

EAST CASCADES OAK PARTNERSHIP



Credit: OWEB



Partnership Overview

The East Cascades Oak Partnership is comprised of people who know and love the Columbia River Gorge and the East Cascades as a place with thriving wildlife, a vibrant natural resource economy, and incredible beauty. The partnership recognizes the importance of Oregon white oak systems to communities and to the well-being of hundreds of species of plants and wildlife. The partnership collaborates to leverage resources, share knowledge, and implement conservation strategies that will help protect vulnerable oak habitats, encouraging more reciprocal human interactions with these important resources and improving outcomes for people, oaks, and wildlife.

In July 2022, the East Cascades Oak Partnership was awarded funding through the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) grant program. A FIP is an OWEB investment that addresses a Board-identified priority of significance to the state; achieves clear and measurable ecological outcomes; uses integrated and results-oriented approaches as identified through a strategic action plan; and is implemented by a high-performing partnership.

Initiatives are eligible for up to six years of OWEB funding. For the 2021-23 biennium, OWEB awarded \$1,400,000. When combined with investments from 2021 to 2027, the anticipated total investment is approximately \$7,521,000.

Goals by 2027:

- Protect 15,000 acres within priority areas and corridors.
- Reduce fuel loads on 17,000 acres.
- Improve native plant populations in priority areas (to be determined).

Ecological Outcomes

The oak landscape is intact and connected, and therefore more resilient to climate change, fire and other disturbances.

Diversity in oak system structure and species persists.

Mature oak habitat features are retained and recruited.

Oaks are released from conifer encroachment.

Core Implementing Partners

Columbia Land Trust

Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs

Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust

Natural Resource Conservation Service

Oregon Department of Forestry

Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife

Oregon Parks and Recreation

Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture

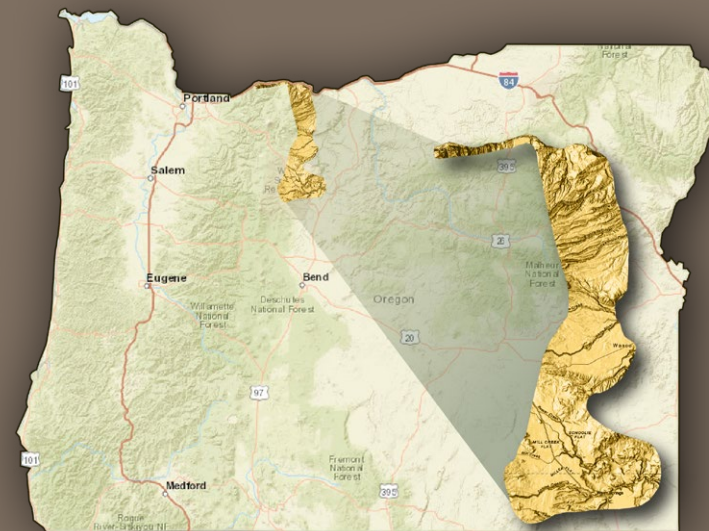
US Forest Service – Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

US Forest Service – Mt. Hood National Forest

Community Outcomes

Human interactions within the oak landscape are reciprocal.

Strategies are implemented in cooperation with community partners.



Strategy 1:

Restore oak systems to address the effects of fire suppression and conifer encroachment.

Conservation Actions

- Establish and distribute BMPs and fill key knowledge gaps to improve oak release and prescribed fire management outcomes.
- Advocate for oak systems experiencing fir encroachment in existing fuels reduction programs funding allocations/expand partner capacity.
- Design and implement a prescribed fire program that builds regional capacity and competency for prescribed fire and removes barriers to implementation.
- Protect high priority oak systems experiencing encroachment to facilitate release and ensure conservation management.

Near-term Ecological Outcomes

- Increased awareness about how fir encroachment and heavy fuels increase wildfire risk.
- Increased number of trained contract and volunteer prescribed fire practitioners.

Longer-term Ecological Outcomes

- People value the ecological benefit of maintaining habitat variety (forest, woodland, savanna).
- Landowners and land managers have access to trained contractors.
- Policies support fir encroachment removal.
- Increased use of prescribed fire, where appropriate.

Strategy 2:

Restore and steward oak systems to improve grazing impacts.

Conservation Actions

- Prevent expansion of grazing into sensitive or uniquely intact native oak systems using land protection tools.
- Establish, disseminate and incentivize Best Management Practices (BMPs) to support positive outcomes for both ranching and oak systems.

Near-term Ecological Outcomes

- Ranchers have the information and resources to implement BMPs.
- Ranchers and partners have knowledge of areas to avoid grazing (key or unique oak systems).

Longer-term Ecological Outcomes

- The ecological condition of oak systems is improved on grazed lands.
- Grazing lands provide connectivity with conserved lands.



Credit: East Cascades Oak Partnership

Strategy 3:

Identify priority areas to protect and account for rural residential development.

Conservation Actions

- Protect sensitive and uniquely intact oak systems from development.
- Maintain connectivity using a variety of incentive and land protection tools.
- Establish and distribute best management practices (BMPs) to support positive outcomes for private landowner management goals and oak systems.

Near-term Ecological Outcomes

- Data and information about high priority areas for protection and conservation.
- Local leaders, landowners, and planners understand the value of oak systems.

Longer-term Ecological Outcomes

- Rural residential developments are designed to avoid impacts to oak systems or conversion of oak habitat systems.
- Large parcels and working lands are protected from fragmentation and development.



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