

2017 Annual Report OREGON NRCS

Voluntary Conservation Works in Oregon

2017 has been a busy year for voluntary conservation in Oregon. As we look back on our accomplishments, we are reminded that our achievements are defined by the success of farmers, ranchers and family forest owners across Oregon's diverse landscape. It's with this in mind that we continue to deliver technical and financial assistance to our partners and producers through Oregon's Strategic Approach to Conservation. Guided by this approach, we have improved the health and vigor of working lands across the state, addressing important resource concerns like forest health, water quality, water supply, wildlife habitat, and soil health. These strategic investments also serve to stimulate local economies and support an agricultural future in Oregon.

To all of our Oregon NRCS employees, our partner agencies, Tribes, non-profits, universities, and the farmers and ranchers who work with us—thank you for your hard work in helping us deliver the conservation successes detailed in this annual report. You play an important role in voluntary conservation on Oregon's working lands. Together, we look forward to another year of helping people help the land.

- Ron Alvarado, State Conservationist



Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Contracts . . . 394
Acres 86,467
Dollars \$18 million



Conservation Stewardship Program

Contracts . . . 209
Acres 681,250
Dollars \$5.4 million



Regional Conservation Partnership Program

Contracts . . . 101
Acres 35,550
Dollars \$5.2 million



Sage Grouse Initiative

Contracts . . . 24
Acres 31,671
Dollars \$3 million



Pictured: Cows graze on the Zumwalt Prairie landscape in Wallowa County. Photo by Julia Amato, The Nature Conservancy.

Pristine, working grasslands protected from development forever

First Ag land easement closed under current Farm Bill

This year, NRCS in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and landowners Dan and Suzy Probert, closed on the first Agricultural Lands Easement (ALE) under the current Farm Bill in Oregon. The easement sustains and protects grasslands of special significance in the Zumwalt Prairie landscape in Wallowa County, while supporting the rural economy.

With this permanent easement, the Probert family ensures their 12,225-acre ranch will be managed to benefit both ranching livelihoods and the native habitat and wildlife it supports. The easement prohibits conversion of native grassland caused by tilling or energy development, while allowing the property to be used for livestock grazing that follows a grazing management plan. The easement also prevents conversion to residential or commercial development.

“Wallowa County is a very special and unique place, and I believe it is absolutely critical that we protect our resources for future generations,” Dan Probert said. “Because of this conservation easement, Lightning Creek Ranch will always remain a working ranch while also protecting some of the most beautiful and ecologically important lands in the country.”



Water Quality Initiative
Contracts . . . 4
Acres 394
Dollars \$335,580



Drought Initiative
Contracts . . . 5
Acres 1,240
Dollars \$2 million



Air Quality Initiative
Contracts . . . 9
Acres 385
Dollars \$691,759



Organic Initiative
Contracts . . . 14
Acres 4,053
Dollars \$395,237



High Tunnel Initiative
Contracts . . . 48
Acres 118
Dollars \$327,740



Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Initiative - Partnership between NRCS and the U.S. Forest Service

Ashland Forest All Lands Restoration (Jackson County)

Contracts . . . 14
Acres 773
Dollars \$1.1 million

Greater La Pine Basin Cohesive Strategy (Deschutes & Klamath County)

Contracts . . . 7
Acres 230
Dollars \$97,663

Salmon Superhighway Basin Management (Tillamook County)

Contracts . . . 15
Acres 1,529
Dollars \$237,216

North Warner Multi-Ownership Forest Health (Lake County)

Contracts . . . 5
Acres 1,453
Dollars \$796,176



Conservation Innovation Grants Awarded by NRCS Oregon

Technology Transfer for Rapid Forest Assessment

Awarded to: Ecotrust, \$75,000

This project will accelerate forest stewardship planning by integrating high resolution imagery, such as LIDAR, with mobile inventory technologies. Results of the project will allow forest landowners to rapidly assess the composition and structure of their forests.

Forest Understory Vegetation Establishment

Awarded to: West Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District, \$60,075

Healthy forests require strong understory and middle story plants to support wildlife and protect soil. This project will develop seeding mixes, shrub planting guides and other materials that forest managers can use to grow more resilient forests.

Northeast Oregon/Blue Mountain Woodlands Outreach and Education

Awarded to: Oregon Department of Forestry, \$75,000

Engaging forest landowners is key to achieving conservation success on a landscape scale. This project will provide direct outreach to rural non-industrial forest landowners and develop a "Forest Wellness Report Card" to help them understand fire risk, stand density and forest production capabilities.



Pictured: Nick Puhl of Cape Blanco Cranberries is one of several participating farms that is saving water, time and energy with automated irrigation systems.



Pictured: Forest landowner and contractor Pancho Parker with his daughters Isa (left) and Haley (right) were one of 54 families that participated in the Ashland Forest All Lands Restoration project.

Creating resilient forests across public and private land ownerships

Ashland Forest All Lands Restoration Wraps Up

This year NRCS completed its final year of the three-year Ashland Forest All Lands Restoration Project, funded by a special partnership between NRCS and the U.S. Forest Service to improve the health and resilience of forest ecosystems on public and private lands in communities prone to high wildfire risk. In total, NRCS awarded \$4 million in financial assistance to help 54 landowners treat over 3,100 acres of private forest land in the Ashland watershed in Jackson County. By working together across public and private land boundaries, the project reduces the critical risk of severe wildfire in a changing climate, while securing clean drinking water, protecting forests and wildlife, habitat, people, property, the local economy, and quality of life.

Saving water, energy in Oregon's cranberry capitol

Conservation strategy targets water quantity

Cranberry beds along the Southwest coast produce 99 percent of Oregon's cranberry crop. Through a targeted conservation strategy, NRCS is helping 18 percent of cranberry growers in Coos and Curry counties save water, time and energy by installing automated irrigation systems that can be controlled remotely with a smart phone or laptop. The project is on target to exceed the original goal of 520 acres.

"If you're willing to put in the work to learn the technology, you can really increase your sustainability," says cranberry producer Nick Puhl. "The equipment is expensive, but with NRCS's help, we're able to produce more fruit with less wear on our equipment, all while using less water and electricity."

Wetland Reserve Easements

- 3 new wetland easements in process covering 174 acres
- Restored 8 existing wetland easement sites covering 3,584 acres
- \$1.7 million obligated for restoration agreements on existing sites

Agricultural Land Easements

- 1 Ag land easement closed – 257 acres in Wallowa County
- 2 Ag land easements enrolled for 5,915 acres in Crook and Umatilla counties
- 1 Ag land (Grasslands) easement closed - 12,225 acres in Wallowa County
- 1 Ag land (Grasslands) easement enrolled for 3,755 acres in Crook County

Healthy Forest Reserve Program

- 332 acres restored under former Healthy Forest Reserve Program



Pictured: Chris Negelspach, an engineer with the City of Scappoose, and Meghan Walter, state hydraulic engineer with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, assess the condition of the newly re-stabilized streambank on South Scappoose Creek.

Protecting Infrastructure in Response to Severe Flooding

NRCS completes emergency projects in Columbia County

This year NRCS, in partnership with the Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District, successfully completed 13 projects funded by \$3 million from the Emergency Watershed Protection Program to repair critical infrastructure damaged by severe flooding in December of 2015.

One of the projects was repairing an exposed section of sewer pipe along South Scappoose Creek, near a popular swimming hole and playground.

The streambank was restored using bio-engineering techniques that protected water quality, salmon habitat and the natural aesthetics of the area.

Oregon Quick Facts



60%
of Oregon
is Public Land
40%
of Oregon
is Private Land

34,600
Farms in Oregon

474 acres
average farm size



16.4 million
acres of Farmland



\$4.8 billion
total ag production
market value

* Source: 2015 national Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Ag Census and 2012 Natural Resources Inventory



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