

# Memorandum of Understanding

## Paint Rock Forest Dynamics Project

January, 2021

This is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) among the principal investigators (PIs) on the Paint Rock Forest Dynamics Project (PRFDP) regarding (i) the use of the plot for teaching and research by themselves and others, and (ii) the sharing of data from the plot among themselves and others. It is an MOU between the individual PIs, not the institutions and organizations to which the PIs belong.

The terms of this MOU are subject to all of the agreements with The Nature Conservancy of Alabama governing use of the property.

The five PIs included in this MOU, whose efforts established the PRFDP plot and conducted the first census and map of the woody plant community in the plot, in alphabetic order, are:

Dr. Richard Condit (Field Museum)  
Dr. Luben Dimov (University of Vermont)  
William Finch (Paint Rock Research Center)  
Dr. Stephen Hubbell (UCLA, ret.; UGA, ret.)  
Dr. Dawn Lemke (AAMU)

The above listed PIs accept and agree to abide by the following terms of this MOU:

- (1) This MOU remains in effect until December 31, 2026, as long as all the PIs listed above remain as participants in the PRFDP until this date. A PI may withdraw at any time for any reason. If a withdrawal occurs, this MOU is null and void and a new agreement must be drawn up and signed by the remaining PIs. A new MOU must also be drafted and signed when this MOU expires, assuming the remaining PIs wish to continue the PRFDP. Should an individual withdraw from PI obligations, this individual will no longer retain PI rights and privileges.

- (2) The PIs, not their institutions, are the collective owners of the intellectual property, consisting of the initial census and spatial data on the woody plant community in the 60-ha PRFDP plot (hereafter the *initial PRFDP census*). These data consist of, and are limited to, the data on the species identification, stem diameter, and map location of all woody stems with a stem diameter of 1 cm DBH or larger.
- (3) Prior to December 31, 2026, the PIs maintain rights to be co-authors on all publications resulting from use of the initial PRFDP census data. Any of the PIs may write such a paper at any time, but must inform the other PIs beforehand. The order of authorship will be decided by all the PIs in advance. Any PI may, however, decline co-authorship on such papers.
- (4) Prior to December 31, 2026, use of the initial PRFDP census data by other researchers, outside the PIs, will be allowed, but only after a written request from the researcher, including a short proposal describing the planned research, followed by review and approval by a majority of the PIs. If approved, the external researcher can expect to be senior author, but will include all PIs as co-authors unless they explicitly decline. Such requests may be declined, however, especially before the main results of the initial census have been published. The PIs may reject requests that, in the opinion of a majority of the PIs, overlap too greatly with publications planned or in progress by the PIs.
- (5) At the end of December, 2026, the initial PRFDP census data will be made public by the PIs. From this time forward, the complete first census results will be posted at a permanent, public archive, searchable online and immediately available for download. The archive will list citations and acknowledgments that should be published along with any use of the data, and will include instructions for contacting the PIs to invite co-authorship.
- (6) Future censuses of the entire 60-ha PRFDP are planned at five-year intervals, starting in 2025. Use of future census results for publication by PIs and other scientists will be subject to restrictions (nos. 2-5 above), following a five year cycle: PIs have priority

access (nos. 3-4) for five years after a census is completed; then data will be public (no. 5).

- (7) The PIs will decide by majority vote what research projects can be carried out within the 60-ha plot and a 20-m buffer around it (other than the scheduled censuses of woody vegetation). This includes proposals from other researchers as well as the PIs themselves. Proposed projects will be judged solely on their compatibility with the plot census, regardless of research topic. In general, projects that involve observation only, or minor manipulation and sampling, will be approved, while destructive sampling or experimental manipulation will not be, and should only be done outside the plot and buffer zone. The PIs decisions on such projects will be conveyed to The Nature Conservancy, and the projects are then subject to guidelines and restrictions set by the Nature Conservancy for access to the Paint Rock Forest Reserve.
- (8) Research projects that are approved within the boundaries of PRFDP plot (no. 7), but that do not make use of the main census results, will not require co-authorship of PIs on resulting publications (see no. 2 above).
- (9) Visitors who enter the Paint Rock Forest Reserve with permission from The Nature Conservancy do not require permission from the PIs of the PRFDP if the only intent is observation (photography, bird-watching, etc.). The PIs assume they may enter the plot but will not damage vegetation, based on The Nature Conservancy guidelines. Any of the PIs also has the right to bring visitors for observation only without consulting the other PIs, assuming it follows The Nature Conservancy guidelines.
- (10) This MOU applies only to the collection, management, use, and publication of the census and spatial data on the woody plant community in the PRFDP plot. The PIs have no jurisdiction or right to evaluate or approve research projects conducted in areas of the Reserve that lie outside the plot and buffer zone, and have no ownership over the data or results of such research projects.