Fiscal year 2021 was a challenging year for everyone. We continued to navigate through a pandemic and Oregon experienced extreme drought, heat, and snow events. The challenges that we’ve faced in the last year underscore the importance of locally-led conservation, strong partnerships and strategic collaboration across the state. After more than a decade of implementing Oregon’s Strategic Approach to Conservation, I have seen first-hand how this approach allows us to quickly adapt and respond to real-time needs while we continue to work on established priorities, always with an eye towards the future.

One example of how our strategic approach paved the way for success was visible in our quick drought response last summer. NRCS Oregon was selected along with three other states to pilot a new program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program – Conservation Incentive Contracts (EQIP-CIC). The goal of EQIP-CIC was to target assistance to landowners impacted by drought across the state, particularly those experiencing extreme drought in the Klamath Basin area. We also had opportunities to focus this program on the statewide priorities of forest, pasture, range, and soil health. We received a total of $11 million in EQIP-CIC funding and were able to obligate all of that in two and a half months, all while concurrently planning and obligating our other Farm Bill programs. I see this success as evidence of our dedicated and talented workforce operating within a strong framework to deliver high quality and timely programs across the state.

In FY21, NRCS Oregon worked with local stakeholders and landowners to plan and develop new Conservation Implementation Strategies, many of which target climate resiliency across Oregon’s landscapes. For fiscal year 2022, we have 88 active strategies and partnership projects targeting a variety of priority resource concerns that are established through our annual local work group planning process.

This report highlights our achievements and investments in conservation for fiscal year 2021. In the year ahead, we will continually work to strengthen relationships and adapt to changing conditions to support Oregon’s farmers, ranchers and forest landowners. I am proud of NRCS Oregon’s accomplishments in the last fiscal year and look forward to seeing what outcomes are possible as we continue to harness our Strategic Approach to Conservation to serve our communities, get conservation on the ground and help people help the land.

Ron Alvarado
NRCS Oregon State Conservationist
FY21 INVESTMENTS IN CONSERVATION

Environmental Quality Incentives Program
(includes all locally-led EQIP and state initiatives below)

699 contracts
212,280 acres
$35.1M obligated
$2.3M payments

Joint Chiefs Initiative
(partnership with U.S. Forest Service)
43 contracts
6,774 acres
$4,249,908 obligated

Sage Grouse Initiative
33 contracts
26,815 acres
$3,387,892 obligated
$137,262 payments

Organic Initiative
22 contracts
1,681 acres
$812,025 obligated
$46,758 payments

Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative
66 contracts
232 acres
$424,311 obligated
$75,864 payments

National Air Quality Initiative
5 contracts
226 acres
$554,752 obligated
$87,613 payments

National Water Quality Initiative
11 source water protection projects
1 watershed project in planning
1 watershed project in implementation

Regional Conservation Partnership Program
73 contracts
1,863 acres
$2.4M obligated
$71,646 payments

FY21 New RCPP Projects
Klamath Basin Farming and Wetland Collaborative
Smith Rock Irrigation Modernization & Conservation
East Oregon Forest Restoration
Tillamook Watersheds Conservation Partnership
West Bear All-Lands Restoration Project

Conservation Stewardship Program
(new contracts only, includes CSP general & CSP grasslands)
120 contracts
272,789 acres
$15.1M obligated
$1.4M payments

PL566 Watershed Projects
(infrastructure)
24 active watershed planning efforts
19 agricultural water management plans
2 dam rehabilitation plans
2 watershed protection plans
1 dam remediation plan

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CONSERVATION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The circles below highlight the priority resource concerns targeted through Oregon's FY21 EQIP Conservation Implementation Strategies.

1. AIR QUALITY
2. EMERGENCY WILDFIRE
7. FOREST HEALTH
3. INVASIVES
13. IRRIGATION EFFICIENCY
2. OAK WOODLAND
4. SALMON HEALTH
4. SOIL HEALTH
6. UPLAND HABITAT
9. WATER QUALITY
2. WETLANDS
12. WILDFIRE
CONSERVATION SUCCESS IN THE FIELD

Success in the Soil on Garnetts Red Prairie Farm

At the age of 57, Pryor Garnett (pictured with family above) became a first-generation farmer, with dreams of creating an organic operation that, in time, would be self-sustaining and both environmentally and ecologically beneficial.

Previous operations on the property had left the soil in need of some care and attention. After working with NRCS to implement the emergency plan, Pryor applied for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Organic Initiative.

His first organic EQIP contract included practices such as a nutrient management plan, field border, minimum tillage, conservation crop rotation, cover crops and conservation cover – all of which help to stabilize and regenerate soil.

Read the full story here: bit.ly/GarnettsRedPrairieFarm

Public/Private Partnerships Restore Willamette Valley Wildlife Habitat

NRCS Oregon and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are working together alongside private landowners to proactively address conservation needs in the Willamette Valley and restore wildlife habitat. The goal of the partnership is to restore native oak savanna and woodlands, prairie and wetland habitats and protect them from future development through NRCS easement programs.

This partnership and landowner support have contributed to species recovery success, as seen with the removal of the Oregon Chub and Bradshaw’s lomatium (pictured above) from the Endangered Species List in 2015 and 2021, respectively.

Read the full story here: bit.ly/WillametteValleyEasements

HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED FARMERS AND RANCHERS CONTRACTS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Contracts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Limited Resource</td>
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<td>Beginning</td>
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<td>Socially Disadvantaged</td>
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<td>$5.06 M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native American Indian Tribes</td>
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**CONSERVATION SUCCESS IN THE FIELD**

**Linn County Tree Farmers of the Year Transform the Forest**

Ten years ago, the 80-acre property near Scio, Ore., affectionately named “Bogwood” by current owners Lee Peterman and Shirley Jolliff, looked very different. What was then an overstocked mix of conifers and hardwoods has been transformed into a substantially less-dense property, allowing room for native trees and plants to thrive, as well as local wildlife to move in and get comfortable.

EQIP funding helped Bogwood owners create a forest management plan and implement a number of conservation practices to include brush management, conservation cover and forest stand improvement. In 2020, Lee and Shirley were named Linn County’s Tree Farmers of the Year.


**Resurrecting the Lost Art of Farming**

Nick Kelly, owner and operator of Black Moon Farms, started out farming after wanting more out of a career. His farm, located 10 miles south of Bandon, Ore., is certified organic through Oregon Tilth. With financial assistance through EQIP, Kelly is working to renovate pastures utilizing cross-fencing for management.

Last spring, through the EQIP National High Tunnel Initiative, Kelly set up his first high tunnel. Utilizing a high tunnel extends the growing season, helps diversify crop selection even more, and can help with pest management.


**Umpqua Oak Partnership**

The Umpqua Oak Partnership is a collaborative regional partnership of landowners, tribes, agencies, and organizations working together to preserve and promote healthy oak habitats in Douglas County. The partnership aims to address major threats to oak habitats with the long-term goal of increasing the health and resiliency of oak woodland communities. These rare and declining habitats are critically important to the greater landscape and the partnership is striving to restore and improve the habitat function.

The first phase of this new project takes place on 16,855 acres of private non-industrial forestland and oak savannas that fall within the 32,366-acre project area. To increase health and resiliency, the partnership works with private landowners to implement NRCS forest restoration treatments while fuels reduction work is conducted on connected public lands and private industrial forestlands. The project had a successful first year with significant landowner interest and sign-up.


*Photo: A beaver dam analog helps to slow water on the Bogwood property.*

*Photo: Nick Kelly and NRCS District Conservationist Katlyn Woodruff discuss conservation goals for Black Moon Farms.*

*Photo: The project team tours an oak habitat in Douglas County, Ore.*
The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) programs were historically created with large-scale farming operations in mind. Small scale, organic and diversified operations have different needs than large-scale operations and require scaled solutions to their unique set of challenges and opportunities.

The USDA defines a small farm as an operation with gross cash farm income under $250,000. According to the Census of Agriculture, small farms account for 91% of U.S. farms and contribute 23% of agricultural production.

Oregon is home to 34,807 small farms that generate nearly $582 million in total agricultural product sales. Oregon’s 456 certified organic farms cover 196,045 acres of the state and generate over $454 million in certified organic agricultural product sales.

To support small farm and organic producers across the state, NRCS Oregon created two Small Farms and Organic Specialist positions in 2020. Stacey Cooper and Stephanie Payne, Oregon’s Small Farms and Organic Specialists, split their coverage across the state. Stacey is based out of the St. Helen’s USDA Service Center and covers the North Coast and Lower Willamette basins; Stephanie is based out of the Redmond USDA Service Center and covers the Deschutes and High Desert Basins.

Stacey Cooper studied plant science and environmental science in college and began volunteering at a local farm in New Hampshire when she finished grad school. Her volunteer farm work developed into an organic vegetable farm manager position, which helped connect her to NRCS and producer resources. In 2018, she joined the NRCS New Hampshire team as a soil conservationist, and in 2020 moved to NRCS Oregon for her current role.

Stephanie Payne studied environmental science at Oregon State University and interned with NRCS Oregon in Pendleton before working full time as a soil conservationist for two years prior to her current position. Stephanie has seen the benefits of local food production up close while previously working as a pastry chef in Tennessee and Georgia. This unique perspective led her into the field to work with small and organic farms in a different capacity.

Stacey and Stephanie adapt USDA programming to make program delivery more equitable and provide the means to encourage and support small and organic farmer participation.

Connect with Stephanie at [Stephanie.Payne@usda.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Payne@usda.gov).
Connect with Stacey at [Stacey.Cooper@usda.gov](mailto:Stacey.Cooper@usda.gov).

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**OREGON’S SMALL AND ORGANIC FARMS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Small farms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total sales</td>
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<td>Source: 2017 NASS Data</td>
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<td>Certified organic farms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acres</td>
<td>196,045</td>
<td>Source: 2017 NASS Data</td>
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