



---

**Hybrid Commission Meeting**  
**June 10, 2025**

---



# Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission

## Meeting Agenda

### June 10, 2025

Business Meeting	June 10, 2025	2:30 pm – 5:00 pm
------------------	---------------	-------------------

#### Virtual Meeting

The public is welcome to watch or listen to the meeting through the following methods:

- **YouTube Recording:** <https://www.youtube.com/@oregonwatershedenhancement616>

A recording of the meeting will be posted after the meeting has ended to the OWEB YouTube page. To watch the meeting live, please use the Zoom link below.

- **Zoom:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81632422786>
- **Phone:** (669) 900-6833, **ID number:** 816 3242 2786

#### Public comment

The OAHC welcomes written and verbal public comments on any agenda item. Written comments submitted by the deadline will be provided to the commission before the meeting.

Written comments and requests to make verbal comments should be submitted using the online [Public Comment Form](#). The deadline for submitting written comments and requests to make verbal comments is **5:00 pm Thursday, June 5, 2025**.

Verbal comments are limited to three minutes and will be heard in the public comment period. If physical, auditory, language, or other accommodations are needed for this meeting, please contact [Nicole Bettinardi](#) as soon as possible, and at least 48 hours before the meeting.

#### Agenda

*For each agenda item, the time listed is approximate. Anyone interested in a particular agenda item is encouraged to give ample time and listen in to the meeting at least 30 minutes before the approximate agenda item time.*

##### **Welcome & Introductions (2:30 pm)**

The Commission will welcome three new members. *Information item.*

##### **A. General Public Comment (2:40 pm)**

This time is reserved for the commission to hear public comments and review the written public comments submitted before the meeting. *Information item.*

##### **B. [Review and Approve Minutes \(2:50 pm\)](#)**

Minutes from the February 21, 2025, OAHC meeting will be presented for Commission approval. *Action Item.*

##### **C. [Conservation Management Plan \(CMP\) Grant Offering and Funding Recommendation \(2:55 pm\)](#)**

The Commission will consider the eight OAHP CMP grant applications received and make a funding recommendation to the OWEB Board. *Action item.*

##### **D. [Program Update \(3:55 pm\)](#)**

Staff will update the Commission about ongoing program refinement efforts and facilitate a Commission discussion to help inform a potential 2025 OAHP Working Land Conservation Covenant and Easement grant solicitation. *Information item.*

**E. Other Business (4:50 pm)**

This time is reserved to any other business the Commission wishes to discuss. *Action Item.*

**Contact Information**

OAHP Program Coordinator – Taylor Larson

[Taylor.Larson@OWEB.oregon.gov](mailto:Taylor.Larson@OWEB.oregon.gov)

OAHP Conservation Easement Specialist – Robin Meacher

[Robin.M.Meacher@OWEB.oregon.gov](mailto:Robin.M.Meacher@OWEB.oregon.gov)



## Agenda Item A

# Public Comment

## Commission Meeting June 10, 2025

Submitted written public comment will be published in a supplemental document after the committee meeting and posted on our website here:

<https://www.oregon.gov/oweb/grants/oahp/Pages/OAHC/2025-Jun-OAHC.aspx>



Agenda Items B

## **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Commission Meeting June 10, 2025



# Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission

## Meeting Minutes

### February 21, 2025

Business Meeting	February 21, 2025	3:00 pm – 5:00 pm
------------------	-------------------	-------------------

#### Virtual Meeting

The public is welcome to watch or listen to the meeting through the following methods:

- **YouTube Streaming/Recording:** [www.youtube.com/channel/UC0dl-TOWlt4Sp--i1KEa](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0dl-TOWlt4Sp--i1KEa) OA.

#### Commissioners

Doug Krahmer, Chair  
Amanda Lowe  
Sara Evans-Peters  
Mark Labhart  
Mark Vargas  
Ed Contreras  
Nancy Duhnkrack  
Jan Lee  
Dan Bigelow  
John O'Keefe

#### Staff

Taylor Larson  
Renee Davis  
Robin Meacher  
Theresa DeBardelaben

#### Presenters

Matt Penberthy, Oregon  
Agricultural Land Trust  
Eric Moeggenberg, NRCS

#### Agenda

*Chair Doug Krahmer called the meeting to order at 3:01 pm*

#### **Welcome & Introductions**

The Commission introduced themselves and welcomed three new members. *Information item.*

#### **A. General Public Comment**

This time was reserved for the commission to hear general public comments and review the written public comments submitted before the meeting. *Information item.*

*There was no public comment submitted for this meeting.*

#### **B. Review and Approve Minutes**

Minutes from the November 7, 2024, OAHC meeting were presented for Commission approval.  
*Action Item.*

*Nancy Duhnkrack moved to approve the minutes for the November 7, 2024 meeting as presented.  
Amanda Lowe seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

#### **C. Vice-Chair Election**

The commission sought nominations for and elected a new vice-chairperson. *Action item.*

*Jan Lee nominated Sara Evans-Peters, Laura Masterson seconded. Sara Evans-Peters accepted the nomination.*

*John O'Keefe moved to cast a unanimous ballot, Jan Lee seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

**D. Program Updates**

Staff updated the Commission on the OWEB Board's action at their January 2025 meeting, during which they awarded OAHP Conservation Easement Grants, adopted new OAHP administrative rules and appointed three new commissioners. Staff also gave a brief overview of the OAHP Conservation Management Plan Grant Solicitation that is currently open and an update about status of Legislative session. Staff highlighted potential refinements to the Working Land Conservation Covenant and Easement program that will inform updates to program structure and materials. *Information item.*

**E. 2025 OAHC Work Schedule**

Staff presented the expected OAHP and OAHC work plan for 2025 and proposed a meeting schedule for the year. *Information Item.*

**F. Working Land Conservation Easement Grant Timeline Extension**

Staff requested the commission recommend the OWEB Board extend the grant deadline for two OAHP CE grant agreements. *Action Item.*

*Ed Contreras moved that the commission recommend to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board that they extend the grant deadline to March 31, 2026 for the Aspen Valley Ranch – Rim Tract (Grant No. 223-7106-22616) and Pitchfork T (Grant No. 223-7105-22611) with all other conditions and requirements remaining unchanged. Dan Bigelow seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

**G. Informational Presentation and Discussion about NRCS ACEP/ALE Process**

NRCS ACEP/ALE staff gave an overview of their application process and materials, ranking criteria, and general timeline associated with the program. *Information Item.*

*Doug Krahmer adjourned the meeting at 4:43 pm*

**Contact Information**

OAHP Program Coordinator – Taylor Larson  
[Taylor.Larson@OWEB.oregon.gov](mailto:Taylor.Larson@OWEB.oregon.gov)

OAHP Conservation Easement Specialist – Robin Meacher  
[Robin.M.Meacher@OWEB.oregon.gov](mailto:Robin.M.Meacher@OWEB.oregon.gov)



Agenda Item C

**Conservation Management  
Plan Grant Offering & Funding  
Recommendation**

Commission Meeting June 10, 2025





# STAFF REPORT

## *Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program*

June 10, 2025 Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission Meeting



Tina Kotek, Governor

## ITEM C –OAHP Conservation Management Plan Grant Offering and Funding Recommendation

**To:** Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission  
**From:** Taylor Larson, OAHP Program Coordinator  
Robin Meacher, OAHP Conservation Easement Specialist  
Renee Davis, OWEB Acquisitions and Special Programs Manager

### Introduction

This staff report provides an overview of the June 2025 Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) Conservation Management Plan grant solicitation and outlines staff recommendations for commission consideration.

### OAHP Conservation Management Plan – June 2025 Offering Background and Summary

The Oregon Climate Action Commission directed OWEB to use \$750,000 from the Natural and Working Lands (NWL) Fund to support OAHP grants for the development and implementation of Conservation Management Plans (CMP) that have carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emissions reduction benefits via a payment-for-climate-smart-practices approach. The Climate Action Commission also indicated OWEB could invest more than \$750,000 in OAHP grant programs if there was demand and money was available from the NWL funds allocated to OWEB to support Open Solicitation grants. Staff will recommend the OWEB board amend their spending plan at the July 22-23 meeting in order to make \$752,524 available to fund OAHP CMP grants this cycle. The CMP grant solicitation opened in February 2025 and closed on April 1, 2025. Eight applications were received, requesting a total of \$955,084.

### Application Review Process

The CMP grant applications were reviewed in accordance with administrative rules for the program, adopted in 2024. Per OAHP's statute and rules, staff's role in the application review is to facilitate a process where applications are evaluated and ranked by a technical review team (TRT) with expertise relevant to the evaluation criteria for the grant offering. The review team does not make "fund/do not fund" recommendation on submitted applications based on merits of the proposed projects relative to the evaluative criteria. Rather, the review team's ranking signals their expert opinion on alignment of proposed projects with program intent. Staff present the OAHC with the application ranking from the review team and the evaluations, along with a funding recommendation. The OAHC, per statute, reviews and considers these rankings and recommendations in the development of the commission's recommendation to the OWEB Board. Given this decisional space for OAHC, the recommendation from staff simply articulates for the commission where the line of available funding falls in the TRT's ranking.

The technical reviewers convened in a review team meeting to discuss and rank the eight applications. The review team discussion of each project was summarized by staff and is presented in the evaluations in Attachment A. The review team ranking is in Attachment B.

The review team generally found that all projects were "qualified" in terms of meeting basic OAHP CMP program requirements and thresholds. Those applications that ranked the highest were considered to have provided a clear connection between the proposed conservation actions and the long-term viability of the land for agriculture.

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommend the Commission recommend funding the OAHP Conservation Management Plan Grants in ranked order up to the available funding line as detailed in Attachment B.

### **Attachment A**

OAHP Conservation Management Plan Application 2025 Evaluation Summaries

### **Attachment B**

OAHP Conservation Management Plan 2025 Application Ranking

# Spring 2025 OWEB Grant Offering

## Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

### Conservation Management

Application No.:	226-7201-24326	Project Type:	Conservation Management
Project Name:	Branch Road Farm Conservation Management Plan Implementation Phase One		
Applicant:	Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council		
Region:	Willamette	County:	Lane
OWEB Request:	\$49,519	Total Cost:	\$ 54,322

---

#### APPLICATION DESCRIPTION [ABSTRACT PROVIDED BY THE APPLICANT]

Branch Foard Farm is a 72.66 acre property located at 79442 Repsleger Road, Cottage Grove, in Lane County, Oregon. The property has been in a conservation easement for over 7 years, with areas designated for sustainable agriculture. The Farm Operator runs a diversified small farm operation with a mix of market vegetables and livestock for direct-to-consumer markets. The farm acts as a classroom for community workshops in rural living skills, a site for children's programs, and an event venue for large group gatherings. The proposed project will include the revision and implementation of a Conservation Management Plan previously approved by OWEB in 2024. Climate change has brought increased pressures on soil and water resources in recent years, with longer dry seasons in the summer, and greater frequency of extreme weather events. Concerns about continued sustainability of farming practices have led the Farm Operator to seek strategies and efficiency improvements to conserve and enhance available soil and water resources, as well as natural areas located on the property's forests and riparian zones.

The work being proposed includes the revision and update of a comprehensive conservation management plan for the entire property that addresses natural resource management needs in the interests of agricultural sustainability. It also includes (1) implementation of near-term portions of the plan, (2) annual site visits with the farm manager to monitor progress, (3) the creation of annual reports to OWEB, and (4) updates and adjustments to the plan over the four year project period.

The Farm Operator of Branch Road Farm, Andhi Reyna, and the property's Landowner, Jerry Russel, seek to partner with the Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council to implement this Conservation Management Plan to address water resource concerns, soil conservation priorities, and natural habitat restoration into the coming decades.

#### Strengths

- The application builds off an existing conservation management plan and is a logical next step for both the applicant and agricultural operator.
- The Farm School run by the agricultural operator could serve as a useful way of engaging the surrounding community.
- The property has viable soils, access to water, and is a diversified operation, which can be an agriculturally viable approach.

- The application clearly articulates past planning and conservation projects and their focus on improving the farm ecosystem and economy.
- The proposed expansion of grazing into the forested areas of the property to manage the understory vegetation makes sense in the context of the goals lined out in the application and the location of the property.
- The property is in a high priority watershed for temperature and bacteria. The proposed conservation practices presented in the applications would address both water temperature and bacteria loads in the watershed.
- The organization possesses the necessary staff and an experienced executive director with a history of working with state and federal partners, indicating a high likelihood of successful project execution.

### **Concerns**

- It is unclear from the application how much of the property is actively engaged in agriculture, as compared with forestry or other uses.
- It is unclear how active the farm business is at the time of the application's review.
- The application does not clearly address the engagement with communities disproportionately impacted by climate change.
- Given the relatively small acreage of the property, it limits potential to support wildlife habitat and connectivity and sequester carbon at a meaningful scale.

### **Concluding Analysis**

The application presents a strong continuation of existing conservation efforts, leveraging viable soils, water access, and diverse agricultural practices. Its strengths include a clear articulation of past projects, a proposed expansion of grazing for understory management, and the potential for community engagement through the Farm School. The project is well-positioned to address high-priority water quality concerns and benefits from an experienced staff, increasing the likelihood of success. However, concerns exist regarding the clarity of agricultural versus forestry land use, the current activity level of the farm business, and the lack of explicit engagement with communities disproportionately impacted by climate change.

### **Review Team Ranking**

# Spring 2025 OWEB Grant Offering

## Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

### Conservation Management

Application No.:	226-7202-24328	Project Type:	Conservation Management
Project Name:	Creswell Oaks Conservation Management Plan and Implementation Phase One		
Applicant:	Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council		
Region:	Willamette	County:	Lane
OWEB Request:	\$200,000	Total Cost:	\$ 210,590

---

#### APPLICATION DESCRIPTION [ABSTRACT PROVIDED BY THE APPLICANT]

The project is located in Lane County, west of the City of Creswell, in the Camas Swale sub basin. The property (~2000 acres), also known as the Salyers Family Ranch, is owned by private landowners, the Salyers Family. Approximately 1600 acres of the ranch known as Creswell Oaks is protected by a conservation easement designated for agricultural use. The family runs a diversified small farm operation with a mix of timber and livestock. The farm is a classroom for community workshops in rural living skills, a site for children's programs, and an event venue for large group gatherings such as public tours.

The proposed project will include completing and implementing a Conservation Management Plan. Climate change has increased pressures on soil and water resources in recent years, with longer dry summer seasons and greater frequency of extreme weather events. Concerns about the continued sustainability of farming practices have led the Farm Operator to seek strategies and efficiency improvements to conserve and enhance available soil and water resources and natural areas located in the property's forests and riparian zones.

The proposed work includes creating and updating a comprehensive conservation management plan for the entire property that addresses natural resource management needs in the interests of agricultural sustainability. It also includes (1) implementation of near-term portions of the plan, (2) annual site visits with the farm manager to monitor progress, (3) the creation of annual reports to OWEB, and (4) updates and adjustments to the plan over the project period.

The Salyers Family seeks to partner with the Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council to implement this Conservation Management Plan, which will address water resource concerns, soil conservation priorities, and natural habitat restoration in the coming decades.

#### Strengths

- The organization possesses the necessary staff and an experienced executive director with a history of working with state and federal partners, indicating a high likelihood of successful project execution.
- The application builds upon an existing conservation plan and previous OWEB grants, demonstrating a sustained commitment to restoration and management.
- The property contains the largest population of Oregon vesper sparrow in the Willamette Valley.
- The noted partnership with Tribes is a significant strength, highlighting a commitment to inclusive conservation efforts.

- The operation welcomes school programs focused on teaching children about farming, offering a valuable avenue for community benefit and education.
- The existing plan covers a mosaic of habitats and balances a complex mix of objectives, including soil health, habitat for Oregon vesper sparrow habitat, and recently restored oak areas, and describes how all these elements will be effectively managed and monitored. Funding will enable implementation of this complex plan.
- The property is in a high-priority watershed for bacteria and temperature water quality concerns, and the proposed practices, including improved upland watering, are expected to address these.
- The plan explicitly notes practices that contribute to carbon sequestration through increasing soil organic matter and reducing erosion.

### **Concerns**

- Although the use of upland water sources to draw cattle away from streams and the fact that half of the streams are currently fenced through CREP were strengths, the application did not state a clear plan or indication for implementing riparian fencing on remaining streams.
- The property has a BPA easement that requires all management activities to support the conservation values in the easement, but the application did not provide the easement. Thus, questions were raised about how the grazing plan will differ from existing expectations under the conservation easement—for example, how prescribed grazing, which is a significant portion of the budget, will be additive.
- The application lacks clarity about the size of the funding request without a clear articulation of specifics regarding how this plan will build upon extensive restoration already undertaken.

### **Concluding Analysis**

The proposal demonstrates a high likelihood of success due to the applicant's and agricultural operator's robust organizational capacity, successful history of leveraging existing conservation plans and funding, and valuable partnerships with Tribes. The project effectively addresses critical environmental issues like water quality and climate change mitigation while fostering community engagement. However, concerns remain regarding the lack of detailed information for the proposed prescribed grazing, the absence of a clear riparian fencing plan, and insufficient clarification on how this project connects to the existing easement.

### **Review Team Ranking**

# Spring 2025 OWEB Grant Offering

## Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

### Conservation Management

Application No.:	226-7204-24335	Project Type:	Conservation Management
Project Name:	Deck Family Farm Conservation Management Plan		
Applicant:	Long Tom Watershed Council		
Region:	Willamette	County:	Lane
OWEB Request:	\$98,983	Total Cost:	\$ 108,533

---

#### APPLICATION DESCRIPTION [ABSTRACT PROVIDED BY THE APPLICANT]

The project is located at Deck Family Farm (DFF), west of Junction City in Lane County. DFF is a diversified livestock and vegetable farm on 321 acres of EFU40-zoned property in the Long Tom Watershed of the Upper Willamette Basin. The farm maintains surface water irrigation rights to 78 acres from Owens creek and soils on the property are characteristic of the Willamette Valley, with a range of silty loams. DFF raises pigs, beef, dairy, eggs, roasting chickens, and lamb on pasture and implements rotational grazing practices along with managing fertility organically on its 321 acres. The farm supplies wholesale products to area retailers, as well as direct to consumer outlets including local farmers markets, a CSA, and online sales from its own website.

Portions of three streams run through the property - Owens, Turnbow, and Nails Creeks - and there are important wetland and remnant oak woodland and savanna habitats on the property. All of these streams are tributaries to Bear Creek, which enters the Long Tom River near Cheshire and is a priority subwatershed for the Long Tom Watershed Council, ODA, and other organizations. Multiple aquatic and terrestrial species listed in the Oregon Conservation Strategy are found on the property, including coastal cutthroat trout, northern red-legged frog, western gray squirrel, and acorn woodpecker.

Funding for a conservation management plan is necessary to help create a plan that balances, enhances, and maintains the highly productive farmland and ecologically important habitats found on the property for the next 50 years.

Long Tom Watershed Council and Upper Willamette Working Lands Program staff will work with the landowner to develop a CMP based on conceptual ideas that have been in discussion for a number of years. Farming practice information and natural resources on the property will be analyzed, maps will be created and partners from other organizations will be consulted during development of the CMP.

#### Strengths

- The application demonstrates the farms strong economic viability through its diversified operations, including vegetables and value-added livestock/meat.
- The project offers significant co-benefits for the City of Monroe's Drinking Water Source Protection area.
- The operation is a multi-generational farm with a proposed 50-year Conservation Management Plan (CMP) duration, encompassing generational transition, indicating long-term commitment.

- The property is located in a high-priority watershed for addressing temperature, bacteria, and nutrient concerns, making livestock management practices particularly impactful.
- The farm's location in a Strategic Implementation Area and National Water Quality Initiative area opens doors for multiple external funding sources.
- The farm runs an effective educational and internship program, providing tangible community benefits beyond environmental improvements.
- The farm currently implements various conservation practices, indicating a proactive approach to stewardship.
- The application acknowledges local climate impacts such as the "heat dome" and the importance of providing shade for livestock and waterways.
- The property is recognized as a Conservation Opportunity Area for oak savannah, riparian areas, and wetlands.

### **Concerns**

- A significant portion of the budget is allocated to nutrient management, but the application lacks sufficient detail on what this will look like in practice.

### **Concluding Analysis**

The application presents a compelling case for funding due to the farm's strong economic viability and diversification, its multi-generational commitment to conservation over a 50-year plan, and its location within a high-priority watershed for addressing critical environmental concerns like water temperature, bacteria, and nutrients. The farm's established and effective educational and internship programs further underscore its broader community benefit, while its existing proactive conservation practices and acknowledgement of climate impacts demonstrate a deep understanding of sustainable agriculture. However, the application could be strengthened by providing more detailed information on nutrient management practices to justify the allocated budget.

### **Review Team Ranking**



# Spring 2025 OWEB Grant Offering

## Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

### Conservation Management

Application No.:	226-7205-24342	Project Type:	Conservation Management
Project Name:	Garden Creek Ranch CMP		
Applicant:	Deschutes Land Trust		
Region:	Central Oregon	County:	Crook
OWEB Request:	\$134,428	Total Cost:	\$ 142,528

---

#### APPLICATION DESCRIPTION [ABSTRACT PROVIDED BY THE APPLICANT]

Deschutes Land Trust (DLT) is requesting \$134,428 from the OWEB OAHF Conservation Management Plans program to fund development and monitoring of an approved Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for a 640-acre privately owned parcel in eastern Crook County. Garden Creek Ranch (the property) is approximately 22 miles east of Prineville and contains pasture and grasslands along Ochoco Creek, and Ponderosa pine forested upland areas. The property is situated on the western boundary of the Ochoco National Forest.

Development of this CMP will increase the long term sustainability of agricultural operations on the property, while also improving the health of aquatic and terrestrial habitats important for local wildlife. This project would serve as a model for similar conservation and agricultural heritage projects across the broader region.

The landowner currently runs a small cattle operation on the property consisting of 25 animals with cow- calf and feeder operations. The landowner's goal is to eventually expand the herd to 75 animals with rotational grazing, while protecting and enhancing natural resources such as pasture land, riparian habitat and forest land. To achieve these goals, the landowner will develop a CMP to identify and prioritize conservation practices that can be implemented over time.

DLT will serve as the grant applicant, administrator, and primary coordinator for the project. Crooked River Watershed Council (CRWC) will oversee development of the CMP and be the resulting Plan holder. CRWC will conduct annual monitoring and reporting. The property owner will assist in the development of the CMP, apply for implementation funds and facilitate monitoring. Other federal and state agencies, such as the USDA Forest Service, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Oregon Department of Forestry, will serve as partners to assess resource needs and collaborate on implementation of identified practices via cost-share programs.

#### Strengths

- The application emphasizes soil health, native plant management, and carbon sequestration through practices like rotational grazing and native revegetation, along with juniper removal. This demonstrates a thoughtful, multi-tiered approach to ecological improvement.
- The proposed use of e-collars is a key strength, allowing for precise grazing control without traditional fencing, which benefits wildlife movement and reduces habitat fragmentation.

- The proposed conservation management plan supports climate resilience by transitioning from invasive annual grasses to native perennials, which contributes to increased carbon sequestration and improved forage.
- The project area is identified as ODFW crucial habitat zone 1 and is adjacent to public lands, offering potential for broader ecological connectivity. It also benefits from the DLT pursuing a Conservation Easement.
- The project benefits from in-kind funding from DLT and NRCS, indicating collaborative support and additional financial resources.
- Applicants have a long history of engagement with Tribes, even if not yet formally enacted on this specific property, highlighting a commitment to inclusive practices.

### **Concerns**

- The agricultural portion of the project seems small in comparison to the overall property size, raising questions about the scalability of the agricultural component despite plans to increase herd size.
- The application is unclear on how grazing will be managed within the forested areas of the property.
- The project area is currently a fairly low priority watershed for water quality concerns.
- More information about the generational succession of the property and the long-term plan for the operation would have been appreciated by reviewers.
- Prescribed burning is generally not recommended in this habitat type due to the high potential for invasive annual grass invasion, which could undermine conservation efforts.

### **Concluding Analysis**

The application presents a forward-thinking approach to land management, strongly emphasizing soil health, native plant restoration, and carbon sequestration through innovative practices like rotational grazing and the use of e-collars for wildlife-friendly control. Its location within a crucial habitat zone and adjacency to public lands, coupled with DLT's pursuit of a Conservation Easement and a history of Tribal engagement, highlights significant ecological and partnership strengths. However, the application raises concerns regarding the limited apparent scalability of the agricultural component and, the lack of clarity on forested grazing management. Additionally, the project's low priority for water quality and potential unsuitability of prescribed burning for this habitat type may impact its broader appeal and effectiveness, and more detail on generational succession would strengthen the application.

### **Review Team Ranking**

4 of 8 (tie)

# Spring 2025 OWEB Grant Offering

## Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

### Conservation Management

Application No.:	226-7207-24352	Project Type:	Conservation Management
Project Name:	Henderson Flats OAHF Conservation Management Plan		
Applicant:	Jefferson SWCD		
Region:	Central Oregon	County:	Jefferson
OWEB Request:	\$133,727	Total Cost:	\$ 167,877

---

#### APPLICATION DESCRIPTION [ABSTRACT PROVIDED BY THE APPLICANT]

The Conservation Management Plan (CMP) Area is 932 acres on the north edge of the Crooked River west of Smith Rock, 22 miles SE of Madras. Approximately half is valuable irrigated cropland in the North Unit Irrigation District (NUID); the other is ungrazed rangeland. The Area consists of 3 contiguous farms and one operator. NUID is a gravity-fed system, delivering water in open canals. Extra water needed to 'carry' irrigation water to the end of the canal enters the Crooked River via the 34Drain, which also carries field runoff from 1400 acres, 500 of which are in the Area. Monitoring of nearby drains shows elevated levels of sediment, phosphorus, and pesticides. The Western ridged mussel (proposed for Endangered Species Act list) lives in the CMP portion of the Crooked River. NUID sharply curtailed irrigation deliveries in the last 5 years, leaving up to 40% of their land unirrigated. The farm economy is suffering, and bare fields host weeds and are eroded by wind and water. Because of its prime location, the Area has been targeted by developers, with attempts in the 1990s to build a resort. However, the majority of the cropland soils are 'farmland of statewide importance'. ODFW has identified portions of the Area as a Priority Wildlife Connectivity Area, and it is adjacent to Deer Winter Range and multiple categories of Crucial Habitat. NUID is piping their local laterals, which will eliminate excess carry water in the 34Drain. The pressurized water will allow more efficient irrigation. The operator has engineer designs for two pivots to replace less efficient wheel lines. Finally, a pond and new pumpback system will be built to capture and reuse all field runoff and prevent it from entering the Crooked River. Partners include Robert Ohlde, Leslie Elliot, and Tom Holechek (landowners); RG Ag Acres (operator); NUID; Jefferson County SWCD (Plan holder); Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, NRCS, Deschutes River Conservancy, and Central Oregon Landwatch.

#### Strengths

- The project is located on working lands threatened by development and adjacent to the USFS Crooked River National Grasslands, BLM, and Smith Rock State Park, offering crucial wildlife connectivity and contributing to the conservation of agricultural lands.
- The application proposes practices to significantly improve soil health, water retention, and reduce soil loss, with potential water quality benefits for Crooked Creek and direct benefits by limiting pollutants in Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs drinking water source area.
- The application showcases excellent partnerships and instills confidence in the applicant's ability to complete the plan. The project also boasts a high match percentage, highlighting strong financial leverage.

- Irrigated cropland can help with wildfire risk mitigation, increasing the significance of the property for the surrounding community.
- The inclusion of viable farming practices, such as the exclusion distance from hybrid seed growers, adds value to the property for long-term agricultural production.

### **Concerns**

- The project's reliance on NUID piping and other larger, external pieces of infrastructure creates some uncertainty regarding its full implementation and success.
- The long-term lease of the properties is not secured, and the involvement of three separate landowners not managed as one unit by the SWCD could pose challenges for long-term cohesion and sustained implementation.
- There is also no mention of juniper removal, despite a significant portion of the land being rangeland where it might be beneficial.
- The watershed is not a high priority watershed for water quality concerns, potentially limiting certain funding avenues.

### **Concluding Analysis**

The application presents a compelling opportunity to conserve and enhance working agricultural lands adjacent to significant public resources like Smith Rock State Park and the Crooked River National Grasslands, directly contributing to wildlife connectivity and offering substantial soil health improvements and water quality benefits for Crooked Creek and the community of Warm Springs' drinking water. The project's high match percentage and strong partnerships underscore its organizational capacity and broad support, while its role in wildfire risk mitigation highlights a crucial community benefit. The application's reliance on external NUID piping infrastructure creates uncertainty and the unsecured long-term lease and fragmented landowner management could undermine sustained implementation. There was a lack of detail about juniper removal considerations in the application which leaves key ecological questions unanswered.

### **Review Team Ranking**

4 of 8 (tie)

# Spring 2025 OWEB Grant Offering

## Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

### Conservation Management

Application No.:	226-7203-24331	Project Type:	Conservation Management
Project Name:	Horseshoe Bar Conservation Management Plan		
Applicant:	Sustainable Northwest		
Region:	Central Oregon	County:	Wasco
OWEB Request:	\$185,386	Total Cost:	\$ 206,335

---

#### APPLICATION DESCRIPTION [ABSTRACT PROVIDED BY THE APPLICANT]

1. This project is located in the Clarno Rapids-John Day Rivers Watershed (17070202407) located in Wasco and Sherman County. This project runs along the main stem of the John Day River for approximately 13 river miles between the southern tip of Sherman and Gilliam Counties and the northern portion of Wasco and Wheeler Counties.

2. Rangelands in the west are integral to the framework of preserving our natural resources and habitats and working agricultural lands can play a key role in conserving and enhancing these areas. In 2021 the Horseshoe Bar ranch was purchased after years of poor management. Current ownership and ranch management seeks to work in harmony with their resources and improve their over 34,542-acre landbase.

3. Sustainable Northwest and our partners believe in the ability of regenerative ranching to improve the outcomes of rangelands. Through our partnership with Horseshoe Bar Ranch and our Regenerative Ranching Program, we have established a strong relationship with the landowners and want to help them enhance their landbase and ranching business to meet both their ecological and economic goals.

4. Project Partners include Sustainable Northwest, Country Natural Beef, NRCS, Wasco County SWCD, and BLM.

#### Strengths

- The project covers over 34,000 acres with extensive river frontage, offering substantial potential for regional conservation.
- The property is a viable ranch with existing farm infrastructure to support a diversity of ranching operations.
- Covenants and easements recorded in the title ensure its long-term use as agricultural land, preventing development.
- The proposed conservation management plan includes significant juniper removal, focuses on soil health, and implements prescribed grazing to improve degraded areas, transitioning to perennials for carbon sequestration.
- The property is in a high-priority watershed for temperature and bacteria, indicating the proposed water quality improvements will have a high impact.

- The project benefits from a partnership with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Sustainable Northwest, and the new landowner is already engaged with NRCS programming (EQIP), demonstrating strong capacity and support.
- The ranch's multi-use nature is compatible with surrounding working lands and increases the economic resilience of the operation.
- The property's large scale and location in a high-priority area for conserving natural resources in the John Day region make it well-suited for a comprehensive conservation management plan.

### **Concerns**

- The application lacks clarity about the current productivity of the ranching operation given past degradation on the property.
- The application indicates the property is outside a mapped Sage Grouse area, despite checking the box for it in the application.

### **Concluding Analysis**

The application presents a strong case for conservation due to the immense scale of the property (over 34,000 acres) and its extensive river frontage, offering significant regional ecological benefits. The ranch's agricultural viability, reinforced by covenants and easements ensuring its long-term agricultural use, firmly positions it as a vital working landscape. The plan's focus on juniper removal, soil health, prescribed grazing for carbon sequestration, and addressing water quality in a high-priority area watershed demonstrates a technically sound and impactful approach. Furthermore, robust partnerships with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and NRCS, coupled with the ranch's compatible multi-use nature, highlight its strong collaborative foundation and economic resilience.

### **Review Team Ranking**

# Spring 2025 OWEB Grant Offering

## Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

### Conservation Management

Application No.:	226-7206-24347	Project Type:	Conservation Management
Project Name:	Rio Robles Habitat Sanctuary		
Applicant:	South Santiam Watershed Council		
Region:	Willamette	County:	Linn
OWEB Request:	\$30,416	Total Cost:	\$ 45,686

---

#### APPLICATION DESCRIPTION [ABSTRACT PROVIDED BY THE APPLICANT]

This Conservation Management Plan (CMP) project is located on the 100.2-acre Koos property along the South Santiam River, near its confluence with the North Santiam River, in Linn County, Oregon. Approximately 50 acres of the site are in rotational grass seed production, while the remaining acres host a mix of oak savannah, wetlands, and wet forest, riparian habitats, and conifer forests. Rapid development pressure in the Willamette Valley, coupled with habitat loss and declining watershed health, underscores the need to proactively protect agricultural viability, soil health, and water quality, as well as preserve sensitive habitats.

The proposed work includes developing and implementing a comprehensive CMP over a 20-year planning horizon. Key conservation activities will include forest stand management; native shrub establishment; restoration of oak savannah and declining habitats; wildlife habitat enhancement plantings; no-till farming; and cover cropping. These efforts aim to enhance ecological resilience, support recovery of ESA-listed Upper Willamette River Chinook salmon and winter steelhead through improved off-channel habitats, and maintain agricultural productivity.

#### Strengths

- The application clearly prioritizes habitat restoration, specifically for a developing savanna (under at-risk ash trees) and a riparian area with sloughs. The proposal identifies and connects to ODF Conservation Strategy habitats.
- The application demonstrates a clear understanding of climate threats (e.g., drought, fire, hydrology shifts) and articulates a strong connection between these threats and proposed implementation practices like cover cropping, wetland protection, and forest management. The applicant is conscious of the carbon footprint of the agricultural operation and strives to maintain year-round cover on all fields.
- The property is in a high-priority water quality watershed for bacteria and temperature and is located directly across from a USFWS conservation easement, offering potential for broader ecological connectivity.
- The application incorporates a multi-generational aspect, indicating a long-term commitment to the land, and lists a 50% match in the project budget.

#### Concerns

- The combination of the property's smaller acreage, lack of irrigation water, and focus predominantly on grass seed crops raises concerns about its agricultural economic viability as a standalone operation. Reviewers noted it might need to be farmed in conjunction with other properties.
- The application is focused solely on developing a plan with no early implementation, which may reduce its immediate impact compared to other proposals.
- The application is more geared towards habitat improvement than farm economics. Reviewers would have appreciated more detail on the interactions between ecological uplift and long-term agricultural viability.

### **Concluding Analysis**

The application presents a vision for ecological enhancements, demonstrating a strong understanding of habitat needs and climate threats through its focus on savanna development, riparian enhancement, and explicit conservation practices like cover cropping. Its strategic location in a high-priority water quality watershed and adjacency to a USFWS conservation easement underscore its potential for significant ecological impact and connectivity, further bolstered by a multi-generational commitment. However, significant concerns arise from the project's limited agricultural economic viability as a standalone operation due to its small acreage and lack of irrigation, making the economic-ecological interaction unclear. The application's singular focus on plan development without immediate implementation also limits its near-term impact, and a clearer articulation of how the proposed ecological uplift directly supports long-term farm economic viability would strengthen its overall competitiveness.

### **Review Team Ranking**



# Spring 2025 OWEB Grant Offering

## Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

### Conservation Management

Application No.:	226-7200-24325	Project Type:	Conservation Management
Project Name:	Rogue Regenerative/Soda Springs		
Applicant:	Rogue Regenerative		
Region:	Southern Oregon	County:	Jackson
OWEB Request:	\$122,625	Total Cost:	\$ 128,785

---

#### APPLICATION DESCRIPTION [ABSTRACT PROVIDED BY THE APPLICANT]

This project proposes the development of a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for Soda Spring, a 190-acre property located in Jackson County at approximately 42.1274°N, -122.5580°W (mailing address: 800 Buckhorn Springs Rd), ten miles southeast of Ashland, Oregon, in the historic Buckhorn Valley. Rogue Regenerative, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, submits this proposal in alignment with its mission: “serving, engaging, educating, and celebrating with the community through organic, regenerative agriculture and social permaculture.” The CMP will demonstrate how conservation practices can be developed in collaboration with landowners and agricultural operators to support viable agricultural operations and delivery of ecosystem services.

The CMP will be co-developed with landowner Soda Spring LLC and agricultural operator Veld Farm. The property faces challenges including decline in pasture productivity, encroachment of invasive species, soil degradation, and increasing climate pressures such as drought, wildfire, and heavy rainfall. Regionally, agricultural engagement is waning, and working lands are fragmenting. The CMP will address these concerns using NRCS conservation practices to restore pasture and rangeland, protect riparian areas, and improve soil health and water retention. Practices may include Conservation Cover (327), Prescribed Burning (338), Pasture and Hay Planting (512), Prescribed Grazing (528), Tree/Shrub Establishment (612), Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390), and Riparian Forest Buffer (391), and others.

Veld Farm will play an active role in both designing and implementing the CMP. With experience in regenerative agriculture and community education, they bring on-the-ground insight and commitment to land stewardship. Rogue Regenerative will guide coordination and planning to ensure the CMP reflects both ecological best practices and the nonprofit’s mission, setting the foundation for long-term agricultural viability and conservation at Soda Spring.

#### Strengths

- The property is located in a priority water quality watershed for bacteria and temperature, and some proposed practices could directly address these water quality concerns.
- The application incorporates NRCS practice codes, suggesting a standardized approach to some conservation efforts.
- The mention of prescribed burning for fuel load management and promoting fire-adapted native species aligns with important ecological goals, though concerns about its suitability in this habitat were noted by reviewers.

### **Concerns**

- The application lacks baseline information on existing habitat, water quality, and wildlife presence. Specifically, oak savannah habitat is not mentioned, despite its potential presence and regional restoration efforts.
- The application identifies many practices that seem layered or "stacked" on top of each other, raising concerns about the interplay among these and if the proposed approach was strategically planned to address specific issues. The application is unclear about why specific activities are proposed on this specific property at this point in time.
- The application lacks clear articulation of the significance of this specific ranch and its relative contribution to Jackson County agriculture.
- The application lacks clarity on applicant's capacity to complete the project, citing a limited track record of having completed only one other project. Reviewers expressed questions about there being no public presence of the organization (e.g., no website) and about the organizational contact for the application being a partial owner of the property proposed for work
- The cost of the project appears high for the proposed activities.

### **Concluding Analysis**

While the proposed project aims to address critical water quality issues for bacteria and temperature in a priority watershed and incorporates standardized NRCS practices, and briefly mentions prescribed burning for fuel management, significant concerns overshadow these strengths. Reviewers expressed questions about the applicant's capacity given their limited track record and lack of public presence. The proposed plan is seen as overly ambitious with too many layered practices, raising doubts about feasibility and cost-effectiveness. The property description lacks crucial baseline information on habitat and wildlife, including notable omissions like oak savanna.

### **Review Team Ranking**

# ITEM C, Attachment B



## Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program

June 10, 2025 OAHP Commission Meeting



Tina Kotek, Governor

The following table shows the Technical Review Team ranking of each OAHP Conservation Management Plan grant application. The table shows the amount requested for each project, and in the far-right hand column, the total amount of grant funds that would be cumulatively committed depending on the location of the funding line.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>App #</b>	<b>Application Name</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>OWEB Ask*</b>	<b>Running Total Request</b>
<b>1</b>	226-7204-24335	Deck Family Farm Conservation Management Plan	Long Tom Watershed Council	\$98,983	\$98,983
<b>2</b>	226-7203-24331	Horseshoe Bar Conservation Management Plan	Sustainable Northwest	\$185,386	\$284,369
<b>3</b>	226-7202-24328	Creswell Oaks Conservation Management Plan and Implementation Phase One	Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council	\$200,000	\$484,369
<b>4 (tie)</b>	226-7205-24342	Garden Creek Ranch CMP	Deschutes Land Trust	\$134,428	\$618,797
<b>4 (tie)</b>	226-7207-24352	Henderson Flats OAHP Conservation Management Plan	Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District	\$133,727	\$752,524
<b>Staff Recommended Funding Line</b>					
<b>6</b>	226-7201-24326	Branch Road Farm Conservation Management Plan Implementation Phase One	Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council	\$49,519	\$802,403
<b>7</b>	226-7206-24347	Rio Robles Habitat Sanctuary	South Santiam Watershed Council	\$30,416	\$832,459
<b>8</b>	226-7200-24325	Rogue Regenerative/Soda Spring	Rogue Regenerative	\$122,625	\$955,084
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>				<b>\$955,084</b>	

**Spending Plan Target:**

**\$752,524\*\***

\*Final OWEB ask numbers may be adjusted based on final OWEB fiscal budget review.

\*\*\$750,000 was the OWEB board and OAHC adopted spending plan target for this offering, however OWEB staff plan to request the OWEB board amend their spending plan at their July 22-23<sup>rd</sup> meeting in order to fully fund the top five ranked projects in the OAHP CMP solicitation.



Agenda Item D

## **Program Updates**

Commission Meeting June 10, 2025



# STAFF REPORT

## *Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program*

June 10, 2025, Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission Meeting



Tina Kotek, Governor

### ITEM D – Program Updates

**To:** Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission (OAHC)

**From:** Taylor Larson, OAHP Program Coordinator

Robin Meacher, OAHP Conservation Easement Specialist

Renee Davis, OWEB Acquisitions and Special Programs Manager

#### Introduction

This staff report provides a brief update to the commission about legislative and general OWEB agency developments since the previous commission meeting in February 2025 and provides Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) working lands conservation easement grant program refinements for discussion by the commission.

#### Legislative Updates

[House Bill 3131](#) would allocate \$17.3 million to the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Fund. As of 2/12/25 the bill has been referred by the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means. Included in the Governor's Recommended Budget and also being considered by the Joint Committee on Ways and Means for OWEB, is \$5 million to the Natural and Working Lands Fund to be allocated at the direction of the Oregon Climate Action Commission and \$2 million for the OAHP program for grants. Staff will continue to track the status of House Bill 3131 and any other legislative actions that impact OAHP.

#### Proposed Refinements for 2025 OAHP Solicitation

The topics identified below are those identified by staff for potential refinement for the next cycle of OAHP working lands conservation covenant and easement grants and staff request OAHC input in these areas.

##### **Conservation Covenants and Easements – Scoring Rubric**

Grant applicants, the Commission, and some technical reviewers have expressed interest in OAHP developing and utilizing a scoring rubric in coordination with the evaluation criteria to better communicate and understand why projects fall in a certain ranked order. The OAHC previously expressed interest in transparency related to the translation of the technical committee's discussion to the ranking and expressed interest in aligning with NRCS ACEP/ALE to the extent possible, as it is the primary match funding program.

The use of a scoring rubric in application evaluation could provide a useful communication tool throughout the evaluation process to guide applicants and the OAHC in understanding where an application excelled or fell short, while providing the technical committee with more direction as to

what they should be looking for related to each evaluation criteria. OAHP staff have spent a considerable amount of time researching acquisition grant programs that utilize scoring rubrics for their evaluation criteria and have drafted a memo and an example rubric to prompt Commission discussion on this item (Attachment A).

Staff have identified a number of topics to prompt Commission discussion on this item, including:

- acknowledgement that attaching a point range to a criteria inherently weights that criteria's importance to the program;
- some scores may end up within one to two points of each other, ultimately leading to similar questions from applicants about the "why" behind a score;
- more quantitative method may result in less qualitative reasoning presented in evaluations; and the development of a rubric framed within the context of the existing evaluation criteria will take time and input from the Commission; and
- no evaluation system, whether qualitative or quantitative, solves the problem of some projects falling below a funding line in a funding constrained environment.
- the value of staying consistent in review processes between OWEB programs vs the benefits of customizing review processes to meet identified needs in one program

Staff request that the Commission consider the use of scoring rubric, and if interested, provide guidance to staff on the preference and methods to utilize in creating the points and point ranges for each criterion.

### **Conservation Covenants and Easements -- Technical Review Process**

Technical review and subsequent ranking by the technical review team (TRT) of grant applications is required by OAHP's statute and is an integral part of OWEB's application review process. TRT members bring subject-matter expertise that is invaluable in providing an accurate and fair review of applicants' description of their project and how its design is consistent with OAHP evaluation criteria. OAHP staff have approached convening the technical expertise for application evaluation in two ways. In the program's initial solicitation, technical expertise was gathered from a "core" of subject matter experts that reviewed and provided written comment on each application submitted. Additional review was provided for each application by regional experts familiar with the natural resource and agricultural values described in the application. The second solicitation involved one technical committee that reviewed, evaluated, and collectively ranked every application in a meeting that had 100% attendance from the committee. The committee was an amalgamation of statewide expertise and regional expertise, as demonstrated by the list of areas of expertise presented in Attachment B.

In the initial round, site visits were offered for each application, with varying levels of participation by review team members, which ultimately led to feedback/concern from some applicants about parity or review. In the second round, staff conducted site visits without review team members but prompted the reviewers for any questions about the application they would like staff to bring to the site visit.

Staff will present the Commission with the potential merits, logistical considerations and trade-offs presented by technical reviewer site visits (in person/virtual), one TRT vs. core team with regional variability for each application, and general categories of subject matter expertise utilized in previous cycles to develop the review team (Attachment B). The level of participation by federal partners and the ultimate strain on time for all those tapped to participate in review teams presents important consideration around what is possible for future review team make-up and procedure.

### **Application Updates**

Staff have continued to solicit feedback from OAHP program participants to inform program continuous improvement efforts. In early May 2025, staff convened applicants from the 2024 application cycle for a feedback session on items of interest on the program implementation. Most comments focused on the application and evaluation process. Topics of discussion included: finding the balance between rigor and volume of questions asked; volume of maps and overall uploads requested; understanding evaluation of organizational capacity and soundness considerations; and understanding what conservation plans, species, and habitats applicants should focus on in their applications.

Ultimately, the goal of the application is to solicit the foundational aspects of a specific project that speak to the evaluation criteria and the “sweet spot” among the suite of criteria. The application should contain enough detailed and specific information to enable the review committee to rank applications against each other. Further, the application must be robust enough to enable the Commission and ultimately the OWEB Board to confidently recommend and award public funds to a project. Finally, it is important that the application gather appropriate amount of detailed and specific information to translate into the project scope of any resulting grant agreement. Staff create a line-of-sight goals, objectives, and outcomes presented in the application through the grant agreement and into final project documents that describe successful project implementation. Staff will work to incorporate feedback, including from the Commission, and learnings from previous cycles into any future grant applications.

### **Recommendation**

*This is an information item only.*

### **Attachments**

Attachment A – Analysis Memo and Draft Scoring Rubric

Attachment B – Review Team Expertise Areas

# Scoring Analysis Memo

## *Considerations for Application of Scoring Rubric to OAHP Working Lands Covenant and Easement Grant Applications*

### **Current Scenario**

OAHP is required to utilize technical expertise to evaluate and rank applications for funding under both the Working Lands Covenant and Easement and the Conservation Management Planning grant offerings.<sup>1</sup> The technical committee(s) is “jointly” appointed by the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission (OAHC) and the board.<sup>2</sup> The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission is required to review and consider the recommendations of the technical committee established to evaluate and rank applications as part of its core duties.<sup>3</sup> Technical committee evaluation and ranking of grant proposals must be based on evaluation criteria established in administrative rule.

The technical review and funding process is further described in rule, requiring OWEB staff to convene the technical committee and provide those rankings to the Commission.<sup>4</sup> The statutory process was further elaborated on to include a requirement that OWEB staff develop a funding recommendation to accompany the technical committee’s ranking. These are considered by the OAHC in its development of a funding recommendation to the OWEB board based on the availability of funds, and the OWEB board makes the final award decision. While this process is similar to the statutory framework provided in 541.958(2) for OWEB grants authorized under 541.956, ORS 541.977 to 541.989 provides a statutory framework for Working Lands Conservation distinct from that under the Watershed Enhancement Program.

OAHP staff have approached convening the technical expertise for application evaluation in two ways. In the program’s initial solicitation, technical expertise was gathered from a “core” of subject matter experts that reviewed and provided written comment on each application submitted. Additional review was provided for each application by regional experts familiar with the natural resource and agricultural values described in the application. The second solicitation involved one technical committee that reviewed, evaluated, and collectively ranked every application in a meeting that had 100% attendance from the committee. The committee was an amalgamation of statewide expertise and regional expertise. In both scenarios, members of the technical committee

---

<sup>1</sup> ORS 541.984(6)(b)

<sup>2</sup> ORS 541.984(3)

<sup>3</sup> ORS 541.989(1)(d)

<sup>4</sup> OAR 698-015-0100(3)



suggested that a scoring rubric would have been helpful to guide their individual review approach to better understand how they should be looking at each criterion individually and each criterion in the context of the full range of criteria included. OAHP has 27 different considerations in its evaluation criteria, which may be an exacerbating factor in the challenges reviewers have expressed in ranking projects from all corners of the state and with a variety of farm and ranch properties hosting different natural resource values.

Grant applicants also requested consideration of a scoring rubric to better understand why projects fell in a certain location on the ranking when the evaluations were similar, particularly as the evaluation criteria are currently not weighted, and to be able to better vet their own projects on the front end when deciding whether their project would rank highly in OAHP. The OAHC expressed similar interest in transparency related to the translation of the technical committee's discussion to the ranking and expressed interest in aligning with NRCS ACEP/ALE to the extent possible, as it is the primary match funding program.

The use of a scoring rubric in application evaluation and ranking would present a useful communication tool throughout the evaluation process to guide the OAHC in understanding where an application excelled or fell short, ultimately helping applications in assessing their applications and the projects they propose.

### **Use of Scoring Rubrics Across Similar (non-OWEB Programs)**

The requests for a scoring rubric have been limited to the application within OAHP's working lands conservation covenant and easement program. This program funds the purchase of working lands covenants or easements by eligible entities. For the purposes of exploring the use of a scoring rubric, staff compiled programs similar in scope (fund conservation easement, and are within the Pacific Northwest, or are focused on working lands conservation). The following is a summary of these programs and their approach to application evaluation.

#### **Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program – Farmland Preservation**

##### ***Program Manual Linked Above***

*Evaluation Process, Section 4, begins on Page 40*

*Evaluation Criteria Summary and Detailed Scoring Criteria begins on Page 41*

Most akin to the OAHP is the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program's Farmland Preservation grant offerings. This program funds the purchase of working lands conservation easements - both termed and perpetual - as well as the acquisition of leases. While the program's purpose does not explicitly call out protection of fish and wildlife, the

program includes farm stewardship practices and proposed enhancement and restoration activities as both eligible expenses and considerations in its evaluation criteria.

Applications are reviewed by an advisory committee comprised of people who possess a statewide perspective and are recognized for their experiences and knowledge of farming and ranching in Washington. Applicants prepare written responses to the evaluation criteria, and the advisory committee members review the responses and score the projects. The scoring is confidential. Staff then combine the scores for a total of evaluation score and the resulting ranked list is used to develop the funding recommendations presented to the RCO Board.

There are nine evaluation criteria scored by the Advisory Committee and two scored by the RCO staff. Each criterion has an associated total of possible points. The program manual provides additional detail related to the considerations for the point range, providing a guide for the reviewer when evaluating the application's addressing of the particular criteria.

An example of grants and evaluation results materials can be found [here](#).

### **California Department of Conservation – Agricultural Conservation Easements Grants**

#### ***Program Manual Linked Above***

*Evaluation Process and Criteria begins on Page 11*

*NOTE: The manual linked and referenced is a DRAFT from January 2025.*

The California Department of Conservation funds agricultural conservation easements through its Farmland Conservancy Program. The program has a lengthy list of goals, including “promoting land stewardship practices that result in clean air, clean water, carbon sequestration, and healthy natural ecosystems.

Applications are evaluated by department staff designated as evaluators by the Director. A pre-proposal is required prior to applying for funding, where department staff assist the applicant in determining whether the project meets the program eligibility criteria and what additional information will need to be presented with the application. The program has both Eligibility Criteria (14) and Easement selection criteria that have associated points (12 criteria with 90 points possible).

A ranked list based on the points received is presented to the Director of the Department, who then considers comments and recommendations of the reviewers and mails the final funding decision.

### **NRCS ACEP-ALE**

[General Oregon ALE Ranking Pool](#) - Scoring Criteria begins on Page 5

[Other programmatic documents \(including application packet\)](#)

The Natural Resource Conservation Service Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) is intended to protect the agricultural viability and related conservation values of farms and ranches. It does this by limiting nonagricultural uses that can negatively affect those values and by protecting grazing uses and related conservation values. The Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) facilitates the use of conservation easements to meet the above goals.

The program is a national program, with state NRCS offices facilitating application and ranking, then sending projects forward for national review that allocates funding across the country. There is a set of 14 criteria with associated points, totaling 200 points maximum. The majority of the criteria have quantitative point ranges, typically 2-5 categories that are associated with a measurable quantity. For example, one criterion asks the proximity of the parcel to other agricultural operations and agricultural infrastructure, which is then evaluated based on the property adjoining, being within 1 mile, or greater than 1 mile but less than 3 miles from, or greater than 3 miles away. Each category has a given number of points associated. Other criteria are more binary – e.g. YES equates 20 points, NO equals 0 points. State NRCS easement staff score and rank the projects.

### [Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program](#)

#### ***Program Manual Linked Above***

*Project Selection Criteria and Review Process begins on Page 17*

Though unrelated to working lands conservation, the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program is an Oregon program facilitated by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife that funds the purchase of conservation easements (and fee title acquisitions). The program was established through a settlement agreement between the Bonneville Power Administration and the State of Oregon to mitigate the effects of construction, inundation and operation of the Willamette River Basin Flood Control Projects. The program is facilitated by ODFW, but utilizes BPA funds and BPA realty and due diligence staff to facilitate the acquisition review. The project selection criteria were initially developed in 2011 and the program held its most recent solicitation in 2024, for FY26 funding. The project selection criteria were first formally used by the program, after scientific review, for use in FY14 projects and have been reviewed and refined annually.

Project proposals are reviewed by a technical review team, of which BPA staff are part of. The technical review team scores and ranks all projects submitted, which are then

forwarded to the Wildlife Advisory Group (WAG). The WAG provides strategic guidance and coordination for protecting, restoring, and enhancing habitat to implement the settlement agreement. The WAG uses the review and rankings of the technical review team and the project proposals to assess each proposal using the criteria and “unranked social factors that may be relevant.” The WAG produces a prioritized list of the proposals that is presented to the ODFW Director, which then presents a recommendation to BPA for funding allocation.

The program has 12 project selection criteria, each with an identified point range. Notably, certain two criteria - cultural significance and project readiness - are not scored by the technical review team. Cultural significance is based on a determination by at least one of the three partner tribes prior to the technical review team review. It is then given a score of 10 points if designation is received from a tribe and zero points if no designation. Readiness is evaluated by the Readiness Assessment Team, which consists of ODFW and BPA realty staff. The results of the assessment are provided to the technical review team for their consideration during project evaluation.

#### [Private Forest Accord](#)

#### ***Manual at link above – Selection Criteria Points in [Appendix E](#)***

The Private Forest Accord grant program funds projects that benefit species covered under the Habitat Conservation Plan created as a result of the PFA legislation. The program allows for the acquisition of conservation easements. However, there has not yet been a solicitation that includes funding for acquisition. The program is included in this as another example of an Oregon program that funds the acquisition of conservation easements administrated by a state agency that utilizes a scoring rubric in its evaluation process. Additional detail around evaluation process is not included here because an acquisition solicitation has not yet happened.

#### **Implications**

The examples demonstrate that several acquisition programs – more specifically acquisition programs that fund the purchase of conservation easements – utilize a scoring rubric in the evaluation of project proposals. Methods of technical committee involvement vary, but the use of a point system accompanying the evaluation/selection criteria is consistent. For context, these programs were not chosen as examples *because* they use a scoring rubric. Rather, the programs described above represent the programs most like OAHP in scope and geography along the west coast.

## *Scoring Rubric Draft Example*

### **Total Points Available: XXX**

1) The regional significance of the agricultural, natural resource, and related social values of the working land that will be subject to the Working Land Conservation Covenant or Working Land Conservation Easement **(XX points)**

(a) The potential viability of the property for agriculture, including but not limited to soil types, suitability for producing different types of crops, and water availability;

(b) The land's contribution to long-term conservation of the region's agricultural land base;

(c) The regional significance of the agricultural operation based on location, its associated infrastructure, and other relevant factors including supporting agricultural values important to the region; and

(d) Supporting implementation of local, regional, state, federal or Tribal priorities and plans that support fish or wildlife habitat, water quality or other natural resource values.

(2) The extent to which the Working Land Conservation Covenant or Working Land Conservation Easement would protect, maintain, or enhance farming or ranching on the working land **(XX points)**

(a) Reducing the potential for future conversion or fragmentation of the property and surrounding working land; and

(b) Maintaining or enhancing the ability of the land to be in productive agricultural use that supports a viable agricultural operation.

(3) The extent to which the Working Land Conservation Covenant or Working Land Conservation Easement would protect, maintain or enhance significant fish or wildlife habitat, water quality or other natural resource values **(XX points)**

(a) Protecting, maintaining, or improving the quality and connectivity of plant or wildlife habitat on and around the working land; and

(b) Utilizing land stewardship practices that maintain or enhance soil health.

(4) The extent to which the project supports the integrated management, maintenance or enhancement of the agricultural and natural resource values on the working land. **(X points)**

**0 points** There is no discussion of the specific approaches the project will address integrated management, maintenance or enhancement of the specific resources that support the stated agricultural and natural resource values on the property.

**X-X points** There is some discussion of the specific approaches the project will address integrated management, maintenance or enhancement of the specific resources that support the stated agricultural and natural resource values on the property.

**X-X points** There is extensive discussion and evidence provided of the specific approaches the project will utilize to address integrated management, maintenance or enhancement of the specific resources that support the stated agricultural and natural resource values on the property.

**X points** There is extensive discussion and evidence provided of the specific approaches the project will utilize to address integrated management, maintenance or enhancement of the specific resources that support the stated agricultural and natural resource values on the property **AND** the applicant will include the specific stewardship practices in the terms of the conservation easement.

(5) The extent to which the Working Land Conservation Covenant or Working Land Conservation Easement would protect agricultural outcomes or benefits from other related investments. **(X points)**

In considering the significance of outcomes or benefits identified, consider the extent of the documentation provided by the applicant relative to proposed outcomes or benefits.

**0-X points** Benefits or outcomes are mentioned, but not described in any specific detail

**X-X points** Benefits or outcomes are well described and applicant makes reference to specific detail supporting the assertion of the outcomes

**X-X points** Multiple benefits or outcomes are well described, applicant makes specific reference to the detail supporting the assertion of the outcomes **AND** provides supporting evidence relative to the proposed or demonstrated benefits

(6) The capacity and competence of the applicant and the proposed Working Land Conservation Covenant or Working Land Conservation Easement holder to purchase, accept, implement, hold, monitor, steward, and enforce a Working Land Conservation Covenant or Working Land Conservation Easement **(XX points)**

(a) Accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, or implementation of standards and practices that are similar to an organization that is eligible for accreditation;

(b) Inclusion of working land preservation in the organization's mission, vision or other organizational documents;

(c) The financial capability of the organization to steward conservation Working Land Conservation Covenants or Working Land Conservation Easements over time; and

(d) Demonstrated relevant commitment, ability, expertise, and track record to purchase, accept, implement, hold, monitor, steward, and enforce Working Land Conservation Covenant or Working Land Conservation Easement or other relevant projects.

(7) The extent to which the benefit to the state from the investment may be maximized **(X points)**

(a) The ability to leverage grant moneys with other funding sources;

(b) The duration and extent of the agreement, with a preference for longer term agreements;

(c) The cumulative effect of similar conservation or agricultural investments in the community, including other OAHP funded plans, covenants, or easements; and

(d) Consistency with local comprehensive plans and statewide planning goals.

(8) The extent and nature of the impacts of the Working Land Conservation Covenant or Working Land Conservation Easement on owners or operators of neighboring lands. **(X points)**

(9) The extent to which project will benefit the local area, as evidenced by engagement with and support from the local community and Tribes. **(X points)**

**0-X points** The application includes statements of benefits from the community and Tribes.

**X-X points** The application includes description of the engagement with local communities and Tribes and specific details on the benefits directly related to the specific project

**X points** The application includes description of the engagement with local communities and Tribes and specific details on the benefits directly related to the specific project AND letters of support are included with the application from parties identified.

(10) The level of threat of conversion or fragmentation of the working land. **(18 points)**

Points should be based on the severity of the threat that the property will be converted to some use other than agriculture or fragmented from its existing configuration in a manner that degrades its suitability for agriculture and natural resources within the next five to ten years.

**X-X points** Low likelihood it will be converted to another use or fragmented

**X-X points** Medium likelihood it will be converted to another use or fragmented

**X-X points** Strong likelihood it will be converted to another use or fragmented

(11) The soundness of the legal and financial terms of the proposed real estate transaction. **(X points)**

#### **Climate Criteria from 698-005-0045**

(1) How engagement with, and input from, local communities disproportionately impacted by climate change has informed or will inform the project. **(X points)**

(2) How changing climate conditions are incorporated into the project and how the project will contribute to durable adaptation and resilience for ecosystems, including human communities. **(X points)**

(3) How consideration of greenhouse gas emissions or long-term carbon sequestration or storage has informed the project. **(X points)**



## ITEM D – Program Updates

### Attachment B

Expertise represented on 2024 application cycle technical review committee:

- A. Wildlife habitat
- B. Conservation easement stewardship
- C. Landowner capacity/interactions
- D. Willamette Valley Cropland
- E. Rangeland
- F. Pasture
- G. Land Use
- H. Agricultural Soils
- I. Agriculture Commodities
- J. Water Quality
- K. Food Systems
- L. Fisheries
- M. Wetlands
- N. Sage/Steppe ecosystems



Agenda Item E

## **Other Business**

Commission Meeting June 10, 2025



## STAFF REPORT

### *Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP)*

June 10, 2025 Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission Meeting



Tina Kotek, Governor

## ITEM E – Working Land Conservation Easement Grant Time Extension Request

**To:** Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission (OAHC)  
**From:** Taylor Larson, OAHP Program Coordinator  
Robin Meacher, OAHP Conservation Easement Specialist  
Renee Davis, Acquisitions and Special Programs Manager

### Introduction

Staff requests the Commission recommend the OWEB Board extend the closing date for two OAHP funded Conservation Easement projects: Seeley Farms Phase 1 (223-7100-22521) and Wahl Ranch (223-7104-22600).

### Background

Every OAHP grant is conditioned on the grantee completing required due diligence items to the satisfaction of OWEB and the match-funding partner prior to the release of funds for the conservation easement transaction. Consistent with past practice across OWEB transaction programs, staff is presenting a recommendation to the OAHC (and subsequently the OWEB Board) for approval prior to granting the grantee's extension request.<sup>1</sup>

Both Seeley Farm Phase 1 and Wahl Ranch were awarded in 2023 and required per the administrative rules in effect at that time to complete their transactions within 18 months of their board award<sup>2</sup>. At the June 2024 OAHC meeting, staff presented the OAHC with a recommendation to extend all 2023 OAHP conservation easement grant awards by nine months to facilitate coordinated review and timelines with federal match partners. The OAHC concurred with staff's recommendation and forwarded it on to the OWEB Board, which approved the commission's recommendation. This extended the date for closing for all FY 2023 OAHP conservation easement grants to July 28, 2025. This resulted in a 27-month timeline to close.

---

<sup>1</sup> OAR 698-015-0110(3) requires staff seek OAHC and Board approval if staff is recommending *not* extending the grant award and instead recommending the funds be made available for other uses by OWEB for purposes of the OAHP.

<sup>2</sup> OAHP Oregon Administrative Rules were updated in 2025, which included changing the timeline for completion of conditions and closing on the transaction to 24 months from the Board award.

In January 2025, the Board adopted rule revisions that in part extended the timeline to close on OAHP conservation easement projects to 24 months from the date of the Board award. The initial timeline extension in October 2024 brought all FY 2023 grants within a timeline akin to the timeline now currently described in rule.

### Extension Request

**Seeley Farm Phase 1 (Grant No. 223-7100-22521)** was awarded to Oregon Agricultural Trust (OAT) to be used for the purchase of a working lands conservation easement on approximately 385 acres of high-value farmland in Columbia County.

OAT has completed or initiated a significant portion of their due diligence required by OWEB and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the primary match source for both grants. Progress includes resolving title matters, initiation of survey work to develop boundary descriptions, negotiation of the conservation easement deed, preparation of the baseline documentation report, and completion of an appraisal, which has been received for review by OWEB. OAT anticipates outstanding items will be completed by the end of June.

OAT requests that OWEB extend its closing deadline, anticipating that additional time will be needed to coordinate and accommodate OWEB and NRCS approval timelines with OWEB's approval requirements on due diligence items. OAT requests the OWEB funds in Grant No. 223-7100-22521 be extended to October 31, 2025.

**Wahl Ranch (Grant No. 223-7104-22600)** was awarded to Wild Rivers Land Trust (WRLT) to be used for the purchase of a working lands conservation easement on approximately 775 acres of important soil resources and fish and wildlife habitat on the southern Oregon Coast in Curry County.

WRLT has completed all required due diligence tasks for the project. This includes the negotiation and completion of a final easement deed; resolution of title matters; survey work to establish legal descriptions for the easement area; the completion, submission, and approval of an appraisal report to substantiate the purchase price for the easement; the finalization of a baseline documentation report for the easement; a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment; and other standard due diligence items required by OWEB. WRLT has opened escrow and has received approval to close the project through a WRLT Board resolution.

WRLT has also submitted all required project documents to their NRCS acquisition branch grant manager, who submitted the documents into NRCS Internal Controls protocol prior to leaving the agency at the end of April 2025. WRLT requests the OWEB funds in Grant No. 223-7104-22600 be extended to September 30, 2025, to accommodate the Internal Controls review process that has been delayed due to NRCS staffing shortages.

### Recommendation

Staff recommend the Commission recommend the OWEB Board extend the grant deadline to October 31, 2025 for Seeley Farm Phase 1 (Grant No. 223-7100-22521) and to October 31, 2025 for Wahl Ranch (223-7104-22600).