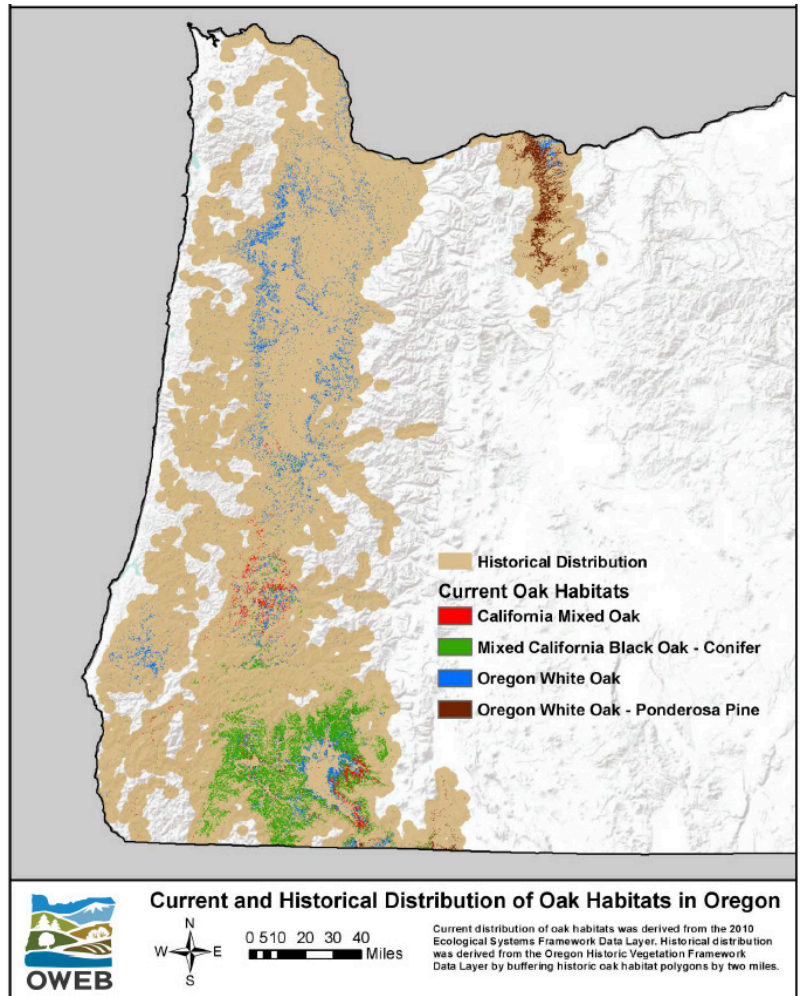


An Initiative of:
Clackamas SWCD
East Multnomah SWCD
Jackson SWCD
Marion SWCD
Polk SWCD
Tualatin SWCD
West Multnomah SWCD
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BRING BACK OREGON'S WILDLIFE HABITAT TAX DEFERRAL

- I. Managing habitat on land in agriculture or forestry deferral puts landowners at risk of losing those deferrals and being assessed back taxes. Once they realize this, many landowners with ag or forest deferrals decline to manage for habitat. They cannot afford or justify the loss of their existing tax deferral.
 - A. Managing for habitat can be expensive and generally does not significantly improve property value.
 - B. There may be grants to cover restoration costs, but they rarely cover ongoing costs for maintenance.
 - C. Public benefit for Oregon Conservation Strategy habitats is high while private benefit is low. In other words, landowners currently must find personal value in habitat work because it does not generate monetary value for them.
 - D. The public gets substantial benefit from their work in terms of improvements in wildlife habitat, fire resilience, and the iconic beauty of these landscapes.

- II. The Wildlife Habitat Conservation Management Program (WHCMP) has been unavailable to new enrollees in ODFW's North Willamette Watershed District for the past five years. A coalition of eight Soil and Water Conservation Districts, multiple regional partners, and ODFW, have been working to make it available again.



Oak woodlands and associated savanna have been identified as a priority habitat type in the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

- It is estimated that oak habitat in the Willamette Valley is found on less than 7% of its pre-settlement area while prairie is found on less than 1%.
- Oak woodlands and savannas have declined by more than 65% in the East Cascades.
- In the Umpqua Valley, oak woodlands have declined by almost 60%.

- III. WHCMP is important to preserving and restoring Oregon Conservation Strategy Habitats
 - A. Significant portions of remaining critical habitats reside on private lands.
 - B. Much of the remaining habitat is at threat of loss to conversion or development.
 - C. Because of these threats, Clackamas SWCD, other SWCDs, regional partnerships, state, and federal agencies are actively prioritizing protection of Oregon Conservation Strategy habitats and are investing time and resources in their restoration, but are running into a significant financial barrier for many landowners who are willing to restore or protect habitat but may lose existing tax deferrals.

- IV. WHCMP is the right tool that can solve the deferral issue and offset the cost of maintenance.
- It starts to balance the public/private benefit disparity.
 - It is not grant dependent.
 - Counties have shown that they want this program fully implemented and see tremendous value in it for maintaining the character of natural and working landscapes as well as for mitigating the impacts of climate change.
 - It provides landowners flexibility and incentive to manage their land for critical habitats, which benefit all Oregonians.
- V. ODFW believes House Bill 2527 will resolve the capacity problems that have plagued the WHCMP in the past.
- Monitoring is time intensive, and giving ODFW discretion on when to monitor a property will free up time for new enrollments.
 - Prioritizing projects based on Oregon Conservation Strategy habitats would increase impact for the capacity expended. Simplifying administration of the program would enable more enrollments to occur.
 - These changes would bring habitat deferrals in line with the requirements for farm and agricultural deferral programs.
 - SWCDs, partners, and other qualified entities can provide the technical advice needed to help enrolled and prospective enrollees be successful.

There is demand for this program from landowners, as well as significant social, economic, and ecologic outcomes that can come from a successful WHCMP. If we can work with ODFW to solve the administrative hurdles to delivering the program, there are lands across the state that are ready to enroll to help achieve the important goals of the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

Throughout the range of Oregon White Oak:

- There are **40 oak and prairie species listed as Threatened or Endangered** at the Federal, State and Provincial levels,
 - **23 that have been extirpated or near extirpated** from at least one ecoregion in their range,
 - and an additional **50 species are considered vulnerable and at risk** of continued decline to levels qualifying for listing as Threatened or Endangered.
-
- There are **6 bird species in Oregon considered wholly dependent on oak,**
 - **20 additional bird species** are considered highly associated with oak,
 - and **5 species are primarily grassland species** but regularly occur in oak savannas
 - Of these **31 species**, many are declining throughout their ranges.



Photo provided by ODFW

For more information, please contact:

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