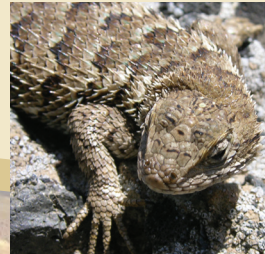




the OREGON CONSERVATION STRATEGY



Oregon
Department of
Fish and Wildlife
February 2006

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FOREWORD

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State and federal agencies, as well as other organizations, have developed and led many plans during the years to guide conservation of Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats. Most of these plans have focused on a particular species, area or natural resource. Although wildlife conservation often has been an implicit concern of these plans, many were developed primarily for other purposes.

With the creation of this Oregon Conservation Strategy, Oregon has its first overarching state strategy for conserving fish and wildlife.

The Conservation Strategy is an effort to use the best available science to create a broad vision and conceptual framework for long-term conservation of Oregon's native fish and wildlife, as well as various invertebrates and native plants. As a guide to conserving the species and habitats that have defined the nature of Oregon, this strategy can help ensure that Oregon's natural treasures are passed on to future generations. The Conservation Strategy emphasizes proactively conserving declining species and habitats to reduce the possibility of future federal or state listings. It is not a regulatory document, but instead presents issues and opportunities, and recommends voluntary actions that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of conservation in Oregon.

Healthy fish and wildlife populations require adequate habitat, which is provided in natural systems and, for many species, in landscapes managed for forestry, agriculture, range and urban uses. The goals of the Conservation Strategy are to maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations by maintaining and restoring functioning habitats, preventing declines of at-risk species, and reversing declines in these resources where possible. These goals fit well with ODFW's statutory obligation

to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

However, this is not a management plan for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Instead, it is a broad strategy for all of Oregon, offering potential roles and opportunities for residents, agencies and organizations. It incorporates information and insights from a broad range of natural resources assessments and conservation plans, supplemented by the professional expertise and practical experiences of a cross-section of Oregon's resource managers and conservation interests. It is designed to have a variety of applications both inside and outside of state government.

Most important, perhaps, it establishes the basis for a common understanding of the challenges facing Oregon's fish and wildlife, and provides a shared set of priorities for addressing the state's conservation needs. The heart of the Conservation Strategy is a blueprint for voluntary action to address the long-term needs of Oregon's fish and wildlife. The future for many species will depend on landowners' and land managers' willingness to voluntarily take action on their own to protect and improve fish and wildlife habitat.

The strategy outlined in this document considers fish and wildlife from a statewide perspective, establishing a broader context for decisions about the species and habitats in greatest need of conservation attention. It also recognizes that these issues vary in different regions, requiring conservation actions to be tailored to the unique needs of the fish, wildlife and human communities that coexist throughout Oregon. Much good work already is being done by private landowners, water-

Foreword

shed councils, conservation organizations and agencies like the many soil and water conservation districts. This strategy continues building on the solid foundation these groups have set for Oregon's conservation future.

This document is called a strategy, not a plan, because its purpose is to help people make decisions more strategically about how they can invest time and resources in fish and wildlife conservation. To that end, the Conservation Strategy focuses on a suite of species and habitats, many of them closely linked, that are in greatest need of conservation attention. The strategy provides guidance on the types of actions most likely to benefit these species and habitats, and describes a variety of non-regulatory programs that can help landowners and land managers with implementation.

For agencies and organizations working on a larger scale, the Conservation Strategy highlights specific geographic "Conservation Opportunity Areas" that provide good opportunities to address the conservation needs of high-priority habitats and species. These landscape-scale areas

include both public and private ownerships where targeted investments in conservation actions and incentives for private landowners are likely to generate the greatest long-term benefits for fish and wildlife.

The expanding footprint of human development and 150 years of landscape alteration have left much of Oregon's fish and wildlife at varying degrees of risk. For example, the song of Oregon's state bird, the western meadowlark, is rarely heard in the Willamette Valley any more. A grassland bird still common in eastern Oregon, the meadowlark is not going to be a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act any time soon. But the state bird is in trouble across a significant portion of its historic range in Oregon. Like most of Oregon's wildlife, it retains a natural resilience and will respond to improved habitat conditions. However, the meadowlark needs some conservation attention.

For the western meadowlark and dozens of other similarly vulnerable species including fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, invertebrates and plants, the Oregon Conservation Strategy offers hope for a more secure future.

Background and Purpose: *State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies and Oregon's Role*

Congress created a non-regulatory State Wildlife Grants Program to provide funding to states for proactive fish and wildlife conservation efforts. All 50 states are participating in the program. The goal of the program is to help maintain healthy fish and wildlife populations, thereby avoiding the costly and controversial regulations that accompany listing of species under the federal Endangered Species Act. Priority must be placed on two major categories: (1) species that are "low and declining" and (2) species that "are indicative of the diversity and health of wildlife of the state." To receive State Wildlife Grant funds, each state fish and wildlife agency must develop a "comprehensive wildlife conservation strategy" that contains eight elements addressing species, habitats, problems, conservation actions, monitoring, strategy review, interagency coordination, and public involvement. State strategies must be developed and submitted to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for approval by October 1, 2005.

All state strategies must be approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Guidance provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service directed states to consider wildlife in a broader sense that includes fish, amphib-

ians, reptiles, mammals, birds, and invertebrates such as butterflies. States were also encouraged to consider native plants. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is the state agency with statutory authority to manage fish and wildlife populations. Other state and federal agencies have jurisdiction over other resources. For example, Oregon Department of Agriculture manages native plant conservation and has responsibility for noxious weeds and insect pests. This Conservation Strategy is intended to be a broad framework for all of Oregon. Therefore, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has coordinated with many agencies in the development of this Conservation Strategy. Priority actions identified in the Conservation Strategy will require continued coordination to build partnerships across jurisdictions and management authorities.

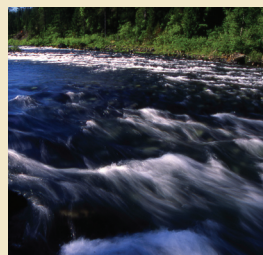


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Most readers will focus their attention on a particular topic, place, or concern addressed by this document, and perhaps find themselves drawn into a broader exploration.

For landowners and land managers who want to improve conditions for at-risk fish and wildlife, it provides a menu of conservation actions.

For agencies and organizations interested in making their conservation investments more effective and efficient, it is a blueprint for more strategic decision-making.

For citizens who value fish and wildlife, and the diversity of Oregon's natural world, it offers insights into complex issues and a doorway into a world where every person can contribute to conservation of Oregon's natural heritage.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife hopes you will participate in this exciting work that celebrates Oregon's heritage and shapes its conservation future.



Marla Rae
Chair, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission

Organization of this Document

SECTION A

Strategy for Action and First Steps

This is the heart of the Conservation Strategy. It describes a broad, strategic approach to the conservation issues facing Oregon. It highlights many large-scale actions that Oregonians can take to conserve fish and wildlife. It also describes how the Conservation Strategy can be implemented and explores some possible funding sources.

SECTION B

Stepping Down from Statewide to Local: Conservation Review and Technical Information

This provides a greater level of detail about key statewide conservation issues, Oregon's ecoregions, Strategy Habitats, and Strategy Species. The Statewide Perspectives and Approaches chapter also describes the Voluntary Conservation Tools available to landowners and the Conservation Strategy's approach to monitoring.

SECTION C

Supporting Information (Appendices)

This provides additional information in appendix form and includes a discussion of Oregon's existing planning and regulatory framework; a statewide list of Strategy Species; a summary of financial incentive programs for landowners; descriptions of the methods used to determine Strategy Species, Strategy Habitats and Conservation Opportunity Areas; and select references.

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