

# Oregon Coast Coho

## A recovery success story

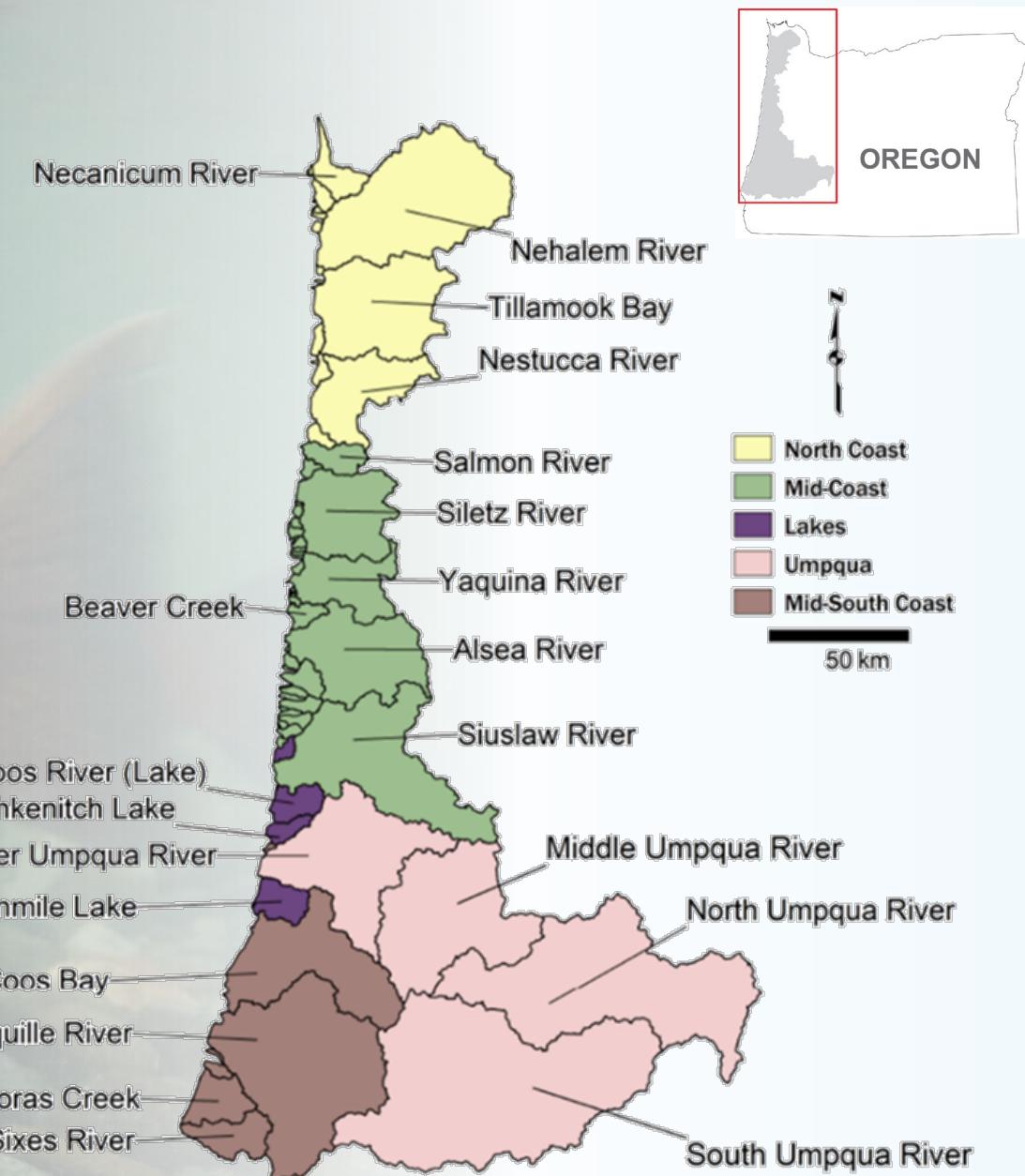
House Interim Committee On Agriculture, Land Use,  
Natural Resources, and Water

September 30, 2025

- Tom Stahl, ODFW
- Stephanie Page, OWEB
- Tim Elder, Wild Salmon Center
- Liz Ransom, Trout Unlimited

# Oregon Coast Coho

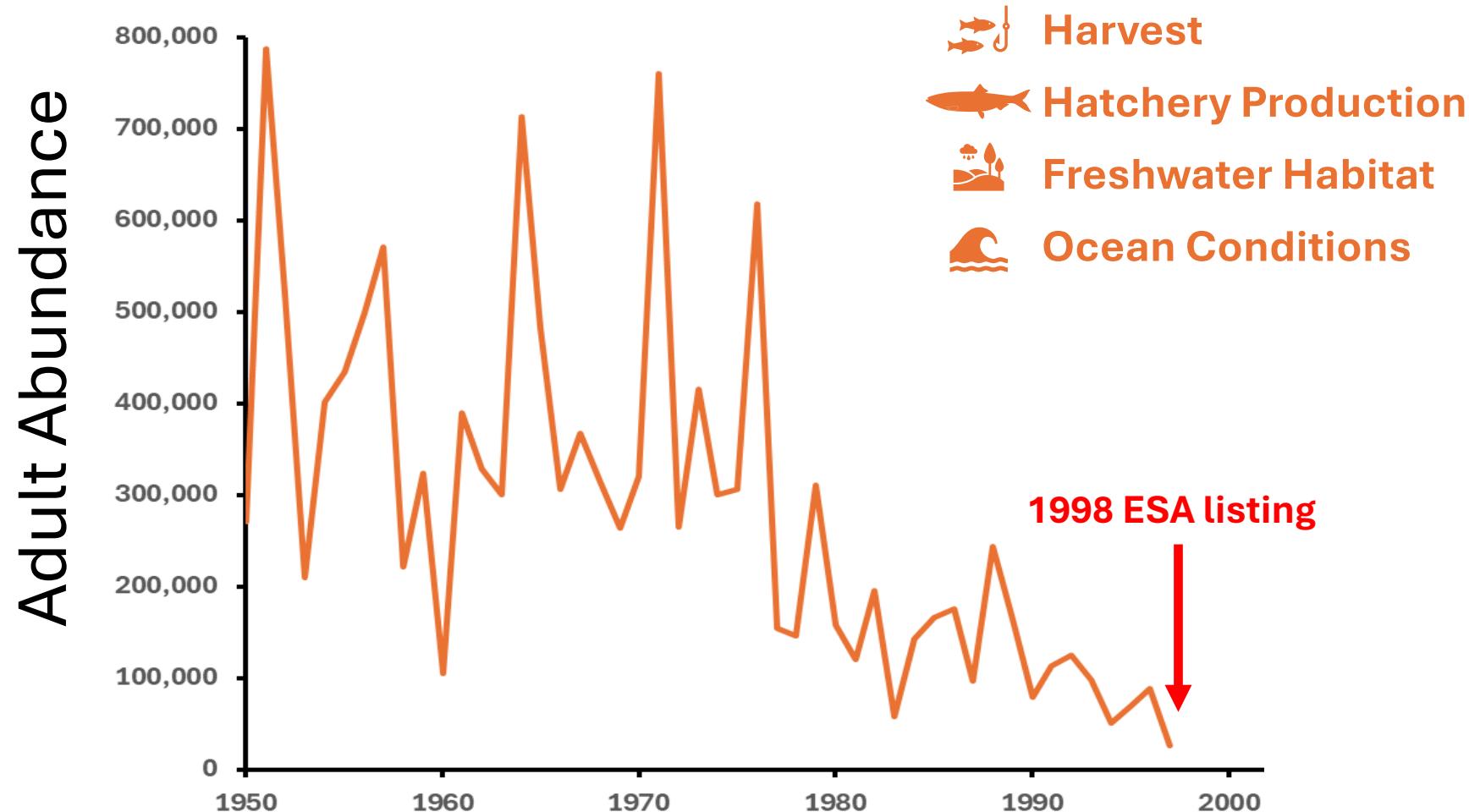
21 populations along 260 miles  
of the Oregon Coast



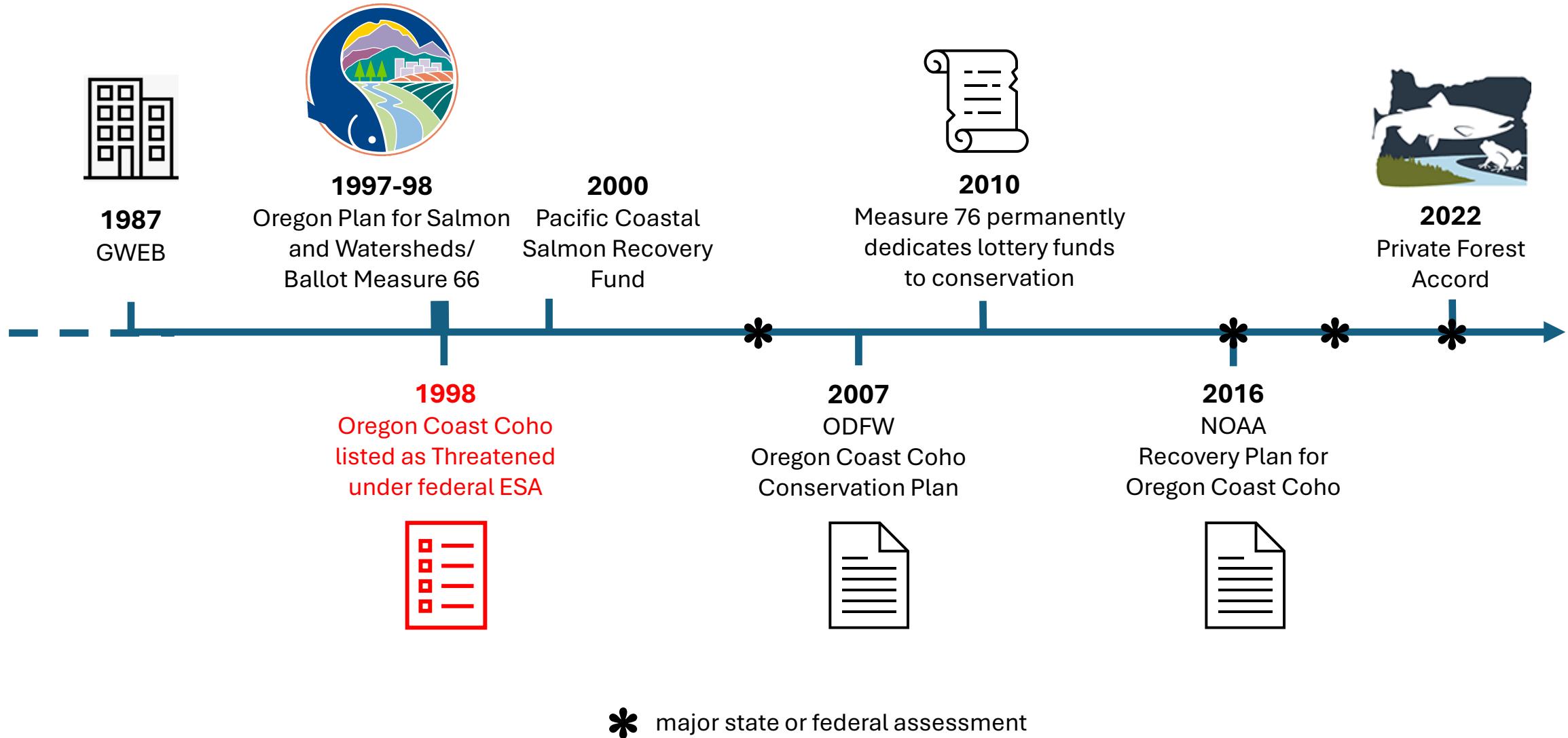
# Key Takeaways

- ***we have collaboratively “moved the needle” on habitat***
- ***we are on a path to delisting***
- ***we need to prepare for future challenges***

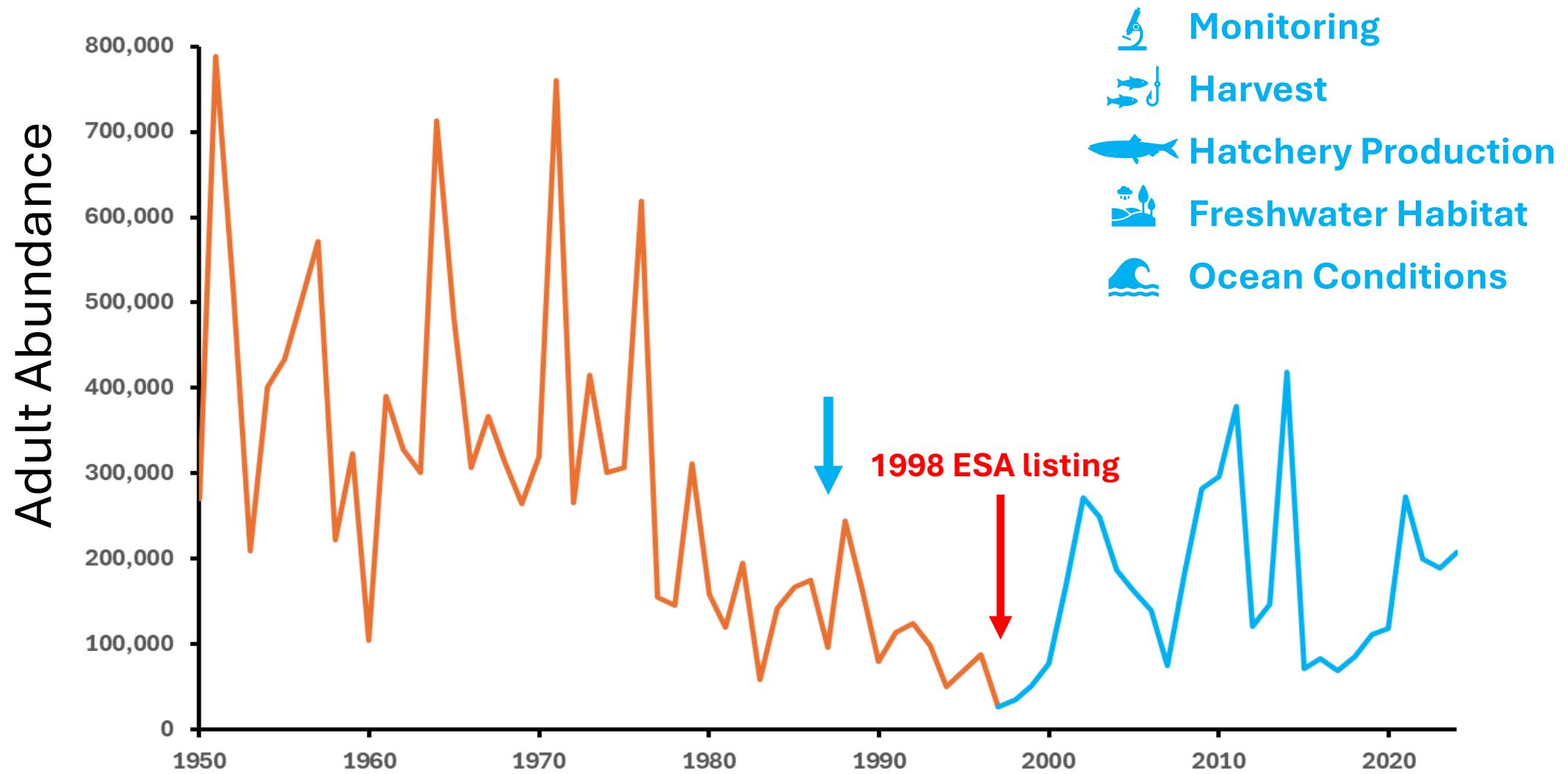
# Abundance declined in 80's and 90's



# An “all State” response



# Abundance and resilience has improved



# Wild coho fisheries are back



# Habitat is Key to Delisting

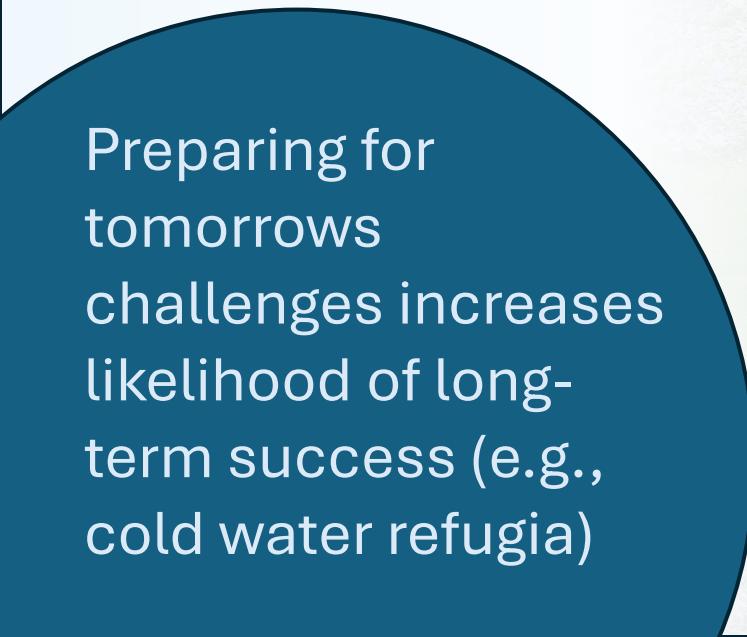
What  
How  
Who

Preparing for  
tomorrows  
challenges increases  
likelihood of long-  
term success (e.g.,  
cold water refugia)

Restoring, protecting,  
and connecting habitats

Connecting funding to  
priority work.

Partnerships



# Administering Grants that Support the Oregon Plan



haich ikt'at'uu Tidal Wetland Restoration Project, Fall 2024: Brent Ross, MRT

Provides Funding

State

Federal

Administers Grants

OWEB

On-the-Ground Work

Local Gov.

Tribal Gov.

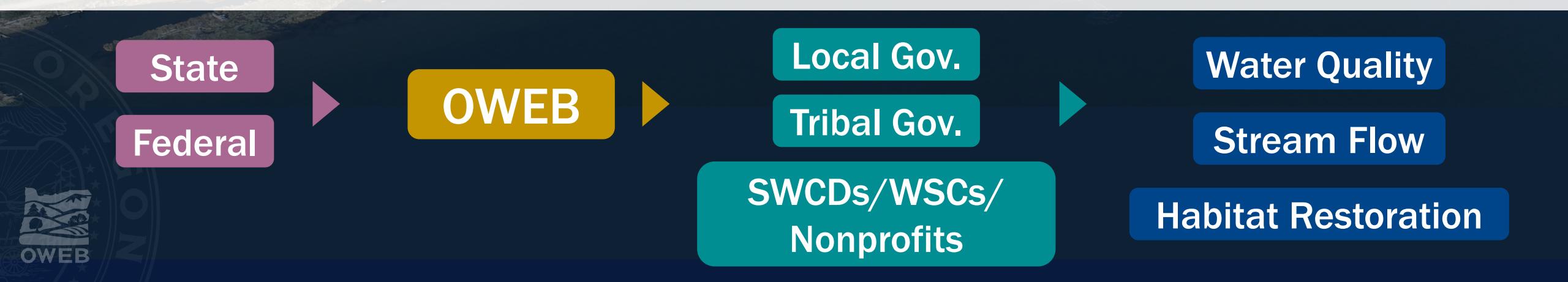
SWCDs/WSCs/  
Nonprofits

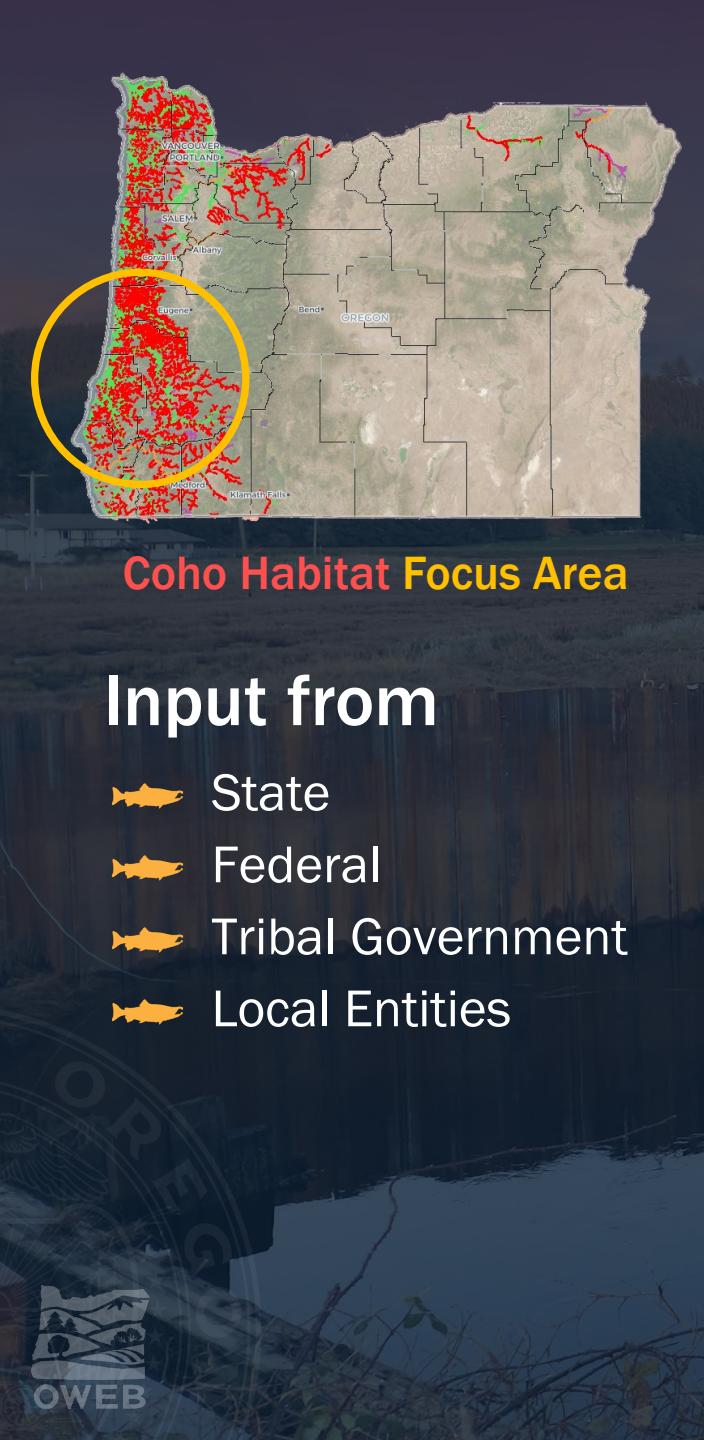
Projects Benefit Coho Salmon

Water Quality

Stream Flow

Habitat Restoration





**Coho Habitat Focus Area**

**Input from**

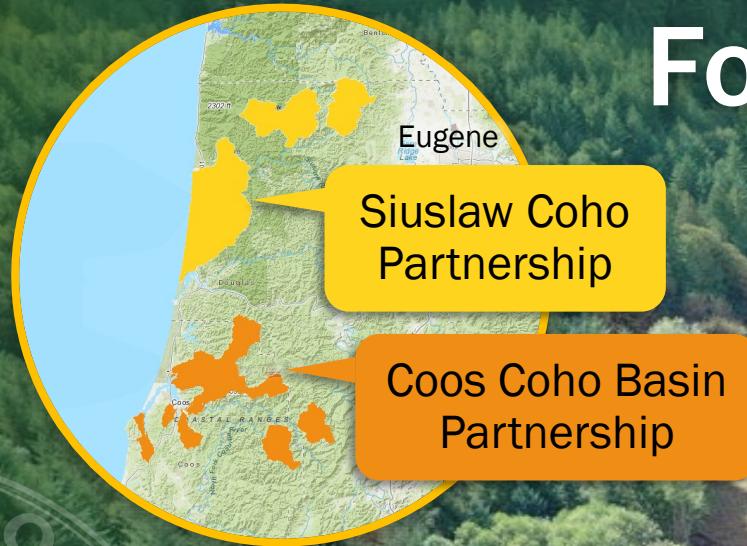
- State
- Federal
- Tribal Government
- Local Entities

# Strategies for the Greatest Impact



Palouse Tide Gate, 2024: Coos Watershed Association

# Focused Approach - Wide Benefits



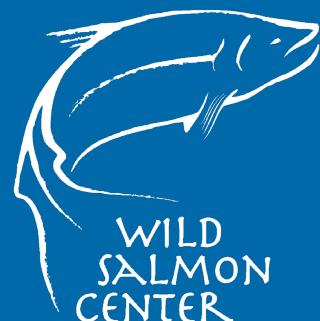
Dorff-Nichols-Steinberg Stage 0 Floodplain Reconnection Project, Fall 2024: Paul Burns, USFS

## Focused Investment Partnerships (FIPs)

- ✓ **50 acres** floodplain habitat reconnected
- ✓ **10 miles** instream habitat for coho restored
- ✓ Barriers removed
- ✓ Native vegetation planted

## All Grant Programs (2000-2025)

- ✓ **2,744 stream miles** made accessible
- ✓ **6,100 miles** of streamside habitat improved
- ✓ **400 acres** of wetlands restored for fish habitat



# Oregon Coast Coho: Recovery Update

Presented For:

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Presented by:

Tim Elder, Wild Salmon Center

September 30, 2025

# It takes a community to recover a species...



NFWF



The Nature Conservancy



TILLAMOOK ESTUARIES  
PARTNERSHIP



**R** ROGUE  
RIVER  
WATERSHED COUNCIL

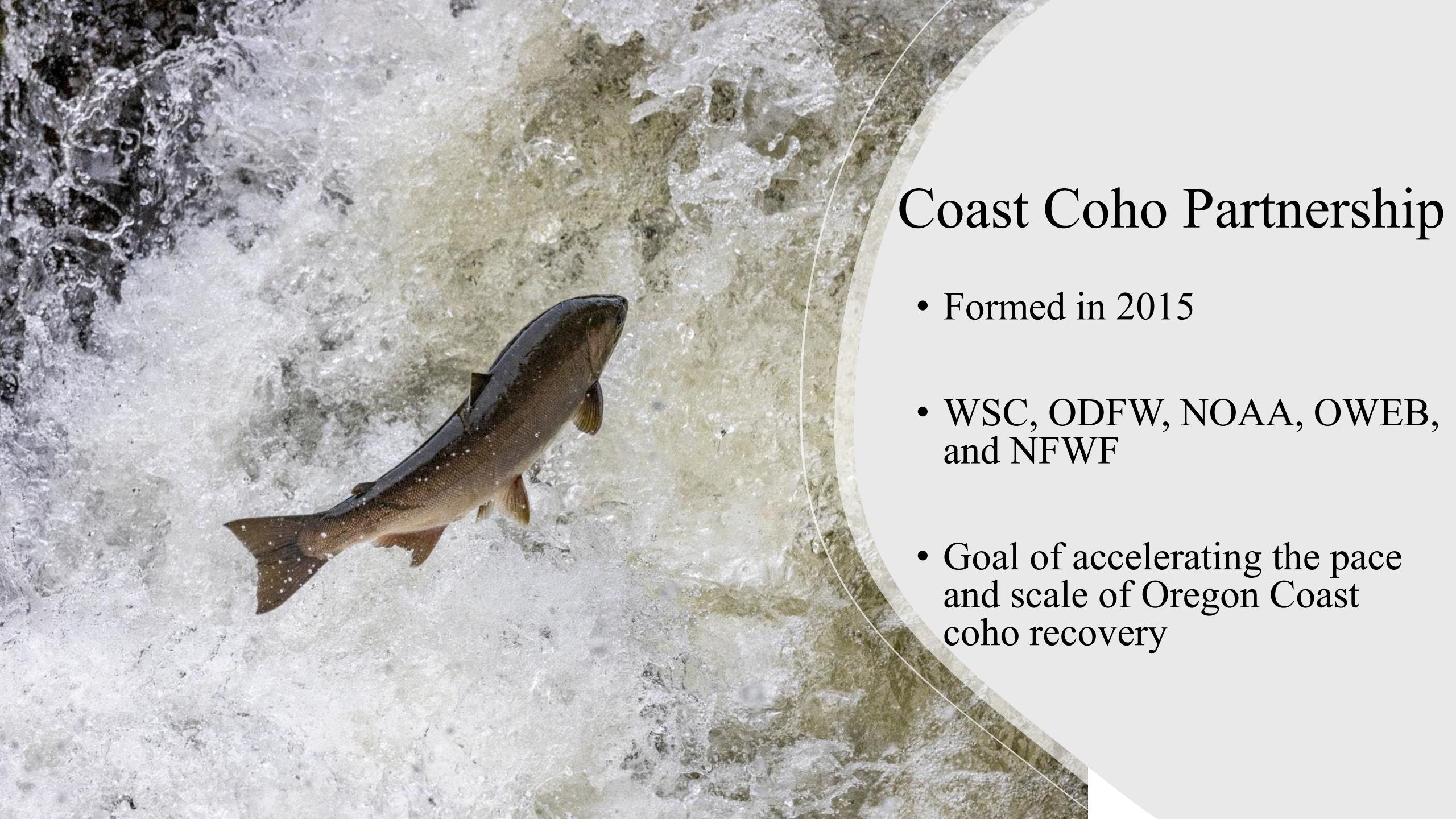
# Oregon Coast Coho Recovery

The key to coho recovery is **restoring watershed function in critical habitats**

This requires...

- A large, focused, and well coordinated restoration effort



A close-up photograph of a Coho salmon swimming upstream. The fish is dark on top, with a lighter, speckled belly. It is positioned in the center-left of the frame, moving from left to right against a background of white, foaming water. The water is turbulent, with visible bubbles and spray.

# Coast Coho Partnership

- Formed in 2015
- WSC, ODFW, NOAA, OWEB, and NFWF
- Goal of accelerating the pace and scale of Oregon Coast coho recovery

# Strategic Action Plans

SAPs provide a science-driven process for local partnerships to:

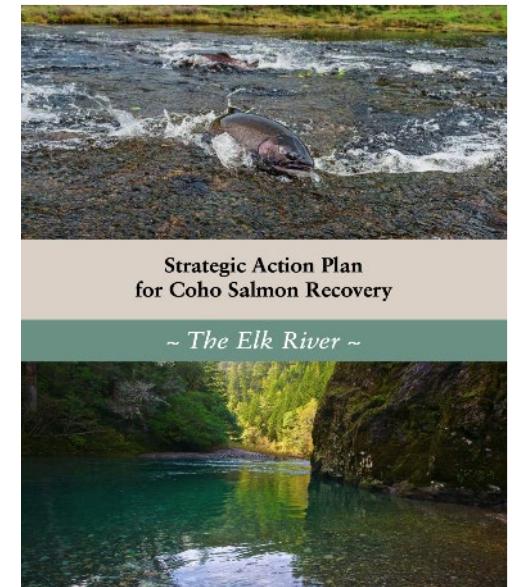
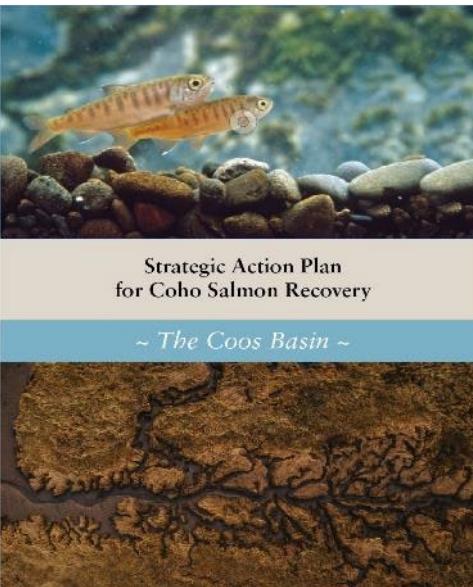
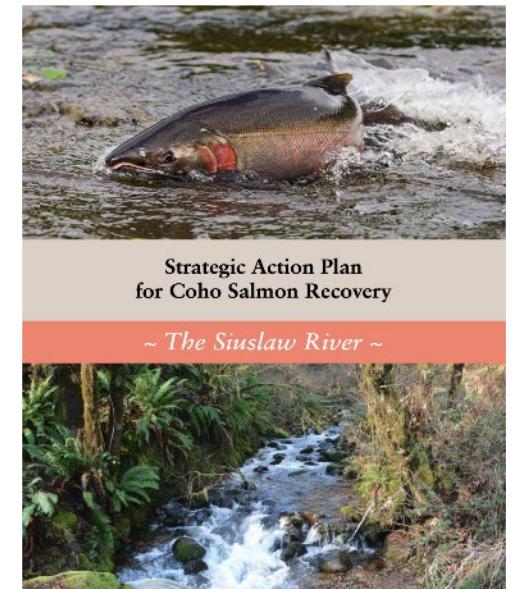
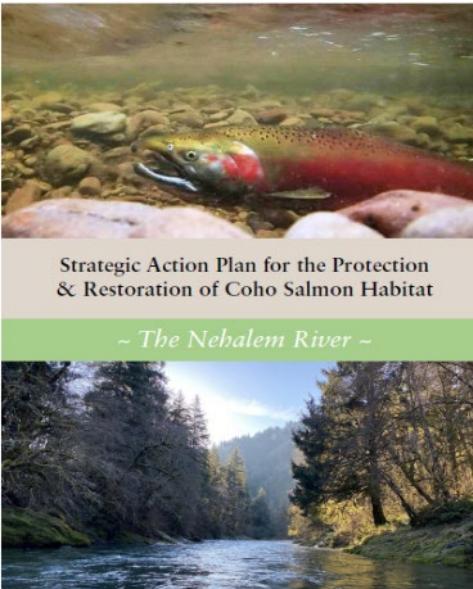
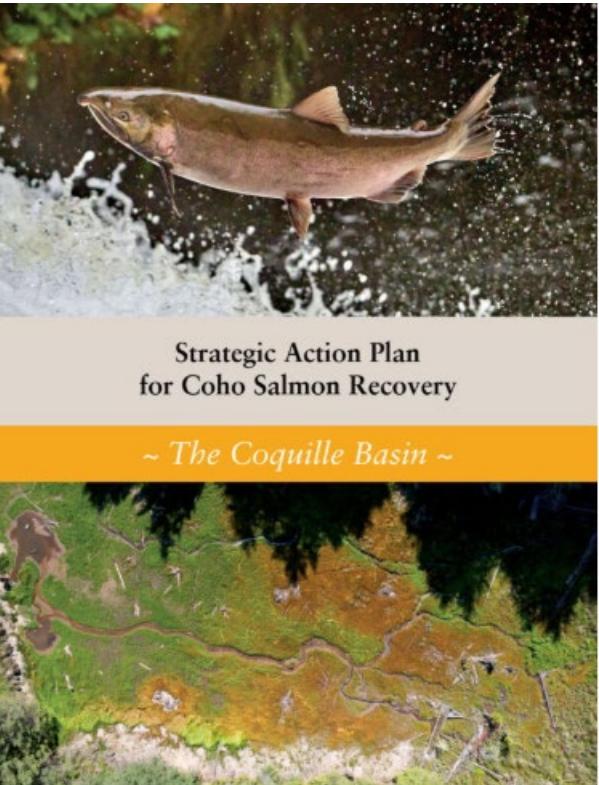
- 1) articulate shared long-term goals and identify strategies focused on improving watershed function (~20 years)
- 2) prioritize and fund short-term projects (~5 years)

Goal: Strategically restore watershed functions that support coho salmon in all 21 populations



# Strategic Action Plans

- 5 SAPs complete
- 3 SAPs in progress
- Funding secured for 2 more





# Strategic Action Plans

- WSC sub-awarded ~\$21m to local partners to support prioritized SAP projects



# Strategic Action Plans

- WSC sub-awarded ~\$21m to local partners to support prioritized SAP projects
- 66 high priority projects since 2017
  - **86.8 miles of stream reconnected**
  - **1317.1 acres of instream complexity**
  - **462.9 acres of riparian enhancement**





## Strategic Action Plans

- WSC sub-awarded ~\$21m to local partners to support prioritized SAP projects
- 66 high priority projects since 2017
  - **86.8 miles of stream reconnected**
  - **1317.1 acres of instream complexity**
  - **462.9 acres of riparian enhancement**
- Coos and Siuslaw watersheds awarded ~\$23m from OWEB FIP to implement SAP identified projects

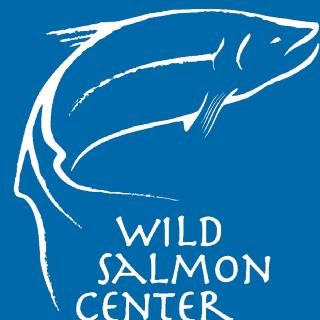


# Private Forest Accords and Coho

- In April, the Fish & Wildlife Commission approved \$10.3m to support projects under PFA Grant Program
- In the 2023 and 2024 grant cycles, \$6.4m awarded to projects in Coos, Curry, and Douglas Counties
- Awarded projects leveraged an additional \$7.7m in matching funds
- As federal dollars become more difficult to secure for restoration work PFA funding is increasingly important for coho recovery



# Thank You!



## Oregon Coast Coho: Recovery Update

Presented For:

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Presented by:

Tim Elder, Wild Salmon Center

September 30, 2025



## Salmon SuperHwy

Liz Ransom – Trout Unlimited





## Coho

- Opening block passages can connect other resorted and conserved habitats building upon restoration investments on the North Coast
- Since NOAA's 2022 five-year review on Oregon Coast Coho Salmon we have removed and additional 16 barriers and have over 20 more barriers various stages of development.
- TU was a lead negotiator for the PFA (Private Forest Accords)
- In the Umpqua TU is assisting local partners in building out an instream flow restoration program to benefit coho recovery





SALMON SUPERHwy

## PARTNERS

**LOCAL:** Tillamook County, Tillamook Estuaries Partnership, Tillamook County Creamery Association, Tillamook Bay Watershed Council, Nestucca Neskowin Sand Lake Watersheds Council

**STATE:** OR Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, OR Dept. of Forestry, OR Dept. of Transportation, OR Watershed Enhancement Board, OR Fish Passage Task Force

**FEDERAL:** US Fish & Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Natural Resources Conservation Service

**NGO:** Trout Unlimited





SALMON SUPERHwy

## THE PROBLEM: FAILING CULVERTS





SALMON SUPERHwy

## THE APPROACH



- Program managers from several agencies convened to develop a **pilot project** to prioritize passage at multiple scales and focus resources
- Needed a scalable prioritization and decision tool
- A new, more strategic approach to maximize benefits

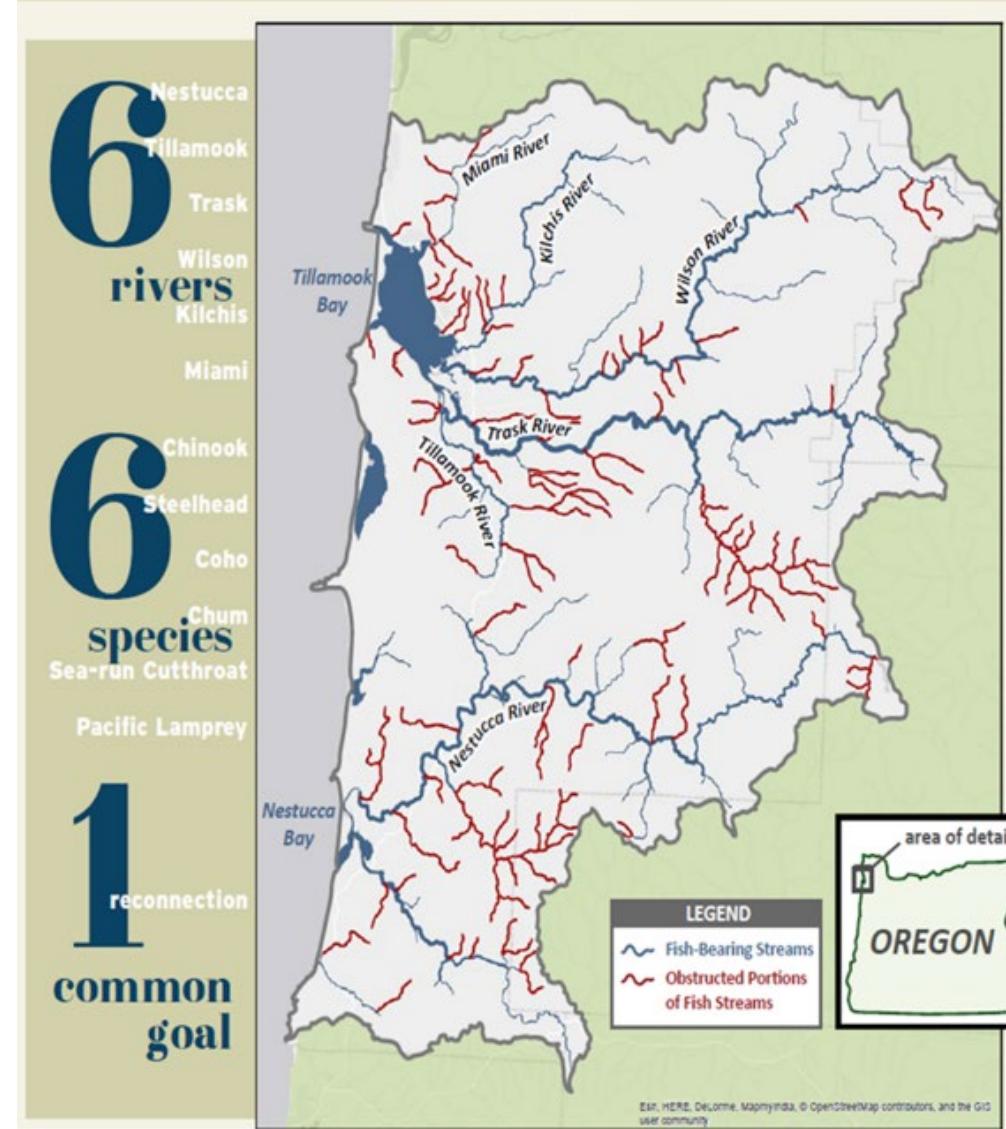




SALMON SUPERHwy

## PARTNERSHIP GOALS

- Optimize habitat gain per funding
- Develop a passage portfolio that sets priorities at a landscape scale
- Open 95% of historic habitat- 180 miles

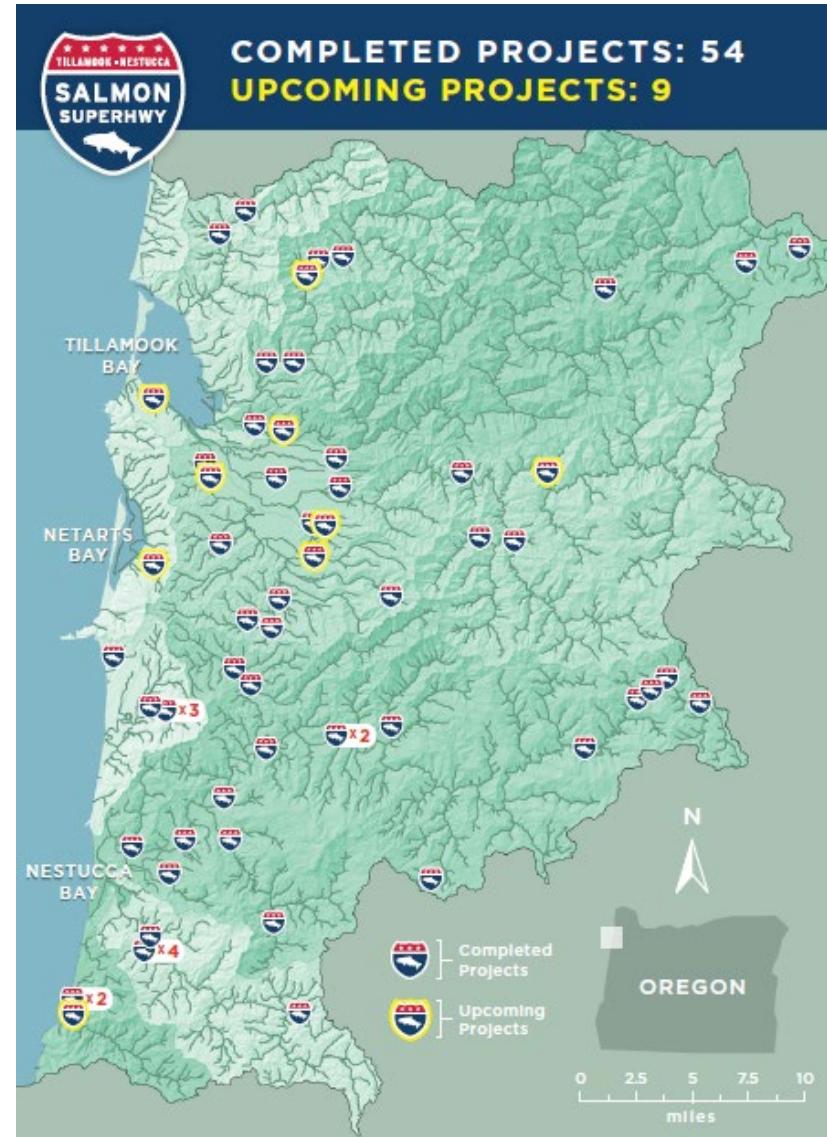




SALMON SUPERHwy

## LAUDED PROGRESS: 2014 THROUGH 2024

- 54 projects completed
- 132 miles reconnected
- Almost 75% of the ways to completion
- \$20M funding leveraged
- 6 species of ocean-going fish species returned to historical habitat
- Landowners united with local, state, and federal partners





SALMON SUPERHwy

## PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

- Collaborative planning
- Shared technical resources and permit support
- Landowner coordination
- Shared vision and goals
- Strategic, coordinated funding
- Partnership track record builds community and funder support





SALMON SUPERHwy

## EXAMPLE PROJECT: WHITNEY CREEK



- Restored access to 1.2 miles of anadromous fish habitat
- Improved sediment and large wood transport
- Leveraged \$800K in partner funds.
- Maintained access on a main line for logging and recreation.



## STATE FUNDING:

- SSH partners have raised \$25M for all SSH Projects. \$10.2M are state funds.
- For every state dollar we have raised \$1.45 in matching funds.
- Many of the state grant programs have made our projects possible including:
  - Oregon Watershed Improvement Board (OWEB)'s, Technical Assistance and Restoration grant programs
  - ODFW's Private Forest Accords (PFA) grant program
  - ODFW's Screening and Passage Program (S&P) grant program
  - ODFW's Natural Working Lands Funds
  - Business Oregon's Tide Gate Grant and Loan Fund Project





SALMON SUPERHwy

## TILLAMOOK COUNTY: ROAD PROJECTS

- **18** county culverts replaced, most replaced with bridges since 2014.
- Total cost for all County projects completed: \$8.2M and the County paid \$2.8M (cash + in kind)
- For every dollar the County contributed we have raised \$2.93 in matching funds.





SALMON SUPERHWP

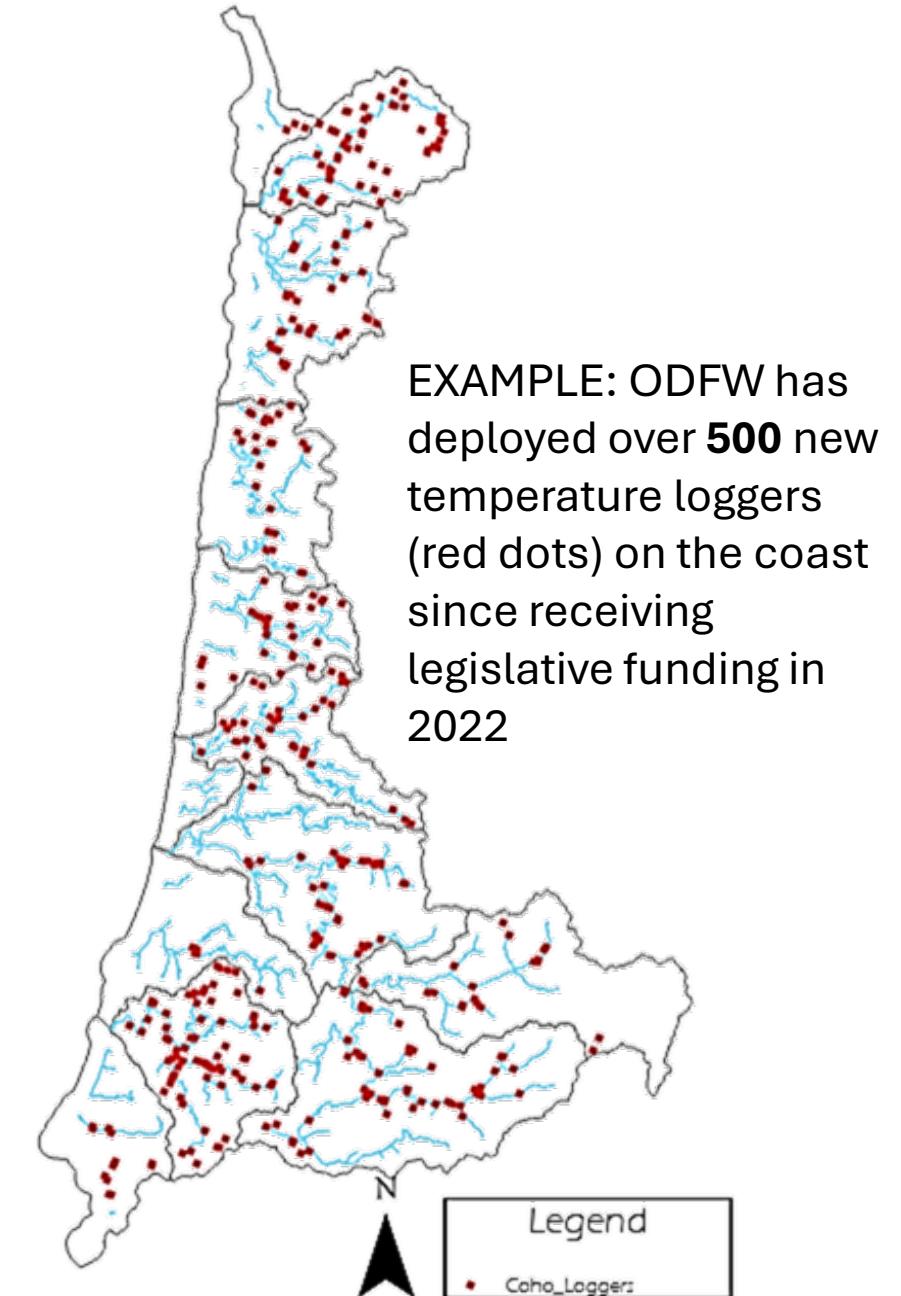
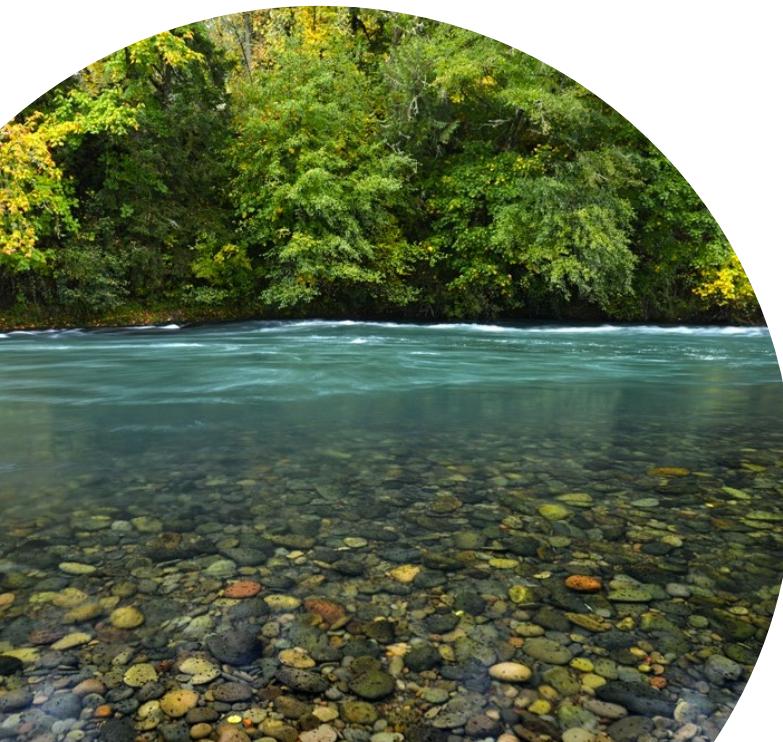
## RESILIENCE: TRANSPORTATION

- Removes deteriorated, undersized culverts
- Reduces risk of catastrophic failure
- Upgrades road stream crossings to accommodate high flows
- Reduces maintenance for road managers
- Keeps industry/economy moving



# Preparing for Future Freshwater Conditions

Research and Monitoring is helping us understand which areas will experience challenges and focus investments in areas and actions to build resilience



EXAMPLE: ODFW has deployed over **500** new temperature loggers (red dots) on the coast since receiving legislative funding in 2022

# Pathway to Delisting

OPINION

## Opinion: Oregon Coast salmon recovery is within our reach

Updated: Dec. 14, 2022, 6:31 a.m. | Published: Dec. 14, 2022, 6:30 a.m.



Juvenile Oregon Coast coho salmon head out to the ocean. The 1998 listing of Oregon Coast coho as threatened forced cutbacks in fishing and the hatcheries that supported it, the author writes. But the collaborative response that followed reflects what can go right for salmon recovery.

By [Guest Columnist](#) | [The Oregonian](#)

**Kim Kratz** Special to The Oregonian/OregonLive

Kratz is assistant regional administrator for NOAA Fisheries' Oregon/Washington Coastal Office.

- ✓ 2022 NOAA 5-Year Status Review
  - ✓ Meeting biological targets
  - ✓ Passed recent ocean “stress test”
  - ✓ Private Forest Accord and Habitat Conservation Plans are increasing regulatory certainty
  - ✓ Umpqua Focus
- ✓ Next NOAA 5-Year Status Review (2026-7)
- ✓ Future Challenges
  - ✓ temperature, flows, funding

A large, vibrant red salmon, likely a sockeye, is swimming in a river. The fish is positioned horizontally across the frame, facing left. Its body is a deep red, with a darker, almost black, dorsal side and a lighter, yellowish-green belly. The salmon has a prominent, slightly hooked mouth and a large, dark eye. The background consists of the turbulent, greenish-blue water of the river, with sunlight filtering through the surface. The riverbed is visible at the bottom, composed of numerous small, smooth, light-colored pebbles and stones.

Questions?