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How to Get the Job Done: Voluntary Conservation Tools

As a non-regulatory, voluntary approach to conservation, the Conservation Strategy relies on effectively using a wide variety of incentives, assistance and other tools that can help landowners and land managers provide fish and wildlife habitat on their land. Private landowners play a significant role in conserving habitats and species. Forty-six percent of Oregon land is privately owned. Some habitats occur primarily on private property; most fish and wildlife species use habitats on private land and some species are dependent on habitats found only on private land.

Publicly owned lands play an equally important role in species and habitat conservation in Oregon. Many public lands could provide greater conservation benefits through restoration efforts or changes in management activities. Coordination of land uses and management activities on adjacent lands is important for both private and public landowners because species and habitats, as well as problems like severe wildfire and disease, occur across landscapes. Voluntary Conservation Tools can link efforts on public lands with stewardship on private lands to meet Conservation Strategy goals for habitat conservation.

Voluntary Conservation Tools need to account for differences in landowners' goals and motivations, as well as property characteristics. For many landowners, financial and practical assistance are strong incentives to take conservation action. Others may only want some technical advice.

In the long-term, using voluntary conservation tools to implement this Conservation Strategy's goals may require new approaches or new funding sources. New approaches could involve adapting, combining, streamline or otherwise improving existing federal, state, and local programs, when compatible with program intent and guiding legislation. New funding could come from engaging new constituents, such as business leaders, or tapping new or underutilized funding programs. This chapter summarizes the types of voluntary tools available, describes

how existing programs might be adapted to better meet conservation goals, and presents some new opportunities.

Types of Voluntary Conservation Tools

In each state, dozens of voluntary programs contribute to habitat conservation. Some programs are administered by the state, while others are federally funded or offered by private organizations. Several tools are available only on private land: income and property tax benefits, acquisition of land as fee title or conservation easement, and market-based approaches. Some apply to both private and public land: regulatory assurances, regulatory and administrative streamlining, direct funding (cost-sharing or grants), land exchanges, technical assistance, information and training, and landowner recognition. Most of these efforts involve cooperative partnerships between public agencies, private landowners or landowner groups, conservation groups, watershed councils and land trusts.

Voluntary programs for habitat conservation generally fall into one or more of the categories described below. Landowner interests, priorities, and qualifications; habitat quality and quantity; species presence; and long-term costs and benefits all influence their program selection. Landowners may also weigh choices that include changing land uses (growing habitat instead of crops) or transferring ownership from private to public.

Certification Programs. More and more consumers are interested in conservation-friendly products and services. Certification programs set management standards for sustainable ecological, social, and economic practices in agriculture or forestry. They provide independent review and validation that these standards are being met. These market-based programs encourage landowners to use sustainable practices and benefit landowners by providing access to new markets. Certification programs serve as vehicles for niche-marketing, linking conservation-minded producers with consum-

ers who value their products. Agricultural certification programs include Oregon Tilth Certified Organic (for producers, processors, handlers, or restaurants), Salmon-Safe, Food Alliance Certification, and Oregon Country Beef. Vineyard certification programs include VINES (Viticultural Indicators for Environmental Sustainability) and LIVE (Low Input Viticulture Enology). Forest certification programs include the American Tree Farm System, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, the Forest Stewardship Council, Green Tag, Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification and other industry standards. Some certification programs are particularly applicable to urban areas, such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification and other “green building” programs, environmentally-friendly golf courses, salmon-safe parks, and even for “wildlife friendly” backyards.

Conservation Banking. A conservation bank is an area of habitat managed and restored for its natural resource values. The resource values gained from a conservation bank are generally sold as “credits” to project proponents who seek mitigation opportunities to compensate for resource impacts elsewhere. Traditionally, banking has been used to mitigate for impacts to wetlands and threatened or endangered species. Conservation banks can be established by local and state agencies or private parties. Conservation banking programs allow people to pool mitigation from multiple projects, which can result in more strategic mitigation. Conservation banks can take advantage of economies of scale and simplify the regulatory compliance process for individual project proponents. They often provide a better alternative to mitigation done for individual project impacts.

Water Rights Acquisition and Leasing. There are many techniques for improving stream flow. In 1987, the Oregon legislature amended the state’s water laws to provide incentives for water rights holders to conserve water resources and to allow for protection of instream water rights by purchasing, leasing, or accepting a donation of existing water rights for conversion to instream rights. The Instream Water Rights Act allows the state to apply for new instream water rights and private parties to create instream rights by purchasing, leasing, or accepting a donation of existing water rights for conversion to instream rights. There are a diversity of options for water rights holders ranging from lease or transfer of their entire right to partial transfers through rotation agreements between diverters, time-limited transfers, split-season instream leasing.

Oregon’s conserved water statute was passed by the Oregon Legislature in 1987. The Conserved Water Program, administered

by the Oregon Water Resources Department, makes it possible for a water user who voluntarily conserves water through improved efficiency to retain 75 percent of the saved water and reallocate it to irrigate additional lands, lease or sell the water, or dedicating the water to instream use.

Several non-profit organizations work with water right holders to enhance instream flows (e.g. Oregon Water Trust, Deschutes River Conservancy, and the Klamath Basin Rangeland Trust). The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and Bonneville Power Administration (through National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Columbia Basin Water Transactions Program) provide funds to organizations to pay willing irrigators fair market value to acquisition or lease water rights.

Direct Funding Programs. Public agencies and private organizations make direct payments to private landowners or landowner organizations to support actions to conserve and restore fish and wildlife habitat, improve water quality, or improve land management activities. These payments are made as grants, purchased conservation easements or fee ownership in land, cost-share payments, and rental payments. Many programs that provide direct payments for acquisition, restoration, or management require a matching financial or in-kind contribution, usually between 10 percent and 50 percent. Usually federal payments must be matched with non-federal contributions. Some programs further require landowners to enter into a temporary agreement or easement to ensure the public investment in restoration or protection will be maintained.

Information and Training. Some landowners are self-motivated to conserve species and habitats on their property and only need information about what to do and how to do it. Information or training may come from agency staff, Oregon State University Extension Service and other university programs, watershed councils, conservation groups, consultants, and/or other landowners. Demonstration projects are an excellent vehicle for sharing information about habitats, conservation activities, programs that can assist landowners, and personal experiences.

Conservation Easements. A conservation easement is a voluntary, but legally binding agreement that allows a landowner to give up one or more of their rights (for example, rights to subdivide and develop) on a given piece of land while retaining the remainder of the rights (for example, rights to farm). In Oregon, state and federal agencies, metropolitan districts, tribes, and non-profit organizations are qualified to hold easements. Oregon has over 27 million acres of private land, and only a very small fraction of

private land is within a conservation easement. For example, approximately 27,000 acres are held by land trusts; 29,000 acres by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; 48,000 acres by Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board; 50,000 acres by Natural Resource Conservation Service; and 400 acres by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Other easements are owned by non-profit groups such as Ducks Unlimited.

Conservation easements can be designed to accomplish specific objectives, such as to protect habitat for an endangered species; or it can be designed more broadly to protect farmland or open space. Because they are flexible they can also be tailored to the particular piece of property, wishes of the landowners, and goals of the easement holder. In some cases, a conservation easement is purchased, providing income to the landowner. Alternatively, landowners who donate conservation easements may qualify for federal, state, or estate tax benefits. Conservation easements may be particularly appealing to landowners if only a portion of the property is used to meet conservation goals. Typically easements are permanent, ensuring that protection of the land's values remain in place even with a change of ownership.

Land Acquisition, Donations, and Exchanges. Many public agencies (examples: U.S. Forest Service, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, or local governments) and private (example: land trust or watershed councils) conservation organizations acquire land from willing sellers. Land acquisitions can be made at fair market value or donated. A number of funding programs provide grants for land acquisitions (e.g., Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and non-profit organizations [e.g. local land trusts, The Nature Conservancy, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation]). In some cases, landowners donate land to particular entities and/or for specific purposes such as education, recreation or conservation. Donation can provide landowners with federal, state, or estate tax benefits. In the case of exchanges, public and private lands are traded to reach mutual goals. These options are only practical when the landowner is willing, funding is available, the new owner is able to take on management responsibility, and the land has high enough conservation values to be worth the cost.

Acquisitions may require significant initial investment, plus there are costs for long-term management and stewardship. Active management may be needed to maintain the values for which the property was purchased. These issues, as well as some other considerations, are discussed later in this chapter.

Landowner Recognition. Motivated landowners are a key element of effective conservation programs. Publicly acknowledging landowners' efforts can provide an added incentive to continue their work and motivate other landowners to participate. Landowner recognition efforts include: profiles in newsletters or on websites, project summaries in annual reports, awards, on-site project signage, and invitations to share knowledge and experience through site visits or other presentations.

Conservation Trading Programs. Conservation trading programs rely on supply and demand to set prices, and allow trading or selling of commodities desired for conservation, such as water rights or pollution credits. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has incorporated trading for "oxygen demanding substances" such as ammonia and other stressors, and temperature into permit limits issued to Clean Water Services, a wastewater and stormwater special service district in Washington County. Through the terms of the permit, Clean Water Services is able to fund riparian restoration and flow augmentation rather than installing more expensive, on-site, cooling technologies to meet temperature standards. The Oregon Climate Trust invests funding in projects that offset greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, businesses, and individuals to reduce the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Funding from this program has been invested in riparian restoration in the Deschutes River Basin.

Managing Lands for Multiple Values. Landowners often can combine habitat conservation with agriculture, timber production and other uses, sometimes creating new economic opportunities. For example, agri- and eco-tourism allows farmers to market the habitat value of their land by offering recreational services to anglers, hunters, bird watchers, and other fish and wildlife enthusiasts.

Heritage Seedlings, Inc. provides another example. Mark and Jolly Krautmann are involved in a variety of stewardship efforts on several rural properties in Marion County. Activities include extensive restoration of oak woodland, oak savanna, upland and wet prairie, and riparian areas, with assistance from their restoration ecologist, Lynda Boyer. The Krautmanns also have a commercial operation with seven acres of native upland seed plants, including rare plants. The seeds are used for their large-scale restoration projects and also available for others doing similar work. Mark Krautmann, former president of the Oregon Association of Nurseries, believes the nursery industry is uniquely placed to play a substantial role in the restoration and recovery of wildlife habitats and native plant species. He promotes the concept of having a commercial operation that is beneficial to fish and wildlife habitat.

Regulatory Assurances for Federal Endangered Species Act. A landowner can voluntarily enter into an agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service and receive certainty that these agencies will not impose additional land use restrictions related to the Endangered Species Act in the future. Safe Harbor Agreements are for landowners who want to conserve listed species on their property. Habitat Conservation Plans are for landowners who want to proceed with an otherwise legal activity that will result in the “taking” or killing of a listed species. “Incidental take” is permitted if the plan specifies actions to minimize and mitigate the effects. Candidate Conservation Agreements are for landowners who want to conserve species that are proposed for listing and thereby help prevent their decline and the need for listing. If certain standards can be met, landowners can be provided assurances that additional regulations will not be imposed due to their actions to benefit species.

Regulatory and Administrative Streamlining. A landowner whose conservation actions go above and beyond regulatory requirements can enter into an agreement with a participating agency and in return receive regulatory certainty, expedited permit processing, higher priority access to other programs and other benefits. An example is “stewardship agreements,” defined in Oregon statutes as “an agreement voluntarily entered into and signed by a landowner, or representative of the landowner, and the state Department of Agriculture or the state Board of Forestry that sets forth the terms under which the landowner will self-regulate to meet and exceed applicable regulatory requirements and achieve conservation, restoration and improvement of fish and wildlife habitat or water quality.” House Bill 3616, passed by the 2003 Oregon Legislature, removed Stewardship Agreements from the Forest Practices Act statutes and created a new Stewardship Agreement Statute, Oregon Revised Statute 541.423. The new statute directs the Board of Forestry and Department of Agriculture to jointly develop rules that address both forest and agricultural lands.

Tax benefits (income tax credits, income tax deductions, property tax benefits): Income Tax Credits - Income tax programs provide a means for landowners to receive a tax credit for part or all of the costs of a conservation activity. Because such programs reduce state income, they are most appropriately used to achieve statewide conservation objectives rather than strictly local objectives. Income Tax deductions - Landowners who permanently donate land, conservation easements or water rights may be able to deduct the value of the donation from their federal or state income

tax. Property Tax Benefits - In Oregon, property taxes on agricultural and forest lands are assessed at below-market rates, providing financial incentives for property owners to maintain these land uses and to discourage scattered development. Tax-based conservation programs also assess lands at reduced levels, allowing landowners to participate in conservation activities without losing tax benefits. Programs that reduce property taxes reduce revenue for counties and tax-supported special districts. If landowners were already participating in a special assessment program their property tax level usually won't change. Therefore, these programs generally do not further reduce county or district revenue.

Technical Assistance. Landowners may need assistance identifying programs; finding expertise, understanding regulations, developing conservation plans, applying for permits or programs, coordinating with other agencies and designing specific conservation elements. Sometimes technical assistance is the landowner's only need. Assistance is available through a variety of public and private sources, including agencies, watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, extension agents and consultants.

Building on Success: Some Recommendations for Improving Current Incentive Programs

While the current tools and programs for implementing conservation provide many good options for landowners, many could be improved to more effectively meet fish and wildlife conservation needs. With the number and variety of programs available, landowners have choices and flexibility. However, there are few statewide programs that provide compelling incentives for landowners in conjunction with addressing high priority conservation goals with a multi-species or habitat approach.

Some states have formed advisory committees to recommend changes to state incentives programs. Other states have introduced legislation to create new programs or adjust existing programs. Recently, agency task groups and private organizations have evaluated some of Oregon's programs. This chapter builds on those efforts.

Effective voluntary programs consider a range of factors. Ideally, effective programs would be adaptable to the needs of individual landowners, unique ecological conditions and strategic conservation goals. For landowners, effective programs would be easy to access, understand, and offer desired benefits. They are not one-size-fits-all but offer options for customizing programs to specific parcels of land. For species and habitats, effective programs would be consistent with statewide and local conservation goals, cluster efforts and effects across scales,

and provide long-term conservation benefits. In addition, programs should provide for monitoring to measure effectiveness and encourage adaptation.

A. Ten Opportunities to Help Prioritize Efforts and Leverage

Resources - The following list identifies ten of the biggest opportunities to help prioritize efforts and leverage resources in Oregon. For some programs, state or federal legislation directs incentive program priorities. These programs were created with different purposes, guiding mandates, geographical areas, as well as different constituents they are supported by and created to serve. Although any modifications to these programs will need to work within the legislative intent, there are opportunities to increase conservation benefit while meeting programs' primary purposes. The extent to which programs can be adapted to support implementation of the Conservation Strategy will vary. Some desired approaches may need state or federal legislation to modify existing conservation programs, authorize specific conservation programs, create new funding sources or comprehensively organize voluntary conservation tools. This would require the support of diverse constituencies at the local, state, and federal levels.

1. Focus on conservation goals – *Align incentive programs with regional and statewide conservation goals, plans, and priorities.*

Program goals and project prioritization are not coordinated with regional or statewide habitat conservation plans. Individual landowners or agency staff can tailor programs to address at-risk habitats, but most programs do not approach conservation goals systematically. This Conservation Strategy provides an excellent opportunity for aligning existing voluntary conservation programs with ecoregional and statewide habitat priorities and focusing on conservation goals.

2. Focus on multiple key habitats and species – *Increase the breadth of habitats and species addressed in existing incentive programs.*

There is a strong tendency for habitat conservation programs in Oregon to emphasize aquatic species and habitats, leaving upland habitats with little attention or funding. This is a result of regulatory efforts and voluntary programs on threatened and endangered salmonids and on water quality issues. While programs focused on water quality and listed species provide conservation benefits many Strategy Species, a broader habitat-based approach could broaden the benefits to multiple species.

Other landowner assistance programs focus on landowner goals such as crop production, soil or water conservation, or reforestation. For these programs, habitat conservation is absent or a secondary goal. Depending on individual program's legislative purpose and goals, there may be opportunities to increase the direct and indirect contributions to conservation goals, while meeting original program intent. A prioritized habitat-based approach allows for the conservation of multiple species. However, certain species may need special management attention on an individual basis.

3. Be strategic rather than opportunistic in program

delivery – *Focus investments on Strategy Habitats, Strategy Species, and in Conservation Opportunity Areas. Cluster efforts where habitats or issues cross ownership boundaries. However, make some programs available to interested landowners across the state, including those outside of priority areas.*

Most programs have no process for selecting participants based on priority habitat types or conservation areas. Instead, they accept any interested landowner who meets eligibility requirements. Some programs prioritize projects, but have no mechanism or adequate funding for clustering participation in high priority areas. With limited funding, opportunistic approaches have been cheaper and easier to administer.

Implement programs at appropriate scales to achieve conservation goals, clustering focus areas at the landscape scale. When compatible with program intent, focus investments on Strategy Habitats and in Conservation Opportunity Areas. This will require decisions on funding levels for rural versus urban conservation efforts; for conservation on private versus public land; for incentives versus acquisition; for restoration versus conservation; for conservation actions versus monitoring; and for one habitat versus another. These decisions need to accommodate diverse conservation programs and approaches specific to each Strategy Habitat.

As an example, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Landowner Incentive Program (www.dfw.state.or.us/LIP) has already begun incorporating priorities identified in this Conservation Strategy into its process for evaluating future grant applications. The Landowner Incentive Program is considering focusing efforts on specific Strategy Species and Strategy Habitats each year. This could increase conservation activity that connects high quality habitats and target technical assistance to a geo-

graphic area and/or habitat type each year. Landowners in that area could plan and implement compatible projects together and to learn from each other.

Also, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board has developed policies and procedures to make its funding decisions more strategic. For example, it recently developed restoration and acquisition priorities (www.oregon.gov/OWEB/GRANTS/index.shtml). In addition, the board has been coordinating with other agencies to ensure programs and priorities are consistent between agencies. This Conservation Strategy can help the board further align funding priorities with statewide conservation goals for species and habitats. As the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board sets statewide priorities consistency at the local level will be important for all of their grant programs.

When implementing the Conservation Strategy, partnering with watershed councils, land trusts and conservation organizations will provide other opportunities for strategic evaluation of projects and conservation investments.

However, encouraging broad participation in the Conservation Strategy requires that conservation opportunities are available for Oregonians throughout the state. Use “strategic opportunism” in identifying potential participants, and make some programs available to interested landowners outside of priority areas, to encourage conservation actions throughout Oregon, especially to link Conservation Opportunity Areas together.

4. Provide monitoring of ecological outcomes – *Learn what works and adapt accordingly at both the project and programmatic levels.*

Program monitoring is often limited to counting people, acres, or trees. Some programs encourage or require monitoring for individual projects such as survival of planted trees. A few programs or agencies may measure local habitat outcomes, such as shade from planted trees, water quality after riparian restoration, or flow increases from water conservation. No programs or agencies adequately monitor desired habitat outcomes.

Monitoring of voluntary conservation tools needs to have two purposes: 1) evaluate effectiveness of program delivery and contributions to toward conservation goals, and 2) evaluate effectiveness of on-the-ground conservation actions. Establish desired outcomes and monitor to evaluate progress at local,

regional and statewide scales. Adaptive management approach is needed at both the program and project levels to regularly adjust approaches to improve effectiveness. The Conservation Registry discussed below can assist with monitoring for both purposes. For complete recommendations for monitoring and a discussion of adaptive management, see *Monitoring for Success* on pages 99 to 103.

5. Improve coordination between agencies, programs, and partners – *Build on existing partnerships between agencies to strengthen coordination, review programs, streamline processes, assist landowners, and share information.*

A wide variety of agencies deliver conservation programs, each with its own objectives, messages, and target audience. This lack of coordination makes the universe of conservation programs complex, confusing, and inaccessible for landowners. It is important to recognize that programs were created for and supported by different constituencies and have may have guiding legislation that determine program priorities. However, there are opportunities to build on existing partnerships between agencies to strengthen coordination. This Conservation Strategy can be a tool to prioritize funding decisions. Coordination can be improved through a “one-stop shopping” approach of delivering incentive programs and technical assistance. This concept is presented in greater detail below, in *New Conservation Tools and Programs*.

6. Provide adequate funding – *Develop stable, long-term state and federal funding sources. Carefully prioritize efforts to make best use of existing funds. Take advantage of underutilized federal programs available to Oregon.*

The majority of state and many federal programs are underfunded. Lack of continuity of programs and coordination between partners hinders the effective use of available funding. This leads to implementation based more on convenience than targeted conservation goals and priority areas. State funding for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board cannot address all of the state's conservation needs.

This Conservation Strategy depends on proactive development of conservation programs with stable, long-term state and federal funding. Focusing funding on programs that implement Conservation Strategy conservation goals and priorities can make efficient use of limited funds. Also, improved coordina-

tion will increase the effective use of limited current funds but current funding is not enough.

New funding sources need to be developed, particularly involving private businesses and community groups. A Flexible Incentives Account created by the state legislature in 2001 to fund innovative conservation projects has yet to be funded. This opportunity is discussed later in this chapter. Build on existing creative funding partnership including the work done by watershed councils, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Oregon Hunters Association, Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, and Joint Venture programs. These organizations contribute matching funds, large numbers of hours and other in-kind efforts, and are highly committed to the success of their projects. Their efforts can be leveraged for grant applications and other funding sources.

7. Increase program participation – *Increase landowner involvement by including them in decision-making processes, increasing flexibility, and conducting outreach to increase awareness.*

Participation in some Oregon programs is below capacity, reducing ability to reach conservation goals. Some landowners are unaware of programs, feel that programs are not flexible enough, and/or do not trust government agencies or conservation organizations delivering programs. Landowners may perceive program delivery as top-down. Other landowners are wary of legal implications of programs that affect federally listed species. Other landowners are reluctant to take conservation actions that might attract federally listed species to their property. Some programs do not provide enough financial incentive, for example property tax programs. Not all programs are available to all interested landowners. For example, the Wildlife Habitat Conservation and Management Program is available only in participating counties. Many programs require landowners to bear the cost of the project until they are reimbursed.

To address these issues, include landowners as local partners and decision makers, providing them a role as stakeholders and increasing their committed to success. Increase flexibility to accommodate landowners' individual needs, balancing flexibility with consistency and compliance requirements. Improve outreach to increase landowner awareness of programs. Outreach efforts can be integrated into individual program administration and into coordination efforts between agencies and programs. Encourage peer learning and participation through landowner recognition, demonstration projects, and landowner groups.

Provide short-term loans to cover reimbursable costs until cost-share payments are received. Evaluate and remove disincentives in existing programs.

In some cases expanding program availability is needed to increase program participation. Oregon's Wildlife Habitat Conservation and Management Program (www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/whcmp_overview.html) is currently limited to the 14 participating counties. With the support of local landowners and community leaders, this program could be expanded to other counties and focused on Strategy Habitats.

8. Simplify complex administrative processes – *Where possible, improve administrative efficiency, simplify paperwork, standardize application forms and processes between programs, streamline processes, increase assistance to landowners in filling out forms and meeting regulatory requirements, empower landowners to manage projects through training and networking, and ensure deadlines are reasonable for landowners.*

Most conservation programs require a significant investment of time to develop plans, keep records, fill out applications, work with agencies and track budgets and reimbursements. Landowners face a daunting challenge completing paperwork and receiving approval from a plethora of agencies or foundations, each of which may have different formats, goals, criteria and monitoring standards. Deadlines often occur at difficult times of the year.

To address these issues, simplify paperwork whenever possible, while ensuring that enough information is collected to ensure accountability and project documentation. Standardize application forms and processes where feasible. Seek ways to provide technical assistance with applications and records. Provide information, training, and networking to empower landowners to manage their own projects. Set deadlines to increase convenience to landowners.

9. Provide more technical support – *Build on existing programs to provide biological and administrative advice and assistance.*

Lack of adequate technical assistance undermines participation in and success of voluntary conservation programs. Technical assistance is severely under-funded, and there is little coordination of efforts. The availability of federal technical assistance does not meet demand from federal Farm Bill programs. As a

result, landowners may not participate. Soil and Water Conservation Districts and watershed councils currently provide assistance, but do not have the funding to fully support landowner requests. In some cases landowners do not ask for financial assistance but only need technical support. Landowners need assistance with planning, funding and permit applications, coordination with partners, record keeping, engineering design, implementation, and monitoring.

Provide technical support to landowners through conservation programs. Improve technical assistance by analyzing program needs and asking landowners for ideas, seeking private sector assistance from natural resource consultants, look for new funding sources, and partnering with entities already working successfully to provide technical services, such as Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watershed programs.

ODFW's Western Oregon Stream Restoration Program provides a prototype for landowner assistance programs and in coordination with local communities. Under this program, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife field biologists provide direct technical support to watershed councils and private landowners to implement the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. Technical support includes pre-project assessment, design, assistance with grants, permits, implementation and effectiveness monitoring. A similar group of ODFW field biologists could provide technical assistance to community and landowner groups to implement the Conservation Strategy. The statewide technical assistance program could also include providing direct restoration services for landowners with high priority habitats, with department staff or consultants doing the actual work. This program would allow ODFW to have direct access to habitats of high conservation need and to determine the specific restoration methods used.

10. Look for ways to increase staffing – *Provide adequate funding to attract and retain program delivery staff over time.*

Some agencies may not recognize the full suite of technical and social skills needed for effective program delivery. Instead they hire staff with good technical skills, or shift staff into program delivery. Lack of funding undermines agency hiring flexibility, as well as staff compensation and satisfaction. High staff turnover limits community integration. Staff time is limited and funding constraints can limit both supporting all the worthy projects as well as providing adequate program oversight and administra-

tion. Greater coordination and landowner support that supplements and does not detract from the work of program-specific staff. Solutions must ensure highly efficient use of limited staff time.

Provide adequate funding to attract and retain effective program delivery staff with diverse technical and social skills. Staff must be knowledgeable in selecting appropriate programs to meet landowner's priorities, habitats and property features.

B. Federal Funding Sources: Some New Opportunities for Oregon

In recent years, new federal funding or new programs to implement existing funding have become available to Oregon. In some cases, they present brand new opportunities. In other cases, these funding sources have been unused or not used to full capacity. In total, these programs offer several hundred million dollars nationally, which could translate into over \$5 million annually for Oregon.

In accordance with Oregon Revised Statute (ORS 291.375), the legislature must review applications for and approve acceptance of federal grants. Local projects that meet multiple community goals and have high citizen support are most likely to have the greatest support within the Oregon Legislature.

1. *Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP)*

www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrep

The Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program provides an avenue for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to form special partnerships with others to improve or expand the delivery of its Wetlands Reserve Program. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board has been asked to develop a WREP proposal for the Willamette Valley as a part of the Governor's Willamette Legacy Program. The proposed Willamette Valley WREP would provide technical assistance and regulatory review for wetlands reserve program projects. The structure would be similar to the federal/state partnership established for the Oregon Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. The Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program would bring needed capacity to serve landowners and add to the partnership implementing wetland restoration in Oregon.

2. *Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program*

<http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/landconservation.html>

This is a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration program for conserving coastal and estuarine lands with significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical, or aesthetic val-

ues, or that are threatened by conversion. The state of Oregon has not applied for this funding. In 2004, this program had about \$51 million available nationally.

3. *Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants*

www.fws.gov/cepcwgcwcover.html

This U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service program provides funding for acquisition, restoration, and enhancement of wetlands of coastal states. The state of Oregon applied for and received grants in 2003, but did not apply for 2004 or 2005 funding. In 2005, this program has about \$13 million available nationally.

4. *Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund*

<http://endangered.fws.gov/grants/section6/index.html>

This U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service program provides funding for projects, land acquisition and planning assistance. The state of Oregon has applied annually for funds and has received a relatively small amount of this funding. In 2005, this program has about \$90 million available nationally.

5. *Forest Legacy Program*

National: www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/flp.shtml

Oregon: <http://159.121.125.11/forasst/Legacy/legacy.htm>

The Forest Legacy Program, a partnership between the U.S. Forest Service and individual states, provides federal funding to protect private forestlands from conversion to non-forest uses, through conservation easements and voluntary land acquisition. Forty-two states are participating although some are still working on their assessment or have applied for but not received project funding. Some have identified their entire state as eligible for the program, an approach that does not focus on conservation priorities.

Oregon is evaluating participation in the program. The state used a strategic assessment process, with a strong emphasis on high priority habitats. Three forest habitats (oak woodlands, riparian bottomlands, and ponderosa pine forests) were prioritized for inclusion in a Forest Legacy Area. The ecological value of the land including priority forest types, high quality examples of forests, priority forest wildlife species, endangered species or their habitat, and riparian habitat were key criteria for screening participation in this program. The Oregon Department of Forestry indicates that before the Forest Legacy program could be implemented, the assessment of need must be updated and compatibility with the statewide land use program determined.

Because of the close alignment between Conservation Strategy and Forest Legacy Area priorities, this program would be a very helpful tool for conserving private forest habitats in Oregon, particularly because there are few such incentive programs. In Fiscal Year 2004, this program received \$71 million of total funding, of which \$64.1 million is new funding and \$6.9 million was to be derived from prior-year funds. See www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/library/FSLegacy.pdf.

C. Some Other Recommendations for Improving Existing Voluntary Conservation Tools

1. Provide support for landowners in drafting conservation easements.

Conservation easements are a flexible legal instrument that often involve creative partnerships for achieving conservation goals while addressing landowner interests and retaining private ownership. However, they are complex, expensive, and time-consuming to arrange, and there is little funding available for preparing legal documents and agreements, or stewardship of easements.

Partners can seek assistance to cover the administrative costs of preparing an easement, which are very difficult to fund. Non-profit groups such as land trusts can provide services and expertise in this area, but have limited funding and need additional support. Alternatively, a tax deduction can be provided to compensate for preparation costs. Similarly, funding sources can be developed to cover stewardship costs which include land management, monitoring and legal enforcement of the easement's restrictions over time.

2. Evaluate conservation priority, long-term costs, and local support when acquiring land.

Purchasing land is a simple, effective, and permanent way to conserve species, habitats, and other ecological values, while providing financial compensation to interested landowners. Fee title acquisitions may require significant initial investment, plus there are costs for long-term management and stewardship. However, because of the costs and the long-term commitment, land acquisition needs to be used judiciously to ensure that limited conservation funds are invested for the highest conservation priorities.

In many cases, there are complex social, political, and economic factors to consider. How does the current and future owner-

ship fit into the local pattern of landownership? What are the potential land management or economic impacts for neighboring landowners? Will the proposed new landowner/manager be a good steward of the property? Are they willing to actively manage the property if necessary to maintain ecological values? Will they be accepted and trusted by the local community? What are the local economic and social impacts of taking land out of commodity production or shifting land to public ownership? Address these issues on a case-by-case basis, consulting the current and future owners, appropriate agencies and local community members.

As an example, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the state's principal funding source for conservation land acquisitions, has developed a formal set of priorities for evaluating the merits of proposed land acquisition projects (www.oregon.gov/OWEB/GRANTS/acquisition_grants.shtml). The Board's land acquisition administrative rules, adopted in 2004, give priority to projects that (1) address the conservation needs of priority habitats and species, and (2) are consistent with one or more of a set of specific conservation principles that help focus acquisition investments more strategically. The ecological priorities were derived from the same data sources and are consistent with priorities in this Conservation Strategy. The rules require applicants to demonstrate public support and address the economic and social effects on the local and regional community. This combination of science-based conservation priorities and a rigorous review process provide a solid model for evaluation of conservation land acquisition proposals.

3. Expand Recognition Programs.

According to a landowner who has been involved in many voluntary habitat conservation efforts, "You can't thank people enough. Even highly motivated people like to have their efforts recognized." In addition to existing recognition programs, it is important to develop additional ways to recognize landowners' and other partners' contributions to habitat conservation. There

are uncounted examples of great projects, dedicated landowners, and innovative partnerships that deserve recognition. Many agencies and organizations could expand their recognition efforts.

Publish profiles or case studies of landowners, projects, partnerships or programs in newsletters, on websites, or in annual reports. These publications to peers motivate new participants,

or spark ideas for new innovative partnerships. Broaden public conservation knowledge and interest through newspaper articles, radio interviews and televised profiles. Arrange on-site learning opportunities for other landowners and conservation partners. Offer project signage, identify demonstration sites and invite landowners to share experiences through site visits or workshops. Recognize success and effort with awards, certificates, and plaques.

Recognition helps shift conservation focus from conflict to success. Rural habitat success stories shared with urban audiences help bridge the gaps, both perceived and real, between diverse Oregonians. The person who hears about a habitat conservation success may be the next partner or fundraiser.

Recommendations for New or Expanded Voluntary Conservation Tools

For effective implementation of this Conservation Strategy, Oregon needs to build on existing efforts and develop new programs to meet statewide conservation goals, while addressing complex local and statewide social and economic issues. Some programs will need additional funding or staff. All programs will require creativity, partnerships, and a commitment to improving voluntary conservation tools and programs.

1. Develop business opportunities and other market-based approaches that advance fish and wildlife conservation.

Healthy ecosystems depend on healthy economies, just as healthy economies depend on healthy ecosystems. A growing number of businesses are striving for sustainability by modifying internal practices or supporting outside efforts. A conservation marketplace is appearing in the state. There are new business opportunities for landowners to market products that in turn help conserve the state's fish and wildlife resources. Native plant nurseries, juniper products, sustainably managed timber, organic produce, and certification programs are making conservation profitable.

In some areas, removing encroaching small-diameter trees can restore habitats with historically open understories, while reducing the risk of uncharacteristically severe wildfire by reducing fuel loads and removing ladder fuels. Developing markets for these small-diameter trees can create jobs, contribute to local economies, and help pay for restoration. Strategic investment in restoration projects such as culvert replacement and invasive species control and could also support job creation in some rural areas, while meeting fish and wildlife conservation goals.

These efforts can be further promoted and expanded. They can serve as role models for new innovative economic and marketing approaches.

Landowners can incorporate conservation into other economic uses of their land. Each property has a unique combination of production capabilities, habitats, and other natural features, allowing different possibilities. Oregonians need to encourage and support innovative approaches to land management that allow landowners to meet economic and ecological goals in both rural and urban areas.

The following examples illustrate some ways that landowners and businesses can combine economic and ecologic goals to benefit fish and wildlife.

- Juniper Group: This local partnership in the Prineville area is developing a program to help meet the community's natural resource and economic needs. Western juniper trees are native to central and eastern Oregon and provide wildlife cover, food (berries), and nest sites, and as shade for livestock. Juniper has expanded dramatically in the last half century, probably due to suppression of natural fires, historic overgrazing by livestock, and possibly climate change. Juniper trees use a significant amount of water, reducing moisture available to other native plants, streams, and the water table. Managing them is challenging because they are hardy, out-compete other vegetation and are highly vulnerable to fire. Juniper has no widespread commercial value, because the logs are difficult to process, cure, and plane. Landowners John and Lynne Breese, in partnership with OSU Extension Agent Tim Deboodt, initiated the Juniper Group to address these management and marketing challenges. The Juniper Group is experimenting with ways to turn juniper trees into a marketable product that creates family wage jobs for the community. They will develop a business plan to assist the community in implementing the program.
- Tree of Life Nursery: In 1987, in a vacant lot in Joseph, Oregon, June Davis experimented with growing seeds of native plants she had gathered locally. She had experience with horticultural businesses, but less with native species. The seeds grew, and soon the new Tree of Life Nursery was providing locally grown native plants for U.S. Forest Service riparian restoration projects. Now she supplies plants for other agencies and for private landowners and she provides workshops. In 1995, Davis began working with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla to help the tribes set up their own native plant nursery. Now, the tribes grow their own native plants for restoration projects and supply plants for other agencies. The nursery is a profitable business for the tribe, and both nurseries provide opportunities for local community members to gain job skills and to learn to reverse the results of some past land use practices.
- Community Smallwood Solutions (www.ccswood.com) and Wallowa Resources (www.wallowaresources.org): Wallowa Resources, formed in 1996 in Wallowa County, is a partnership that balances and blends the ecological needs of the land with the economic needs of the community. In 1999, Wallowa Resources was among the first groups in the nation to sign a memorandum of understanding with the U. S. Forest Service, with the intention to demonstrate new watershed management projects that improve and restore the ecosystem health of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. These projects include: watershed restoration, noxious weed management, fuel reduction and fire planning, development of a pole and post processing facility, timber worker retraining, construction projects with local wood products, education and projects for K-12 students, and classes for university credit. Wallowa Resources owns interest in a local mill and contracts restoration and stewardship work. In addition, it developed Community Smallwood Solutions to develop markets for small-diameter trees removed during fuel reduction and habitat restoration projects. Through these market-based approaches, the organization is making a difference in the long-term economic and ecological health of Wallowa County by creating and maintaining family-wage jobs and business opportunities from natural resource stewardship. This community-based group has become a model for other rural communities. Additional information on community Smallwood Solutions is on pages 80 and 284.
- Salmon-Friendly Power: Customers of Pacific Power and Portland General Electric have the option to pay an extra monthly charge with their electric bill, which goes into the Salmon-Friendly Power Fund (www.portlandgeneral.com/home/products/power_options/habitat.asp). The funds are administered by The Nature Conservancy for on-the-ground salmon habitat restoration grants (www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/oregon/

- [press/press1572.htm](#)). The grants can be used to match other federal and state funding sources. Salmon-Friendly Power grants are available for projects in the service and transmission areas of Pacific Power and Portland General Electric.
- Tyee Winery and Buchanan Century Farm ([www.tyeevine.com](#)): The Buchanan farm sits on the fertile banks at the confluence of Muddy and Beaver Creeks, in the Marys River Watershed in Benton County. Dave Buchanan is a fourth generation farmer and his daughter plans to be the fifth. In recent years, this Willamette Valley operation has focused on growing wine grapes, filberts, sheep, grass seed, wheat, and hay, and operating the Tyee Wine Cellars. Conservation is a high priority for the family, who has extensive wetlands and bottomland hardwood forests on their property, along with migratory waterfowl, frogs, turtles, native trout, over 100 species of birds, and several rare or threatened species. A 30-year conservation easement through the Wetlands Reserve Program allows the Buchanans to conserve and restore habitat on about half of the 460-acre property while giving the next generation a decision-making role on long term stewardship. The vineyard, with its perennial cover crop and intact riparian buffer, is certified as Salmon-Safe under an eco-label.
 - Oak Woodland Restoration ([www.mckenzieiver.org/fall_2004.pdf](#) page 3): In 2004, Marilyn Gill donated a 200-acre conservation easement in Douglas County to the McKenzie River Trust to conserving oak habitat for the Columbian white-tailed deer and other special species. The Trust is developing and implementing a restoration strategy for the property that allows the landowners to balance economic and natural values of the land. Restoration is funded through the Private Stewardship Grant Program (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and other sources. The Trust also received a grant to investigate whether small diameter oak trees generated from the oak woodland restoration can be commercially processed into viable wood products, such as poles and posts. The project will generate educational materials for landowners interested in developing a similar project.
 - Yannix Ranch, Sprague River Valley, Upper Klamath Basin: This diverse partnership is supporting comprehensive ranchland renewal on a 480-acre ecologically significant property in poor condition due to past management. The goal is to demonstrate that ranches are an

essential component of regional sustainability, providing fish, wildlife, and habitat values, open space, a local food supply, and an economic pillar for rural communities. The partnership includes the new landowners (Becky Hatfield-Hyde and Taylor Hyde, both from multi-generational ranching families), neighboring landowners, federal and state agencies, the Klamath Tribe, and Sustainable Northwest. The partnership has worked to develop a ranch restoration, management, and monitoring plan through respectful dialogue and inclusion of all interests. Two model conservation tools are being developed for this project, with the goal of using these on other lands in the Pacific Northwest. The first tool is a working-lands conservation easement with conditions that are flexible enough to allow opportunities to experiment, learn from the land, and modify management activities, and yet will still give funders assurance that they are investing in conservation. The second tool is a conservation investment program that provides incentives and financial support to ranchers seeking to transition to more sustainable approaches, by linking urban investments to ranch-based restoration.

2. Expand conservation banking to a statewide approach.

Conservation banking has been developed to provide options for regulatory compliance and can be a more simple and economical option for meaningful mitigation for unavoidable impacts, resulting in a win-win outcome if designed well. Today, the concept of conservation banking is expanding, presenting new options. Conservation banking is emerging as a means of financing the conservation and restoration of high priority habitats, in large contiguous blocks, whether regulated or not.

Conservation banking places a dollar value on habitat, establishing "credits" that serve as a currency and are purchased with mitigation fees or voluntary investments, bringing a market approach to conservation. The number of credits available in a conservation bank is based on the bank's acreage, habitat quality, location, and level of restoration needed or completed. Because credit prices are based on supply and demand, profitable conservation banks will attract additional banks into the market, and competition can lower or raise the price of the credits. Banking can thus provide a desirable economic use of priority habitats for landowners.

Mitigation for habitat impacts is required under existing state and federal regulatory programs for a variety of development actions, including transportation projects, hydroelectric projects, energy facility projects and other residential, commercial and industrial development. Mitigation can also be required by local agencies for new habitat impacts from developers or for past and ongoing impacts from rate payers or users. Habitat mitigation has often been done on-site, but the conservation benefits may have been limited due to nearby non-habitat land uses. In addition, mitigation projects often involve construction of new habitat to replace complex ecological systems such as wetlands, a challenging and often unsuccessful endeavor. Depending on local considerations, on-site mitigation may be the most appropriate approach in order to benefit the impacted populations and local habitats. Existing state and federal regulations require on-site mitigation in some circumstances. However, off-site mitigation may be appropriate to achieve larger-scale habitat conservation goals.

Voluntary investments can significantly increase a bank's capacity to meet key habitat conservation needs. Agencies, organizations, or individuals who are interested in contributing to habitat conservation efforts, but do not have access to other high priority conservation opportunities, can invest in conservation banks. Carbon sequestration is one of the newer and now fairly well established forms of conservation banking in which power utilities purchase credits for forests (which absorb and store carbon dioxide) in exchange for permission to release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. All of these investments increase the ability of the conservation banking system to purchase or manage larger blocks of habitat.

A statewide system of conservation banks would provide a tool for implementing this Conservation Strategy and for achieving statewide habitat conservation goals. Working at the state level allows the banking system to be flexible by receiving mitigation fees and voluntary investments from parts of the state where habitat impacts occur and by developing conservation banks in areas with the highest priority conservation needs. The Conservation Strategy recognizes there are ecologically significant values in both rural and urban areas and prioritization regarding where to invest in conservation banks should take those values into account. The statewide conservation banking system could allow off-site (away from the impact) banking perhaps with an ecoregion focus while other banks could be closer to the project site (same or nearby watershed). Currently, state and federal

requirements for mitigation banks do not always provide this flexibility.

Conservation banks can be in-kind (same or similar habitat type) in order to replace lost ecosystem services. In many cases it may be desirable to make out-of-kind (different habitat type) investments when there is opportunity to trade a more common habitat type for an extremely rare one such as Willamette Valley prairie. The statewide conservation banking system would need to balance the benefits of conserving the highest priority habitats (regardless of location and type impacted) with the benefits of replacing impacted habitat with the same habitat and in close proximity.

Careful planning, coordination and management will be needed to create an effective, flexible statewide conservation banking system. Significant coordination will be needed between agencies that set conservation goals, potential and actual conservation bank owners and managers, and agencies or organizations that contribute mitigation fees or voluntary funds toward credits. One or more agencies or organizations would need to take responsibility for coordination, program management, habitat management, measuring performance, monitoring, reporting, and fiscal management.

3. Seek Funding Opportunities for Oregon's Flexible Incentives Account.

Voluntary conservation tools require adequate funding, and new tools need start-up investments. In 2001, the Oregon Legislature created a Flexible Incentives Account to provide flexibility in funding innovative projects that implement statewide, regional, or local conservation plans. The account can receive private or public funds, and is administered by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. To date, no funds have been committed to the Flexible Incentives Account. However, there are opportunities to fund the Flexible Incentives Account through donations, business partnerships, and pooling resources. If funded, this account could be used to launch new programs or support revision of existing programs to meet statewide priorities.

If funded, the Flexible Incentives Account could be an important tool to implement the Conservation Strategy by using the account to target Strategy Habitats or Species. Alternatively, it could target comprehensive efforts such as large-scale floodplain restoration at a scale that can provide significant

benefits for fish, wildlife, and humans (such as Willamette River floodplain restoration).

4. Develop and expand local citizen-based partnerships to maximize citizen involvement and support.

Local partnerships involving diverse interests have evolved in many parts of Oregon. In some cases, partnerships have formed to cooperatively restore habitats or address other local natural resource issues. In other cases, partnerships have formed as a peaceful alternative to years of conflict. Community-level partnerships include diverse public and private interests and strive to address the ecological, economic, and social issues that cross ownerships in a local area. Smaller partnerships may focus on a specific project or habitat. These partnerships can engage Oregonians, strengthen communities, increase information sharing, help plan and implement conservation projects, and come up with innovative solutions. Communities are stronger when they come together to address shared interests.

The following examples illustrate some local citizen-based partnerships:

- o Watershed Councils (www.oregon.gov/QWEB/WSHEDS/wsheds_councils_list.shtml): Watershed councils are locally organized, voluntary, non-regulatory groups established to improve the condition of watersheds in their local area. The 1995 Legislature unanimously passed House Bill 3441 providing guidance in establishing watershed councils but making it clear that formation of a council is a local government decision, with no state approval required. Watershed councils are required to represent the interests in the basin and be balanced in their makeup. Watershed councils offer local residents the opportunity to independently evaluate watershed conditions and identify opportunities to restore or enhance the conditions. Through the councils, partnerships between residents, local, state and federal agency staff and other groups can be developed. Through these partnerships and the resulting integration of local efforts, the state's watersheds can be protected and enhanced. Watershed Councils provide critical technical assistance, information and training, project management, and coordination for habitat conservation efforts in their community. Additional funding and support is needed for these groups to improve their capacity to deliver programs and projects on local private and public lands.
- o Applegate Partnership (www.grayback.com/applegate-valley/ap/partnership.htm): In 1992, an environmentalist and a logger in southwest Oregon discovered common ground in a climate of animosity over natural resources. They initiated an experiment in collaborative management with community members, federal agencies, timber interests, local businesses, and environmentalists to focus on common goals rather than affiliations or positions. Soon, the Applegate Partnership had a board of directors, a vision, goals, and objectives. The Partnership supports management of all land in the watershed in a manner that sustains natural resources and that contributes to economic and community stability. Leadership is shared, decisions are made by consensus, and participation is high. The Partnership has focused on two challenging forest issues: overcrowded forests that are vulnerable to insects and fire, and high unemployment of timber workers due to logging injunctions and mill closures. The collaborative approach avoids the use of litigation, allowing the local community to suffer fewer impacts in lost jobs, divisive issues, and unhealthy forests. The Partnership also is involved in decisions about management of local federal land, allowing local social issues and priorities to be incorporated, and improving the relationship between the community and federal agencies.
- o Local Resource Advisory Committees: Under Title II of the "Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act" of 2000, federal money is available for distribution to projects meeting objectives that include: watershed restoration and maintenance; improvements in forest ecosystem health; restoration, maintenance, and improvement of fish and wildlife habitat; and invasive plant control. Eligible projects must be on federal lands or adjacent lands (including private lands) where projects would benefit federal lands. The act set in place a structure for cooperative working relationships among the people who use and care about public lands and the federal agencies responsible for managing these lands. Through Resource Advisory Committees, community members including counties, state and local governments, watershed councils, individuals, private and non-profit entities, and landowners work closely with federal agencies to develop and approve projects. In many parts of rural Oregon, the Resource Advisory Committee process has served as a catalyst to bring together diverse groups and individuals with the shared goal of improv-

ing the condition of public lands. In addition, the process provides an important funding source for cooperative projects. Multi-year funding is possible. Any person, organization, or agency interested in submitting such a project for funding may do so, ideally in coordination with the local U.S. Forest Service staff.

- Trout Creek Working Group (www.mtnvisions.com/Aurora/tcmwgrup.htm): The Trout Creek Mountain area occupies nearly a quarter-million acres in Harney and Malheur counties, mostly managed by the Bureau of Land Management, in the southeastern corner of Oregon. The creeks are home to the endangered Lahontan cutthroat trout, as well as a source of irrigation water for the ranches scattered around the base of the mountains. The area has a 130-year history of summer livestock grazing by family-owned ranches that also produce wild hay and alfalfa on their flood-irrigated meadows. By 1988, cutthroat trout habitat was severely degraded due to grazing and some ranchers were about to lose their permits to graze cattle in the mountains. Several ranchers and Bureau of Land Management staff met to discuss range management solutions. As a result the Trout Creek Working Group was formed in 1988, bringing together the ranching community, environmental groups, and the Bureau of Land Management to preserve the land, cutthroat trout, economy, and ranching culture of the Trout Creek Mountains. By working in partnership through consensus the diverse members developed new grazing management systems to reestablish riparian vegetation and fish habitat. By the mid to late 1990s, the riparian vegetation and cutthroat trout populations had recovered, and local ranchers are still grazing their cattle on the mountain. The Trout Creek Mountains are very remote, so the group now only meets once a year to tour grazed areas and see first-hand if management objectives are being met, then re-evaluate the management plan as needed. The Trout Creek Working Group has served as a model for a collaborative process adopted by the Bureau of Land Management and other federal and state agencies.

5. Engage and support local multi-purpose approaches.

Local governments play a role in assessing and conserving habitats in their jurisdiction, under statewide planning goals. Some local governments are also interested in additional conservation and restoration of natural areas to meet community needs for recreation and quality of life. Oregon Department of Fish and

Wildlife and other conservation partners could support local governments undertaking projects to conserve priority habitats by providing technical assistance about conservation tools available for public or private land or matching funds.

Two habitat conservation efforts with significant involvement of local governments are outlined below.

- Metro: Metro is the directly elected regional government that serves over 1.3 million Oregonians in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties, and the 25 cities in the Portland metropolitan area. Metro works across jurisdictional boundaries to conserve open space, parks, and habitat, to plan for land use and transportation, establish a region-wide urban growth boundary and to manage garbage disposal and recycling. Metro is developing a fish and wildlife habitat conservation plan that integrates the community's need for a strong economy with the need for healthy habitats that provide valuable ecosystem services such as regulating floods, improving water quality, and habitat for fish and wildlife. The fish and wildlife habitat program includes an inventory and map of regionally significant habitat (completed), an analysis of the economic, social, environmental, and energy impacts of protecting / not protecting habitat (completed), and a regional habitat protection program (in progress). The habitat protection program will focus on incentive-based, voluntary stewardship programs such as: technical assistance, grants, willing-seller acquisition, property tax reduction programs, alternative development practices, and tools for protecting habitat during development. Regulatory protection is limited to about 38,000 acres of the highest value riparian habitat, some of which is already protected. Metro will seek voter approval of a bond measure to support habitat acquisition and restoration by November 2006. A successful 1995 bond measure has allowed Metro to purchase over 8,000 acres of greenspace in the region.
- West Eugene Wetlands: The area west of Eugene was once dominated by a mosaic of wet prairies, grasslands and braided creeks. Over time, land use conversion, flood control projects, fire suppression and non-native plants impacted the quality and quantity of habitats, yet the area remained critical for a variety of wildlife. To provide for a comprehensive approach to wetland management and a coordinated approach to development, the City of Eugene and Lane County adopted the West Eugene

Wetlands Plan in 1992. The plan was also adopted by the Oregon Department of State Lands and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1994. It was the first wetland conservation plan of its kind adopted by state and federal agencies in the United States. Under the umbrella of the plan, the City of Eugene, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy, and five other partner organizations continue to provide recreation and education programs; operate a wetlands mitigation bank to satisfy mitigation requirements for local development projects; acquire wetlands and adjacent uplands; collect native seeds; and plan, implement, maintain, and monitor restoration projects. Recent efforts include the Meadowlark Prairie restoration project, which restored 400 acres of prairie, wetland and riparian habitats between 1999 and 2002. New viewing overlooks, picnic areas, interpretive materials, and bike paths allow visitors to enjoy and learn about Eugene's wetlands.

6. Provide "One-Stop Shopping" for delivery of incentive programs.

Some landowners are unaware of programs, while others are confused and frustrated by the alphabet soup of programs and agencies. No single agency or organization provides knowledge of or access to the full selection of programs, and landowners aren't likely to research programs on their own.

In an ideal world, there would be a statewide system offering centralized funding and technical assistance for all conservation programs. Due to logistical and legal limitations, this may be difficult to achieve. However, there is a need and opportunity to coordinate programs, identify common goals, reduce redundancy and resolve conflicts between programs. Through "one-stop shopping" agency staff, extension agents, local organizations, and/or consultants could serve as liaisons between programs and landowners, providing technical and administrative assistance as needed. Liaisons would need to have diverse technical, social, and coordination skills plus local knowledge and good connections with agencies and organizations offering conservation programs. They would use Conservation Strategy goals to identify high priority projects and landowners. The liaisons could approach key landowners and work with them to bundle different incentive programs as needed to address specific habitat, economic, and other circumstances. Interested landowners could fill out one simple pre-screening application that the liaisons would use to evaluate habitat conservation

opportunities and determine programs the landowner could use. The liaisons would continue to assist some landowners in the application and implementation phases of conservation projects, while other landowners might be referred directly to other agencies offering specific programs.

Designing and delivering "one-stop shopping"

There are various models for how to design and deliver this service, some of which could be combined to create a more effective program. With any one-stop shopping model, several issues should be addressed to ensure effective program delivery and technical assistance:

- Trusted Source: Landowners need to trust the person and organization from which they receive information. Some landowners trust government agencies. Others may prefer to work with an extension agent, Soil and Water Conservation District staff, watershed council, agricultural or timber organization, or landowner group.
- Agency Support: Agencies and organizations that currently deliver programs need to support the new system. One-stop shopping will shift the first contact for many landowners away from the agency offering the program. Some agencies will be grateful for the assistance while others may perceive that they are giving up some control.
- Funding: Additional funding will be needed to provide program delivery and technical assistance services beyond those currently available.
- Information Format: A collaborative service needs to produce user-friendly information in several formats to suit the needs and capabilities of diverse audiences. These include a website with summaries of programs, hard copies of the same information, and knowledgeable staff available by phone and in person.
- Organizational Capacity: Agencies or organizations providing one-stop shopping need adequate organizational capacity to use staff and financial resources efficiently and effectively.
- Statewide Coordination: Centralized service delivery requires consistency across the state and a strong tie to Conservation Strategy goals.

Delivery options:

- Organizations That Work with Landowners: Existing agencies or organizations that work with landowners (such as government agencies, watershed councils, land trusts, soil and water conservation districts, extension

offices, irrigation districts, or other landowner groups) could provide one-stop shopping. Their services would be funded through a combination of existing and new funding. Local preferences, office locations and other factors may require that the same simplified access to programs be provided by different agencies or organizations.

Ducks Unlimited is a good example of a conservation organization that provides access to incentive programs. Dedicated to conserving and restoring wetlands and wetland wildlife, Ducks Unlimited establishes relationships with landowners who might use the Wetlands Reserve Program, and provides technical assistance throughout the planning, application, and implementation process. They provide some of the design and restoration services, which are paid for by the Wetlands Reserve Program.

- OSU Extension Service: One-stop shopping could be provided in extension offices, which are widely used, trusted by many landowners and located across the state. However, conservation incentive programs are not the current focus of extension, and staff have other commitments. Rather than hiring new staff across the state, one statewide position could be designed to provide program information to landowners, other extension agents, watershed councils, and other conservation partners. This person would refer interested parties to other agencies and organizations for their funding and technical assistance.
- Private Sector: Local consultants paid by existing program funding and additional one-stop shopping funding could open opportunities for innovation within the private sector. Teams of consultants with a range of expertise would expand services, offering technical assistance in planning, design and implementation.
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Natural Resource Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Soil and Water Conservation District, or other agency: These agencies all provide financial and technical assistance to landowners. Having a single agency take the lead could offer centralized simplified service at locations throughout the state or work within other state and federal agency offices in Oregon. This has potential to coordinate statewide and ecoregional conservation goals with other agencies' conservation programs.
- Inter-agency Habitat Teams: Sometimes a landowner or a group of landowners undertake a complex project

and would like assistance from people with a variety of expertise and experiences. In these cases, an inter-agency habitat team could visit landowners on their property to offer advice and gain local knowledge about habitat conservation opportunities. The team would represent various state and federal agencies and other conservation partners, and ideally would have a mix of technical expertise, from hydrology to soils to botany to wildlife ecology. The team's visit could be coordinated with a group of neighboring landowners who share similar habitats, circumstances or goals. The team's visit would allow the agencies to assess the property's conservation opportunities, the landowner's interests, and make recommendations about incentive programs and other assistance. In addition, the team could provide technical expertise from a variety of backgrounds. This approach would require a coordinator to identify landowners, arrange site visits, synthesize the recommendations, and provide technical assistance for the landowner(s) to implement projects.

First Steps to Implement "One-Stop Shopping:"

Creating a statewide system of "one-stop shopping" will require extensive coordination and planning. In the meanwhile there are immediate steps that will assist landowners and move agencies toward the goal of centralized service.

- Provide outreach on existing programs: Create a comprehensive listing in easily understandable and usable format so landowners could more easily find programs based on their situation. Provide the listing in print and web-based media.

Work with existing clearing houses to update program listings, since information can change frequently. For example, Boise State University manages a searchable database of funding resources for watersheds (<http://efc.boisestate.edu>). The Federal Catalog of Domestic Assistance has a database of all federal programs available to state and local governments; Native American tribal governments; private profit and nonprofit organizations and institutions; specialized groups; and individuals (<http://12.46.245.173/cfda/cfda.html>). Some agencies currently maintain comprehensive summaries of their own programs. One example is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Grants-At-A-Glance" website (www.fws.gov/grants/). Other agencies provide links to various grant opportunities. Examples include Oregon Department of

Agriculture (www.oregon.gov/ODA) and NOAA Fisheries (www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/funding-opportunities/nonfunding.html).

One example of web-based technical assistance is the Missouri Conservation Assistance Guide (<http://outreach.missouri.edu/mowin/conseguide2/guide.htm>). The Missouri Extension Service has developed an interactive website that allows landowners to easily explore the range of federal and state assistance programs available for different types of conservation projects. Landowners can learn what programs might be most useful to them by selecting options on what resources they want to conserve, specific management practices, or types of assistance.

- Consolidate ODFW landowner assistance programs within one administrative unit. Look for opportunities to combine programs with similar goals or to re-organize existing staff to bring incentive programs into one administrative section. Some consolidation of landowner incentive programs has occurred within the Wildlife Division of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. As a key player in implementing this Conservation Strategy, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife needs adequate staffing to coordinate, manage, support, and track habitat conservation efforts. One option would be to fund a statewide coordinator position or organize a coordination team to ensure that funds are distributed appropriately to watershed councils, conservation districts, extension agents, weed boards, industry and commodity groups, and conservation groups.
- Work with state and federal agencies, landowners, and organizations to explore options for creating and sustaining “one-stop shopping” for incentive programs in Oregon.

7. Create a statewide registry for tracking conservation actions and programs

The state of Oregon needs to develop a comprehensive registry for tracking all habitat conservation actions and programs in Oregon on private and public lands. It is critical for the state and conservation partners to quantify and map the use and distribution of each habitat conservation program tool. This will allow agencies and conservation partners to track, analyze, and understand amounts and patterns of participation in habitat conservation actions and programs, and to target funding to address unmet conservation priorities.

In addition to monitoring at the programmatic level, the statewide registry could be useful for monitoring project success and sharing information to support adaptive management (see sidebar).

The statewide conservation registry would include a database and mapping capability so the information can be displayed and manipulated using a geographic information system. To ensure that the registry provides useful information, careful thought is needed regarding information content and access capabilities. The database and mapping tool need to be accessible online, with an interactive, user-friendly format for adding new information and the means to select and display chosen information. The availability and purpose of the database and mapping tool need to be communicated to federal, state, and local agencies and to private organizations. To maximize use of the system, reporting can be incorporated into the administration of each incentive program. In addition, when federal agencies report their program activities in Oregon for national tracking, they can provide the same information to the state.

Program delivery staff, policy makers, or conservation organizations can use the database to answer question such as:

- Where (which ecoregion, watershed, or habitat type) has a specific conservation tool been used in Oregon?
- What conservation actions have occurred on a specific priority habitat type, and where?
- How and where has a specific incentive program been implemented, and does delivery need to be more strategic in the future?
- Which landowners have participated in conservation actions in a specific watershed or county?
- What actions were taken in a certain time frame, that now need follow-up actions such as monitoring?

The information could be used to produce an annual, statewide report of all habitat conservation activities. The report could include maps showing conservation actions by incentive program, conservation tool, habitat type, and other variables. Information from the database could be used to assist in landowner recognition efforts.

The statewide registry should track the following information: conservation goal(s), habitats and species present and benefiting, number of acres / trees / culverts affected, project coordinator, contact information, project location (including watershed,

county, and ecoregion), funding sources and amounts, match and in-kind contributions, project partners, maps, and past and future phases of the project. In addition, the registry should include opportunities for participants to comment on successes and lessons learned. The registry could protect the privacy of landowners who prefer anonymity by providing an option to display only non-identifying information, and another option to track project locations only at the county or watershed level.

The statewide registry should build on existing efforts to the extent possible. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board requires grant recipients to fill out a project reporting form (www.oregon.gov/OWEB/MONITOR/OWRI.shtml) that serves as a prototype. OWEB also maintains data on voluntarily reported restoration projects. This project tracking system is a major step in the right direction, and needs to be expanded to include projects funded by other programs, projects initiated without financial assistance, more details about upland projects, and a website with user-friendly data entry, query, and mapping tools. A national tracking system is being used for many of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's programs, and may be a source of additional information.

8. Develop new incentive programs or expand existing ones to fill identified needs - New types of landowner assistance may be needed to implement some of the Conservation Strategy's actions. For example, there is currently no program that supports landowners who provide ecosystem services. This type of incentive program could assist landowners in maintaining an economically viable operation while providing resources needed for habitat conservation. Growing native plants or seeds commercially for restoration, conserving high-quality intact habitat, or allowing floodwaters to inundate fields are good options.

Two examples illustrate these concepts:

- Peter Kenagy grows vegetables, fruits, and grains on 450 acres of diverse landscape on the Willamette River near Albany. Kenagy also manages a large riparian area, plants hedgerows and crops for wildlife, and controls invasive species. In addition, he is growing native seeds and plants for wetland mitigation, upland prairie restoration, and re-vegetation of public lands. The native crops are well suited to the landscape, contribute to native wildlife and plant habitats, and contribute to the farm's income.
- The City of Albany owns and manages a canal that delivers the municipal water supply from 20 miles away, from the South Santiam River. In the 1996 flood, the canal flooded a residential area in Albany. Subsequently, the City made an arrangement with a farmer just upstream to allow his fields to flood instead of the residential area. In the event of a flood, the City will compensate the landowner for lost income in the flooded field, rather than risk flooding the residential area.

Voluntary Conservation Tools: Conclusions

Changing conditions require adaptable programs. In order to fully implement this Conservation Strategy, Oregon's agencies and conservation partners need to creatively use, adapt, expand, and create voluntary conservation tools and programs. Throughout many of the examples of voluntary conservation programs presented here, there are strong elements of local involvement and flexibility. With the framework provided by the Conservation Strategy there is a tremendous opportunity to strategically target a broad range of tools toward meeting Oregon's conservation goals.

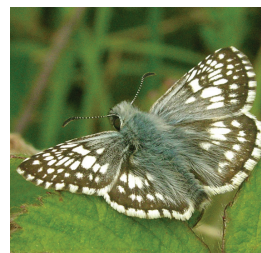


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How a Registry of Conservation Actions Can Support Monitoring

What does this registry do?

This database will document progress toward meeting Conservation Strategy goals before broad scale ecological effects are apparent. Coding and mapping different types of conservation tools, such as easements, tax incentive programs, voluntary acquisition, cost share programs, stewardship agreements, and certified agriculture and forestry operations lets state agencies and their partners graphically display the relationship between investments and conservation priorities. Then they can identify geographic or habitat gaps in implementation of the Conservation Strategy and begin to understand which techniques produce the most effective results.

A state-level monitoring program will require accessing information held by different agencies and organizations. A registry of conservation actions can be a helpful first step in organizing and sharing information. Involvement of partners in this step will help ensure cooperation with data collection, information sharing, and program implementation. Ideally, conservation projects will be monitored to demonstrate progress toward Conservation Strategy goals, and some conclusions can be drawn regarding the effects or outcomes at the site level and more broadly across the landscape.

What will be tracked? How will this information help monitoring? Many state fish and wildlife strategies are designed to implement conservation actions, which can be tracked by asking the following simple questions:

Action Question	Example	Monitoring Type	Time Frame
1. Was the conservation action implemented?	Were the trees planted?	Compliance monitoring	Short term
2. Did it work?	Did the trees survive and grow?	Effectiveness monitoring	Medium term
3. Did it have the desired effect on species and habitats?	Do the trees provide better habitat?	Validation monitoring	Long term
4. Was it the action that caused the effect	Did planting the trees provide better habitat or did climate change?	Causality	Long term

In the short term, the first question asks whether state agencies and their partners have made strategic investments in the region's natural capital at the habitat level. In the medium term, did the conservation actions work? Over the long term have desired species or habitats increased, declined or remained stable? Can this result be linked to Conservation Strategy conservation actions?

Voluntary acquisition, easements, incentives, and certification can be monitored and analyzed for cost effectiveness as well as accomplishments. For example, do forests certified by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative or the Forest Stewardship Council support more abundant and diverse wildlife? Are easements and incentives as effective as acquisition? Answers will help states be more strategic in prioritizing wildlife management tools.

The conservation registry would track the following information:

Goals	Actions	Mappable Indicators	Targets
Conserve and restore habitat through...	Tax incentives Restoration projects Easements Acquisitions Habitat improvement Certification Stewardship agreements Tracking threats	Acres, Transactions, Site-based actions in: a. priority habitat b. other habitat	Acres, Transactions, Site-based action By Date