Labels for Succession Drawings

1. This drawing shows a disturbed habitat with the new growth typically seen within a few years of a major disturbance. This new growth might be generated from seeds that are present in the soil (referred to as a ‘seed bank’), or may arrive by the usual seed dispersal methods; alternatively, this new growth could be the result of restoration planting. A natural system recovering from a disturbance has many herbaceous perennials, deciduous shrubs and trees, and slower growing evergreen shrubs and trees.

2. This drawing shows an early succession forest, about 40 years old, with the forest beginning to form layers. It is possible to distinguish evergreen conifers growing up under the canopy of deciduous trees. If evergreen trees are not present in a restoration site it is important to make sure to add them at this stage to help aid the natural succession.

3. This is a mid-succession forest, about 60-100 years old, with a mix of mature deciduous trees, and a strong population of young evergreen conifers. Douglas fir is a fast growing conifer that forms the mid-succession canopy along with bigleaf maple and red alder. Slower growing conifers such as red cedar and Western hemlock grow in the shade of these faster growing trees. The groundcover layer has become established. Sun-loving herbaceous plants are disappearing as their habitat changes.

4. This mid-succession forest is about 150-200 years old. Older trees have become snags, or have fallen to earth to become nurse-logs. The mature evergreen trees have shaded out the deciduous, sun-loving shrubs and trees, except along the edge of forest, which now has a greater diversity.

5. This drawing represents a mature late–succession old growth forest, about 250-300 years old. There are large conifers such as Douglas fir, red cedar and Western hemlock. There are snags and nurse-logs throughout the forest, and new plants are growing on stumps, and nurse-logs. The new plants thrive in the deep shade or along the edge zone, and the forest continues to regenerate unless there is a natural or manmade disturbance.