



**OREGON**  
IS WORTH PROTECTING

2026 State Wildlife Action Plan



# CONSERVATION TOOLBOX

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH & WILDLIFE

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# WHY HAVE A CONSERVATION TOOLBOX?

Across Oregon, motivated community members are removing invasive species, replacing culverts, restoring wetlands, establishing native plants, and taking large and small actions to enhance habitat for fish and wildlife. Individuals living, visiting, or recreating across Oregon, from urban centers to the most remote wilderness parts of the state, can all take action to benefit Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and Key Habitats. Connecting people in Oregon to nature and helping Oregonians find their role in conservation is critical to the success of the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). Wildlife and habitat conservation is essential for the health of our planet and all living things, including humans: healthy wildlife and ecosystems provide the clean air, water, and food we all depend on. To be successful, conservation can't be left to a few experts or organizations—it requires support and engagement from communities throughout the state.

However, a number of challenges slow progress toward conservation success, including access to information. Individuals need to assess which aspects of a project on their own land or in their community they can do themselves, which aspects require assistance, and whom to ask for assistance.

Some challenges that a motivated individual might encounter in taking voluntary conservation action on their own land or in their community include:

- Finding information relevant to a project
- Recognizing ways to create better habitat
- Setting priorities among several conservation needs
- Obtaining permits, particularly for projects involving streams, lakes, and wetlands
- Navigating zoning restrictions and complex habitat tax deferral programs
- Selecting the appropriate plants and resources for a particular site
- Reducing opportunities for invasive species to take hold
- Accessing labor, equipment, and materials to carry out a project
- Covering the costs of a conservation project

In addition to participating in on-the-ground projects, all Oregonians and visitors can take small actions to benefit fish, wildlife, and their habitats. These small actions, including everyday decisions about what to buy and what to do, can have large impacts on wildlife. Access to information on these small actions can help protect wildlife and address **Key Conservation Issues** and can support individuals who are interested in taking the first step towards being an active partner in conservation.

Expanding public awareness of the importance of conservation is foundational to the success of the SWAP. Effective conservation outreach requires diverse perspectives, yet some communities have been unable or limited in capacity to contribute due to constraints on time, funding, or other resources. Established conservation partners continue to shape the conversation, while other voices remain underrepresented, reinforcing an echo chamber in conservation spaces. Without adequate funding or compensation for time spent reviewing outreach materials or planning documents, broader engagement and meaningful review are difficult to achieve, limiting progress. Expanding participation strengthens conservation efforts and leads to better-informed decisions for Oregon's natural resources.

The goal of this Toolbox is to support all people in Oregon interested in taking voluntary actions to help steward fish, wildlife, and their habitats in line with the SWAP by providing information, resources, and knowledge of where to ask for assistance. Many organizations exist in Oregon to support individuals who are interested in conservation in their own backyard, neighborhood, community, watershed, or private property, and can help provide guidance on how to balance fish and wildlife stewardship with their own needs on the landscape. If you're not sure where to start, please reach out to your **local ODFW office** for support getting directed to the right group.



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# CONSERVATION TOOLBOX

**Landscape Scale Conservation in Oregon**

# LANDSCAPE SCALE CONSERVATION IN OREGON

Oregon is an intersection of landscapes, cultures, and communities. From its dramatic oceans and lush forests to high desert plateaus and urban centers, Oregon offers something for everyone. Across the landscape, people share a commitment to keep Oregon a place where people and wildlife thrive. They are working to steward Oregon's ecosystems to restore and preserve Oregon's vibrant habitats for fish, wildlife, and people. Landscape-scale conservation recognizes the importance of large, interconnected land- and seascapes to maintaining biodiversity, and considers the needs of wildlife, ecological processes, and human communities holistically to achieve benefits for both the environment and people.

Oregon's ocean, geology, soil, and climate give rise to an extraordinary variety of species and habitats. The land and ocean also sustain communities through agriculture, mariculture, commercial fishing, shipping, timber, ranching, outdoor recreation, and industry. Whether you're hiking in the forest, fishing for salmon in the ocean or a river, or enjoying a city park, the health of Oregon's natural systems enhances every experience.

Urban and rural landscapes alike hold rich potential for wildlife and people. Even within city boundaries, Oregon hosts oak woodlands, grasslands, riparian areas, and forests that support everything from migrating salmon to songbirds and pollinators. The Columbia and Willamette Rivers, lifelines for both fish and people, flow through our biggest cities, connecting natural systems with daily life.

However, there are significant challenges to maintaining Oregon's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats. Expanding urbanization, infrastructure, and intensive land use are fragmenting habitats and reducing the capacity of ecosystems to provide the services that define Oregon's history, culture, and economy. While not all land conversion results in habitat loss, construction, road development, and river alteration can isolate fish and wildlife habitats and reduce biodiversity. Across the landscape, all kinds of people are in unique positions to contribute to conservation in Oregon by leveraging their specific situations and abilities from Oregon's bustling cities to its awe-inspiring natural and working lands and waters.

## **Urban Conservation**

Urban areas, while often seen as barriers to conservation, hold untapped potential. These spaces are mosaics of both built environments and natural habitat. With smart planning

and inclusive engagement, urban landscapes can be transformed into functional habitats that serve both people and wildlife—places where conservation and community meet.

Many of Oregon’s cities, like Portland, Bend, and Eugene, have made strong strides in protecting fish and wildlife through parks, greenspaces, and thoughtful land use planning. As an example, Portland is recognized nationally for its urban natural resource planning. These efforts not only support habitat and connectivity but also help connect people with nature, fostering greater awareness and support for conservation.

Many different habitats are found in urban areas, including oak woodlands and savannas, urban wetlands, native grasslands and sagebrush, bottomland hardwood forests, and coniferous forests. Urban rivers, streams, wetlands, and the surrounding areas support salmon and trout as well as other native fish, and a host of amphibians, reptiles, mammals, birds, and invertebrates.

### **Rural Conservation**

Oregon’s natural and working lands and waters, spanning forests, rangelands, wetlands, farmlands, estuaries, and nearshore waters, form the foundation of the state’s ecological health, cultural identity, and rural economy. These lands and waters support biodiversity, regulate water and air quality, store carbon, and provide food, lumber, and habitat. They are home to diverse ecosystems such as sagebrush steppe, oak savannah, and coastal estuaries, which sustain fish and wildlife populations and serve as critical buffers against the impacts of climate change. Working lands, including farms and ranches, are often managed in ways that support conservation values while contributing to local economies and food systems. Natural and working lands and waters represent vital spaces that must be protected and stewarded to maintain Oregon’s resilience and quality of life for future generations.

### **The Importance of Landscape-Scale Conservation**

Landscape-scale conservation is essential for maintaining the ecological function and connectivity of Oregon’s diverse systems, made even more vital by the workload that is often placed on our working lands. Conservation at this scale enables habitat corridors, supports wide-ranging species, and improves ecosystem services such as pollination, water infiltration, and wildfire resistance. It also ensures that natural processes, like fire regimes and water movement, operate within functioning ecological boundaries, rather than being fragmented by jurisdictional or land use divisions. Coordinated, landscape-scale efforts help build climate resilience by connecting intact habitats, supporting species

adaptation, supporting soil health, and enabling landowners and communities to implement conservation strategies that benefit both the environment and the economy. Protecting Oregon's natural and working lands through a landscape-scale lens is critical to sustaining the state's ecological integrity, cultural heritage, and climate goals.

Oregon's population is becoming increasingly varied, bringing a wide range of perspectives, traditions, and relationships to the outdoors. To truly care for Oregon's lands and waters, conservation efforts must reflect and include all communities. This means addressing disparity in the distribution of environmental burdens and ensuring that all people have access to the outdoors and the benefits like clean water and air it provides.

Historical and systemic factors have shaped what communities have access to Oregon's environmental resources. Today, we have the opportunity, and responsibility, to change that, ensuring that everyone feels a sense of belonging and stewardship in Oregon's natural spaces.

Protecting and restoring Oregon's fish, wildlife, invertebrates, plants and their habitats is essential to maintaining healthy ecosystems and preserving the natural systems that support all Oregonians.



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# CONSERVATION TOOLBOX

# ACTIONS BY URBAN AND SUBURBAN OREGONIANS

## Oregon's Urban and Suburban Landscape

Oregon's urban and suburban areas cover only around six percent of the state, but two out of three Oregonians live in metropolitan areas (65%, U.S. Census Bureau). *Urban areas* typically have high population densities and extensive infrastructure development. They often have limited green space and are dominated by impervious surfaces like roads, sidewalks, and buildings. *Suburban areas* are residential areas situated on the outskirts of cities, generally with lower human population densities than urban cores, more single-family homes, and may have greater access to green space. Exurban areas are located even farther from city centers than suburbs and are often semi-rural, surrounded by farms, ranches, forests, and public lands.

People who live in and around cities and towns have significant opportunities to contribute to restoration and stewardship activities in three different spheres of life:

1. **Backyard** - Planting native species, reducing pesticide and rodenticide use, water conservation and waterwise practices, creating wildlife habitat with features like bat boxes, snags and brush piles, and securing garbage, food, and other items that attract animals to keep wildlife safe.
2. **Neighborhood** - Collaborating with community members to live responsibly with wildlife, leaving wildlife wild, planting native species in public spaces like parks or school yards, and hosting workshops or events about supporting native species and habitats.
3. **Watershed** - Working with local governments, nonprofits or watershed councils to support restoration projects, sharing information with the community about where they live, contributing to discussions on city planning to protect wildlife habitat, and encouraging schools to engage in education about conservation and stewardship of Oregon's fish, wildlife, and their habitats.

## AROUND THE HOME

Actions you take in your own home can play a role in effective landscape conservation and reducing impacts of **Key Conservation Issues**, even in the most urban areas of the state.

### Creating backyard habitat

Residents in urban and suburban areas can support wildlife in their own backyard by planting **native gardens** and landscaping to create habitat for native species. Beyond planting native plant species, there are many other actions that can help create backyard

habitat, including selectively keeping leaves and leaf piles in place in the fall and winter rather than raking, reducing use of pesticides, leaving plant stems for cavity nesting bees, and leaving messy spaces in your landscaping, like brush piles, to allow insects to thrive.

Planting native plants helps with yard-scale climate adaptation: **native plants use less water** than traditional landscaping, do not rely on the use of pesticides and insecticides, and can help with storm-water runoff (**Key Conservation Issue: Pollution**). They also provide food for native species, cover for animals rearing their young, and can create connectivity between urban green spaces and nearby habitats so wildlife can **move more freely**. Gardening with native plants can also benefit humans – native plants can be beautiful, invite native bumblebees, butterflies, and hummingbirds into the yard, and be a source of relaxation and improved mental health.

Selecting the plants appropriate to your own backyard is very local to where you are in the state. Many different online resources can get you started, or you can consult with a local nursery or extension service to help develop your planting guide. Resources to get started gardening for wildlife:

- **Bird Alliance of Oregon/Columbia Land Trust Backyard Habitat Certification Program**
- **Bee Safe Nursery Plants**
- **Garden for Wildlife**
- **GardenSmart Oregon**
- **Bat Conservation International planting guide for bats, Portland**
- **Northwest Steelheaders Native Plant Guide**
- **WAFWA monarch butterfly gardening handout**
- **National Wildlife Federation Backyard Certification**
- **Forestry for the Birds in Western Oregon, Forest Stewards Guild**

### **Managing backyard chemical pollutants**

Urban and suburban environments can contribute to pollution in a variety of ways, including stormwater runoff, vehicle emissions, lawn chemicals, and household waste. Rainfall can wash oil, pesticides, fertilizers, and other pollutants into local waterways, harming native wildlife and aquatic habitats. Individuals can reduce these impacts by using fewer or no synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, or pesticides, properly disposing of household chemicals, maintaining vehicles to prevent leaks, and picking up pet waste. Individuals can also install rain gardens or permeable pavement to absorb and filter stormwater and redirect downspouts towards lawns or gardens instead of driveways or other paved surfaces, so that water has a chance to soak into the ground. Choosing native plants for

landscaping helps reduce the need for irrigation and chemical inputs, while also supporting local pollinators and wildlife. By taking these small but meaningful actions, urban and suburban Oregonians can play a direct role in improving air and water quality across the state.

### **Reducing light pollution**

In cities and towns, excess artificial lighting disrupts sleep, increases stress, and affects human health. Bright streetlights and commercial signage can also confuse wildlife and waste energy. Nocturnal migrants like songbirds may be attracted to lights and get entrapped, circling the lit area and wasting energy reserves, impacting their ability to reach their destination (**Key Conservation Issue: Pollution**). Individuals, businesses, and organizations can all help reduce light pollution. Keep lights low, mounting fixtures as low as possible and using the lowest wattage necessary. Use longer wavelength light sources such as amber, orange, or red LEDs. Use shielded fixtures that help keep light from being visible at a distance or from above. Turn off unnecessary lights and opt for motion sensors where artificial lighting is absolutely required. For more information:

- **Light pollution harms wildlife and ecosystems**
- **Solutions to Light Pollution**
- **Bird Alliance of Oregon's Lights Out program**
- **Xerces, Protect Pollinators by Fighting Light Pollution**

### **Conserving water**

In cities and suburbs, small changes at home can make a big difference for rivers, wetlands, and wildlife. Choose native or drought-tolerant plants to reduce outdoor watering, fix leaks promptly, and install water-efficient appliances. Collecting rainwater or directing roof runoff into rain gardens helps recharge groundwater and can reduce pollution in streams. Watering in the early morning or late evening helps prevent evaporation, and using mulch around plants and garden beds helps the soil retain moisture longer, reducing water needs. Consider replacing ornamental lawns with native ground cover or letting grass go dormant during the summer months. These actions not only conserve water but also protect fish, amphibians, and other species that depend on healthy urban watersheds.

- **How you can keep our rivers healthy**

### **Retrofitting buildings**

Cities and towns are sometimes called “novel ecosystems” because they are unlike habitats that wildlife have lived in historically. Urban and suburban settings can serve as a gauntlet of barriers to movement, as native species did not adapt to live in or navigate these novel systems. However, simple modifications to buildings can have a dramatic positive impact on the ability of wildlife to survive and move freely.

Window strikes are a common cause of injury and death for birds, especially in areas where homes are near trees or other natural habitats. Birds often can’t see glass and may fly into windows because of the reflection of sky or vegetation (**Key Conservation Issue: Barriers to Animal Movement**). To help prevent window strikes, homeowners can make windows more visible to birds by adding decals, stickers, or tape in patterns spaced two inches apart vertically and horizontally. Installing screens, using external shades, or applying bird-safe window films are also effective solutions. Turning off non-essential lights at night is also an effective way to reduce issues with artificial light.

In some cases, individuals may be able to add green roofs or living walls to homes and other buildings, providing habitat for insects and birds while improving insulation and stormwater control. Adding a small pond or water feature, planting a pollinator garden, and using bat boxes and birdhouses can also help wildlife adapt to urban spaces, especially in areas where native habitats have been lost.

- **USFWS Bird-friendly Toolkit**
- **Bird Alliance of Oregon Bird-Safe Buildings program**

### **Keeping cats indoors**

Free-ranging domestic cats kill billions of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates every year. Even when well fed, domestic cats instinctively hunt and kill wildlife. They also indirectly harm wildlife through transmission of disease, competition with native predators, and impacts to native wildlife behavior. Keeping cats indoors is also important for the health and safety of the cats. Cats let outdoors face many dangers, including traffic, parasites, poisons, aggressive animals, and even abuse by humans. Indoor cats live longer, healthier lives than cats allowed outdoors. Keeping cats indoors, or creating safe spaces like catios, helps protect birds and other wildlife while also keeping cats safe and healthy.

- **Cats Indoors, American Bird Conservancy**
- **Cats Safe at Home, Bird Alliance of Oregon**

## IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Urban greenspaces can sometimes be overlooked, but they can provide valuable habitat for native species while also providing benefits like clean air, shelter from heat, and opportunities for recreation.

### **Participating in or leading a collaborative stewardship group**

Participation in a collaborative stewardship group can be an opportunity to learn about natural habitats near you while helping to restore or conserve them. These groups bring together diverse stakeholders, such as community members, environmental organizations, land managers, schools, and local governments, to work collectively on conservation goals. Together, they might take part in activities like habitat restoration, monitoring wildlife, improving trails, or organizing educational events. Active involvement in such a group encourages open communication, inclusive decision-making, and the integration of local knowledge with scientific expertise. By contributing time, skills, and perspectives, participants help ensure that conservation efforts are effective, equitable, and reflective of community values. While each group focuses on the unique needs of their local area, the common goal is to protect and sustain the area for future generations while fostering a connection between the community and ecosystem.

### **Reducing human-wildlife conflict**

As cities expand and more people live close to natural areas, encounters with wildlife in urban areas like raccoons, coyotes, deer, and bears can become more frequent. These interactions can raise safety concerns for people, pets, and wildlife. Wildlife can be harmed when they become dependent on human-provided food or are perceived as threats due to misunderstood behavior. Harmful impacts to wildlife include outcomes such as increased disease prevalence, injuries due to vehicle collisions, or even attacks by unsupervised domestic cats and dogs. Reducing human-wildlife conflict requires both education and action across neighborhoods and communities.

One important step is to recognize the difference between observing wildlife and feeding or attracting them. Watching animals from a distance is generally safe, but providing food, intentionally or by accident, can be harmful. Giving wildlife access to unsecured trash, compost, pet food, or birdseed teaches them to associate people with food. This increases the risk of harmful interactions with people, raises the potential for disease transmission, and disrupts their natural diets.

Keeping food, garbage, and pet food secure and out of reach is one of the most effective ways to prevent issues with wildlife. This is especially important in towns and cities where animals are more likely to come in contact with people and become habituated – meaning they lose their natural fear or wariness of people. When animals find easy access to food sources provided by people, they learn to return regularly, which can lead to property damage, human safety risks, and unhealthy changes in wildlife behavior.

Species that are commonly involved in human-wildlife conflict vary across the state, and it is important to look to local resources for guidance on best practices to prevent human-wildlife conflict. In some areas like Ashland, bears are frequent visitors to neighborhoods, while in other urban areas like Portland, coyotes are the most commonly reported species involved in conflicts. Local guidance can help you prepare for the animals most likely to occur in your neighborhood. Broad recommendations to avoid human-wildlife conflict and prevent habituation of wild animals are applicable statewide, and can serve as a solid foundation for implementing more locally specific guidance:

- Don't feed pets outside. Feed your pets indoors or pick up the dish after they finish.
- Secure garbage and compost. Use bins with tight-fitting lids or secure them with a strap. Store bins in garages or sheds if possible. Avoid placing food scraps (like meat, dairy, or fruit) in uncovered compost piles.
- Remove bird feeders, or clean-up fallen birdseed regularly. Place bird feeders out of reach of other wildlife.
- Harvest fruits and vegetables as they become ripe.
- Especially in areas with bear activity, make sure trash and dumpsters are secure by using locking or screw-on lids, placing metal bars over dumpsters, or storing garbage in fully enclosed areas.
- Avoid putting trash out the night before pickup—instead, take it out as close to pick up time as possible.

These simple steps help keep wildlife safe and wild, and protect people, pets, and property.

### **Attending a local education program**

Attending a local nature education program offers an opportunity to deepen your understanding of the natural world in your own community. These programs provide hands-on experiences that connect participants with the local habitats, wildlife, and the ecological processes that sustain them. By learning about native species, watershed

health, and conservation challenges firsthand, you gain the knowledge and skills to become an effective steward of your local environment.

Local education programs often emphasize the importance of cultural and historical connections to the land, fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility for protecting these places. They also create safe spaces for community members, including families and youth, to explore nature together, build meaningful relationships, and develop a shared commitment to conservation.

## AT THE WATERSHED

At the watershed scale is where rural, suburban, and urban Oregonians come together. Actions at the watershed scale beyond your communities' boundaries, including recreating, volunteering, or engaging in community science, can often be the primary way that Oregonians directly interact with, observe, or impact wildlife and their habitats.

For more information on actions all Oregonians (urban, suburban, rural, and frontier) and visitors can take at the watershed scale on both public and private lands, see the **Actions by all Oregonians at the Watershed Scale** page.



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# ACTIONS BY RURAL OREGONIANS

## OREGON'S RURAL LANDSCAPE

Oregon's natural and working rural lands comprise 94% of the state and are home to 1 in 3 Oregonians (35% of the population), including both rural and frontier landscapes. *Rural* Oregonians (33% of the population) live in rural areas that are ten or more miles from a city with 40,000 or more people. Two percent of Oregonians live in Oregon's ten *frontier* counties, where there are fewer than six people per square mile.

Oregon's rural and frontier populations have a long history of stewardship of our natural resources and have an unparalleled opportunity to influence long-term conservation of the fish, wildlife, and habitats that make Oregon beautiful. Landowners and rural residents can engage in restoration and stewardship activities around the home, on their land, and across property boundaries at the watershed scale.

Rural and frontier residents have significant potential to contribute to restoration and stewardship activities at several scales:

1. **Around the home** - Plant native species, reduce pesticide and rodenticide use, create wildlife habitat with bat boxes, and secure garbage and other attractants from wildlife.
2. **On the land** – Adopt best management practices for working lands that are compatible with both wildlife conservation and resource use, restore native habitats, remove barriers to movement, reduce catastrophic wildlife risk, and restore incised streams.
3. **Watershed** – Work with local governments, nonprofits, or watershed councils to support restoration projects, share information with the community about where they live, and encourage schools to engage in education about conservation and stewardship of Oregon's fish, wildlife, and their habitats.

## AROUND THE HOME

As Oregon grows and changes, people and wildlife share the same spaces more often. Living close to wildlife can present challenges like property damage, safety risks, threats to pets and livestock, disease concerns, and nuisance issues like noise or dealing with animal droppings.

The good news is that many of these issues can be prevented through simple actions like securing garbage and other items that attract wildlife, avoiding feeding wildlife, protecting

pets and livestock with secure enclosures or fencing, and wildlife-proofing your home by sealing up entry points.

### **Keeping cats indoors**

Free-ranging domestic cats kill billions of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates every year. Even when well fed, domestic cats instinctively hunt and kill wildlife. They also indirectly harm wildlife through transmission of disease, competition with native predators, and impacts to native wildlife behavior. Outdoor cats in rural and frontier areas where human settlements directly abut high quality natural habitats can be especially impactful to native communities of fish and wildlife. Keeping cats indoors is also important for the health and safety of the cats. Cats let outdoors face many dangers, including traffic, parasites, poisons, aggressive animals, and even abuse by humans. Indoor cats live longer, healthier lives than cats allowed outdoors. Keeping cats indoors, or creating safe spaces like catios, helps protect birds and other wildlife while also keeping cats safe and healthy.

- **Bird Alliance Cats Safe at Home Campaign**

### **Reducing light pollution**

In rural areas, preserving natural darkness is important for wildlife and community well-being. Excessive outdoor lighting from homes, farms, and roadways can disrupt natural patterns of activity. Rural residents can help by using low-intensity, downward-facing lights, shielding lights, using motion-sensors for areas where lights are needed, and otherwise limiting nighttime lighting.

- **Solutions to Light Pollution**

### **Preventing window strikes**

Window strikes are a common cause of injury and death for birds, especially in areas where homes are near trees or other natural habitats. Birds often can't see glass and may fly into windows because of the reflection of sky or vegetation (**Key Conservation Issue: Barriers to Animal Movement**). Nocturnal migrants like songbirds may crash into windows at night due to light pollution (**Key Conservation Issue: Pollution**). To help prevent window strikes, homeowners can make windows more visible to birds by adding decals, stickers, or tape in patterns spaced two inches apart vertically and horizontally. Installing screens, using external shades, or applying bird-safe window films are also effective solutions. Turning off

non-essential lights at night is also an effective way to reduce issues with artificial light at night.

### **Managing wildlife in and around the home**

Sometimes wildlife finds its way into homes while seeking food, shelter, or warmth, especially through open doors, vents, or small gaps in walls or roofs. Managing for these unwelcome visitors around the home requires careful consideration to avoid unintended harm to wildlife and pets.

Poisons like anticoagulant rodenticides, commonly used to control rats and mice, can pose serious risks to non-target species (**Key Conservation Issue: Pollution**). These poisons can remain in an animal's system long after ingestion, meaning predators or scavengers like owls, hawks, foxes, and even pets that eat poisoned rodents can also be harmed or killed. Safer alternatives include sealing up entry points to prevent rodent access, maintaining clean yards free of food attractants, and encouraging presence of natural predators through habitat-friendly practices.

All bats in Oregon are Species of Greatest Conservation Need, reflecting their dire conservation status. However, sometimes these bats may find their way into your home, and Oregonians may need guidance on how to respond. A local **Wildlife Control Operator** can help you bat-proof your home outside of the pup-rearing season (immobile pups (baby bats) may be present in June, July, and August and need protection), or you may close up all gaps in your home >1/4" to prevent incursion when bats are not present. Installing bat boxes in your yard or surrounding area as an alternative roost site can also help to limit conflict. Bats can be a welcome addition to your yard or garden by helping control insect populations.

Additional resources on living with wildlife can help guide all Oregonians trying to keep their home and their local wildlife safe:

- **Bat Conservation International, Bats in Homes and Buildings**
- **OSU Extension, Living with Wildlife**
- **ODFW Living with Wildlife**

### **Keeping garbage and other wildlife attractants secure**

Securing food, garbage, and recycling is one of the most effective ways to prevent issues with wildlife. When animals find easy access to trash, pet food, or other human food

sources, they learn to return regularly, which can lead to property damage, safety risks, and unhealthy changes in their behavior. To help prevent this, feed pets indoors, or quickly remove any uneaten pet food. Remove or secure any other food attractants. For example, use electric fencing to protect beehives, and secure vegetable gardens and chicken coops with wildlife-proof fence. Make sure trash and dumpsters are secure by using locking or screw-on lids, placing metal bars over dumpsters, or storing garbage in fully enclosed areas. Avoid putting trash out the night before pickup—instead, take it out as close to pick up time as possible. These simple steps help keep wildlife safe and wild, and protect people, pets, and property.

## ON THE LAND

Oregon's **key habitats** can be found throughout the state on public and private lands, including on farmland, ranchland, and commercial forestlands. As just one example of the critical importance of working lands in our state, flood irrigated pastures in Lake, Harney, and Malheur counties create continentally important seasonal wetland habitats that support millions of birds on migration. Oregon's landowners work to protect these important habitats while also providing food, timber, and other resources.

Additionally, **much of Oregon's coastline is rural**. The coastal environment, including natural resources and physical geography, influences where people live, work and recreate, which, in turn, affects local and regional economies. There are extensive commercial operations in the nearshore waters of Oregon, though the majority of the nearshore is public. Examples include shellfish mariculture in estuaries, commercial harvest of clams in estuaries, and commercial fisheries that occur in our nearshore waters. These waters are home to many species of fish, wildlife, marine invertebrates, plants, and algae. These working waters of Oregon are also where commercial shipping occurs, with goods being both imported and exported from our ports.

Habitat restoration or conservation for working lands can range from simple actions like retaining snags or removing derelict fencing all the way to complex multi-year projects that require engineering design or permitting, like installing beaver dam analogs to restore streams or conducting a prescribed burn to manage forests or sagebrush. With the diversity of habitat types and landowner needs across the state, it takes time and effort for motivated landowners and land managers to determine what action best suits their property.

Broad information on each Key Habitat, limiting factors affecting those habitats, and recommended approaches can be found in the **Key Habitat** page, but oftentimes more

local information, including local comprehensive land use plans, are needed to inform an appropriate site-specific approach. Local biologists, including ODFW Habitat Biologists **local ODFW office, SWCDs, watershed councils**, and other local conservation agencies can provide support and guidance to land managers interested in managing their lands to benefit native species.

### **Support for landowners and land managers**

People own and manage land for different reasons and need a range of incentives and conservation tools to complement each landowner's unique circumstances. The State Wildlife Action Plan provides a summary of voluntary, non-regulatory approaches to conserving fish and wildlife and recommendations to further assist willing landowners to protect and restore **Key Habitats**.

Many landowners and land managers already have plans of some kind to manage their land, balancing short-, medium-, and long-term goals for habitat conservation as well as business plans. A habitat conservation and management plan developed with the assistance of local biologists can help achieve multiple goals simultaneously.

Many landowners may need **assistance** to implement certain restoration actions on the land. For example, working with local biologists can help develop site-appropriate prescriptions and find financial incentives to carefully reintroduce natural fire regimes as a part of a plan to reduce wildfire risk (**Key Conservation Issue: Disruption to Disturbance Regimes**).

### **Adopting Best Management Practices**

Managing lands for wildlife use and managing lands for resource use, like cattle grazing, crop production, or timber production, don't need to be mutually exclusive. Adopting Best Management Practices (BMPs) that support both working lands and wildlife creates a win-win approach to land stewardship. Working lands can and do provide high quality habitat for native species, and sometimes minor changes in the type or timing of activities like grazing, mowing, harvesting, or irrigation can help land managers avoid harm to wildlife and create high quality habitat. For example, maintaining adequate separation (e.g. fencing or herding) between domestic and wild species, such as domestic and wild sheep where interaction leads to negative consequences, can reduce or minimize chances of disease transmission between species. Where separation cannot be maintained, considering changing livestock species can be a viable option for larger landscapes.

Whether it's preserving grassland bird breeding habitat on a hayfield or improving fish passage in an irrigation system, BMPs demonstrate that conservation and production can go hand in hand. Contact your **local ODFW habitat biologist** or other local conservation organization for guidance on BMPs pertinent to your local area. **Voluntary conservation programs** can provide technical support, financial resources, and other incentives to support landowners who are interested in maintaining their working lands.

### **Reducing chemical pollutants**

In rural areas, pollutants can originate from agricultural runoff, septic systems, unpaved roads, and livestock operations, impacting both surface water and groundwater quality. Landowners and residents can help reduce these risks by implementing Best Management Practices such as creating buffer zones of native vegetation along streams, minimizing and timing fertilizer and pesticide applications carefully, properly managing agricultural waste], maintaining septic systems to prevent leaks and water contamination, and preventing livestock from accessing waterways. Stabilizing road surfaces and using tilling practices that minimize soil disturbance can also reduce sedimentation and nutrient loading into local streams. Smaller actions for rural Oregonians include maintaining vehicles and equipment to prevent leaks and spills and reducing or eliminating the use of rodenticides. These efforts protect drinking water supplies, improve soil health, and maintain habitat quality for fish and wildlife while supporting the long-term sustainability of working lands.

- **Manure and Nutrient Management**

### **Water conservation and stewardship**

Rural residents and landowners play a vital role in protecting Oregon's water resources. Practices like wildlife-friendly irrigation, maintaining healthy riparian buffers, control of invasive vegetation, and restoring wetlands help retain water on the land, support wildlife, and increase drought resilience. Use of cover crops and no-till practices can improve soil moisture retention and reduce the need for irrigation. Managing livestock access to streams and preventing runoff from roads or fields can protect both water quality and aquatic habitat. Whether on a farm, forest, or ranch conserving water supports both the long-term health of working lands and native ecosystems.

### **Creating defensible space**

Wildfire is a growing threat across Oregon's rural landscapes. Proactive steps can help protect homes, property, and wildlife habitat. Create defensible space around buildings by

clearing flammable vegetation, dead vegetation, dry leaves, and pine needles, thinning trees and shrubs, and removing ladder fuels that could carry fire into treetops. Create and maintain firebreaks and access routes for emergency vehicles and use fire-resistant materials for buildings and other structures. Remove invasive vegetation—many invasive plants burn easily and increase the spread and intensity of wildfire. With guidance from local experts, manage forest or rangeland fuels through practices like thinning, grazing, or prescribed burning. These actions not only reduce risk to people and property, but also support healthy, fire-adapted ecosystems that support all wildlife.

### **Managing invasive species**

**Invasive species** are species that are not native to an ecosystem and that cause economic or environmental harm. Not all non-native species are invasive, but many become a serious problem. Invasive vegetation can outcompete native plants, reducing forage and shelter for native fish and wildlife, and in many cases increasing wildfire risk. Invasive aquatic species can clog waterways, damage infrastructure, and displace native aquatic life. Invasive wildlife can aggressively compete with Oregon's native wildlife for food and habitat, damage crops, prey on native species, and spread disease. These invasions often reduce ecosystem resilience, harm local economies, and require costly management efforts to control. Landowners and land managers can take action to prevent the establishment of non-native species on their property. Reducing invasions of non-native species provides benefits to wildlife and maintains property value for resource production, including by improving livestock forage and water quality and reducing wildfire risk.

- **[OISC Info Hub](#)**:
- **[OISC Get Involved](#)**

### **Removing barriers**

Human-caused changes to the landscape (**[Key Conservation Issue: Barriers to Animal Movement](#)**) can affect the ability of fish and wildlife to move across landscapes by adding obstacles, changing their natural behavior, and increasing habitat fragmentation. Buildings, solar energy facilities, roads, fences, power lines, wind turbines, dams, and other structures can be obstacles to species movement. Certain types of land use, like crop production and recreation, can also deter or prevent movement.

Landowners can take action to improve wildlife connectivity in their own backyards, farms, forests, and ranches in a variety of ways, including replacing culverts to improve fish and wildlife passage, removing or replacing fencing to make it wildlife friendly, maintaining

riparian buffers and planting prairie strips or other corridors of native vegetation to provide cover and facilitate wildlife movement, and removing, repairing, or replacing tide gates on coastal lands to improve fish connectivity. Different animals have different needs, and local biologists can help in identifying barriers to animals moving across the land and developing a plan to address them.

### **Observing and reporting**

Residents of Oregon's most rural and frontier areas are often front-line observers of our natural systems on the landscape. This situation creates a unique opportunity for these residents to serve as sentinels for conservation. Many issues that might develop in rural areas can be most effectively handled with a rapid assessment and response once observed. Reporting observations, including disease, invasive species, or other conservation concerns to local conservation partners is essential to informing rapid responses that can reduce impacts to both natural and agricultural systems. Rapid detection is critical in situations involving wildlife diseases or other animal health issues. One example of rural ranchers on the frontline of protecting native species is the disease caused by *M. Ovi*, which can cause devastating losses to domestic livestock and native sheep alike. Monitoring, early treatment, and maintaining separation between domestic sheep and wild populations can keep animals safe.

### **Participating in or leading a collaborative stewardship group**

For decades Oregon landowners have been creating and leading collaborative stewardship groups to work with neighboring private and public lands on shared goals around watershed management, drought mitigation, juniper encroachment on grazing lands, sage grouse management, wildfire management, and more. Landowners can serve as paid or volunteer leaders in these groups or participate in a variety of other ways, including hosting tours of past habitat restoration projects or sharing insights on management planning processes.

## **AT THE WATERSHED**

At the watershed scale is where rural, suburban, and urban Oregonians come together. Actions at the watershed scale beyond your communities' boundaries, including recreating, volunteering, or engaging in community science can often be a primary way that Oregonians directly interact with, observe, or impact wildlife and their habitats.

For more information on actions all Oregonians (urban, suburban, rural, and frontier) and visitors can take at the watershed scale, see the **Actions by all Oregonians at the Watershed Scale** page.



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# CONSERVATION TOOLBOX

## ACTIONS BY ALL OREGONIANS AT THE WATERSHED SCALE

While some actions are specific to where individuals live, Oregonians and visitors alike have a direct impact on Oregon's fish, wildlife, and habitats while recreating, volunteering, or exploring beyond their immediate communities on both public and private lands. Opportunities and landscapes differ across the state, and everyone can contribute to conservation by recreating responsibly, volunteering locally, and participating in community science. These efforts help protect the state's diverse ecosystems, from high deserts and ancient forests to urban greenways and coastal estuaries.

Oregon has extensive tracts of public lands under state, federal, tribal, or local management. Some public lands are managed for multiple uses, including energy development, timber harvest, and grazing while conserving natural and cultural resources and opportunity for public access. Other public lands limit development and resource extraction, while encouraging recreation and stewardship. These public lands include a variety of protected areas including designated wilderness (e.g., the Eagle Cap Wilderness), National Wildlife Refuges (e.g., Baskett Slough), State Wildlife Areas (e.g., Summer Lake, Denman), National Park Service units (e.g., Crater Lake, John Day Fossil Beds), and marine reserves (e.g., Cape Perpetua, Otter Rock) among others. This extensive network of public lands comprises over 53% of the land base in Oregon.

In addition to public lands, many of Oregon's privately owned and managed lands are open for public use. These working lands can provide high quality habitat for native species and may be open for hiking, wildlife viewing, hunting and fishing, or other recreational opportunities. For example, many private forestland owners keep their land open to the public for recreation much of the year, though they may close it during fire season to limit risk.

Information is presented here on how individuals can help in these spaces. While visiting these areas, all Oregonians and visitors play a crucial role in maintaining healthy habitats for fish and wildlife by leaving places in as good or better condition than when they arrived. By visiting, volunteering in, and advocating for protection and conservation of these areas, Oregonians and visitors alike can support long-term habitat conservation and ecosystem health.

## Recreating responsibly

Every year, millions of Oregonians and visitors explore Oregon's coastal beaches and mountain trails, desert plateaus, and forested hills. As more people venture outdoors to enjoy Oregon's natural resources, it's more important than ever to **recreate responsibly**. By preparing and planning for your adventure appropriately, packing out what you pack in, and respecting wildlife, fish, and their habitats, you can help protect these fragile ecosystems for future generations to experience and enjoy. The way we recreate directly affects the health of these species and the natural systems they rely on. Our choices matter, whether on the trail, along the beach or riverbank, at a campsite, or deep in the backcountry.

Responsible recreation means:

- **Planning ahead and being prepared:** Know the rules, conditions, and risks where you're going. Bring necessary supplies and let someone know your plans.
- **Staying on trails and minimizing impact:** Straying off trail can destroy habitat, contribute to erosion, and spread invasive species. Stick to designated paths and minimize your footprint.
- **Packing out what you pack in:** Trash, leftover food, pet waste, and gear, even biodegradable items like fruit peels, can harm wildlife and pollute habitats.
- **Respecting wildlife and keeping your distance:** Do not approach or feed wild animals. Keep quiet to limit disturbance and observe from afar using binoculars or cameras.
- **Leashing pets:** Dogs can disturb nesting birds, chase wildlife, or trample sensitive plants. Keep dogs on a leash and out of sensitive areas.
- **Respecting seasonal closures and sensitive habitats:** Many areas are closed or restricted during certain seasons to protect nesting birds, spawning fish, or vulnerable plant communities.

## Engaging in community science

Community science is a collaborative approach where community members directly assist professional scientists with collecting information. Community-based monitoring can greatly expand our ability to collect data on sensitive fish, wildlife, and habitats in Oregon. Through community science, Oregonians contribute valuable local biological knowledge.

For example, birdwatchers and anglers understand the distribution and behavior of their favorite species, and farmers and other landowners have deep familiarity with what occurs on their land. Community-based monitoring can tap into this knowledge, increase the amount of data that can be collected, and reduce the overall costs of data collection. This also encourages Oregonians to take an active part in conservation, teaching people about their local environment, and providing a forum for feedback and discussions related to conservation actions currently underway on their land or in their neighborhood.

Community led efforts can help by filling otherwise unaddressed gaps in information on Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and Species of Greatest Information Need (SGIN) while engaging individual Oregonians directly.

By supporting and building on these efforts, scientists and Oregonians can work together to address monitoring priorities identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP).

How you can participate:

- Record your observations of species you encounter while fishing, birdwatching, gardening, recreating, or otherwise spending time outdoors. This local knowledge is invaluable for detecting trends in species presence and distribution. Apps like iNaturalist, eBird, or Bumblebee Watch can be used to document plants and animals in your neighborhood, local park, hiking trail, or elsewhere. Unsure of what type of plant or animal you saw? Report it anyway! These apps have vibrant communities that can help identify species.
- Join seasonal counts or bio-blitzes that help track the health of species such as monarch butterflies, amphibians, or native bees.
  - **Xerces Bumblebee atlas**
  - **Xerces western mussel atlas**
  - **Oregon BioBlitz**
- Collaborate with schools, watershed councils, non-profit organizations, or community groups conducting monitoring or habitat assessments.

### **Volunteering for a local conservation, fishing, or hunting organization**

Volunteering with a local conservation, fishing, or hunting organization offers meaningful ways to connect with nature while contributing to community-based stewardship. Activities might include removing invasive species like Himalayan blackberry at a local nature reserve, helping lead youth birding tours, organizing family fishing days at nearby lakes, or coordinating community science efforts to monitor species such as the northwestern pond turtle. Organizations provide volunteers with hands-on opportunities to learn about local ecosystems, build new skills, and increase their capacity to engage in

environmental protection. These experiences not only support conservation goals but also foster a deeper personal connection to the land and the people who care for it.

### **Leaving wildlife wild**

Finding a young wild animal alone does not mean it needs to be rescued. The best way to help young wild animals survive is usually to leave them where you find them. **Here's how you can help responsibly:**

- Keep pets and other domestic animals away from wildlife. Pets will stress wildlife, especially if there are young wildlife or fledgling birds in your yard. Keep dogs on a leash when recreating outside, especially during the spring when young wildlife are around. Keep cats indoors to protect them and our native wildlife.
- Give wild animals time, space, and a chance to survive on their own. Wildlife face survival challenges and sometimes need time to rest before moving on.
- If you are certain an animal is orphaned because you saw the parent animal is dead, the animal has not moved on for a day or two, or you see an animal that is injured, **call ODFW, a licensed wildlife rehabilitator** or Oregon State Police for advice.
- Don't feed wildlife. All species of wildlife have a specialized diet that coincides with seasonal changes. Access to food provided by people, whether intentional or accidental, can negatively impact wildlife health, lead to conflict with people, and in many cases has fatal consequences. It can also lead to wild animals losing their fear of people and posing a threat to human safety.
- Secure food, garbage, and recycling to keep wildlife out. Take trash out immediately before pick-up, not the night before pickup. Feed pets indoors and store their food inside.



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# CONSERVATION TOOLBOX

# GOALS AND ACTIONS FOR STATE, LOCAL, TRIBAL, AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS, NONPROFITS, AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS TO ENGAGE ALL OREGONIANS

## OREGON'S CONSERVATION PARTNERS

The habitats that support Oregon's Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) are found across a diverse and interwoven landscape spanning public and private lands and waters, working forests, farms, rangelands and urban spaces. This patchwork of land uses and ownership is managed by a broad range of partners across the state, from federal and tribal governments to local agencies, private landowners, and nonprofit organizations. Effective conservation outcomes for Species of Greatest Conservation Need and Key Habitats rely on strong communication, alignment of priorities, and shared stewardship among all Oregonians. No single organization can fully address the challenges described in the State Wildlife Action Plan alone. Collaborative leadership, sustained coordination, and collective responsibility are essential to success.

Landowners and land managers are encouraged to partner with multiple entities such as the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), watershed councils, land trusts, landowner organizations, and nonprofit conservation groups. These partnerships enable more comprehensive and innovative approaches by integrating local knowledge, technical expertise and varied funding sources.

Each sector, from State and Local Governments to Tribal Governments, the Federal Government, Nonprofits, and Community-Based Organizations each has a crucial role in the stewardship of Oregon's natural resources. Their contributions include integrating natural resource conservation and management into existing operations, conducting outreach and engaging the public, and providing guidance and support to private landowners seeking opportunities for voluntary conservation action.

Collaboration between conservation partners is vital to protect and restore natural areas and the corridors that connect them. For example, in urban areas, park and greenspace enhancement programs provide excellent opportunities for building fish and wildlife habitat while contributing to people's recreational opportunities and enhancing their quality of life. Local and regional governments and park districts are instrumental in

obtaining funding for land acquisitions, while regional partnerships support efforts to preserve open space and natural areas.

Oregon's ability to conserve its most vulnerable species and habitats depends on building relationships across agencies, sectors, and communities. Everyone has a role to play in ensuring that Oregon's fish, wildlife and their habitats are protected for generations to come.

## CONDUCTING OUTREACH, ENGAGEMENT, AND EDUCATION TO AND FOR ALL OREGONIANS

Conservation doesn't happen in a vacuum, and it is important for active conservation leaders at all levels to provide opportunities for all Oregonians to find their role in conserving or appreciating Oregon's natural resources. The conservation of natural resources impacts all people, through benefits like clean air, clean water, and healthy ecosystems.

Conservation education programs need to reach people of all ages and backgrounds across Oregon, using languages and materials they understand. These programs should also encourage real, hands-on actions and help people understand the many sides of complex conservation issues so they can make informed choices about how they want to act.

Education and outreach will be most effective when linked strategically to other actions, such as land management and habitat conservation, water management, or incentives for private landowners. Successful implementation depends on expanded involvement from a wide variety of people, agencies, and groups across the state. Effective outreach will be needed to share the goals, voluntary approaches, recommended actions, and benefits of habitat conservation to diverse Oregonians and partners. For real impact, a wide range of people and organizations need to be involved. This includes both sharing information and listening to input from all communities.

Some examples of ongoing efforts to engage Oregonians being implemented by many agencies, schools, and organizations in Oregon are:

- Interpretation presentations and educational programs, such as campground talks, nature walks, tidepool tours, skills workshops, hunter and angler education programs, games, and other children's programs and exhibits (e.g. **Tidepool Ambassador programs**)

- Informational signage, brochures, videos, and other materials at agency offices, trails, campsites, beaches, wildlife refuges, and other outdoor recreation sites
- School-sponsored learning, including outdoor camps, internships, restoration projects at schools, and classwork such as **Bird by Bird**
- Special events, such as festivals and camps (e.g., **Oregon Zoo, Oregon Museum of Science and Industry**)
- Fish and wildlife viewing programs, such as whale watching, bird watching, and elk viewing
- Information on reducing human/wildlife conflicts in urban areas, such as Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's (ODFW) **Living with Wildlife**, and the **Bird Alliance of Oregon**
- Media relationships, such as Oregon Public Broadcasting's **Oregon Field Guide**
- Booths at county fairs and other community events
- **Volunteer programs**
- Information available to landowners and managers interested in supporting wildlife on their property, such as **Know Your Forest** created by the Partnership for Forestry Education
- Community Science

### **Goal 1: Improve Coordination, Strategic Implementation, and Evaluation of Conservation Education and Outreach in Oregon**

Expanding public awareness of the importance of conservation is foundational to the success of the SWAP. Goals and Actions are presented here that are tied to the conservation actions for Urban and Suburban Oregonians, Rural Oregonians, and State and Local Agencies.

#### *Action 1.1. Build on existing efforts*

- Work with local, state, and federal parks, wildlife areas, campsites, and other recreational programs to enhance interpretation programs.
- Enhance effective partnerships with organizations whose primary mission is conservation education (e.g., non-governmental organizations, universities, agencies). Seek new conservation education partners in Oregon.
- Fold SWAP priorities into the education and outreach activities of federal, state, and local natural resource agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other education providers.
- Support environmental education programs for educators and students K-12.
- Broaden outreach materials and information available electronically to deepen public appreciation of Oregon's environment. Increase the quantity, quality, and timeliness of information available on topics including nearshore fisheries, regulations, conservation, and ecosystem management.

- Provide translation services and resources in multiple languages to ensure equitable access to information.

*Action 1.2. Market and promote opportunities to learn more about and engage in conservation in Oregon*

- Develop education materials about the SWAP. Produce outreach materials addressing SGCN and Key Habitats, Conservation Opportunity Areas, and conservation actions and issues. Inform people about opportunities to weave conservation goals into ongoing planning, greenspace acquisition and management, neighborhood projects, educational programs, restoration programs, and other activities. Provide information on human-wildlife conflict and coexistence strategies for humans and wildlife.
- Develop and expand existing partnerships for communication, education, and outreach on conservation topics and issues. Work with partners to develop new mechanisms for information development and dissemination and leverage partnerships to reach new audiences.
- Work with media partners to promote the SWAP and its implementation priorities and create messages which report successes achieved by the SWAP.

*Action 1.3. Incorporate outreach and education into other voluntary actions*

- Produce informational brochures or other educational materials for landowners on SGCN and Key Habitats
- Develop educational tools that complement on-the-ground conservation actions and management for SGCN and Key Habitats.
- Work with partners to develop a statewide awareness campaign about sections of the SWAP (e.g., work with the Oregon Invasive Species Council on invasive species messaging), which will assess SWAP needs for education and marketing. Develop other tools for public participation.

*Action 1.4. Expand outreach to populations that natural resource agencies have not historically engaged*

- Assess what communities have historically been left out of the conversation, using social science data to identify currently unknown, historically excluded, or unengaged constituent groups.
- Assess opportunities to engage with new communities more effectively. This may include providing compensation for the time and travel involved with engagement in conservation discussions, as well as broadening the venues and manner in which we hold conservation discussions. Holding discussions in areas that are more easily accessible or part of regularly attended community-led meetings, as well as

providing methods for input to be collected without travel or electronically may allow for a broader engagement and increase perspectives. Expanding participation strengthens conservation efforts and leads to better decisions for Oregon's natural resources.

- Identify barriers to participation in natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation for these groups.
- Ensure that documents are available in multiple languages that reflect the major languages spoken in a community.
- Identify constituent interests, values, and types of engagement or experiences relevant to the SWAP.
- Support community-led organizations and empower community leaders to advance conservation actions in Oregon through shared resources and knowledge/information sharing.
- Recognize the contributions of underrepresented partners to natural resource conservation.
- Develop and expand creative avenues to engage a representative array of all constituents, including the broader public. Explore technologies that support alternative methods of communication and participation, in addition to continuing to support traditional paths such as issue-specific advisory groups.

## **Goal 2: Promote Outdoor Opportunities related to the Oregon SWAP**

Outdoor recreation and outdoor tourism are an opportunity for the public to connect with Oregon's natural spaces and increase engagement in conservation. Conservation leaders should work with landowners and land managers, communities, recreational businesses, and other partners in developing projects and be sensitive to any concerns local communities may have. All proposed actions should consider and mitigate for any potential impacts to both species and habitats.

### *Action 2.1. Explore joint outdoor recreation marketing and market research opportunities*

Explore joint opportunities for cooperative marketing of key nature-based outdoor recreation themes (including wildlife watching). In addition, determine priority areas of joint need for undertaking cooperatively funded market research that will better inform the marketing and product development strategies adopted.

### *Action 2.2 Build on existing wildlife-watching programs*

Support and expand the many fish and wildlife-watching programs that currently exist. For example, work with partners at all scales, including community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and local, state, federal, and tribal governmental organizations to promote development and expansion of birding trails in Oregon. Work with

the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and other coastal partners to support existing whale watching and tide pool programs. Work with local groups to promote existing wildlife festivals.

### *Action 2.3 Provide information on responsible recreation*

Oregonians and visitors in all corners of the state have significant opportunity to impact fish, wildlife, and habitats when they enter their habitat while recreating. Provide information on best practices for recreation to minimize or mitigate impacts to fish, wildlife, and habitats.

## PROVIDING TECHNICAL GUIDANCE TO OREGONIANS FOR VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION ACTIONS

There are numerous resources available for voluntary conservation actions, whether big or small. However, particularly when projects are complex, there is not a “one-stop-shop” for technical guidance resources to identify all requirements for funding sources, permitting or regulatory agencies, engineering requirements, or science to support various practices. Establishing networks of agencies, organizations, and other groups who complete conservation and restoration activities will help facilitate shared learning and knowledge to be used for future projects.

To increase the volume of voluntary conservation actions in Oregon, focal areas include striving to make it easier to for landowners and land managers to find technical assistance for conservation projects, helping landowners and land managers prioritize conservation actions, facilitating relationships between landowners and land managers and natural resource professionals to provide continued guidance and support, and identifying potential financial resources to assist landowners and land managers in implementing projects on their lands.

### **Goal 3: Make it easier for landowners and land managers to find assistance on conservation projects.**

For complex projects involving multiple partners and funding sources, it can be difficult to receive approval from several agencies or foundations, each of which may have different goals, criteria, and standards for monitoring, completion, or success.

*Action 3.1 Expand technical assistance and site-specific restoration information for landowners and land managers. Technical support services include information to help evaluate habitat, information about best management practices, and monitoring.*

Landowners and land managers often want help in designing projects, applying for funds, obtaining permits, and conducting on-the-ground work. At present, many agencies and conservation organizations have developed brochures and web resources on invasive non-native plants, native plant guides, habitat management guidelines, and other aspects of habitat restoration. However, sorting through this information to find specific information relevant to a specific property can be overwhelming. At the same time, excellent technical information that would be useful to landowners and land managers may not be finding its way into their hands. Technical and communications staff across agencies should be urged to collaborate in this area.

Some ways to increase technical assistance to landowners include increasing coordination between incentive program staff, providing training for groups that work with landowners and land managers, developing more targeted outreach materials, providing avenues for landowners and land managers to learn from one another, helping with setting up demonstrations and workshops, and developing information about funding and incentives programs.

*Action 3.2 Build capacity among organizations to provide the technical expertise described in the above action item.*

Landowners and land managers often turn to an organization with a local presence to help implement a conservation project. Organizations with field offices provide a natural entry point for landowners and land managers to find information. Examples include the NRCS programs, ODFW, SWCDs, OSU Extension Services, watershed councils, land trusts, nonprofit conservation organizations, and university extension offices. However, there is no single organization currently providing oversight or coordination. Collaborative discussion and leadership are needed to determine the best avenues to provide technical assistance throughout the state.

Since the Dust Bowl days, SWCDs have been working directly with landowners around the country, providing technical assistance on soil erosion and water quality issues. In recent years, however, as more landowners and land managers have requested help with habitat restoration projects, SWCDs have expanded into this area. During this timeframe, watershed councils have also emerged to work one-on-one with landowners and land managers on projects, particularly those that impact the survival of native migratory fish.

However, the resources, capacity, and abilities of SWCDs and watershed councils are unequal across the state. Enhanced information sharing among agencies and organizations like SWCDs, watershed councils, and nonprofit conservation organizations will help landowners and land managers find consistent and reliable information.

**Goal 4: Help landowners and land managers plan and prioritize conservation actions on their properties, evaluate results, and build long-term relationships to help them achieve their goals.**

*Action 4.1. Help landowners and land managers develop conservation plans that stress multi-year solutions, noting which conservation needs are most pressing.*

Technical guidance should help prioritize actions and provide resources for information over time. Grants provided as incentives to landowners and land managers should be a starting point for a long-term relationship, with additional opportunities for technical assistance. Conservation projects are dynamic and require ongoing attention, and there is concern among landowners and land managers and the conservation community about the short-term nature of many grant cycles. Continuing education is one way that landowners and land managers can add to their knowledge base to inform future work even when grant cycles are complete.

Work with landowners and land managers to build trust and learn from landowners and land managers what their objectives are for their land to find where there are overlapping benefits for working lands and wildlife. Meet with landowners and land managers on their property to learn from their understanding of the land and share technical guidance that can inform conservation actions in line with their goals. Share success stories.

*Action 4.2. Improve data management, coordination, and sharing between conservation partners to support landowner-initiated conservation actions.*

Effective restoration requires collecting, analyzing, and sharing data to adapt activities to changing conditions or to better meet goals. Currently, a variety of entities collect data using different protocols, and there is a need for greater coordination to improve adaptive management throughout the state. Additionally, organizations need to increase collaboration to make the most efficient use of limited resources and reach shared goals. Some approaches include:

- Identifying critical data collection activities and associated data management efforts
- Establishing a consistent data management system

- Adopting and using standard protocols for database design, data collection, and metadata development
- Making data publicly available, with mapping tools developed to facilitate information sharing and assist landowners and land managers with use and application of data

**Goal 5: Provide information about financial incentives for conservation projects.**

Conservation projects can benefit landowners and land managers, with activities like forest thinning and invasive species removal often providing direct economic benefits to a property. There are also indirect ways for landowners and land managers to conserve habitat while also realizing economic gains. For example, conservation easements protect habitat while allowing a property to remain in private ownership. The landowner receives tax benefits in exchange for an agreement to manage the land for specific, agreed-upon conservation benefits. However, access to information on available financial support or **voluntary conservation programs** can be limiting.

*Action 5.1. Provide information about how conservation projects can enhance property values. Provide information about grants, cost sharing programs, property tax deferral, and conservation easements.*

Agencies, SWCDs, and watershed councils all have an interest in helping landowners and land managers find information on programs that enhance habitat and property values, but currently there is limited capacity to organize and distribute this information effectively. One possibility would be to investigate collaboratively funding staff position(s) throughout the state to meet this need. Tools such as the **Conservation Program Explorer** can help connect landowners and land managers with agencies, organizations, and stewardship and incentive programs available to assist with project development, funding, and implementation.

Assist landowners and land managers in finding ways to generate revenue for implementing conservation actions, such as encouraging counties and municipalities to offer tax deferral programs for habitat protection. The Wildlife Habitat Conservation and Management Program (WHCMP) offers a property tax incentive to private landowners who want to provide wildlife habitat on their properties. Under the WHCMP, landowners develop a wildlife habitat conservation and management plan. If approved, landowners then receive a special tax assessment, where property taxes are assessed at a relatively low value, similar to the tax rates that would apply if the land were being farmed or used for commercial forestry.

*Action 5.2. Encourage state agencies and organizations serving landowners and land managers to recognize and support the conservation value of working landscapes.*

Working lands and waters can provide significant value to fish and wildlife habitat, but this can be difficult to recognize and difficult to fund. Land zoning regulations and the “transfer of development rights” process can be confusing. State programs should work together to increase the options available for landowners and land managers to fund conservation and restoration actions, while maintaining all or part of the property as a working landscape. Organizations can encourage creative new ways to value ecosystem services. A broader recognition of the conservation value provided by working landscapes could result in expanded grant programs or other support for landowners.