical issues.
 - b. The recording will be posted online and distributed to the growing PFA Grants Program listserv in October, and ODFW will host an October live Q&A for prospective applicants.

- c. A Q&A link will be embedded into the recording description and the distribution email for prospective applicants. All questions will be responded to and posted online before the opening of the grant solicitation.
 - d. A second informational webinar is anticipated upon launch of the grant solicitation to help applicants apply within the interim grant management system (in development).
5. Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) & Reporting Requirement Update
- a. Staff continues to work with the Oregon Department of Forestry, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service to clarify the interplay between ODF's proposed Habitat Conservation Plan and the PFA Grants Program. While the HCP will center on the increased habitat protections afforded by the regulatory updates to the Forest Practices Act, the PFA Grants Program will be included in the HCP's Conservation Strategy as an important measure for offsetting take. Discussions are ongoing and will likely influence the program's descriptions of project eligibility, review criteria, and reporting requirements as outlined in the Grant Guidelines.
 - b. The current draft reporting requirements can be found in the attachment "05_Grantee Reporting Requirements_2023", however, Staff expects those requirements to become more robust as the HCP discussions among the state and federal agencies continue..
 - c. Oregon Department of Forestry is currently developing chapters of the HCP, with an anticipated draft HCP in mid-2024. The legislative deadline for a final HCP is the end of 2027.
 - d. Staff recommends the Advisory Committee proceed with its plans for a November 2023 grant solicitation for the first round of PFA grant funding. It may become necessary to limit project types and funding amounts for the first round, and if so, Staff will make that determination and notify the Committee by mid-October.

Agenda item: 5. PFA Mitigation Advisory Committee Appointments

- The Advisory Committee will elect a chair and vice chair from one of the voting members for the next two years.

Agenda item: 6. Land Acquisition Update

- ODFW has decided land acquisition will not be eligible for this first round of projects. Land acquisitions require different documentation from restoration and capacity building projects, tailored to the unique specificity and complexity of land acquisitions/easements. This includes specific application questions and process, land use information, management plans, environmental site assessments, title investigation requirements, survey requirements, etc.. The program does not have these administrative elements in place to field acquisition/easement proposals at this time. Staff will engage the Advisory Committee and technical experts in acquisition/easement grants in scoping and program development over the coming year.

Agenda item: 7. Grant Guidelines & Attachments

- The guidelines are a guiding document for program applicants that outlines the program priorities, funding pathways, grant criteria and review, and the application process.

- Attachments include a variety of important documents ranging from the template agreements to the application questionnaire.
- The document has gone through both internal and external reviews. The shared version is the most current version for consideration and discussion at the October Advisory Committee meeting. Committee members should carefully review the Grant Guidelines and all attachments and flag any points for discussion, as this will be one of the final opportunities to comment on the document and its attachments before the Grant Program's launch and the guidelines' release. **Final comments are due to Andy by Thursday, October 12, 2024.**
- This agenda item will not be a full review of the Guidelines but an opportunity for the Committee members to discuss any flagged content in their reviews of the Guidelines and attachments.
- Grant guidelines will be in final draft form for a final review and adoption by the Advisory Committee by Wednesday, November 1, 2023, during the Advisory Committee meeting.