



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Investing in Oregon - 2016

Created by the 2014 Farm Bill, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is a partner-driven, locally-led approach to conservation. It offers new opportunities for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to harness innovation, welcome new partners to the conservation mission, and demonstrate the value and efficacy of voluntary, private lands conservation.

In 2016, NRCS is investing up to \$220 million in 84 high-impact projects that impact every state in the nation, including seven in Oregon. This investment, which builds on the \$370 million invested for 2014 and 2015, will help conservation partners and agricultural producers conserve natural resources, leading to cleaner and more abundant water, healthier soil, enhanced wildlife habitat and many other benefits.

Alder Slope Cooperative Partnership

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$1.1 million (State)

Lead Partner: Willowa Soil & Water Conservation District

Number of Partners: 9

Participating State(s): Oregon

Partners will address irrigation efficiency and forest health in high priority Alder Slope areas. The irrigation portion of this project will increase irrigation efficiency by 15 percent, reduce water waste and generate power in the Alder Slope geographic priority area. A catastrophic fire on Alder Slope would result in negative resource impacts to forest health, soil conditions and endangered species such as bull trout, steelhead and salmon. The forest health portion of this overall project will create a defensible space from wildfire between public forests and private non-industrial forestland by reducing the density of overstocked stands, manipulating fuel arrangement, forest structure and significantly reducing the fuel load by an estimated 99,000 tons of fuel. The U.S. Forest Service will do the same on the federally owned lands to increase the defensible space.

Dairy-McKay Degraded Riparian Ecosystems

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$936,000 (National)

Lead Partner: Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District

Number of Partners: 3

Participating State(s): Oregon

During the past 10 years, the Tualatin SWCD and its partners have worked with over 70 private landowners to restore 39 miles of stream throughout the larger watershed using unique riparian restoration programs. Tualatin SWCD and its partners have ranked the Dairy-McKay and Middle Tualatin watersheds, sub-watersheds of the Tualatin River Watershed, as high priority for conservation treatment. This project proposes to work on land along priority stream reaches within this focus area to implement practices to restore fish and wildlife habitat that utilize the streams and riparian areas, increase efficient use of irrigation water, and decrease nutrients and pesticides in surface and ground waters. Objectives by 2021 are to: establish riparian forest buffers along 20 miles of priority stream reaches bordering agricultural lands; improve irrigation



water use efficiency on 170 acres along priority stream reaches; decrease manure runoff from five livestock operations; and restore 20 acres of wetland in floodplain sites bordering priority stream reaches.

Grande Ronde Watershed Conservation Partnership

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$3.7 million (CCA)

Lead Partner: Union County Conservation District

Number of Partners: 7

Participating State(s): Oregon

The Grande Ronde Watershed Conservation Partnership is a diverse group with a 23-year history of collaboration and working with landowners to address local conservation priorities related to watershed health and fish and wildlife habitat. This partnership will implement critical watershed-scale projects addressing soil erosion, sedimentation, and water quantity and quality contributing to the recovery of ESA listed salmon, steelhead and bull trout populations. Project success will be monitored and demonstrated through irrigation water management analysis, in-stream flow measurements, vegetative assessment surveys and fire danger assessments. Fish distribution and quantitative habitat surveys will be conducted annually. Site visits for all upland projects will be conducted to ensure project implementation success, operations and maintenance.

High Desert Drought Resilient Ranching

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$1.3 million (National)

Lead Partner: Trout Unlimited

Number of Partners: 17

Participating State(s): Idaho (**lead state**), Nevada & Oregon

Nevada, Idaho and Oregon ranchers have experienced a severe drought for the majority of years in the last 30-year cycle. This project will help reduce drought impacts to wildlife and livestock in the Owyhee watershed and adjacent communities in two lesser watersheds, which have been historically underserved. Project partners will work together to develop on-the-ground projects that keep water in streams longer for both livestock and wildlife. Project area selection will emphasize state and private land that currently provides habitat for three focal species: redband trout, greater sage-grouse and Columbia spotted frogs or is adjacent to known populations and has the capacity to restore habitat for these species.

Lower Columbia Watershed Partnership

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$3 million (CCA)

Lead Partner: Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

Number of Partners: 11

Participating State(s): Oregon

Through the Watershed Authority PL-566 and locally led contracting, this partnership will be able to involve more landowner participants and make measurable improvements to the health and viability of the Lower Columbia River Watershed. The project will focus on water quality degradation, with an emphasis on improving excessive sediment in surface waters by designing and implementing several stream bank protection projects as well as increasing vegetation to minimize excess nutrients and pesticides from getting into the stream systems. These actions would also assist in improving another resource concern - inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife. By bringing different expertise together in one specific regional area, this project can make significant strides towards improving the habitat and water quality in the Lower Columbia Watershed.



SONEC Working Wet Meadows Initiative

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$2.6 million (National)

Lead Partner: Intermountain West Joint Venture

Number of Partners: 12

Participating State(s): California & Oregon (**lead state**)

The Southern Oregon-Northeastern California (SONEC) region is one of the most important areas for migratory waterbirds in North America, supporting approximately 70% of the Pacific Flyway's wetland-dependent migratory bird population (>six million birds). These birds are attracted to SONEC because of the food resources provided by privately owned, flood-irrigated wet meadow habitats on working ranchlands within historic floodplains. However, these habitats are increasingly threatened by changing irrigation practices, aging water conveyance infrastructure and fragmentation. To address at risk species habitat, water quantity and drought resource concerns, this project will strategically utilize Farm Bill programs and partner contributions to conserve nearly 25,000 acres of wet meadow habitats and improve the resiliency of working ranchlands to drought. Specifically, the project will improve the sustainability of wet meadows for migratory birds by: enhancing infrastructure and improving the efficiency of flood-irrigation on critical wet meadows; acquiring conservation easements to remove fragmentation risk; and enhancing important foraging habitat for wetland-dependent migratory birds.

Water Quality and Quantity in the Klamath Basin

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$7.6 million (National)

Lead Partner: Trout Unlimited, Inc.

Number of Partners: 5

Participating State(s): Oregon

The Klamath Basin is well known for water related issues, as agricultural and environmental interests compete for an over allocated resource. The primary natural resource concerns in the basin are limited instream flows and external loading of nutrients into Upper Klamath Lake, problems that persist downstream through the mainstem Klamath River. Reduced instream flows contribute to elevated summer stream temperatures, and thereby limit the amount of cold water spawning and rearing habitat for a number of native fish species, including bull trout and redband trout. Lake-fringe wetlands and riparian buffers, which historically provided extensive nutrient filtration and critical habitat for endangered sucker, are now limited. Irrigators in the Klamath Basin have been hit hard by many years of drought, and it is clear that there is currently not enough water to meet irrigation needs and simultaneously address the natural resource concerns described above. The project goals are to: improve water quality; increase protected instream flows in tributaries and flowing into Upper Klamath Lake; increase drought resilience of producers and natural systems; and improve instream, wetland and riparian habitat for federally listed species. Tangible, measurable results of the innovative program activities will be tracked, including instream water quality, acre-feet of water saved through irrigation efficiencies, pasture condition scores, and acres of restored wetlands and proper functioning riparian buffers.

