

2019-21 Funding Needs

For Sage Grouse, Fire Protection, and Rangeland Health

AN INTEGRATED INVESTMENT STRATEGY FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES IN EASTERN OREGON

Oregon narrowly averted a collision with the Endangered Species Act in 2015 when the federal government opted not to list sage grouse as a threatened species.

The state earned the reprieve from new federal regulations with a comprehensive plan to reverse the bird's decline and a robust package of initial funding approved by the 2015 Legislature.

But the impact of Oregon's conservation investments goes well beyond sage grouse.

The biggest threats to sage grouse – increasingly large wildfires and invasion of rangelands by juniper and non-native annual grasses – also pose threats to the livestock industry and rural communities. Cattle ranchers have a saying these days: “What’s good for the bird is good for the herd,” and by extension, the social and economic health of communities across a wide swath of rural Oregon.

With the ESA status of sage grouse up for federal review again in 2020, Oregon's conservation commitments will face renewed scrutiny.

Funding for the state's Sage Grouse Action Plan will be an important factor in evaluation of the Oregon's conservation efforts. The 2019 Legislature's budget decisions could have profound implications for the economy and ecological health of southeastern Oregon.



How the State's Action Plan is Funded

State, federal, and private partners have all provided funding for implementation of the state's sage grouse action plan, including millions of dollars for on-the-ground work to improve habitat for sage grouse and substantial federal contributions to the costs of the SageCon partnership.

Although the state's funding for implementation of the sage grouse plan is spread across more than a half-dozen agency budgets, a 2015 executive order requires development of a coordinated package of spending requests. Because issues around sage grouse and rangeland health are often deeply inter-related and span multiple jurisdictions, these budget requests need to be viewed as an investment package, rather than a menu of spending options.

Association of Oregon Counties
Audubon Society of Portland
Intermountain West Joint Venture
Oregon Association of Conservation Districts
Oregon Business Council
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Farm Bureau
Oregon Hunters Association
Oregon Natural Desert Association
The Nature Conservancy
Willamette Partnership
... on behalf of

SageCon



Oregon's sage grouse conservation partnership

SAGECON FUNDING PRIORITIES

Top priorities for additional General Fund support in the 2019-21 biennium include:



DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY

Rangeland fire protection associations

RFPA firefighter training and equipment (including personal protection equipment, radios); equipment maintenance; state match (\$50,000) to leverage federal funds for State-Federal-RFPA liaison position.

Volunteers organized by local RFPAs provide the first line of defense against wildfires in many areas. Fires, and the weeds that invade rangelands after a fire, are the two biggest threats to sage grouse and rangeland health. Improved equipment, training and coordination with BLM have dramatically improved initial response to fires in recent years.

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Sage grouse local implementation teams

Coordinator position (1 FTE) for Burns/Lakeview LITs.

Local Implementation Teams (LITs) are the primary vehicle for implementing the Oregon Sage Grouse Action Plan at the local level. Most of these groups have been moribund since 2012, primarily due to lack of ODFW field-based capacity for coordination and facilitation. SageCon partners have secured funding to support coordinators for the Baker, Prineville and Vale LITs in 2019; an additional position is needed for the Burns and Lakeview groups.



DEPARTMENT OF LAND CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

SageCon facilitation and support

(In Governor's Recommended Budget)

State's share of costs for Oregon Consensus and Oregon Solutions programs' support for collaborative sage grouse conservation through the SageCon Partnership.

Oregon and its federal partners share the costs of supporting the SageCon Partnership, a national model for successful collaboration. Funding includes coordination, technical support, and facilitation for SageCon Coordinating Council, Staff Implementation Team, All-County / SWCD CCAA Coordinating Committee. Effective coordination among SageCon's large and diverse set of stakeholders allows partners to align their efforts for maximum efficiency and effectiveness.