

Oregon Clean Water Fund

Problem: Although Oregon's water quality improved steadily through 2005, since that time trends have flattened, and some areas of the state still have significant water pollution problems. Population increases and a warming climate will make it harder to attain and keep the clean water that supports our communities and that makes Oregon a special place.

Voluntary Solutions: The Clean Water Fund is designed to complement other local, state, federal and private resources that are already being invested to achieve healthy streamside (riparian) vegetation and clean water improvements on farm, ranch and forestlands. Funds for the program will come from Lottery-backed bonds, with a request of \$13 million for the 2015-17 biennium.

Initially focused in 2-3 basins in the state, the goal of Fund is to provide 15-, 30- or 50-year contracts for landowners who agree to work toward healthy riparian areas on farm, ranch or forest lands. By agreeing to carry out particular practices over a long-term, and undertaking actions needed to address legacy conditions, this program is designed to improve water quality while also supporting continued active farm and forest management.

What the program would cover:

- Rental payments (15, 30 or 50 years) with an option for renewal if funds were available;
- The cost of riparian area improvements (planting, weeding and other tasks associated with ensuring healthy riparian areas) and associated technical assistance for design of the habitat, and/or
- The cost of other, off-stream water quality improvements if a landowner agrees to enter into a contract on the property's riparian acres. Examples include: grassed waterways on agricultural lands or road improvements on forest lands.
- In lieu of rental payments, landowners can request assistance to manage their riparian areas for the length of the contract.

The Clean Water Fund will be designed to be flexible and work with landowner goals. The Fund can be used in place of, in conjunction with, or in addition to the following program funds, depending on landowner preference, funding availability and land eligibility.

US Department of Agriculture

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding - provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers through contracts up to ten years. These contracts

Examples from Other States

In New York, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) targets the 500,000-acre Catskill and Delaware watersheds, which furnish most of the 1.34 billion gallons of water used daily by New Yorkers. The goal is to reduce soil erosion by 36,000 tons per year and to decrease levels of pollutants entering the waterways.

In Montana, the Missouri/Madison CREP will reach more than 500 miles in Northern Montana, encompassing an eligible area of over 338,000 acres in nine counties. The goal of the program is to improve water quality along the Missouri and Madison river corridors, maximizing the opportunity for federal, state and private funding to improve riparian, in-stream, and upland habitat restoration and enhancement.

provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns including clean water.

- Farm Service Agency (FSA) Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program - an offshoot of the Conservation Reserve Program, the country's largest private-land conservation program. In Oregon, CREP targets salmon habitat and water quality as its high-priority conservation issues. In exchange for protecting riparian areas and introducing conservation practices, agricultural land owners are paid an annual rental rate. Participation is voluntary, and the contract period is typically 10–15 years, along with other federal and state incentives as applicable per each CREP agreement.

In Oregon, since the program's inception, the program has protected nearly 42,000 acres, with a combination of state and federal funding.

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

- Capacity funding for soil and water conservation districts and watershed councils can support riparian project development
- Habitat grants can complement Clean Water Fund investments

Public Utilities – on the Tualatin and McKenzie river systems, public utilities are partnering with state and federal funders to support voluntary riparian improvements in ways similar to those outlined above. Other utilities are considering similar programs. The Clean Water Fund can complement these programs at a watershed scale.

Private Foundations – through this investment, the State of Oregon will seek to coordinate with private foundations with similar goals to increase clean water investments.

The map below identifies cumulative acres enrolled by county in Oregon's CREP. Although the Clean Water Fund will operate differently and initially focus in 2-3 basins, this map gives an indication of the current participation of landowners in a program that supports healthy riparian areas and clean water with 10-15 year contracts.

Cumulative CREP Acres Enrolled by County

