



Take-Home Overview for the Oregon Department of Agriculture Board

Upper Klamath Basin Ag Collaborative

Agriculture-Led Restoration for a Resilient Upper Klamath Basin

The Upper Klamath Basin Ag Collaborative (The Ag Collaborative) is a producer-led nonprofit committed to improving agricultural resilience and restoring ecological integrity in the tributaries above Klamath Lake. Current efforts center on the Sprague River Valley.

Key Milestones & Initiatives

Landowner Listening



Held over 60 one-on-one “kitchen table” listening sessions with ranchers, farmers, and Tribal allottees to build trust, understand local needs, and surface shared priorities to move towards problem-solving.

Tributary Restoration



Completed 14.5 miles of tributary restoration using low-tech, process-based restoration (LT-PBR) led by Trout Unlimited. Additional (LT-PBR) initiated by Klamath Watershed Partnership on ranch lands.

Economic Evaluation



Initiated a Real Estate Survey to inform equitable lease structures and better understand producers’ economic positions – highlighting the need for support tools tailored to the Sprague.

Restoration



We’re conducting advanced flow analysis and channel design to guide restoration planning, ensuring river dynamics are understood and optimized for long-term function and resilience. The design process carefully considers both the positive and potential negative impacts on agricultural productivity, while addressing long-standing challenges related to habitat degradation and water quality—striving to balance restoration goals with ag viability.

Agricultural Resilience



Initiated development of the Agricultural Resilience Toolkit (ART), a practical and flexible approach designed to support ranchers and farmers in the Sprague River Valley, to help producers offset losses and sustain working lands. It will offer voluntary options with financial incentives like lease agreements, water markets and conservation practices that increase ag productivity.

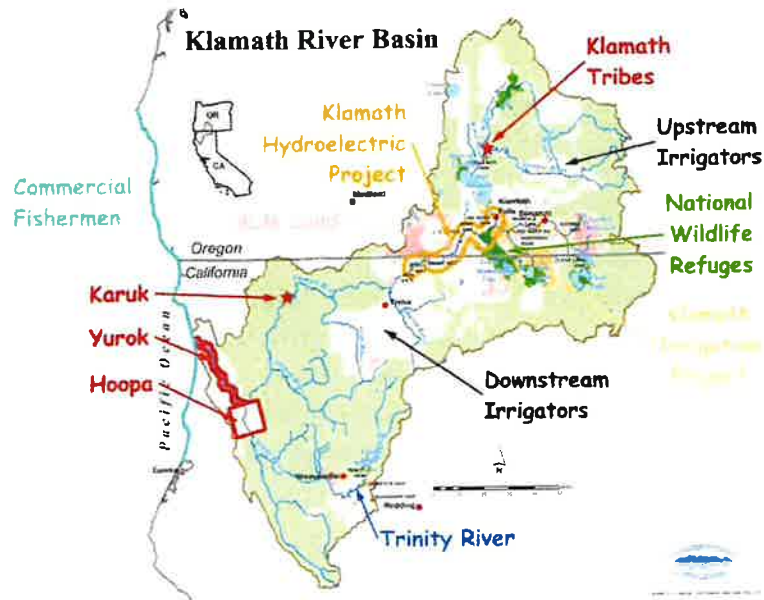
Funding Secured



Received OWEB startup funding, secured private foundation funding from two sources, and secured a \$6 million grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to launch the Sprague River Collaborative Restoration Project.

Project Background

The Ag Collaborative is a producer-led nonprofit working to strengthen agricultural resilience, and restoration in the Upper Klamath Basin. Our efforts center on the Sprague River Valley, where restoration planning is underway for 80 miles of the main-stem and 26 miles of tributaries. These efforts aim to improve water quality, restore habitat, and support fish species critical to Tribal culture and ecosystem health – all while evaluating impacts on agricultural productivity and ensuring landowner involvement in design and implementation.



Upper Klamath Basin Ag Collaborative Core Objectives

- Support family ranchers and farmers
- Restore tributaries and plan mainstem Sprague River restoration
- Co-develop tools and strategies for long-term sustainability

Partnership & Engagement Highlights

The Ag Collaborative has united a diverse coalition with partners contributing strength in agricultural resilience, ecological restoration, Tribal knowledge and community engagement. Each partner contributes unique strengths in agricultural resilience, ecological restoration, and community engagement. Partners include: Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD), Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Oregon Agricultural Trust (OAT), Klamath Watershed Partnership (KWP), Intermountain West Joint Venture (IMWJV), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Sustainable Northwest, and Trout Unlimited.

Successes and Impacts

The Sprague River Collaborative Restoration Project has delivered meaningful progress in the Sprague River Valley across trust-building, strategic planning, restoration implementation, and the development of tools to support agricultural and ecological resilience. These successes reflect the strength of The Ag Collaborative's approach, which is grounded in trust-building, voluntary participation, and collaboration.



The Agricultural Collaborative is developing a multi-year funding strategy to support phased implementation—aligning state, federal, and private resources for agricultural incentives, restoration, and capacity building.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Sprague River Collaborative faces a complex landscape of challenges and opportunities. While climate stress, regulatory hurdles, and economic pressures impact agricultural viability, Tribal and landowner support, strategic planning tools, and growing regional momentum offer a clear path forward.

Challenges	Opportunities
Climate & Water Stress: Persistent drought and declining groundwater levels threaten both ecological health and agricultural viability.	Toolkit & Planning Readiness: The ART platform and main stem restoration planning position the project for large-scale funding and implementation.
Regulatory Complexity: Multi-agency permitting and compliance requirements slow progress and increase administrative burden.	Momentum for Basin-Wide Collaboration: Growing interest in collaboration across the Upper Klamath Basin offers a unique opportunity to scale impact.
Economic Pressure on Producers: Financial constraints limit the ability of landowners to invest in long-term resilience and restoration strategies.	Tribal and Landowner Support: Engagement supports voluntary lease structures, restoration approaches that target long-standing issues, creating a foundation for collaboration.

Looking To The Future

Project Milestones Ahead

- Launch a landowner proposal package and develop a Benefits Calculator to support voluntary participation and measure impact.
- Finalize mainstem restoration planning to guide construction and program rollout in late 2026 or 2027.
- Expand monitoring to track groundwater, water quality, and habitat conditions.

Outreach

- Continue transparent, one-on-one engagement with ranchers and farmers using a “kitchen table” approach as the process advances.
- Continue building trust between coalition partners by engaging in meaningful work.
- Implementing an outreach strategy to engage Klamath community members, including tribal nations, political representatives, local stakeholders, and agencies, with the goal of increasing transparency and building broad support for the project.

Funding Approach

A multi-year funding strategy is underway, aligning state, federal, and private sources to support incentives, restoration, and capacity. Priority targets for funding applications to support Ag Resiliency include the USDA-NRCS RCPP and OWEB FIP.

Partnering for Basin Resilience – Help Us Take Action!

The Ag Collaborative is laying the groundwork for long-term agricultural and ecological resilience in the Upper Klamath Basin. What began as a grassroots effort is now gaining traction and support from a growing network of collaborators. We invite the Oregon Department of Agriculture Board to:

- **Share our work with other agencies and stakeholders**
- **Explore funding and policy alignment opportunities to support this work**
- **Engage with our team to identify collaborative pathways forward**
- **Provide cost share for large federal grant applications, such as RCPP**

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