



# Pinchot Partners

F O R E S T C O L L A B O R A T I V E

**October Field Tour Notes**  
**Wednesday, October 16, 2024 9am-3:00pm**  
Randle, WA

## **In Attendance**

*PP Staff:* Janene Ritchie, Sarah Yeoman; *PP Board:* John O'Brien, Ashley Short, John Squires, David Owen, *US Forest Service:* Theresa Tanner, Quentin Hall, Chris Starling, Josh Chapman, Erin Baumgart, Raina Stokes; *DNR:* Jeff DeBell; *WDFW:* Elliott Johnson; *Other attendees:* Sheryl Hall, Gina Owen, Brooke Squires

## **Tour Summary**

Group gathered at the Cowlitz Valley Ranger Station in Randle and the meeting commenced with a welcome and introductions. Region 6 geneticist Erin Baumgart led a presentation on Forest Service seed orchard projects around the Pacific Northwest in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The presentation explained the need for critical reforestation in certain regions as the program has been neglected for the past 30 years. This has created a large maintenance backlog, which the Forest Service is now focusing on. Goals of the seed orchards have also shifted to address possible climate scenarios. Erin emphasized genetic diversity among trees is a top reason why seed orchards are necessary, and that the project is attempting to balance the needs of the current conditions of the neglected orchards, partnerships with organizations and landowners, and the possibility of less funding in the future.

## **First Stop**

Group reconvened at the Cispus Seed Orchard. Erin explained that this seed orchard is of Douglas fir and future maintenance will focus on thinning the orchard by removing roughly 3 out of 4 trees. While it may seem extreme, she explained that the current conditions are too crowded for the trees to produce cones at the level they would like to see. The group also talked about tree grafting and the process for identifying specific trees through a tagging system. Break for lunch.

## **Second Stop**

The group then moved on to French Butte Seed Orchard. Erin detailed facts about the orchard including the noble firs that grow at a higher altitude and different conditions than Douglas fir. She also noted the cones that grow and shed differently for seed collection. She then led the group to a seed "nursery" for white bark pine saplings, explaining their significance, as they have recently been listed as threatened/endangered. She noted the challenges the project is anticipating in ensuring as many saplings as possible grow to maturity, including direct sun exposure in heat dome conditions, bug infestations, and root establishment.

Notes prepared by Sarah Yeoman