

the OREGON CONSERVATION STRATEGY



Oregon
Department of
Fish and Wildlife
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>i</i>	A Place for People and Wildlife: Conservation in Urban Areas Summary	19
<i>Organization of this Document</i>	<i>iii</i>	Where to Start?	21
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>iv</i>	■ Strategic Opportunism: Every Acre Counts	21
		■ Prioritizing Landscapes: Conservation Opportunity Areas	21
		How to Get the Job Done: Conservation Tools	23
		■ Volunteer Conservation is the Conservation Strategy's Primary Focus	23
		■ Building upon Success: Some Recommendations for Improving Current Incentive Programs	24
		■ Recommendations for New or Expanded Voluntary Conservation Tools	24
		Monitoring for Success: Recommendations	27
		Conservation Strategy Implementation and Review	29
		■ Goals for Conservation Strategy Implementation	29
		■ First Steps in Achieving Those Goals	29
		■ Funding the Conservation Strategy	32
		■ Conservation Strategy Review and Revision	32
		Conclusions: Stepping into the Future	33
SECTION A			
<i>A Strategy for Action: Summary and First Steps</i>			
Oregon's Unique Natural Heritage	1		
Pulling Together to Make a Difference: a Collaborative Approach to Conservation	3		
■ A Solid Foundation: Oregon's Existing Planning, Regulatory, and Voluntary Framework	3		
■ Oregon's Conservation Strategy: What It Is and What It Can Do	3		
■ Oregon's Conservation Strategy: What it is Not	4		
■ The National Approach	4		
■ Oregon's Collaborative Approach	6		
Statewide Conservation Issues	7		
■ Six Key Conservation Issues, Goals and Actions	7		
A Summary of Strategy Habitats and Species	11		
■ The "Filter" Approach to Conservation Planning	11		
■ A "Big-Picture" View of Strategy Habitats	11		
■ A "Big-Picture" View of Strategy Species	12		
An Ecoregional Approach to Conservation	15		
■ Blue Mountains Summary	16		
■ Coast Range Summary	16		
■ Columbia Plateau Summary	16		
■ East Cascades Summary	17		
■ Klamath Mountains Summary	17		
■ Northern Basin and Range Summary	17		
■ West Cascades Summary	18		
■ Willamette Valley Summary	18		

■ Issue 5: Water Quality and Quantity	59
■ Issue 6: Institutional Barriers to Voluntary Conservation	63
A Place for People and Wildlife	65
How to Get the Job Done: Voluntary Conservation Tools	70
■ Types of Voluntary Conservation Tools	70
■ Building on Success: Some Recommendations for Improving Current Incentive Programs	73
A. Ten Opportunities to Help Prioritize Efforts and Leverage Resources	74
B. Federal Funding Sources: Some New Opportunities for Oregon	77
C. Some Other Recommendations for Improving Existing Voluntary Conservation Tools	78
■ Recommendations for New or Expanded Voluntary Conservation Tools	79
■ Voluntary Conservation Tools: Conclusions	88
Engaging Oregonians in Conservation	90
■ Strategy Outreach and Conservation Education	90
■ Fish and Wildlife-Based Tourism	93
■ “Human Dimensions” Research	97
Monitoring for Success	98
Monitoring in Oregon: Some “Frequently Asked Questions”	98
Specific Recommendations and First Steps for Monitoring in Support of the Conservation Strategy	101
■ Fish and Wildlife Monitoring Team	101
■ Portals of information on the web	102
■ Citizen-based monitoring is central to Conservation Strategy monitoring	102
■ Charting conservation actions	102
■ Strengthen data management capacities	102
■ Track and report results	103
Current Ongoing Efforts to Monitor Species and Habitats in Oregon	103
Overview	103
■ Major Plans and Initiatives that Identify Priorities for Monitoring Oregon’s Natural Resources	103
■ Current Major Efforts, Gaps, and Priorities	105

<i>Chapter: Ecoregions</i>	
Introduction and Overview	111
Blue Mountains	112
Coast Range	133
Columbia Plateau	160
East Cascades	172
Klamath Mountains	190
Northern Basin and Range	204
West Cascades	222
Willamette Valley	234
Connected by Water: the Columbia River	254

<i>Chapter: Habitats</i>	
Introduction and Overview	257
Aspen woodlands	297
Coastal dunes	261
Estuaries	262
Freshwater aquatic habitats	265
Grasslands	270
Late successional conifer forests	275
Oak woodlands	279
Ponderosa pine woodlands	282
Riparian habitats	287
Sagebrush steppe and shrublands	294
Wetlands	298
Habitat Data Gaps	305
Specialized and Local Habitats	308

<i>Chapter: Species</i>	
Introduction and Overview	313
Why Conserve Plants and Invertebrates?	313
What about Extirpated Species?	316
Conservation Summaries for Strategy Species	319
■ Mammals	320
■ Birds	324
■ Reptiles	336
■ Frogs	337
■ Fish	341
■ Invertebrates	350
■ Plants	357
■ Species Data Gaps: Research and Monitoring Needs	367
■ Animal Concentrations	370
■ Naturally Occurring Fish and Wildlife Diseases	372

SECTION C

Appendices: Supporting Information

Appendix I. Statewide Summary of Strategy Species	a:2
Appendix II Existing Planning and Regulatory Framework for Conservation	a:13
Appendix III. Existing Voluntary Conservation Programs	a:26
Appendix IV. Methods	a:34
Appendix V. List of References	a:41
Appendix VI. A Brief Look at Global Warming	a:48



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Contact Information

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
3406 Cherry Avenue, NE
Salem, Oregon 97303-4924
Web: www.dfw.state.or.us

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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.

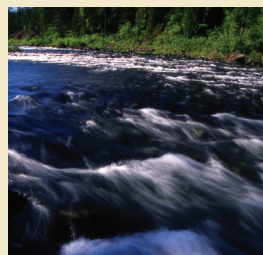


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Most readers will focus their attention on a particular topic, place, or concern addressed by this document, and perhaps find themselves drawn into a broader exploration.

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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Technical Advisory Committee

John Alexander, *Klamath Bird Observatory*; Scott Black, *Xerces Society*; Bruce Coblentz, *OSU Department of Fisheries and Wildlife*; Char Corkran, *consulting ecologist*; Dave Eshbaugh, *Audubon Oregon*; Aaron Holmes, *Point Reyes Bird Observatory*; Matt Hunter, *consulting ecologist*; Larry Irwin, *National Council for Air and Stream Improvement, Inc.*; Esther Lev, *The Wetlands Conservancy*; Dave Marshall, *consulting ecologist*; Bob Mason, *OSU Department of Zoology*; Andy Moldenke, *OSU Department of Botany and Plant Pathology*; Patricia Ormsbee, *U.S. Forest Service*; Bob Riggs, *Boise Cascade*; Mike Rochelle, *Weyerhaeuser, Inc.*; Al Smith, *consulting ecologist*; Bob Storm, *OSU Zoology (retired)*; Andy Warren, *OSU Department of Zoology graduate program*; Andrew Yost, *Oregon Department of Forestry*; Steve Zack, *Wildlife Conservation Society*.

ODFW staff

Ann Kreager, Ann Snyder, Bill Tinniswood, Bill Castillo, Bill Kinyoun, Bob Hooton, Brad Bales, Brad Wurfel, Brett Weidoff, Brian Ferry, Bruce Campbell, Bruce Eddy, Bruce McIntosh, Cedric Cooney, Charlie Bruce,

Charlie Corrarino, Chip Dale, Chris Carey, Chris Wheaton, Christian Hagen, Clair Kunkel, Clayton Barber, Colin Gillin, Craig Foster, Cristen Don, Cidney Howard, Darren Bruning, Dave Budeau, Dave Enfield, Dave Fox, Dave Loomis, DeWaine Jackson, Dick Caldwell, Don VandeBergh, Doug Cottam, Ed Bowles, George Keister, Glen Ardt, Harry Upton, Herman Biederbeck, Jeff Boechler, Jeff Rodgers, Jim Muck, Joe Sheahan, Jon Bowers, Jon Germond, Katie Thiel, Keith Braun, Keith Kohl, Kevin Blakely, Kevin Goodson, Kim Jones, Larry Cooper, Larry Pecenka, Liz Bueffel, Maggie Sommer, Mark Kirsch, Mark Nebeker, Marnie Albriten, Mary Hanson, Michael Arthur, Michael Pope, Mike Grey, Miriam Hulst, Nancy Breuner, Nancy Taylor, Pete Test, Randy Robart, Ray Perkins, Rick Boatner, Rick Kepler, Rick Klumph, Rod French, Roger Smith, Ron Anglin, Ron Garner, Rosemary Stussy, Russ Morgan, Stephanie Gunckel, Steve Denney, Steve Jacobs, Steve Marx, Steve Mamoyac, Steve Williams, Stuart Love, Sue Knapp, Susan Barnes, Tami Wagner, Tim Unterwegner, Tim Walters, Tina Edwards, Tod Lum, Todd Alsbury, Tom Collom, Tom Thornton, Tom Stahl, Tony Amandi, Tracy Hulett, Travis Aerni, Vic Coggins, Walt Van Dyke, Wendy Foltz, Will High.

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