

Focused Investment Partnerships

Priority Theme – January 2015

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Theme: CLOSED BASIN WETLANDS/SONEC

Suggested priority submissions: Harney Basin wetlands; SONEC basin floodplains
Priority submissions can be found here: www.oregon.gov/OWEB/Pages/FIP-Proposed-Priorities.aspx

Theme Summary

Significance to the state

- SONEC wetlands have international importance as habitat for migratory birds, supporting 70 percent of the Pacific Flyway's waterfowl annually during spring migration. This migration includes 20 percent of the world's white-faced ibises, 50 percent of Ross's and greater white-fronted geese, 18 percent of mallards and redheads, and 90 percent of lesser sandhill cranes, among many other species.
- Instream habitats in this region are important for numerous native fish species, including the ESA-listed Warner and Modoc sucker fish
- The SONEC region also includes extensive sage-steppe habitat that supports an extensive, vibrant ranching community that depends on the ecological health of that sage-steppe habitat.
- SONEC sage-steppe and wetland habitats are also critical for brooding and rearing of sage-grouse in the region.
- Conservation work in this region to date has supported new, important cooperative efforts between the ranching community, the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, and other local, state and non-profit partners. In addition, the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge is a critical recreational and economic resource for Harney County.

Geographical Options

Range from the Harney Basin (including the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge) to the entire Oregon portion of the SONEC region (Southern Oregon Northeastern California)

Habitat/natural resource issue of concern

- Wetland and floodplain habitat
- Migratory birds and sage-grouse
- Native fish species, including bull trout, Warner and Modoc sucker fish, redband trout, tui chub, and lamprey

Limiting factors

- Loss and degradation of wetlands and stream habitat
- Conversion from flood to sprinkler irrigation
- Invasive carp
- Invasive plant species

Ecological and social outcomes

- Acres of increased wetlands and floodplain habitat via acquisition and restoration
- Measured decrease in invasive carp populations
- Reduction of invasive plant species
- Percent increased landowner recruitment
- Coordination with landowners on conservation efforts and irrigation practices
- Instream water transfers to increase flows and support native fish species

Expert Group Input*

- SONEC/Harney wetlands are of statewide and national significance due to the importance of the Pacific flyway. The combination of different wetland types is important throughout the year for the different stages of feeding and breeding of birds.
- In 2012 a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) was adopted by a diverse group of stakeholders to document the hydrology and balance uses in the region. Harney County working group has been convening for seven years to identify and begin to address the threats to the system.
- High conservation priorities include awareness and implementation of flood irrigation practices, management of invasive carp, and water resources management relative to climate change, native fish species recovery, and maintaining wetlands diversity.
- SONEC could focus on increasing acreage of wetlands through restoration and water management; while Harney wetlands could focus on restoring wetlands through water management and invasive carp control.
- Flood irrigation and opportunities to purchase additional wetlands can increase wetland acreage and increase resiliency/longevity of habitat towards climate change. FIP funds can be used to “fill the gap” to create resilient systems to buffer against climate change that is predicted to reduce water availability and increase temperatures over time.
- Investments can be made at a scale that will make a measureable difference. However, additional funding will be necessary, and can continue to be secured through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) and other federal programs, if SONEC/Harney is adopted as an OWEB priority.

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Theme: CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Suggested priority submissions: Assessments of Water Utilities and Irrigation Districts; Fish and Wildlife Habitat Connectivity; Fish Passage Restoration

Other cross-cutting themes identified by staff based on reviews of priority submissions: Climate change, including water-management needs

Priority submissions can be found here: www.oregon.gov/OWEB/Pages/FIP-Proposed-Priorities.aspx

Theme Summary

Several cross-cutting themes were either submitted as suggested priorities or identified by staff as common themes across multiple submissions described in other theme areas. In some cases—for example, fish and wildlife habitat connectivity and climate change—the concepts are potentially relevant and integral to all priority theme areas. In other cases—for example, fish passage restoration and water management—the ideas are focused on actions that can be taken in many of the priority theme areas to address limiting factors to habitats and/or species of concern.

Below are brief summaries of each of the five cross-cutting themes listed above. At the January Board meeting, staff will request guidance from the Board about an approach to address the themes that are cross-cutting in nature.

Cross-Cutting Theme #1: Assessments of Water Utilities and Irrigation Districts

Significance to the state: Efficient water conveyance systems are an opportunity to pursue innovative water conservation, which can lead to increased instream flows and fish passage benefitting native resident and anadromous fish species

Geographical Options: Statewide

Habitat/natural resource issue of concern: Aquatic ecosystems with water-quantity deficiencies

Limiting factors: Funding, landowner recruitment and coordination

Ecological and social outcomes: Instream habitat restoration for native fish species; strengthen rural agricultural economies and communities; in some cases, creation of opportunities for renewable energy production

Cross-Cutting Theme #2: Fish and Wildlife Habitat Connectivity

Significance to the state: Critical component of the Oregon Conservation Strategy

Geographical Options: Statewide

Habitat/natural resource issue of concern: Fish passage and wildlife habitat connectivity

Limiting factors: Land-use development, road construction, stream degradation, small dams, irrigation diversions

Ecological and social outcomes: Ensure the continuation of ecological and evolutionary processes; aid in the recovery of listed species and stabilize existing populations

Cross-Cutting Theme #3: Fish Passage Restoration

Significance to the state: Fish passage addresses 18 ESA-listed fish species throughout the state of Oregon

Geographical Options: Statewide

Habitat/natural resource issue of concern: Fragmented aquatic habitats that have isolated specific populations of native fish

Limiting factors: Fragmented habitat and degraded natural stream channel processes through channel constricting structures, such as fish passage barriers, dams, etc.

Ecological and social outcomes: Restore spatial and temporal connectivity of streams within and between watersheds, permitting fish to access critical areas for the development of various life stages

Cross-Cutting Theme #4: Climate Change, including Water Resources Management Needs

Significance to the state: Conservation of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems statewide; balance demands on water resources for ecosystem and economic needs

Geographical Options: Statewide, with particular attention to central and eastern Oregon

Habitat/natural resource issue of concern: Aquatic habitats, sustainable management of Oregon's water resources

Limiting factors: Shifting hydrologic regimes due to climate change, water availability in key habitat areas where water is needed for agriculture as well as fish and wildlife.

Ecological and social outcomes: Development of a statewide, long-term water conservation strategy; restoration of cold-water springs; protection of groundwater sources; promote hydrologic connectivity among rivers, lakes, wetlands, and groundwater; develop climate change resiliency, particularly relative to water resources

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Theme: DESCHUTES AQUATIC HABITAT

Suggested priority submissions: Lower Deschutes Salmon and Steelhead Stronghold; Salmon and Steelhead Reintroduction in the Deschutes River basin; Upper Deschutes: Conserving a Unique Spring-fed River System

Priority submissions can be found here: www.oregon.gov/OWEB/Pages/FIP-Proposed-Priorities.aspx

Theme Summary

Significance to the state

- The Deschutes River is one of Oregon's most iconic river systems. As the state's second largest watershed, it supports an extraordinary diversity of habitat types, networks of tributary streams, wetlands, and off-channel rearing habitats, which historically generated some of the largest salmon and steelhead runs in the Columbia Basin.
- In addition to its key role in the state-supported re-introduction of anadromous fish, the health of the Deschutes affects the state's ability to recover federally-listed mid-Columbia steelhead. The Deschutes also maintains critical populations of spring and fall Chinook.
- The restoration of salmon and steelhead runs, including Suttle Lake's unique sockeye run, will be a major achievement for the state.
- The Lower Deschutes is a destination for hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing and river recreation, and the Deschutes Basin maintains Federal Wild and Scenic River and State Scenic Waterway designations.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently listed the Oregon spotted frog, which inhabits the Deschutes basin, as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Geographical options

Ranges from the entire Deschutes Basin to the Upper Deschutes basin (including the Metolius and Crooked Rivers and Whychus Creek), to the Lower Deschutes basin (including Bakeoven and Buckhollow Creeks and the White River)

Habitat/natural resource issue of concern

- Native resident and anadromous fish species, including: steelhead (Threatened), Chinook salmon, redband trout, bull trout, and Pacific lamprey
- Freshwater flows, including water quantity and quality (temperature)
- The Oregon spotted frog, recently listed as Threatened under the federal ESA

Limiting factors

- Fish passage barriers and unscreened diversions
- Water quantity and quality (streamflow, water temperatures, sedimentation, inefficient irrigation systems, other)
- Fragmented aquatic habitats and loss of connectivity
- Stream and floodplain habitat
- Land-use changes and competing land uses
- Invasive plant species
- Climate change
- The upper Deschutes' altered flow regime impacts the geomorphology and biological integrity of the river

Ecological and social outcomes

- Reduce habitat fragmentation and improve connectivity
- Improve water quality (e.g., temperature, macro-invertebrate population, sedimentation)
- Increase instream flows
- Improve fish passage
- Restore riparian and upland habitat
- Increase landscape-level planning and implementation
- Balance ecosystem needs and socioeconomic demands, such as agriculture, ranching, recreation and urban and rural development

Expert Group Input*

- Experts agreed that the Deschutes Basin has statewide significance because of the high potential for healthy populations of anadromous fish.
- The Deschutes Basin experiences much demand from development and industry; however, these connections also create opportunities to rally public support for conservation and showcase strong management in achieving economic and ecosystem balance.
- With a substantial investment having been made in the basin, experts thought it is important to keep momentum going in order to achieve anadromous fish habitat condition goals. Experts observed that the Deschutes Basin has received more than \$300M in state, federal, mitigation, and private funding, but a FIP Priority could provide much needed additional funding to achieve restoration goals and make the difference moving forward.
- Expert's discussion of potential Deschutes Priority scales:
 - Some experts indicated that both the upper or lower Deschutes provide important, but different spawning and rearing habitats for salmonids.
 - Experts cited an urgent restoration priority to increase instream flows and address water quality issues in the Upper Deschutes. However, they noted the value in a priority that ties upper and lower basin restoration goals together, especially as fish passage is restored over time. Experts noted the current strong partnerships in place in the basin.

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Theme: DRYSIDE FORESTS

Suggested priority submissions: Restoration of Dry-Mixed Conifer Forests
Priority submissions can be found here: www.oregon.gov/OWEB/Pages/FIP-Proposed-Priorities.aspx

Theme Summary

Significance to the state

- Ponderosa pine and dry mixed conifer forests cover vast acreages in Oregon, including nearly half of all forests in Oregon and 25 percent of the state's land base.
- Dryside forests support over 800 forest-dependent species, many of which rely specifically on this habitat type.
- Dryside forests provide habitat for a wide diversity of bird species, including imperiled species such as: the northern spotted owl, white-headed woodpeckers, northern goshawks, and Pacific fisher.
- These forests also support freshwater ecosystems that host a range of listed native resident and anadromous fish species, including ESA-listed coho salmon, bull trout, and Oregon spotted frogs, as well as Chinook salmon, steelhead, redband trout, and freshwater mollusks.
- Dryside forests have a legacy of supporting Oregon rural communities through local industry and recreational opportunities for local residents and tourists.
- Ponderosa pine and dry conifer forests are an important part of Oregon's forest ecosystems.

Geographical Options

Dry, fire adapted pine and mixed conifer forests east of the Cascade Mountains, such as in the Blue Mountain Range, and in southwest Oregon's Rogue watershed

Habitat/natural resource issue of concern

- Ponderosa pine and dry mixed conifer forests
- Native bird species, including: white-headed woodpeckers, northern goshawks, northern spotted owl, and Pacific fisher
- Native fish species, including: coho and chinook salmon, redband and bull trout, Oregon spotted frogs, steelhead, endemic freshwater mollusks

Limiting factors

- Catastrophic fires as a result of fire-adapted forests
- Densification of these forests due to altered fire regimes
- Vulnerability to insects and disease

Ecological and social outcomes

- Restore resiliency and forest health
- Restore forest structure and species composition to be within the range of natural variation
- Provide opportunities for local communities to be involved in forest management through active partnerships
- Increased work volume to the wood products industry
- Increased landscape-level planning and implementation

Expert Group Input*

- Experts noted that additional funds are needed for a variety of activities to supplement federal funding that is now focused on vegetation management. Federal partners (USFS, NRCS) are actively working in this theme area on both federal and private lands.
- Experts pointed out the connection between a dryside forest investment and associated aquatic outcomes, such as fish habitat and erosion management.
- There is great potential to dovetail existing Forest Collaboratives with FIP funding to increase the scale of investments and accelerate restoration towards this theme area.
- Experts observed that the scale of an all-inclusive dryside forests Priority could be too large. Delineating a smaller area could be advantageous where it overlaps with funding and partnership opportunities. For example, the Blue Mountains and southwest Oregon fit these criteria because there is already substantial investment and have been identified by several state and federal agencies as top priority forest systems for coordinated management.
- Some criteria the Board could consider in identifying a geographic scope for a potential Priority area: past OWEB investments, funding leverage opportunities, partnership opportunities, overlay with climate change/fire risk and sensitive resources/species status, and social/economic opportunities.

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Theme: GRANDE RONDE NATIVE FISH

Suggested priority submissions: Upper Grande Ronde Native Fish Habitat
Priority submissions can be found here: www.oregon.gov/OWEB/Pages/FIP-Proposed-Priorities.aspx

Theme Summary

Significance to the state

- This theme addresses habitat restoration for spring Chinook and steelhead, which aligns with Oregon's Native Fish Conservation Policy and Oregon Conservation Strategy.
- Chinook and steelhead have significance to tribes in the region.
- Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead stocks are listed under the federal ESA. The Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion calls for habitat improvements in tributaries, including the Grande Ronde.
- Work is underway in the basin that incorporates numerous partners, including leaders from local government and tribes.
- Anadromous fish species in this region support a strong recreational tourism economy for local communities.

Geographical Options

Range from the entire Upper Grande Ronde Basin to individual watersheds, including Catherine Creek, the Imnaha River, Joseph Creek, and the Willowa River

Habitat/natural resource issue of concern

Native resident and anadromous fish species: spring Chinook, steelhead, and bull trout

Limiting factors

- Decreased water quantity and quality
- Water temperature
- Excessive sedimentation
- Lack/degradation of stream habitat
- Degraded riparian
- Fish passage

Ecological and social outcomes

- Increased instream habitat complexity
- Improved floodplain connectivity and riparian enhancement
- Increased side channel habitat
- Increased instream flow
- Improved fish passage
- Coordinated restoration efforts
- Restoration work supports job creation and recreation opportunities

Expert Group Input*

- The Grande Ronde has a long history of restoration planning and action relative to listed native resident and anadromous fish species. As a result of 30 years of work, there are strong partnerships and restoration plans in place to support additional funding opportunities that could greatly accelerate restoration actions.
- Experts discussed an appropriate geographical scale in this watershed that could encompass Chinook, steelhead, and bull trout habitats. The area includes: Catherine Creek, the Upper Grande Ronde, the Joseph River, the Imnaha River, and the Wallowa River. This area already possesses a list of prioritized projects, a monitoring program, and means for tracking progress towards recovery goals.
- OWEB funding could complement BPA funding that cannot be used for rivers that do not include Chinook habitat. An additional investment by OWEB could “tip the scales” towards faster recovery for all species.
- Experts indicated the following limiting factors in the Grande Ronde basin: reduced instream flows, water quality degradation, and a lack of habitat complexity. The recovery plan in place for Chinook and steelhead identifies the limiting factors in biologically significant reaches and the actions needed to address those limiting factors. An OWEB priority for the Upper Grande Ronde could accelerate restoration in key reaches of the tributaries for native fish recovery.

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Theme: JOHN DAY NATIVE FISH HABITAT

Suggested priority submissions: Accelerated Restoration in the Upper North Fork John Day; Instream Habitat and Upland Plant Communities of the John Day Basin; John Day Basin Cold-Water Salmonid Habitat; John Day Basin Restoration of Aquatic and Upland Habitats; Lower John Day River Whole Watersheds Restoration Initiative; Restoration of Habitats in the John Day River Basin
Priority submissions can be found here: www.oregon.gov/OWEB/Pages/FIP-Proposed-Priorities.aspx

Theme Summary

Significance to the state

- The John Day Basin is the Columbia Basin's most biologically diverse river system, with Federal ESA-listed steelhead, spring Chinook and bull trout.
- The John Day River is the longest free-flowing river in the Western U.S. with strong wild runs of salmon and steelhead. These runs are two of the last remaining intact wild populations in the Columbia River basin.
- The ecological health of John Day basin is important for agricultural as well as recreation and forestry.
- The John Day theme aligns with the Oregon Conservation Strategy for the John Day basin, as well as DEQ, USFS, and ODF conservation plans.

Geographical options

Ranges from the South Fork John Day basin; to the Upper North Fork John Day, including several watersheds: Granite Creek, Desolation Creek, North Fork, and Big Creek; to the entire John Day Basin

Habitat/natural resource issue of concern

- Native resident and anadromous fish species, including: salmon, steelhead, bull trout, and Pacific lamprey.
- Upland native plant communities, such as aspen and mixed-conifer forests

Limiting factors

- Historical timber harvesting, gold mining, grazing, and fire suppression
- Reduced instream flows and a lack of seasonal instream flows during critical anadromous fish migration periods
- Water quality, including temperature
- Water quantity, including the over-allocation of water
- Fish passage
- Instream habitat complexity
- Increased sedimentation due to habitat degradation in riparian areas
- Invasive weed encroachment in riparian areas
- Lack of beaver habitat

Ecological and social outcomes

- Recovery of native fish species
- Increased landscape-level planning and implementation
- Restoration and protection of core cold-water habitats in the upper reaches of the basin
- Improved instream habitat and water quality
- Removal of fish passage barriers
- Improvement of upland plant communities
- Increased instream flows, including actions such as landowner incentive programs and implementing irrigation efficiencies

Expert Group Input*

- Experts agreed that the John Day River basin is of statewide and national significance given that it is the largest undammed river in the west, supports listed species of Chinook and steelhead, and does not have any fish hatcheries.
- The basin is vulnerable to climate change due its reliance on snow pack for seasonal flows to support critical flows during spawning and rearing periods. There is already evidence that shows that warming waters in the John Day River and tributaries are contributing to an increase in habitat used by bass which may impact salmon survival rates. Restoring the riparian areas and reconnecting with cold-water springs to provide cold-water refugia was identified as a high priority. The John Day River is on the 303D list of impaired waters. DEQ is currently modeling how to best reduce temperature in order to protect anadromous fish as a beneficial use.
- There have been numerous agencies and tribes active in the John Day Basin, so much planning, restoration, and partnership work is already underway.
- FIP funding could supplement federal funding in critical areas, accelerating restoration efforts and increasing leverage opportunities on both private and public lands
- Experts discussed the Upper John Day and its tributaries as an important area in the basin to address critical limiting factors.
- Experts noted the existing strong partnerships in some areas of the basin.

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Theme: LOWER COLUMBIA NATIVE FISH HABITAT

Suggested priority submissions: Chum Conservation; Hood River Salmon, Steelhead, and Bull Trout Habitat; Protecting Oregon Estuaries from Climate Change; Sandy River Basin Initiative
Priority submissions can be found here: www.oregon.gov/OWEB/Pages/FIP-Proposed-Priorities.aspx

Theme Summary

Significance to the state

- This region hosts ESA-listed species, including: chum salmon, steelhead, and bull trout.
- Tributary watersheds of the Lower Columbia provide refuge for native fish and wildlife species in an increasingly urbanized space. In some cases, these watersheds also supply drinking water for their communities (e.g., the Sandy River basin provides drinking water for over 900,000 residents in the Portland area).
- Actions taken in the Lower Columbia River towards estuarine conservation can serve as a model for elsewhere in the state. Such actions also align with Oregon's land use planning goal 16 – Estuarine Resources.
- Some Lower Columbia tributaries (such as the Hood River basin) and certain native fish species (such as chum salmon) have significance to tribes in the region.
- The loss of chum salmon in the Columbia basin has had serious economic impacts, and this species recovery is a priority of the Oregon Conservation Plan and Chum Recovery Strategy.

Geographical options

Ranges from all Oregon tributaries of the Columbia River; to estuarine and tidal freshwater habitats, including the Lower Columbia River; to the Hood River basin; and the Sandy River basin

Habitat/natural resource issue of concern

- Improved water quality (e.g., temperature, sediment, nutrients)
- Native resident and anadromous fish species, including: Chinook, chum, and coho salmon; summer and winter steelhead; Pacific lamprey; sea-run and resident cutthroat; rainbow trout; listed bull trout; and salmon in the Clatskanie watershed
- Spawning and rearing habitat for fish species
- Estuarine ecosystems

Limiting factors

- Historical habitat alteration through channelization, diversions, and loss of complexity
- Instream and off-channel habitat loss and degradation
- Impairments to spawning habitats through a range of impacts
- Fish passage
- Sedimentation in spawning habitat throughout chum range
- Alteration of hydrologic processes
- Water quality, including stream temperature
- Decreased instream flows
- Channel stability
- Hydropower production

Ecological and social outcomes

- Improved water quality
- Improved instream, riparian, and floodplain habitat
- Provide critical habitat for salmonids, shorebirds, and migratory waterfowl
- Improve estuarine ecosystem function and resiliency
- Balance irrigated agriculture and ecosystem needs
- Assess potential impacts of climate change
- Increased landscape-level planning and implementation

Expert Group Input*

- Experts discussed scale and significance, and it was suggested that a FIP Priority could align with work currently being done by existing organizations, such as the Lower Columbia Estuary Program and others. These organizations may have a comprehensive overview of needs and strategies, as well as the partnerships in place to implement projects.
- Experts did not support a narrower focus on specific tributary basins at this time, but suggested that FIP partnerships could pursue programs in these tributaries at a focused scale.
- Experts also discussed other funding sources, such as the BPA and the US Army Corps of Engineers that provide millions of dollars of funding to the Columbia Basin and tributaries due to their accountability to Columbia basin salmon Biological Opinion.
- Experts noted that Clatskanie watershed salmon have a relatively high likelihood for recovery given current conditions in the watershed. There is also strong overlap with efforts towards chum recovery in this watershed.
- A more comprehensive discussion of this proposed priority theme is needed given the diversity of issues covered by the individual submitted proposed priorities.

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Theme: OAK WOODLANDS

Suggested priority submissions: East Cascades Oak Woodlands; Oak woodlands in Southern Oregon; Willamette Valley Oak and Prairie Habitats

Priority submissions can be found here: www.oregon.gov/OWEB/Pages/FIP-Proposed-Priorities.aspx

Theme Summary

Significance to the state

- Oak and prairie habitat in Oregon is iconic, culturally important, and imperiled.
- Oak and prairie habitats benefit Oregon's state bird, the western meadowlark.
- Oak woodlands habitat is home to roughly 30 species addressed by the Oregon Conservation Strategy.
- Oak woodlands habitat contains a high percentage of bird "species of concern" according to Partners in Flight North American Landbird Conservation Plan.

Geographical options

There are oak woodland habitats statewide, but three areas were proposed as distinct geographic priorities: 1) Prairie and oak habitats of the Willamette Valley ecoregion, generally excluding riparian areas and wetlands associated with the main stem of the Willamette River and its major tributaries; 2) Oak woodlands in the East Cascades, which encompasses 467 square miles of oak/conifer foothills; and, 3) Southern Oregon oak woodlands, including Rogue and Klamath Basins

Habitat/natural resource issue of concern

- Oak and prairie habitat throughout Oregon
- Numerous species that inhabit oak woodlands and prairies, such as Oregon's state bird the western meadowlark, and endemic and ESA-listed species, the Fender's blue butterfly, Kincaid's lupine, Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, and the Willamette daisy

Limiting factors

- Habitat loss and degradation, subsequent loss of biodiversity
- Land conversion for agriculture and development
- Invasive plant species
- Altered successional and disturbance forest patterns
- Habitat fragmentation and barriers to species' movement through disconnected habitats
- Slow regeneration of adult oak trees
- Lack of oak regeneration due to overgrazing by livestock and wildlife
- Encroachment of conifer forests
- Severe wildfire due to altered fire regimes

Ecological and social outcomes

- Conserving and restoring large, connected networks or oak-prairie habitat
- Create resiliency against climate change
- Improved habitat for priority species
- Address invasive species
- Decrease barriers to economic development, particularly in the Willamette Valley
- Reduced catastrophic wildfire risk
- Protected drinking water
- Coordination with private landowners
- Beneficial to Oregon's hunting community
- Increased awareness of historical oak woodlands and habitat conservation in a highly populated region
- Increased landscape-level planning and implementation

Expert Group Input*

- Oak woodlands and prairies are an important terrestrial ecosystem in Oregon. Oregon's oak woodlands are imperiled and funding can be used to develop a comprehensive conservation/restoration strategy. Experts cited encroachment of conifers (such as junipers) as one of the biggest threats to old oak stands. Experts recommended a statewide assessment to identify top priority areas.
- Experts expressed that the Willamette oak woodlands may be the most vulnerable at this time, due to habitat fragmentation and pressures of development. Partnerships and potential funding leverage exist here also. Southern Oregon oaks are vulnerable to climate change. The situation for eastern Oregon oaks is not as dire at this time, although management is needed for conifer encroachment.
- Experts noted oak woodlands conservation does not have a regulatory driver and needs a voluntary effort to make it a higher priority for the state.
- Land ownership influences oak woodlands management and opportunities. Experts confirmed that Wasco is evenly divided between private and public land, the Willamette is predominantly private land, and the Klamath/Rogue is primarily public BLM land.
- Experts suggested that the Willamette Valley and southern Oregon oak woodlands could present a continuous geography that includes the prairie component of this habitat type.

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Theme: OREGON COAST

Suggested priority submissions:

Governor's Habitat Priorities: Coastal Coho; Integrated Land Stewardship for Salmon, Cape Blanco Area; Oregon Coast Coho; Oregon Coast Estuarine Habitats; Oregon Coastal Coho Habitat, with Focus on Family, Forests, and Farms; Re-igniting the Oregon Plan: Achieving Restoration Scale in Coastal Sedimentary Basins; Rogue Basin Native Fish Population, Capacity Building; Rogue River Stream Corridors; Tillamook-Nestucca Fish Passage Partnership; Umpqua and Rogue River Basins Native Fish Habitat, Lamprey; Upland/Riparian Restoration in the Coastal Ecoregion; Wild Rivers Coast Estuaries

Priority submissions can be found here: www.oregon.gov/OWEB/Pages/FIP-Proposed-Priorities.aspx

Theme Summary

Significance to the state

- Oregon coastal coho salmon and Southern Oregon Northern California coho salmon are both listed as Threatened under the federal ESA. A recovery plan was just finalized by NOAA for the SONCC and a recovery plan is currently being prepared for the Oregon coast populations
- Native Pacific and western brook lamprey are an 'at risk' species (ODFW) and have cultural significance to Oregon tribes.
- Coastal estuaries are central to Oregon's land use planning goals 16 (Estuarine Resources) and 19 (Ocean Resources) and provide critical habitat to a diversity of fish and wildlife, including coho salmon and migratory birds.
- Sitka spruce forests and riparian areas have important implications on hydrology and water quality to improve salmon habitat. These forests also support stream habitat that hosts cutthroat trout, steelhead, Chinook, and chum salmon. These forests also support habitat for bird species such as the federally ESA-listed western snowy plover and marbled murrelet.
- Coho salmon and upland plant and riparian forests are important to coastal communities and economies, including commercial and recreational fishing, hunting, wildlife watching, and forest resources industries.
- This theme aligns with other state planning efforts, including ODFW's Oregon Coast Coho Conservation Plan and NOAA's recovery plans.
- Extensive efforts and partnerships are already underway coast-wide.

Geographical Options

- Entire Oregon coast
- All private lands
- South coast
- Coastal estuaries, including the Sixes and New River estuaries
- Sitka spruce coastal forests
- Coastal sedimentary basins
- Specific watersheds, including: the Elk River basin, the Necanicum and Sixes Rivers, the Rogue River basin, the Tillamook-Nestucca basin, and the Umpqua basin

Habitat/natural resource issue of concern

- Native fish species, including lamprey and coastal coho
- Marbled murrelet
- Sitka spruce forests

Limiting factors

- Increased conversion of land uses
- Water quality
- Fish passage
- Habitat degradation, including instream, floodplain, off-channel, and riparian habitats
- Loss of instream habitat complexity and diminished ecosystem function

Ecological and social outcomes

- Restore and sustain coho population numbers
- Protection of habitat areas and increased habitat connectivity and complexity
- Improved water quality and quantity
- Acres of in-stream, riparian, and wetlands habitat restoration
- Landowner recruitment for coordination of restoration on private property
- Protection of intact agricultural lands

Expert Group Input*

- Recovery of Oregon Coast coho is of statewide and national significance.
- FIP funding can be leveraged in key locations. One or two locations can serve as “proof of concept” to set a precedent for program success.
- A larger, long-term strategy needs to be developed for the Coast, and OWEB funds can be used to “fill the gap” where other funding sources cannot provide resources, especially on the mix of private and public lands.
- Climate change/sea-level rise are additional areas of focus for increasing resiliency by enhancing wetlands that also serve as critical habitat for numerous species, including coho salmon as well as other native fish species.

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- Expert’s discussion of potential Coast Priority scales:
 - Estuaries – Address ecosystem functions in estuaries coast-wide. Primary limiting factors, such as: instream habitat complexity and water quality in tidal areas.
 - Coho habitat Coast-wide – Pursue restoration actions guided by current recovery plan. NOAA is finalizing a recovery plan that identifies key restoration areas.
 - Independent coho populations – At the population-level, target ripe places on the coast for restoration. With leveraged funding, this scale could offer measurable outcomes contributing to de-listing. Such areas may include: the South Coast (Cape Blanco/New River), Coquille, and Tillamook basins.
- Experts discussed the need to focus on “drivers”, such as nutrient impairment. Consideration should be given to areas on the Coast that are data-rich and data-poor as there is inconsistent quality and quantity of information available to assess these “drivers”.
- Sequential impact can be achieved by strategically coordinating FIP efforts with other (non-FIP) restoration actions and funding opportunities in a long-term, large-scale action plan.
- Targeted restoration actions: coho habitat, water quality, work on private lands, addressing agriculture in low lying estuary and tributary areas. Some experts noted that the most important limiting factor for coho habitat and recovery is instream complexity and ecosystem function.
- Strong partnerships at the local level exist, and many state and federal agencies have prioritized the development of action plans to address threats and secure coastal resilience from climate change by restoring and protecting habitats.

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Theme: SAGE-STEPPE/SAGE-GROUSE

Suggested priority submissions: Governor's Habitat Priorities: Sage-steppe; Oregon Model to Protect Sage-grouse

Priority submissions can be found here: www.oregon.gov/OWEB/Pages/FIP-Proposed-Priorities.aspx

Theme Summary

Significance to the state

- Identified by a broad collection of stakeholders as a state conservation priority
- Aligns with restoration actions outlined in the state's All Lands, All Threats Plan and the Oregon SageCon Action Plan
- Opportunity to coordinate with the ranching community and work towards ecological and socio-economic goals that support the extensive ranching economy in this region
- Implications of regulatory intervention with listing of sage-grouse under the federal ESA
- Sagebrush/sage-steppe habitat is the largest ecosystem in eastern Oregon, and one of the most threatened land types in North America
- Interest in this issue spans the Western U.S and is a high priority for the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior, given that sage-grouse habitat and associated issues affecting it is a common concern across the west with significant economic implications if sage grouse are ESA listed.

Geographical options

Ranges from the entire Great Basin of Eastern Oregon to the specific priority sage-grouse habitat areas within several counties of Eastern Oregon as identified by the BLM, ODFW, and others

Habitat/natural resource issue of concern

Sagebrush-steppe habitat and sage-grouse

Limiting factors

- Loss and degradation of biodiversity of sage-steppe habitats due to altered fire regimes and other land use management practices
- Encroachment of conifers such as juniper and invasive non-native grasses

Ecological and social outcomes

- Coordination with existing agency conservation plans
- Response to federal ESA sage-grouse proposed listing
- Restoration of sage-grouse habitat in the most critical breeding and foraging areas
- Coordination with the region's ranching community
- Management of conifer forests and invasive grasses
- Increased acres of native grasses
- Pre- and post-fire conservation actions
- Increased landscape-level planning and implementation

Expert Group Input*

- Experts cited sagebrush-steppe habitat as one of the most imperiled in North America, with 50% of this ecosystem having been lost during the past 150 years.
- Sage-steppe habitat is critically important to the agricultural/ranching community in the region. Cattle production is dependent on healthy sage-steppe ecosystems.
- The greater sage-grouse is a candidate species for ESA listing and experts noted the implications of regulatory intervention that would result of such a listing. The portion of the bird's range that is in Oregon has also been identified by the Secretary of Interior as one of national significance.
- Experts also agreed that partnerships with landowners in this region could be strong and current efforts have already received solid support. Such efforts include the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) processes that are underway.
- Experts' discussion of potential sage-grouse priority scales included:
 - A regional-based strategy supported by a comprehensive plan that prioritizes key areas with strong partnerships and is ripe for implementation, and has a practical scale with measurable outcomes.
 - The PAC (Priority Areas for Conservation) approach – various PACs could be focus of a sage-grouse priority, targeting specific habitat currently in use by the species.
 - In the context of sagebrush-steppe habitat more broadly, some experts noted that although this area is large, targeted investments could make a measurable difference in key breeding and foraging areas.
- There is potential for different funding sources (e.g., federal funding through NRCS for landowner actions, funding from BLM for work on federal land) to complement each other. It is urgent that all potential funding sources become involved to avoid listing of sage-grouse.
- Large-scale restoration strategies include restoring sage-grouse habitat at the landscape scale to protect critical lek areas with buffers, reducing habitat fragmentation, and increasing connectivity of high-quality habitats. Major ecosystem threats of wildfire, exotic weed invasion, and conifer encroachment must be adaptively managed over time.

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Theme: UPPER KLAMATH NATIVE FISH HABITAT AND WATER QUALITY

Suggested priority submissions: Aquatic Ecosystems in Upper Klamath Basin; Governor's Water Quality Priorities: Upper Klamath Basin

Priority submissions can be found here: www.oregon.gov/OWEB/Pages/FIP-Proposed-Priorities.aspx

Theme Summary

Significance to the state

- The Upper Klamath Basin (UKB) contains the Lost River and shortnose sucker fish species, both of which are listed under the Federal ESA. In addition, the wetland complexes are a critical migratory corridor for many bird species.
- The basin hosts important tribal fish species, including sucker fish and potentially salmon
- UKB is an icon for water conflict in the state. Resolving it would be symbolic and provide a model for effective watershed management elsewhere.
- Significant conservation planning and implementation is already underway. Examples include the 2008 Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement and most recently the Upper Klamath Basin Comprehensive Agreement (UKBCA), signed in 2014, which coordinates the Tribes, agencies and landowners and has great potential for increased instream flows and decreased nutrient loading in Upper Klamath Lake.

Geographical options

Ranges from the entire Upper Klamath Basin in Oregon to regions in the Sprague, Sycan, Williamson and Wood sub-basins that have been identified in the UKBCA for water-use management and riparian restoration

Habitat/natural resource issue of concern

- Aquatic ecosystems
- ESA-listed sucker fish (Lost River and shortnose species)
- Redband and bull trout
- Reintroduction of salmon and steelhead

Limiting factors

- Nutrient loading, namely phosphorous in Upper Klamath Lake
- Riparian degradation
- Stream channelization
- Reduction of instream flows
- Fish passage barriers
- Loss of floodplain connectivity
- Increased sedimentation
- Increased water temperatures
- Degraded fish habitat

Ecological and social outcomes

- Strategies to improve fish and wildlife habitat and water quality towards restoring native fish populations to the Upper Klamath basin
- Improve instream flows to meet fish and agricultural goals
- Implement collaborative actions between agencies and landowners, including the development of grazing management plans
- Removal of levees to promote floodplain connectivity
- Reconnect cold-water springs to adjacent river systems
- Continue the momentum of important collaborative agreements in the basin
- Foundation for market-based programs that bring capital to invest in water quality conservation
- Increased landscape-level planning and implementation
- Improved coordination and collaboration among sectors/stakeholders

Expert Group Input*

- The Upper Klamath can set a precedent in Oregon and the Western U.S. for finding solutions and managing conflicts related to water management and endangered species.
- Experts discussed the importance of maintaining momentum since 2000 with collaborative agreements and the risk of the momentum dissipating and agreements unraveling if funding resources are not allocated to the Klamath Basin while Congressional legislation is pending.
- Issues of scale and measurable outcomes should be considered. For example, nutrient loading can be addressed but requires large-scale coordination, including with landowners.
- Experts also considered a whole watershed approach in connecting the Upper and Lower (CA) Klamath. This could be the most significant river restoration effort in the U.S. by reconnecting the wild salmon runs of the lower river, providing fish passage into Oregon and re-establishing anadromous fish in the Upper Basin.
- Experts agreed that the investment needed to restore the entire basin is large, but there are key areas of investment that are necessary to meet the goals of the UKBCA and are within the potential of OWEB funding if leveraged with other agency funds. Such actions include various local projects to restore hydrologic-riparian connectivity and acquire water rights.
- Some experts noted that even at smaller scales actions focused on fish passage and riparian restoration will address ESA-listed sucker fish, as well as redband and bull trout. For example, a measurable difference can be made at a few locations with fish screens and habitat improvements.
- The reduction of phosphorous loading into Upper Klamath Lake was discussed as a very high priority because it affects so many downstream ecological functions and habitats.
- Experts also discussed the risks of not selecting the Upper Klamath Basin as a priority, given the social and political momentum) in the basin, and recognition that the restoration efforts are also of national significance.

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Theme: WILLAMETTE BASIN AQUATIC HABITAT AND WATER QUALITY

Suggested priority submissions: Governor's water quality priority: Willamette Basin; McKenzie River conservation of native fish, wildlife and other natural resources; Oregon's river/Our river: Willamette Basin rivers, streams and riparian forests
Priority submissions can be found here: www.oregon.gov/OWEB/Pages/FIP-Proposed-Priorities.aspx

Theme Summary

Significance to the state

- Several native resident and anadromous fish species are listed under the federal ESA, including Chinook salmon, bull trout, and Oregon chub.
- The Oregon Conservation Strategy highlights several key species for protection in the Willamette Basin, including Pacific lamprey, Pacific brook lamprey, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, western pond turtles, and Oregon spotted frogs.
- McKenzie River spring Chinook are a genetic legacy for the Upper Willamette Basin and McKenzie River bull trout are listed as a statewide priority in the Oregon Conservation Strategy.
- The Willamette basin provides many beneficial uses such as drinking water for large populations, as well as a vibrant recreation and tourist economy. It is also home to approximately 70% of the population of Oregon.
- Future population growth projection shows that the Willamette Basin will grow rapidly.
- The Pacific Flyway bird species utilize inundated floodplains and side channel habitats throughout the basin, which are also critical areas for salmon recovery.
- Habitat conservation efforts provide an opportunity to build resiliency and cold-water refugia to offset climate change impacts.

Geographical Options

Range from the entire Willamette Basin, to the Upper Willamette Basin, to the McKenzie River or other sub-basins

Habitat/natural resource of concern

- Native fish and wildlife
- Water quality
- Native riparian, floodplain, and off-channel habitats

Limiting factors

- Degradation of instream, riparian, and floodplain habitats
- Channelization
- Habitat fragmentation
- Land conversion due to development
- Impacts of dams
- Fish passage
- Invasive species

Ecological and social outcomes

- Improved water quality
- Increased acres of floodplains and off-channel habitats
- Increased native fish species population numbers
- Strategically restored riparian forests
- Unified, cross-organizational strategic approach to restoration throughout the Willamette Basin (upper, middle, lower)
- Increased landscape level planning and implementation

Expert Group Input*

- Natural resource issues in the Willamette are well-documented and have been ongoing for decades. The challenge is determining how to organize conservation efforts to get the best return on investments. Partnership implementers may need to coordinate more closely between the tributary and mainstem efforts to better understand where to make optimal investments. For example, a good starting place is riparian/floodplain areas.
- Due to past and ongoing work in the Willamette, many problems are more tractable than perhaps elsewhere in the state. However, the Willamette faces immense pressure as the population center here will continue to grow according to population projections.
- Experts discussed the risk of not having a Willamette Priority in terms of losing important momentum for conservation and restoration. The Willamette's recent legacy of large-scale restoration and conservation could be reinforced with a Willamette Priority to maintain a culture of restoration in the basin. A Willamette Priority would offer the opportunity for partnerships to "build their brand" towards collective impact and political clout in improving ecosystem health in the basin.
- Experts suggested embracing the Willamette system in terms of drivers or by desired outcomes such as floodplain reconnection as a priority goal, as opposed to geography of the basin. Experts also discussed scale ranges from the whole Willamette to the McKenzie River tributary. No recommendation was made at this time for scale of the proposed priority, but they did note that in the future, more efforts need to be made to link the work in the upper watershed tributaries to the mainstem restoration work.
- Experts noted the importance of determining how and what outcomes to measure at larger scales and stated that it is important to be realistic about the funding available and setting measurable goals to achieve.
- Key drivers in the Willamette include: ripeness (leverage, partnerships, and landowner engagement) and system focus (clarity on spatial and temporal scales).

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