

REPORT TO THE OREGON LEGISLATURE:
OREGON CONSERVATION CORPS
ORS 476.694-476.698
2025



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The Oregon Conservation Corps (OCC) is codified in ORS 476.694-476.698. OCC is a youth-focused wildfire risk reduction and workforce development initiative that has concluded nearly three and a half years of program operations between January 2022 and June 2025. This report aggregates performance data from two biennia (2021–2023 and 2023–2025), offering a comprehensive view of OCC's impact statewide. It was originally funded with a one-time investment in 2021 (SB 762) and then again with one-time funding in the Legislature's 2023 end of session bill (SB 5506). The Legislature has not finalized its 2025-27 budget at the time of writing.

OCC engages youth, particularly those from underserved communities, in fire fuels mitigation efforts while also providing job training and certifications relevant to wildfire and natural resource careers. It is a program of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) and is housed within its Office of Workforce Investments.

ORS 476.696 requires HECC to biennially submit a report, on the timeline described in ORS 293.640, to an appropriate committee or interim committee of the Legislative Assembly, as described in ORS 192.245, and to the State Wildfire Programs Director and Wildfire Programs Advisory Council, regarding the expenditure of moneys deposited in the Oregon Conservation Corps Fund.

Key Program Metrics (Cumulative)

- Total Grants Awarded: \$21,706,651
- Total Reimbursed/Spent as of January 2025: \$15.9 million
- Youth Served: 1,079 participants (with <30 possible duplicates)
- Youth Wages Paid: \$4.49 million (estimated)
- Adult Staff Supported: 150 positions (estimated)
- Acres Treated: 7,406
- Sites Treated: 1,147
- ZIP Codes Served: 82
- Structures Impacted: 1,347

Beyond acres treated and youth employed, OCC's broader value lies in:

- Building fire-adapted, resilient communities
- Empowering youth from diverse and underserved backgrounds
- Earning certifications and credentials
- Supporting career pathways into forestry, wildland firefighting, emergency management, and conservation
- Enhancing community trust and safety through visible mitigation work

OCC's success depends on recognizing the multifaceted impact: from economic mobility and job readiness for participants to reduced wildfire risk for vulnerable neighborhoods. Importantly, defensible space and mitigation treatments are not permanent fixes—they require ongoing maintenance, education, and resources to ensure sustained community resilience.

Considerations for this investment cannot be limited to only the number of youth participants served or the number of acres treated.

The impact of the program extends to the adult staff who are employed and supported by grant dollars, the residents who have their properties treated, the neighborhoods and infrastructure that is protected by

completed fuels mitigation treatments, the evacuation routes that serve as both paths to safety and sometimes as buffers for advancing fire, the community members who feel seen and cared for, the fire responders who are able to make difficult decisions more easily because they know that an area has received treatment, and the sense of community resilience built by engaging in this work collaboratively.

Much of the work that OCC grantee partners do is defensible space-related work, which is time consuming both in coordinating logistics and in on-the-ground mitigation effort. On top of that, it should be noted that OCC is still a workforce program, where participants are learning how to do this work and building their efficiency. As participants become more experienced, they are encouraged to seek other employment so the program can support another young person interested in fire fuels mitigation. Youth participants in OCC have gone on to find jobs with Oregon Department of Forestry, United States Forest Service, local government, local private companies, and some have created plans to start their own business.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Oregon Conservation Corps reporting occurs twice annually, four times per biennium. This summary reflects both the first biennium of implementation, which began in January 2022 through the rest of the fiscal biennium, end of June 2023, in the first column. Column two reflects $\frac{3}{4}$ of the current biennium, which is July 2023-June 2025. There are an additional 6 months of service remaining that are not captured in the report. The purpose of this report is to provide the most up-to-date statistics for our grantee partners, agency representatives, policymakers, and interagency partners.

CORE REPORTING

Category	January 2022- June 2023	July 2023 – December 2024	Total
Overall Reimbursed/Spent	\$9,229,000	\$6,685,000	\$15,914,000
Youth Served	542	537	1,079 ¹
Youth Paid	\$1,300,000 ²	\$3,190,000	\$4,490,000 ³
Adult Staff Supported	103	96	150 ⁴
Acres Treated	3,117	4,580	7,406
Sites Treated	561	586	1,147
ZIP Codes Treated	73	82	82 ⁵
Structures Impacted	486	860	1,347

¹ This may include some duplicated youth participants; it is estimated that less than 30 youth were counted twice due to serving over multiple reporting windows. A full comparative roster is in the process of being assembled as of February 2025.

² This is an estimate. Originally, Oregon Conservation Corps reporting didn't require grantee partners to differentiate between adult and participant wages and fringe.

³ This is an estimate, due to using the estimate wages/fringe paid to youth in 2022-2023.

⁴ This is an estimate. Many adult staff were retained from the first biennium to the second biennium. Oregon Conservation Corps reporting does not require adult staff rosters to verify specific individuals paid with grant dollars. Instead, the fiscal reports address positions that receive funding support.

⁵ Total cumulative ZIP codes treated. The 73 ZIP codes that received treatments in 2022-2023 received treatments again in 2023-2024.

ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

Category	January 2022-June 2023 <i>First biennium of implementation</i>	July 2023-December 2024 <i>3 out of 4 current biennium reports</i>
Median Participant Age	21 years old	19.5 years old
Staff Race <i>Top five most reported, by percent</i>	61% White 12% Native American/Alaska Native 10% Hispanic/Latino/a/x 7% Prefer Not to Report 6% Multiple/Two or More	60% White 15% Prefer Not to Report 8% Native American/Alaska Native 2% Black/African American 2% Hispanic/Latino/a/x
Youth Race <i>Top five most reported, by percent</i>	62% White 16% Native American/Alaska Native 9% Hispanic/Latino/a/x 6% Multiple/Two or More 3% Black/African American	64% White 14% Native American/Alaska Native 8% Multiple/Two or More 6% Hispanic/Latino/a/x 3% Black/African American
Staff Gender <i>As reported, by percent</i>	65% Male 27% Female 3% Non-binary 5% Prefer Not to Report	57% Male 30% Female 3% Non-binary 14% Prefer Not to Report
Youth Gender <i>As reported, by percent</i>	66% Male 29% Female 3% Non-binary 2% Prefer Not to Report	63% Male 26% Female 4% Non-binary 3% Prefer Not to Report
Youth Participant Barriers <i>Top five barriers reported, by percent of participant youth who reported that barrier (some youth may have multiple barriers)</i>	65% Economic Hardship 45% Skills Gap 31% Academic Gap 19% Disabled 15% Justice-Involved	32% Economic Hardship 31% Skills Gap 16% Disabled 13% Academic Gap 13% LGBTQIA2S+
Spending Categories <i>Top five spending categories expended, by percent of overall dollars spent</i>	49% personnel/Fringe 20% Tools and Equipment 10% Administrative 10% Transportation 4% Supplies	35% Youth Personnel/Fringe 32% Adult Personnel/Fringe 13% Administrative 6% Transportation 5% Equipment

CERIFICATIONS EARNED

CPR	RX-301: Prescribed Fire Implementation
Driver's License	RX-310: Introduction to Fire Effects
First Aid	S-110: Basic Wildland Fire Orientation
IS-100: Intro to Incident Command System	S-130: Firefighter Training
IS-700.B: National Incident Mgmt. System	S-131: Firefighter Type 1 Training
L-180: Human Factors in Wildland Fire Service	S-190: Intro to Wildland Fire Behavior
OSHA-10	S-212: Wildland Fire Chainsaws
P-101: Fire Prevention Education 1	Wilderness First Aid
RT-130: Wildland Fire Safety Refresher	Wilderness First Responder

GRANTEE PARTNERS/AWARD AMOUNTS

Grantee	2021-23 Award	2023-25 Award
Oregon Department of Forestry	\$350,000	\$298,000
AntFarm	\$530,893	\$1,000,000
Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council	\$309,938	\$521,896
Community Services Consortium	\$835,291	\$1,025,000
Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs	\$372,201	\$973,018
Eastern Oregon Workforce Board	N/A	\$578,047
EcoStudies Institute	\$920,645	N/A
Fortaleza Atravez Barreras	N/A	\$49,858
Heart of Oregon Corps	\$765,124	\$1,148,104
Integral Youth Services	\$980,354	\$1,000,000

Lomakatsi Restoration Project	\$1,523,347	\$1,669,952
Northwest Youth Corps	\$2,515,406	\$1,669,579
Phoenix Charter School	\$999,998	\$1,670,000

CONCLUSION

Considerations for this investment cannot be limited to only the number of youth participants served or the number of acres treated.

The impact of the program extends to the adult staff who are employed and supported by grant dollars, the residents who have their properties treated, the neighborhoods and infrastructure that is protected by completed fuels mitigation treatments, the evacuation routes that serve as both paths to safety and sometimes as buffers for advancing fire, the community members who feel seen and cared for, the fire responders who are able to make difficult decisions more easily because they know that an area has received treatment, and the sense of community resilience built by engaging in this work collaboratively.

Much of the work that Oregon Conservation Corps grantee partners do is defensible space-related work, which is time consuming both in coordinating logistics and in on-the-ground mitigation effort. On top of that, it should be noted that Oregon Conservation Corps is still a workforce program, where participants are learning how to do this work and building their efficiency. As participants become more experienced, they are encouraged to seek other employment so the program can support another young person interested in fire fuels mitigation. Youth participants in Oregon Conservation Corps have gone on to find jobs with Oregon Department of Forestry, United States Forest Service, local government, local private companies, and some have created plans to start their own business.

The youth served by Oregon Conservation Corps have varying backgrounds. In Oregon Conservation Corps, most participants have already completed high school or received GEDs and have held jobs before. The folks that find themselves engaged in the work supported by Oregon Conservation Corps are brought together by an interest in being outdoors and working with concrete and physical elements, an interest in serving people in their community and finding purpose through their service, the drive for comradery and sense of belonging with a crew and organization that they trust and having agency in their lives.

It should also be noted that fuels mitigation treatments do not equal guaranteed safety in the event of a fire. Fuels mitigation efforts strengthen the resiliency of a home and access to safe evacuation and response routes. These treatments are also not a one-and-done solution. For many residents, receiving assistance from an Oregon Conservation Corps grantee partner's crew helps them to see what their property should look like. However, defensible space and fuels mitigation for larger areas require maintenance and it is only one piece of a larger puzzle for fire-adapted communities. Some people can afford, either physically or financially, to continue that maintenance on their own. However, many people can't afford that. This work will be on-going to continue to serve Oregon's neighbors most in-need.

