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Conservation Strategy Implementation and Review

A foundation of cooperative projects, incentive programs, and voluntary efforts currently exists throughout Oregon. This foundation is wide, strong, and enduring. The Conservation Strategy is a broad framework, a strategic look at what needs to happen to conserve Oregon's species and habitats. Much is already being done, but there remains much more to do.

Conservation Strategy implementation brings all of these people and programs together, to provide a vision and a structure for existing efforts and to build a network of actions and achievements that moves Oregon toward the overall Conservation Strategy goals.

This effort will not be successful without the participation and support of Oregonians. A great deal of work and vision has gone into creating this document, with help from many partners and stakeholders, and the goals outlined here reflect their energy and enthusiasm. The Conservation Strategy will live and thrive through actions, partnerships and a new way of doing business.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife reached out to stakeholders and technical experts in developing this document and talked with state and federal agencies, local governments, tribes and other constituents. Outreach is a key part of the Conservation Strategy, both to let people know about the opportunities, and to begin building the framework for this collaborative approach to conservation in Oregon. The Conservation Strategy encourages flexible and adaptive programs that work at the local level, where the best work happens. The Conservation Strategy also strives to balance conservation with other social, economic and community values, and looks for ways to make conservation a valuable asset for local economies.

Goals for Conservation Strategy Implementation

1. Create sustainable partnerships by building upon current successes and forging new relationships.
2. Create an approach that is collaborative and synergistic.
3. Be strategic in scope, but provide for local opportunities.
4. Break down organizational or institutional barriers.
5. Provide incentives, technical support, outreach and a toolbox for landowners.
6. Synthesize existing data.
7. Collect and use new data to track success over time, learn, and adapt.
8. Document change in habitats and species over time through monitoring.
9. Promote data management and information sharing through tools such as web-based portals.

First Steps in Achieving the Goals

Everyone Can Help

Every Oregonian can have a role in implementing the Conservation Strategy. The key first step is to let people know about conservation needs, provide them with a menu of possible actions, and give them the technical or financial tools to help them take action. Some example opportunities include:

- Landowners and conservation groups can identify Strategy Species or Habitats of interest to them and begin working on conservation actions discussed in the statewide, ecoregion, habitat, and species chapters.
- Citizen-based monitoring has a role in developing, implementing and monitoring conservation actions. People can get involved in the many on-going citizen-based monitoring projects in communities and through schools.
- Academic institutions can assist with filling research needs and data gaps, conduct monitoring and provide results that can be used for adaptive management and analysis.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Action Items

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will take the lead role in promoting the Conservation Strategy and in coordinating cooperative efforts to implement the first steps. ODFW biologists have strong relationships with agency partners, especially at the local level. However, there are opportunities to increase coordination and cooperation between multiple agencies, and with tribes and a variety of citizen groups.

During the first two years after the Conservation Strategy's approval, ODFW will:

- Develop a prioritized "step-down plan" for implementation at various levels (that is, statewide, ecoregional and local) in coordination with staff throughout the agency, recognizing existing workloads and priorities.
- Evaluate, and restructure if necessary, the current efforts and plans within ODFW's Wildlife Diversity Program to institutionalize the Conservation Strategy as a guiding document.
- Coordinate with various ODFW programs to seek opportunities to further the Conservation Strategy's goals. Example opportunities include:
 - Working with ODFW's Wildlife Management Area staff to incorporate Conservation Strategy priorities into management area plans and habitat projects, as well as address issues such as invasive species.
 - Working with ODFW fish hatchery staff to develop potential habitat and outreach projects at hatcheries.
 - Working with ODFW divisions and programs to integrate the Conservation Strategy into other plans such as game management plans and fish conservation plans.
 - Continuing the coordination and, where appropriate, consolidation of existing landowner assistance programs, including tax incentive programs.
- Develop informational materials about the Conservation Strategy targeted to specific audiences, such as private landowners, watershed councils, and local governments. Use a variety of outreach tools to get the word out (e.g., update the ODFW website; give presentations to landowner groups, watershed councils, civic groups, and other interested people; and provide printed materials to agencies, tribes and other partners).
- Meet with agencies, tribes and groups (including industry, fish and wildlife users, conservation, and civic). Build upon existing partnerships and forge new relationships to:
 - Inform agencies, tribes and groups about the Conservation Strategy's goals, approach, and recommended actions.

- Explore options for increasing coordination between agencies to reach shared goals.
 - Incorporate the Conservation Strategy into on-going Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds activities.
 - Enhance coordination with state and federal agencies regarding planning, habitat restoration, and species conservation on public lands and waterways. In particular, work with state and federal land management agencies during the development and updating of land management plans to identify conservation issues that affect Strategy Species and Habitats and actions that can be taken to address these conservation issues.
 - Explore options and partnerships for implementing the registry of conservation actions and web-based "bulletin board" for Conservation Opportunity Areas.
- Work within the existing legal and institutional framework governing private and state forestlands to coordinate Conservation Strategy implementation with the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Oregon Board of Forestry. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will coordinate with the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Oregon Board of Forestry as they implement Oregon Forestry Program for Strategy E. Implementation of Strategy E will require consideration of economic, social and environmental needs. The Conservation Strategy can provide some of the biological information used to help establish policy targets during implementation of Strategy E. Once policy targets are established, the information in the Conservation Strategy can be helpful in evaluating habitat conditions and setting priorities.

Priority Cooperative, Multi-partner Implementation Steps

The issues facing Oregon's fish and wildlife are diverse and complex. Addressing those issues will take coordinated, cooperative actions. Many of the recommended actions in this Conservation Strategy ideally will involve a variety of conservation partners. These partners may range from a private landowner restoring a stream on his land to a business owner promoting "conservation certified" products to a citizen's group monitoring bird populations. In addition a variety of local, state and federal agencies administer funds and programs, manage lands, plan, restore habitats, and implement existing laws and regulations, all of which will be important for reaching conservation goals. Some important multi-partner actions include:

- Establish the Fish and Wildlife Monitoring Team to develop the monitoring approach, standards and reporting format. The team will also examine funding needs for monitoring and maintenance, which are often the under-funded portions of a

project that are difficult to sustain over time. Although the Fish and Wildlife Monitoring Team will be organized and maintained by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, it will involve many partners.

- Develop appropriate tools to track and report results.
- Develop a registry of conservation actions for tracking success. Meet with various groups to introduce the Conservation Strategy and talk about opportunities to track the good work they are doing.
- Create a web-based "Bulletin board" for Conservation Opportunity Areas to help landowners and local biologists:
 - Determine priority areas and actions for those areas.
 - Get information on land use, land cover and ownership.
 - Discuss on-going work (what's working, what's not), share ideas, and get advice.
 - Find contractors used for restoration, seed sources, and other technical assistance.
- Develop a program for conducting outreach to private landowners in Conservation Opportunity Areas identified in the Conservation Strategy.
- Develop an invasive species implementation tool that evaluates the ecological impact and management approaches for invasive species identified as priorities in the Conservation Strategy. Potential partners include The Nature Conservancy, Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center, the Oregon Invasive Species Council, county weed boards, federal land management agencies, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Portland State University and other groups with an interest in this issue.
- Work with local groups and landowners to identify and develop specific projects. Work with existing incentive programs and funding sources to initiate on-the-ground projects.
- Begin developing tools for landowners, such as guides similar to the "Woodland Fish and Wildlife" series, which provide a practical advice for landowners and land managers interested in providing fish and wildlife habitat on their properties. Provide a toolbox for private landowners on tips (e.g., "best management practices") for working in various Strategy Habitats, projects that help Strategy Species, and available incentive programs.
- Develop cooperative approaches to address conservation issues that extend across land ownership boundaries and jurisdictions (e.g., invasive species and uncharacteristic severe wildfire).
- In coordination with the Oregon Institute for Natural Resources and the Oregon State Library, expand the "Oregon Explorer" sites to include "ecoregional portals" that provide information about Strategy Species and Habitats, and other ecoregion specific information.
- In coordination with various state agencies (i.e., Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Department of State Lands, Oregon Department of Energy), explore options for establishing regional "conservation banks" that could be used to meet mitigation requirements in a manner that benefits Strategy Species and Habitats.
- In coordination with OSU's Institute for Natural Resources, Oregon Progress Board and various agencies, implement the newly-established Oregon Benchmark to measure the amount and distribution of natural habitats in each of Oregon's eight ecoregions and track changes in natural habitats over time.
- Improve coordination between conservation incentive programs and simplify and expedite landowners' access to these programs by:
 - Identifying common goals
 - Exploring options for developing a coordinated application form that landowners could use for multiple incentive programs
 - Identifying technical assistance priorities at a local or regional scale
 - Combining resources to provide technical assistance specialists who can assist landowners by:
 - Recommending property-specific conservation actions
 - Matching incentive programs with the landowners' habitat and economic needs
 - Providing technical assistance on project planning, permit and grant application assistance, and project implementation
 - Identifying the most effective locations for housing technical assistance specialists (i.e., extension offices, Soil and Water Conservation District offices, Natural Resource Conservation Service offices, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife offices, etc.)
 - Working through the Governor's Regulatory Streamlining Initiative and other means to look for opportunities to streamline the permitting process and identify and address conflicting regulations or those that hinder habitat conservation and restoration projects.

Funding the Conservation Strategy

The Conservation Strategy is ambitious and requires creative partnerships to fund its implementation. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and its partners will look for additional funding. This may include:

- Working with state and federal agencies, non-governmental agencies and others to obtain additional funding for Conservation Strategy implementation by:
 - Identifying opportunities for using funds from existing conservation programs to implement the Conservation Strategy
 - Pursuing underutilized funding sources
 - Using State Wildlife Grant dollars to leverage funds from other sources
 - Obtain matching funds for State Wildlife Grants
 - Seek funding opportunities, particularly from private partners, for the Flexible Incentives Account so that it can be used for conservation actions that implement the Conservation Strategy
 - Work with all conservation partners to increase the involvement of business and industry in habitat conservation efforts across the state.
- Working with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Federal Assistance, to explore options for:
 - Providing a “programmatic” match for State Wildlife Grant Funds as opposed to a project-by-project match.
 - Simplifying documentation requirements for “in-kind” match

Conservation Strategy Review and Revision

States must update their Strategies “at intervals not to exceed 10 years” to meet the criteria established by Congress.

Two-year Progress Report

Following federal approval, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will report to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission on the Conservation Strategy every two years. This internal review will be tied to ODFW’s biennial budgeting process and will occur within the context of federal reporting requirements.

The report will assess:

- Whether ODFW is meeting internal implementation goals
- Roadblocks to implementation
- Statewide progress in meeting Conservation Strategy goals
- Results of monitoring and data management programs

- Need for adaptive management based on results, data, conservation actions, changes in habitats and species distributions
- Any recent administrative and fiscal changes to the program

Five-year Cooperative Review

Every five years, a more extensive external review will be conducted with public input and the involvement of partners, stakeholders, technical experts, the Fish and Wildlife Monitoring Team and academia. This process will not require a rewrite of this document, but will rather serve as a valuable means to incorporate the latest knowledge and make any needed course corrections.

This process will:

- Update Strategy Species’ status
- Update Strategy Habitat data and mapping
- Assess success in achieving implementation goals
- Evaluate effectiveness of monitoring
- Evaluate the effectiveness of voluntary conservation tools and conservation actions
- Assess statewide progress in meeting Conservation Strategy goals

This review will recommend:

- Adjustments to Strategy Species and Habitat lists, if warranted
- Revisions to conservation actions and tools where appropriate
- Adaptive management actions to increase or enhance effectiveness in meeting Conservation Strategy’s implementation goals

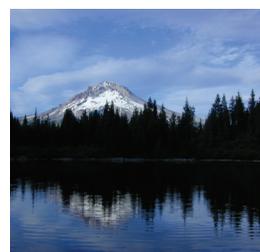


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