

Investing in the Willamette Valley

Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program 2012

Annual Report

Dec. 1, 2011 through Nov. 30, 2012



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife



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Cover photos: Herbert Farm and Natural Area: Fallow grassland is mowed in preparation for riparian restoration. Matt Creek restoration area. Nelson's checkermallow is present in small numbers. Peter Moore, Institute for Applied Ecology, photos. Northern Red-legged Frog. Martyne Reesman, ODFW, photo.

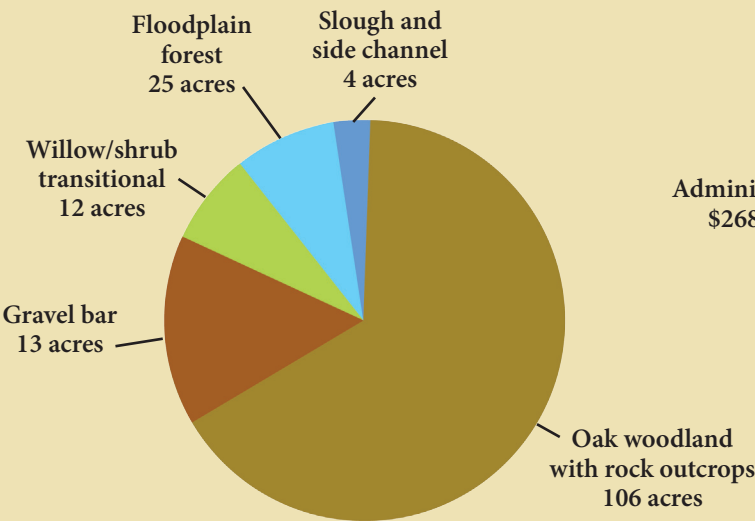
2012 Financial Highlights

Total acquisitions	\$ 160,000
Total restoration, operations and maintenance.....	\$568,552
Total acres secured	160
Number of projects that provide significant habitat benefits to both threatened and endangered fish and wildlife species dual credit projects.....	1

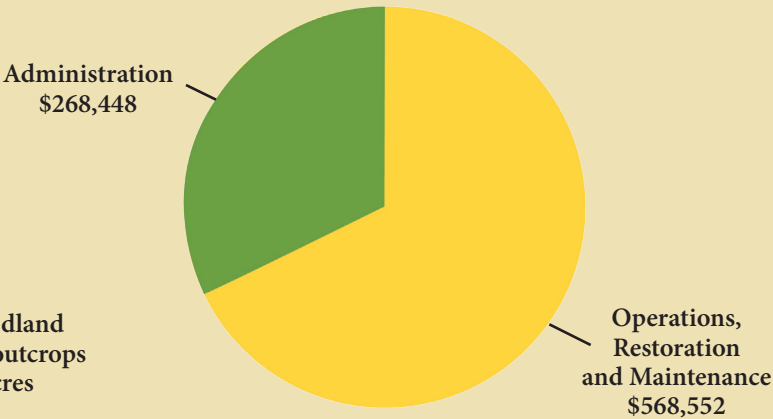
2012 Acquisition Budget

Property	Fee Title Acquisition	Cost (\$)
Rattlesnake Butte	47 acres purchased 50 acres donated	55,000
Railroad Island	63 acres	105,000
Total	160 acres	160,000

2012 Acres of Key Habitat Aquired: 160



2012 Operations, Restoration and Maintenance Budget: \$837,000



Major accomplishments 2012

- Two key acquisitions were completed by Program partners, resulting in protection of more than 160 acres of unique habitat. Two additional projects that were approved in 2012 should close in 2013.
- Project Selection Criteria were approved by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Independent Scientific Review Panel.
- A Policy Coordinator was hired to focus on development of a monitoring and evaluation program, aligning the Program with implementation of the Upper Willamette Conservation and Recovery Plan for Chinook and Steelhead and other projects.
- Draft Project Selection Criteria guidelines were used for the first time.
- Project solicitation resulted in review of eighteen proposals to be funded in FY 2013, ten of which were recommended to BPA. Of these, four projects will provide dual credit benefits to both fish and wildlife species.
- Developed a baseline stewardship funding rate to use when comparing long-term stewardship funding requests.
- Improved coordination with The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians to better coordinate review of cultural criteria during project review.

Goals for 2013

- Expand membership in the Technical Review Team to include technical experts outside ODFW.
- Establish membership on the Willamette Wildlife Advisory Group to guide program implementation.
- Formalize two-tier review process: A technical review by the Technical Review Team followed by a policy-level project review by the Willamette Wildlife Advisory Group.
- Begin development of a comprehensive application system and database.
- Closely align with other project partners and funding cycles in the Willamette Valley to secure maximum leverage for projects.
- Begin development of a monitoring program that will include compliance monitoring, project effectiveness monitoring, program effectiveness monitoring and adaptive management.
- Continue to develop new partnerships in areas that lack established funding infrastructure, i.e. land trusts
- Expand Program staff to include a dedicated biologist for the southern portion of the Willamette Basin to assist partners with project identification and development. Hire seasonal wildlife technicians to assist with stewardship activities on Program properties.

Message from Program Manager

In Fiscal Year 2012, the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program completed two key acquisitions and oversaw ongoing projects for the benefit of some of the Valley's rarest habitats and fish and wildlife species. The program is funded by the Bonneville Power Administration and managed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program made good progress in 2012. On the staffing side, we hired Bernadette Graham Hudson as the new Program Policy Coordinator. With Bernadette's help, we refined project selection criteria to meet the recommendations of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Independent Scientific Review Panel.

On the program side, staff developed a realistic estimate of stewardship needs on habitat protection projects in the Willamette Basin. This baseline stewardship estimate provides ODFW with a comparison point to assess funding requests for stewardship, as well as ensuring that the long-term needs of project maintenance are met.

On the project side, two projects that we approved in 2012 are expected to close in 2013. We also provided funding for the long-term stewardship needs of projects that demonstrated that need to ensure that the conservation values are maintained in perpetuity.

Additionally, we reviewed and recommended ten projects including eight important land acquisitions and two conservation easements for funding by BPA in FY 2013.

All of these projects will help preserve the fish and wildlife species and habitats that make the Willamette Valley a unique and valuable landscape. We look forward to an even more productive year in 2013.

Chris Wheaton
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Northwest Region Manager

Two Acquisitions Expand Native Habitats

Rattlesnake Butte Preserve protects reptiles and rare plants



Western Rattlesnake.
Simon Wray, ODFW, photo.

Forty-seven acres were added to the Rattlesnake Butte Preserve in Lane County near Monroe in a fee title acquisition through the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program. At the same time, The Nature Conservancy donated 50 adjacent acres. All of the property is now under an ODFW-BPA conservation easement and has been transferred to the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde.

“The Tribe brings a rich cultural history and innate knowledge of land management to this property,” said Dan Bell, Willamette Basin Conservation director of the Nature Conservancy. “It is a pleasure to partner with them on this project.”

“This is a wonderful piece of property to protect,” said Michael Karnosh, Program Manager for the Confederated Tribes. “We value the opportunity to take conservation stewardship for the butte and its habitats.”

Rattlesnake Butte takes its name from the Western Rattlesnake, a species that exists only in remnant populations in the Willamette Valley where it is listed as a state sensitive species. The south facing rocky slopes harbor denning populations of virtually every reptile native to the Willamette Valley. It is widely recognized as a significant area by the state’s resident herpetologists.

In addition to Willamette Valley prairie and savanna wildflowers, the property contains plant species including Lemmon’s needlegrass, Roemer’s fescue, Hall’s violet, prairie lupine and turkey mullein—some of which are rare and uncommon. There are very few nonnative plant species on the property.

The property is located in the West Eugene Conservation Opportunity Area, approximately six miles south of Finley National Wildlife Refuge and eight miles north of Fern Ridge Reservoir.



Rattlesnake Butte: *Michael Karnosh, The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, photos.*

Small island, Big benefits

Railroad Island, two river miles upstream of Harrisburg in Lane County, has never been farmed or developed and remains in its natural state. Its 63 acres of floodplain forests, gravel bars and open waters offer excellent habitat for native fish species including juvenile and adult Upper Willamette spring chinook.



Spring Chinook. ODFW photo.

The McKenzie River Trust, which owns other priority conservation properties in the Upper Willamette Basin, acquired the property in 2012 from mainstem Willamette farmers, Wayne and Pam Swango, with funding from the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program.

“Protecting these remaining areas of intact habitat in the Upper Willamette is a high priority for us,” said Nicole Nielsen-Pincus, Willamette Program Manager for the Trust.

The floodplain forest is primarily made up of black cottonwood and Oregon ash and harbors Oregon Conservation Strategy species including willow flycatcher (nesting documented) as well as other migratory birds. Fisheries researchers indicate the cold temperatures in the slough contribute to healthy populations of native fish. Northern red-legged frogs, dusky Canada geese and American bittern are also likely make use of the island.

“The main conservation value of this island is its dynamic nature and the opportunity to encourage healthy river processes,” said Nielsen-Pincus.

The property is located in the Willamette River Floodplain Conservation Opportunity Area. It was designated dual credit habitat by the Habitat Technical Team and is an important stepping-stone on the chain of Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Greenway properties.



Railroad Island. Marty Nil photo.

Multi-year Conservation Projects Improve Native Habitats

Wildlife Area conserves wetlands for fish, birds, amphibians and reptiles



Northern Red-legged Frog.
Martyne Reesman, ODFW, photo.



Northwestern Salamander,
Sue Beilke, ODFW photo.



Wapato. *Sue Beilke, ODFW photo.*

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife staff and a bevy of volunteers continued wetland, meadow and bottomland restoration on the 417-acre J.R. Palensky Wildlife Area north of Portland.

“This year, we really benefitted from the work of Portland State University graduates who helped with monitoring,” said Sue Beilke, ODFW Wildlife biologist. “We are now incorporating that information into restoration projects. For example, surveys show that woody species are encroaching on the open meadows, so we need to remove them to maintain that important foraging habitat for hawks and other birds.”

Oak surveys documented over 100 Oregon white oak seedlings and saplings in several areas. To support the growth of the iconic trees, thinning is underway to reduce competition from nearby trees and shrubs. This work will contribute to both plant and species diversity.

Wetland restoration is increasing habitat for the Northern red-legged frog, an Oregon Conservation Strategy species, which uses the area’s semi-permanent ponds for egg laying and then moves back to nearby forests where it spends most of its life. As part of the long-term monitoring of the species, volunteers assist with yearly frog egg mass counts to document population numbers and habitat use. This information has been crucial in guiding restoration efforts for amphibian species that use the wetlands for breeding habitat.

Invasive species removal is an ongoing project. To combat reed canary grass, a technique called moist soil management is used to restore wetland plant species including the rare native Columbia Sedge plants. The Wildlife Area is believed to be one of only four sites in the lower Columbia River Basin that still support this rare plant community.

The Wildlife Area is made up of habitats once common along the lower Willamette River including riparian bottomlands with old growth Oregon ash and cottonwood gallery forests intertwined with

wetland meadows, ponds and sloughs. These conservation priority habitats support a diverse array of fish and wildlife species including anadromous fish, migrating waterfowl, songbirds, amphibians and reptiles. The site was purchased in 1991 by BPA as the first BPA mitigation site in Oregon and is managed by ODFW. It provides cover, nesting and feeding habitat for many wildlife species including willow flycatcher, hoary bat and western painted turtle.

Restored Natural Area will benefit wildlife and provide recreation

Located a few miles south of Corvallis, the Herbert Farm and Natural Area is a 221-acre gem of a property that includes native prairie, oak savanna and riparian forest. Marys River converges with Muddy Creek here, providing more than two miles of riverfront. Remnant flood channels and swales formed during floods provide a variety of low-lying habitats. Two rare plants exist in the area in small numbers: Kincaid's lupine, which was federally listed as endangered in 2000, and the threatened Nelson's check-ermallow. Oregon Conservation Strategy Species including Northern red-legged frog, streaked horned lark and willow flycatcher populations are resident.



Matt Creek restoration area.

In 2012, the Institute for Applied Ecology created a five-year restoration plan for the area that begins with the phased conversion of approximately 170 acres of agricultural field to riparian and upland or wet prairie, along with the enhancement of existing riparian forest and restoration of oak woodland and savanna.



Wet prairie is home to remnant populations of rare plant species. *Peter Moore, IAE, photo.*

The first phase of restoration, which begins in 2013, will focus on 83 acres in the northwest part of the Natural Area. It involves clearing the riparian borders and controlling invasive species, including blackberries and reed canarygrass. A wide riparian zone with 60,000 trees and shrubs bordering an extensive upland prairie/savanna of native grasses and forbs and scattered oaks is planned. The existing wet prairie and oak woodland/savanna areas will be supplemented by seeding and planting a variety of important native species. The restoration will provide the opportunity to introduce and increase rare, threatened and endangered species, such as Nelson's checkermallow and peacock larkspur and a whole matrix of native grasses, flowering forbs, shrubs and trees, and these will in turn attract an even greater diversity and abundance of wildlife species than currently is found in the area.

The project will provide educational and recreational opportunities. Local schoolchildren will help with planting and monitoring. Culturally important plants, such as camas, will be of interest to Native American tribal groups. A planned trail system will allow the public to enjoy the Natural Area.

"This is an ambitious project, but it is exciting to begin with the vision of restoring the area to its former glory," said Peter Moore, IAE restoration ecologist.

The restoration is a collaborative project between the Institute for Applied Ecology, City of Corvallis, ODFW and US Fish and Wildlife Service. The property is owned by the City of Corvallis and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Bonneville Power Administration hold a conservation easement on the property.

About BPA and Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program

The Bonneville Power Administration funding helps fulfill an agreement that the State of Oregon made in 2010 to protect nearly 20,000 acres of Willamette Basin wildlife habitat. The agreement dedicates stable funding from electric ratepayers for 15 years to safeguard Willamette habitat for native species, supporting state efforts to protect the Willamette Basin and fulfilling BPA's responsibility under the Northwest Power Act to offset the impacts of federal flood control and hydropower dams. Find more information in the Wildlife Habitat section of ODFW's website, http://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/willamette_wmp/index.asp

Financials

On Oct. 22, 2010 Oregon Governor Theodore Kulongoski, BPA Administrator Steven Wright, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Director Roy Elicker signed the Willamette River Basin Memorandum of Agreement Regarding Wildlife Habitat Protection and Enhancement between the State of Oregon and the Bonneville Power Administration. This agreement permanently settles BPA's wildlife mitigation responsibilities for wildlife habitat losses caused by the

construction of the Willamette Valley project, as required under the Northwest Power Act of 1980 (16 U.S.C. § 839-839h, Dec. 5, 1980) by providing funding for the protection and restoration of wildlife habitat in the Willamette Valley.

BPA has agreed to fund the protection of habitat through the purchase of lands or conservation easements for the state or for third parties over the term of the Memorandum of Agreement, which runs through 2025. Funding for these purchases will start at \$2.5 million per year in the first three years, increasing to \$8 million per year in 2014 until 2025. Inflation will be added at 2.5% (compounded), starting in 2015. The total funding for acquisitions will be \$117,864,424 through 2025. These funds will be used to pay for the purchase of real property interest and the long-term stewardship of habitat values. BPA will administer these funds and will purchase properties or easements based on recommendations from ODFW. ODFW established a trust account to pay for long term monitoring and maintenance of these properties after 2025.

BPA also agreed to fund ODFW's implementation of the settlement including O&M for Willamette mitigation sites purchased with BPA funding prior to 2010. The total amount of this fund was \$26,226,440 (including inflation). The fund was to be dispersed in the following increments: for 2011-2012 the dispersal would be \$837,000, in 2013 the dispersal would be \$1.1 million, and in 2014 the dispersal would be \$1.7 million per annum until 2025. These funds are used support ODFW's implementation of the settlement, including personnel costs, development of a monitoring program, and a portion of these funds are directly used to fund ongoing restoration efforts on past and present acquisitions made under the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation program at ODFW.

In return for this commitment, ODFW developed criteria to evaluate potential habitat acquisitions, working with a team of conservation organizations, Tribes, local governments, and other interested parties. These criteria were approved by the Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) in 2012, as required under the Northwest Power Act as amended in 1996 (839b(h)(10)(D)(iv)). Proposals will be evaluated and prioritized using the criteria, and BPA will then fund protection using the prioritized list to guide expenditures until that year's capital budget is expended. The state will certify projects to ensure that they represent appropriate mitigation for habitat losses. Total lands protected, including all projects prior to the MOA, will meet or exceed a minimum of 26,537 acres.

ODFW believes that this program is necessary to successfully compensate the state of Oregon for the losses of wildlife habitat caused by the construction of 13 multi-purpose dams and reservoirs in the Willamette Project. ODFW has engaged the public in developing criteria for selecting the lands to be designated for habitat protection. ODFW will work only with willing sellers and will use a combination of conservation easements and purchases to protect habitat and enable local communities to guide the location of purchases to maximize community support.



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