

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item No.:	5
Work Plan:	Private Forests
Topic:	Water Quality Protection
Presentation Title:	Voluntary Restoration Measures Project – final report
Date of Presentation:	June 7, 2017
Contact Information:	Terry Frueh, Interim Manager, Forest Health & Monitoring, Private Forests, 503-945-7392, Terry.Frueh@oregon.gov Renee Davis, Deputy Director/ Tech Services Manager, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, 503- 986-0203, Renee.Davis@oregon.gov Paul Barnum, Executive Director, Oregon Forest Resources Institute, 971-673-2954, barnum@ofri.org Kyle Abraham, Deputy Division Chief, Private Forests, 503- 945-7473, Kyle.Abraham@Oregon.gov

SUMMARY

This agenda topic provides a final report on the Voluntary Measures Assessment project that was completed collaboratively by the department's Private Forests Division, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), and the Oregon Forest Resources Institute (OFRI). Additionally, it outlines several steps the Department and partner agencies may use to address key findings from the project.

CONTEXT

The Oregon Board of Forestry's (Board) 2011 Forestry Program for Oregon (FPFO) supports efforts under the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds (Oregon Plan) to enhance, restore, and protect native salmonid populations and aquatic habitat, while sustaining a healthy economy (Objective D.6). Similarly, the FPFO promotes various non-regulatory tools (e.g., incentives, landowner recognition) to implement forest related elements of the Oregon Conservation Strategy that apply to aquatic habitat (Objective E.5). The Board's guiding principles and philosophies includes a commitment to continuous learning, evaluating and appropriately adjusting forest management policies and programs based upon ongoing monitoring, assessment, and research (Value Statement 11). The Department also collaborates with partner agencies on water-related monitoring. The Forest Practices Act (FPA) is a cornerstone of Oregon's policy and regulatory framework for protecting resources on nonfederal forestland. The framework relies on two main regulatory approaches augmented by voluntary measures and incentives. This three-tiered approach results in forestland having the highest water quality in Oregon.

OWEB is statutorily charged with conducting a watershed enhancement program to benefit all users of the waters of the state, in a manner that provides the greatest possible opportunity for volunteer participation to achieve the goals of the program. The agency's program advances the Oregon Plan, which restores and protects native fish and wildlife habitat

and addresses water quality issues. At the same time, it aims to support thriving communities and strong economies around the state. OWEB, via its diverse grant programs, invests in voluntary restoration and cooperative conservation to achieve the agency's mission. OWEB's Long-Term Investment Strategy outlines four primary areas of investment: responsive grant-making through Open Solicitation programs; longer term, larger scale investments in partnerships aiming to achieving defined ecological outcomes through the Focused Investments Program; support for enduring, high-capacity local infrastructure through Operating Capacity investments; and monitoring to track progress and impact of all of OWEB's investments.

The Oregon Legislature created OFRI in 1991 to advance public understanding of forests, forest management and forest products and to encourage sound forestry through landowner education. Through publications such as "Oregon Forest Facts – 2017-18 Edition," OFRI communicates to policymakers, opinion leaders, the media and the general public about the volunteer efforts of Oregon's forest landowner community as part of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. OFRI sponsors workshops for forest landowners on best management practices, including three workshops during the 2015-16 fiscal year in Seaside, Salem and Coos Bay, at which 135 participants were introduced to the most effective ways to improve fish habitat in forested streams. As a center of expertise for public opinion research, OFRI regularly works with other state agencies and organizations to survey the general public and landowning community about values, attitudes and beliefs surrounding forest management, and best management practices for forest landowners.

BACKGROUND

The Oregon Plan was developed to help recover salmon and improve watersheds throughout the state. The Plan emphasizes the importance of implementation by landowners of voluntary restoration efforts that benefit salmon and other native fish and wildlife species. Since the establishment of the Oregon Plan, private forest landowners have contributed millions of dollars to salmon and watershed restoration and voluntarily implemented thousands of projects. However, there is incomplete understanding of the number, type, and trend of projects; reporting rates; and potential barriers to implementing and reporting these projects in the future. To address this knowledge gap, ODF's Private Forests Monitoring Program, OWEB, and OFRI conducted a collaborative study on voluntary restoration measures on forestlands in the Oregon Coast Range.

The main objectives of the study were to:

- 1) Assess implementation of voluntary restoration projects that are most frequently conducted by forest landowners.
- 2) Tell the success stories of voluntary restoration measures implemented on forestlands in Oregon.
- 3) Identify barriers to the implementation and reporting of voluntary measures.

To accomplish objectives 1 and 2, a report was prepared that summarizes voluntary measures reported by landowner types (e.g., private industrial, private nonindustrial) to the Oregon Watershed Restoration Inventory (OWRI) database (Attachment 1). OWRI is the repository for information on voluntary projects completed in association with the Oregon Plan. To address objective 3, a survey was conducted in June 2016 that assessed forest landowner's understanding

of voluntary measures and what they perceived as barriers to implementing and reporting voluntary projects (Attachment 2).

ANALYSIS

Voluntary Efforts by Forest Landowners to Restore Salmon Habitat and Watersheds in the Oregon Coast Range (Attachment #1) Key findings from the analysis of OWRI data for restoration projects in the Oregon Coast range are:

1. In the Oregon Coast Range, landowners have completed 5,639 voluntary restoration projects at a cost of over \$162 million. Moreover, 84% of these projects received no incentive funding (i.e., costs of implementation were borne entirely by landowners).
2. Voluntary projects conducted by landowners in the Oregon Coast Range:
 - a. Opened 1,400 miles of streams that were previously unavailable to coho and other native fish by improving fish passage;
 - b. Improved water quality by surveying impacts and improving conditions on more than 8,000 miles of roads;
 - c. Enhanced aquatic habitat by installing 11,000 instream structures, most of which were large wood placements; and,
 - d. Improved 12,000 acres of riparian forests by planting trees, restoring conifers in hardwood dominated stands, and leaving trees that could otherwise be harvested.
3. Private industrial landowners have led implementation of the Oregon Plan, completing the majority (71%) of all reported projects to date. Specifically, industrial landowners conducted over 3,800 large wood placements, surveyed 6,000 miles of roads, and increased access to 900 miles of streams by improving fish passage.
4. The majority of coho habitat is found throughout private nonindustrial forests, so these landowners play a pivotal role in coho restoration. When compared with industrial ownerships, the total financial contributions to projects and the number of implemented projects reported by nonindustrial private landowners was considerably lower (\$10.9 million vs. \$63.5 million; 373 projects vs. 4,033 projects). This suggests that there are still opportunities to restore coho habitat on nonindustrial private lands in Oregon Coast Range. However, we do not know if these lower numbers are due to implementing fewer projects or a lower rate of reporting or a combination of the two

Survey of Forest Landowners' Engagement in Voluntary Practices in the Oregon Coast Range (Attachment #2)

Key findings from the survey are:

1. While participants are only somewhat familiar with the Oregon Plan, they are knowledgeable and well-aware of the types of improvements considered to be voluntary restoration projects. Many participants are completing these projects as part of their ongoing management practices.
2. Landowners largely consider restoration projects the “right thing to do” when it comes to managing their land. The primary factors in deciding to complete projects was ecological benefit, cost, and probability of successful project completion.
3. Relatively few landowners had reported voluntary projects to OWRI, with many explicitly noting that they had completed projects yet not reported them. Lack of

awareness of the option to report was the most frequently mentioned reason, although additional reasons were lack of clarity on how to report, the value of this reporting, and distrust of government agencies.

4. Survey participants were asked about potential initiatives that might increase their willingness to complete and report voluntary projects. Initiatives that reduced costs or provided financial benefits tested well. That said, when landowners were asked about incentives in an open-ended fashion, they focused on other motivation strategies such as education, training, a simplification of the process, and effectively communicating the value of completing and reporting projects.
5. Very few landowners had used OWRI's online reporting tool. Suggestions for improvement focused on clarity and simplification. Complexity in the reporting process was seen as a barrier for doing so.

Next Steps

The department and partners would like to respond to findings of these reports in the following ways:

1. Involve more private, non-industrial forest landowners in implementing restoration projects;
2. Increase reporting rates of restoration projects that are implemented by landowners;
3. Monitor implementation (including quantity, project type, and adherence to implementation guidelines) and effectiveness of restoration projects; and,
4. Tell the story resulting from Steps 1-3, and assess how these aspects change over time.

Full implementation of Steps 1-4 would require significant staff time and resources, by both ODF and our partners. Assuming adequate resources and staffing, we will endeavor to complete this work.

RECOMMENDATION

This agenda item is informational only. Board comments, questions and suggestions are welcome.

ATTACHMENTS

- (1) Voluntary Efforts by Forest Landowners to Restore Salmon Habitat and Watersheds in the Oregon Coast Range.
- (2) Survey of Forest Landowners' Engagement in Voluntary Practices in the Oregon Coast Range.