

# ANALYSIS

## Department of Fish and Wildlife Crooked River Habitat Enhancement

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**Analyst:** Travis Miller

**Request:** Approve the submission of a grant application to the Foundation for America's Public Lands, a congressionally chartered charitable partner of the Bureau of Land Management, in the amount of \$250,000 to support habitat enhancement in the Upper Crooked River Habitat Area.

**Analysis:** On November 20, 2025, the Foundation for America's Public Lands released a request for proposals for the Western Big Game Migration and Connectivity Fund. The grant opportunity seeks to increase access to core habitats and migration corridors for big game, restore seasonal winter range habitats, and improve water availability on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Eligible projects must be located within state-identified priority areas, within sagebrush habitat, and located on BLM-managed land and waters. The foundation anticipates awarding \$600,000 during the current grant cycle with maximum awards of \$250,000 each. The grant application deadline is February 4, 2026.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is requesting permission to submit a \$250,000 grant application to the foundation to support habitat enhancements in the Upper Crooked River Habitat Area, which is one of the five priority areas identified in the 2024 Oregon Action Plan for Improving Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors. The proposed habitat enhancements are anticipated to improve connectivity and foraging for mule deer, elk, and pronghorn; benefit the greater sage-grouse; improve the overall health of rangelands; and reduce fire risk through fencing removal, native reseeding (grass, forb, and shrub), juniper removal, and wetland habitat enhancements.

The grant has a three-year period of performance and requires a 25% non-federal match, which the agency anticipates meeting with a \$62,500 cash match from the Crook County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and \$16,000 from SageCon (a locally led cross-sector partnership focused on implementing strategic conservation actions to improve the Oregon sagebrush ecosystem). If awarded, ODFW would pass through the grant funds to Crook County SWCD for project implementation.

**Recommendation:** The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends approval of the request.

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**Request:** Authorization to apply for a grant of \$250,000 for a project in the Upper Crooked River Habitat Area from the Foundation for America's Public Lands Western Big Game Migration and Connectivity Fund.

**Recommendation:** Approve the request.

**Discussion:** The Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) requests authorization to apply for a grant from the Foundation for America's Public Lands (FAPL), which is a congressionally chartered partner of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Western Big Game Migration and Connectivity Fund, administered by FAPL, is available to western state game and fish agencies to identify priority migration corridors and needed interventions to support thriving populations of pronghorn, mule deer, and elk. ODFW has proposed a project in the Upper Crooked River Habitat Area (UCRHA) for funding. In 2024, Oregon created a State Action Plan (SAP) in accordance with the implementation of the U.S. Department of Interior Secretarial Order 3362. The UCRHA is one of five priority areas identified in the SAP.

The proposed project includes habitat enhancement measures including the removal of barriers to movement (i.e. fences), seeding to improve ungulate foraging, and additional landscape treatment to address invasive annual grasses, native grass, forb, and shrub seeding, juniper removal, and mesic habitat enhancement in wet meadows. ODFW will sub-award some of the grant to the Crook County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWD). The grant requires a 25 percent match, which ODFW expects to meet through partner contributions from the CCSWD and SageCon.

The grant application is due on February 4, 2026, and award notification will occur by April 2026. If successful, ODFW will return to the Emergency Board to request Federal Funds expenditure limitation commensurate with the award. ODFW does not anticipate requiring additional positions or FTE to complete the project.



# Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

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**January 22, 2026**

The Honorable Senator Kate Lieber, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
900 Court Street NE, H-178  
Salem, OR 97301



Dear Senator Lieber and Representative Sanchez:

## **Nature of the Request**

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) requests approval to submit a federal grant application to the Foundation for America's Public Lands (FAPL) under the Western Big Game Migration and Connectivity Fund in the amount of \$250,000 for the purpose of enhancing habitat quality and connectivity within the Upper Crooked River Habitat Area. This area is one of the five priority areas identified in Oregon's State Action Plan (SAP) for implementation of Department of Interior Secretarial Order 3362.

## **Background**

The Foundation for America's Public Lands, the official Congressionally chartered partner of BLM, launched the 2026 Western Big Game Migration and Connectivity Fund (WBGMC) opportunity to address threats to sagebrush habitat and big game movement in State-identified priority areas. To qualify for this program, Oregon developed a SAP in 2024 to identify priority areas.

The requested funds will support numerous actions identified as additional habitat enhancement needs in the SAP's Crooked River Habitat Area. These include removal of barriers to movement (fencing), seeding to improve ungulate forage, and herbicide application to treat invasive annual grasses, native grass, forb, and shrub seeding, juniper removal, and mesic habitat enhancement in wet meadows. ODFW staff will assist with managing and contracting some portions of the requested funding, and some funds will be sub-awarded to the Crook County SWCD for project implementation. Not only will these project actions benefit mule deer, elk, and pronghorn, but they will also benefit Greater sage-grouse, another priority wildlife species in this geography as well as generally improving the health of rangelands and reducing fire risk. All activities for which funding is requested will be implemented on BLM lands. Funding will leverage additional work on BLM lands adjacent to private lands where partners have been awarded OWEB FIP funding, America's Ecosystem Restoration Initiative funding, and Juniper Bill (HB 3135) funding.

This grant supports ODFW's mission through the direct enhancement of sage-steppe habitats to support central Oregon's wildlife species, particularly mule deer, pronghorn, elk, and sage-grouse. The actions proposed with this funding are tied to additional habitat restoration in the surrounding geography, leading to greater landscape resiliency, improved wildlife connectivity, and cross-boundary work that unites public and private entities with a shared vision for sustainable, resilient habitats.

**Agency Action**

Funding applications are due to FAPL by February 4, 2026, with notification of successful applicants by April 2026. Funding will be spent within three years (2029). There is a 25% non-federal match requirement for this funding opportunity (\$62,500 minimum for this request) and match sources include \$62,500 from the Crook Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) (OWEB FIP) and \$16,000 from SageCon (OWEB). No additional FTE are requested through this application. Project partners also intend to apply for Juniper Bill funding that will also be used as match and leverage for funding in the greater project geography. ODFW anticipates making a future request for federal funds expenditure limitation if the grant application is successful.

**Action Requested**

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) requests approval to submit a federal grant application to the Foundation for America's Public Lands (FAPL) under the Western Big Game Migration and Connectivity Fund in the amount of \$250,000.

**Legislation Affected**

None

Sincerely,



Debbie Colbert  
Director