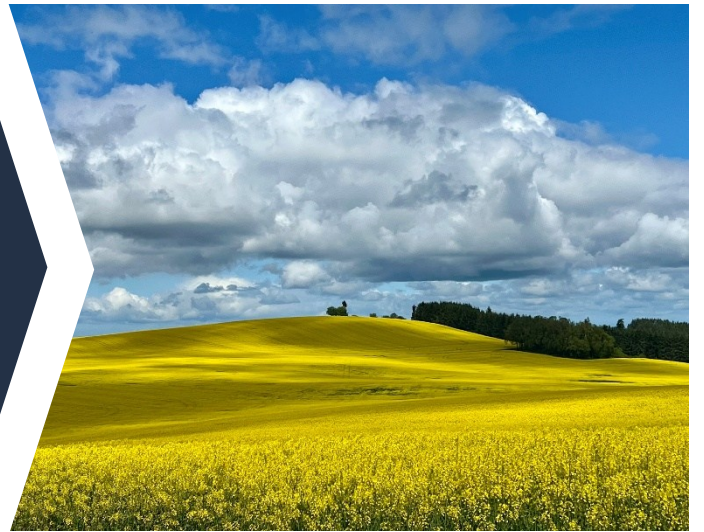




Oregon Climate Action Commission



Natural & Working Lands Fund | Annual Report
September 2025



Commission Chair

- Cathy Macdonald, retired, former North America Natural Climate Solutions Director at The Nature Conservancy

Voting Members from Specified Sectors

- Manufacturing: Dan Thorndike, General Counsel, Medford Fabrication
- Energy: Kristen Sheeran, Director of Sustainability and Resource Planning, Portland General Electric
- Transportation: Lewis Lem, Transportation Programs Manager, Port of Portland
- Forestry: Bettina von Hagen, Managing Director and CEO, Ecotrust Forestry Management Investments and Advisory
- Agriculture: Tom Rietmann, Owner/Operator, Rietmann Ranch
- Fishing Industry: Michael Seavers, Shoreside Management, F/V Miss Sue Incorporated
- Environmental Policy: Nora Apter, Oregon Director of Climate Solutions
- Environmental Justice: Eliza Garcia, States Associate with Climate Power
- Youth Representative: Yaseen Arifin, student at Sunset High School, Beaverton

At-large Voting Members

- Carter MacNichol, retired, former President and Managing Director of Shiels Obletz Johnsen, Inc.
- Karenga Ross, School Board Member at Gaston SD

Non-Voting Members, State Agency Leadership

- Department of Energy Director
- Department of Transportation Director
- Public Utility Commission Chair
- Department of Environmental Quality Director
- Department of Agriculture Director
- Oregon State Forester
- Water Resources Department Director
- Department of Land Conservation and Development Director
- Oregon Health Authority Director
- Oregon Business Development Department Director
- Oregon Department of Administrative Services Director
- Department of Consumer and Business Services Director
- Department of Fish and Wildlife Director
- Oregon Housing and Community Services Director
- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Executive Director

At-Large Non-Voting Members from State Agencies or Academic Institutions

- Greg Dotson, Oregon Law Professor, University of Oregon Law School
- John Wasiutynski, Multnomah County Office of Sustainability Director

Legislative Non-Voting Members Appointed by the Senate President and House Speaker

- Senator David Brock-Smith
- Representative Mark Gamba
- Representative Bobby Levy

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Contractor crew engaged in floodplain reforestation on the North Santiam River (P3)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through the adoption of HB 3409 in 2023, the Oregon Legislature established the Natural and Working Lands Fund (Fund) to support investments in natural climate solutions.ⁱ The Legislature appropriated \$10 million into the Fund for distribution to the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB). The four agencies are collectively referred to as the Fund Agencies. The Oregon Climate Action Commission (OCAC) approved the proposal developed by the Governor’s Office for the distribution of the Fund in January 2024. The Fund Agencies received distributions on April 17, 2024. The legislature did not appropriate additional money to the Fund during the 2025 Session. This report covers the first year and three months of implementation through mid-July 2025.

Natural climate solutions are land management practices and other activities that sequester and store carbon from the atmosphere through natural processes while also maintaining or enhancing ecosystem resilience and human well-being.

Since the 2023 allocation, around 59 percent of all funds have been committed. Some projects, such as ODFW’s Carbon Capture in Oregon Coastal Estuaries, have been completed, while most others have spent 50 percent or more of their allocations. Project activities have occurred in 30 out of 36 Oregon counties and total more than 120 implementation actions across the state. More than 100 landowners have been contacted or received technical assistance from these projects over the last year. Program and project descriptions — along with a progress update, outreach efforts, next steps, and measurable outcomes — are detailed for each of the 13 programs receiving funding in Appendix A.

Since January 2024, N&WL Funds have been leveraged to secure over \$11 million in additional funds – more than doubling the state’s investment.

The Fund programs and projects were specifically selected based on their potential to leverage additional funds from federal and other sources. This strategy has been extremely successful. Since the Commission’s approval of the Fund Proposal in January 2024, the Fund has been leveraged to support \$11.3 million in federal and private funding—doubling Oregon’s investment. The amount and sources of the additional leveraged funds are also included in the program updates in Appendix A.

ODOE took stock of additional funding needs as directed by HB 3409. Three major themes surfaced from this inquiry, including: 1) the need for continuity of funding for these newly established projects and programs to successfully scale up future natural climate solution programs and projects, 2) funding to support increased capacity for Tribal Nation collaboration, and 3) funding to maintain and expand staff capacity to accelerate the pace and scale of natural climate solutions implementation, including being able to reach more landowners and land managers across the state.

By mid-2026, the Commission will have adopted net carbon sequestration and storage goals. The agencies responsible for implementing natural climate solutions will have completed cross-agency work on natural climate solutions, associated metrics, and agency programs, and the information they require to carry out the broad directives of the statute, which will inform Fund proposals. With this information,

ⁱ HB 3409, s. 2023, sections 53 to 63 (Ore.).

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB3409>

additional funding to facilitate the development of a cross-agency implementation plan would give the Commission and agencies a clear roadmap for future N&WL investments, and would help to accelerate project implementation with future Fund allocations.

BACKGROUND

Through the adoption of HB 3409 in 2023, the Legislature established the Natural and Working Lands Fund (Fund) to support investments in natural climate solutions.ⁱⁱ The Legislature appropriated \$10 million into the Fund for distribution to the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB). The Legislature did not appropriate additional funding in the 2025 Session.

The Natural and Working Lands Fund supports investments in natural climate solutions on Oregon’s natural and working lands.

The Legislature directed the four agencies to use their Fund allocations for specific purposes:

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- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| ODA, ODF, and OWEB | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide incentives to help Tribes, landowners, land managers, and environmental justice communities adopt practices that support natural climate solutions. ○ Provide technical assistance for Tribes, landowners, land managers, and environmental justice communities to support the adoption of natural climate solutions. ○ Prioritize assistance and incentives for environmental justice communities or Tribes. |
|---------------------------|---|
-
- | | |
|-------------|--|
| ODFW | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conduct research to understand the effects natural climate solutions, including: climate change mitigation and resilience contributions; community co-benefits resulting from natural climate solutions; as well as the climate, ecosystem, and carbon benefits of products from natural and working lands. ○ Secure federal matching funds or other sources of funding to support investments in natural climate solutions on natural and working lands. ○ Ensure the benefits of natural climate solutions are equitably distributed among Tribes, landowners, land managers, and environmental justice communities. |
|-------------|--|
-

HB 3409 directs the Oregon Climate Action Commission (Commission), with staff support from the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE), to determine the annual Fund allocations to the four agencies, coordinate with the agencies on the development and implementation of natural climate solutions programs and activities, and submit an annual report that provides a summary of the agencies’



ⁱⁱ HB 3409, s. 2023, sections 53 to 63 (Ore.).
<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB3409>

use of the Fund and identifies additional funding needs to the Legislative committees on the environment. **Appendix A** provides detailed summaries of each agency program or project supported by the Fund, with updates on implementation progress through July 2025. Fund allocations approved by the Commission were authorized by the Legislature through the 2024 budget reconciliation bill, SB 5701, which went into effect on April 17, 2024.

Nearly \$10 million was allocated from the Fund for use in fiscal years 2024 through 2028. Table 1 shows that the original budget was frontloaded, with nearly all the spending occurring in the first two years. The remainder of the funds from 2023, which has accrued interest, will be allocated this fall or early winter.

Table 1: Original Natural & Working Lands Fund Budget, 2024-2028*

FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	Total
\$2,945,912	\$6,282,286	\$288,000	\$163,000	\$88,000	\$9,767,198

* Budget as adopted by the Commission in January 2024.

The Fund allocations between the four agencies are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: 2024 Natural & Working Lands Fund Allocations

Agency	2024 Allocation	Statutory Fund
OWEB	\$2,500,000	Watershed Natural Climate Solutions Fund
ODFW	\$3,038,270	Fish and Wildlife Natural Climate Solutions Fund
ODF	\$3,250,000	Forestry Natural Climate Solutions Fund
ODA	\$978,928	Agricultural Natural Climate Solutions Fund

Table 3 lists the Natural & Working Land Fund allocations by programs and projects. Detailed summaries of each of the 13 programs and projects are provided in **Appendix A**.

Table 3: 2024 Natural & Working Lands Fund Programs and Projects

Project No.	Agency	Program/Project	Fund Allocation
P1	ODA	Invasive Annual Grasses	\$396,000
P2	ODA	Oregon Native Seed Strategy	\$582,932
P3	ODFW	Floodplain Reforestation on North Santiam River	\$412,500
P4	ODFW	Carbon Capture and Restoration in North-Central Oregon Rangelands	\$750,000
P5	ODFW	Carbon Capture in Oregon Coastal Estuaries	\$1,100,000
P6	ODFW	Red Hills Conservation Area Wildfire Risk Reduction	\$170,770
P7	ODFW	Natural Climate Solutions Biologist	\$320,000
P8	ODFW	Natural Climate Solutions Assistant Biologist	\$285,000
P9	ODF	Advance Implementation of Climate-Smart Forestry	\$1,500,000
P10	ODF	Climate-Smart Forestry: Tribal and EJ Partnerships	\$1,000,000

P11	ODF	Establishment of Climate-Ready Seed Orchards	\$750,000
P12	OWEB	Restoration & Technical Assistance Grants – Open Solicitation Programs	\$1,625,000
P13	OWEB	Conservation Management Planning, Technical Assistance, Payment for Practices	\$875,000



The Fund is supporting programs and projects that will implement natural climate solutions across Oregon’s natural and working land sectors, including natural lands, rangelands, forestlands, agricultural lands, and blue carbon ecosystems. The Fund allocations targeted investments in existing programs and projects where additional funding can advance the pace and scale of natural climate solutions. Approved investments were also designed to leverage millions of dollars in federal funding.

The Fund allocations are advancing natural climate solutions through incentives, technical assistance, and on-the-ground projects with a focus on accessibility and funding for Tribes and environmental justice communities. The technical and direct financial assistance being provided through the Fund’s projects and programs are helping to remove barriers for Tribes, environmental justice communities, landowners, and land managers to engage in natural climate solutions or access funding to support natural climate solutions. These investments provide important co-benefits including increased climate resilience of fish and other wildlife; wildfire resilience; water source protection; improved soil health and productivity; and improving forest and stream health, wetland recovery, and riparian function—among many others.

2025 IMPLEMENTATION UPDATES

The four Natural and Working Lands agencies received their Fund distributions on April 17, 2024. This status update covers the first year and three months of implementation through mid-July 2025. Most programs and projects are proceeding on schedule. Several projects have succeeded in leveraging N&WL funds to attract additional funding from other state, federal, and non-governmental sources. The following subsections outline notable progress updates for each project, and additional funds leveraged by N&WL programs and projects. The project descriptions in Appendix A provide more detailed descriptions and status updates for the programs and projects supported through the Fund.

Since the April 2024 Fund distribution, around 59 percent of all funds have been committed. Details on project allocations and commitment can be found in Table 4. Some projects, such as ODFW’s P5: Carbon Capture in Oregon Coastal Estuaries, have already been completed, while most others have issued 50 percent or more of their allocation. In cases where federal funding has been leveraged (see below section on Leveraging Funds), agencies have prioritized issuing federal funds first out of concern for the certainty of this funding source. Detailed information on project fund commitment or issuance can be found in Appendix A.

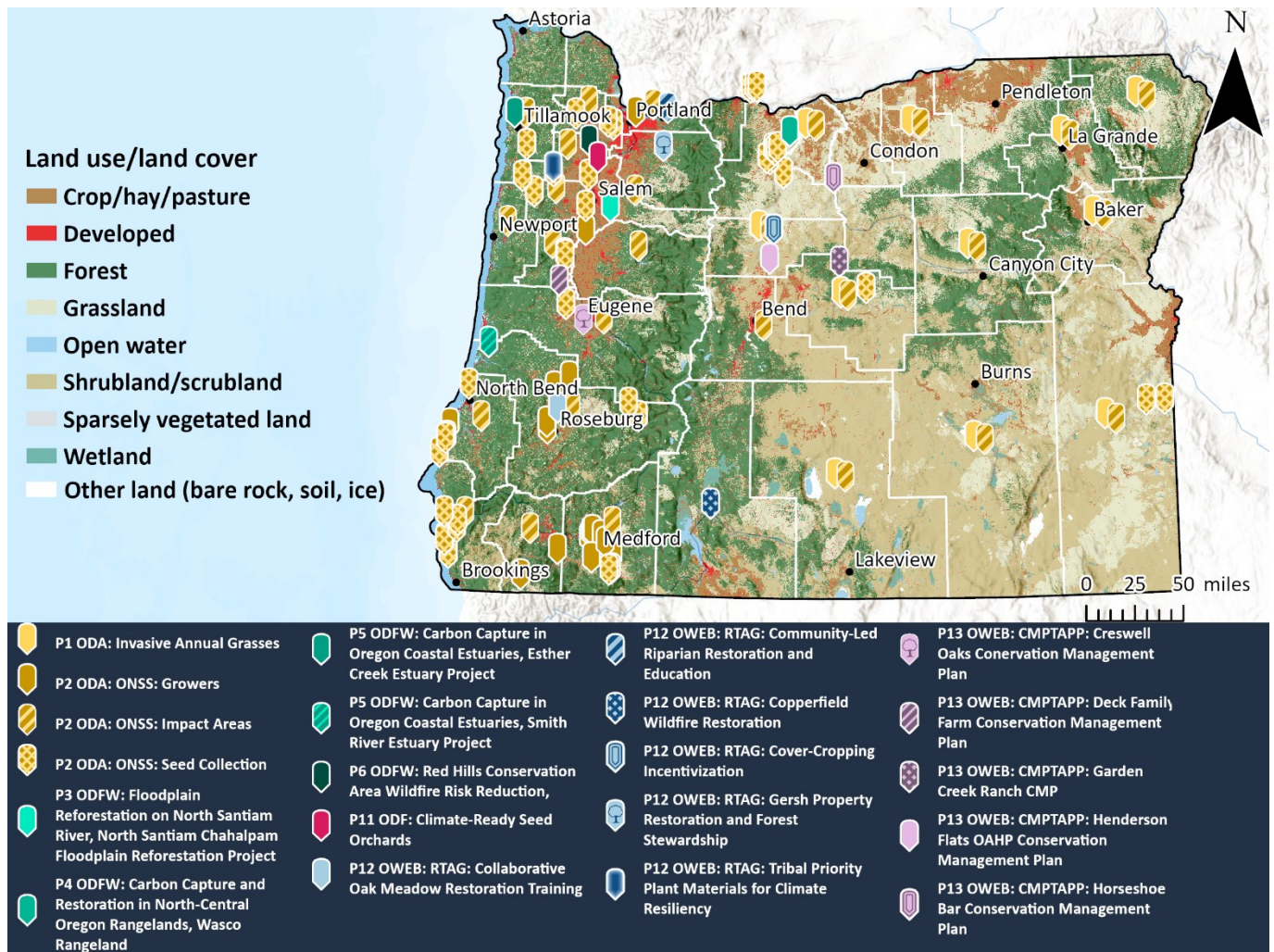
Table 4. Funds Allocated and Committed to Natural and Working Land Fund Projects

Project	Agency	2023 NWL Fund Allocation	2024 Funds Committed or Spent	2025 Funds Committed or Spent	Percent of Allocation Committed or Spent
P1	ODA	\$ 396,000		\$ 26,387	7%
P2	ODA	\$ 582,000	\$ 235,663	\$ 260,027	85%
P3	ODFW	\$ 412,500	\$ 218,481		53%
P4	ODFW	\$ 750,000		\$ 426,308	57%
P5	ODFW	\$ 1,100,000	\$ 680,000	\$ 420,000	100%
P6	ODFW	\$ 170,770		\$ 64,140	38%
P7	ODFW	\$ 320,000		\$ 100,369	31%
P8	ODFW	\$ 285,000		\$ 62,552	22%
P9	ODF	\$ 1,500,000		\$ 250,000	17%
P10	ODF	\$ 1,000,000			0%
P11	ODF	\$ 750,000		\$ 750,000	100%
P12	OWEB	\$ 1,625,000		\$ 1,497,476	92%
P13	OWEB	\$ 875,000		\$ 752,524	86%
	<i>Totals</i>	\$ 9,767,270	\$ 1,134,144	\$ 4,609,783	59%

Geographic Distribution

Project activities have occurred in 30 out of 36 Oregon counties and total more than 120 actions across the state, including native seed collection, floodplain restoration, and post-wildfire reforestation (Figure 1). Where spatial information was only available at the resolution of the county, program activities are shown near the central point of the identified county. Between the agencies, more than 100 landowners have been contacted or have received technical assistance from these projects.

Figure 1. Natural & Working Lands Fund Agency Project Activities and Land Cover Across Oregon



Abbreviations: ONSS = Oregon Native Seed Strategy; RTAG = Restoration and Technical Assistance Grants; CMPTAPP = Conservation Management Planning, Technical Assistance, and Payment for Practices

Natural Climate Solutions Implementation Highlights

For the initial allocation, each agency selected relevant metrics for their projects. Sequestration and community impact metrics are currently being developed by the Commission and ODOE in consultation with the Fund Agencies. These metrics will be applied where possible to these projects and used for future project evaluations and reporting. Because investments from this Fund are so diverse, agencies will continue to track and report on project-specific metrics that are appropriate for the investment; for example, investments in staff capacity. Progress metrics are highlighted in narrative form below. Details of the metrics are in Appendix A for each program/project.

Department of Agriculture

Oregon Native Seed Strategy: Five Tribes received grants through this initiative. This funding has helped Tribes replant after wildfires, purchase seed cleaning equipment, and collecting seeds from culturally significant plant species for Tribal conservation and restoration efforts. **Eight native seed collectors/plant growers** received technical assistance. **More than 20 native plant species from across eight counties** have been collected. The plant stock produced by these seeds will provide species and ecosystem benefits and support cultural lifeways.

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Red Hills Conservation Area Wildfire Risk Reduction: This project, designed to thin Douglas fir from an Oregon white oak stand in the Willamette Valley, was **completed in June 2025**. An Intergovernmental Agreement was established in August 2024 with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs to complete this tribal-led project. Archeological surveys were conducted on **254 acres** within the project area.

Floodplain Reforestation on the North Santiam River: In this project, **the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde are planting 159 acres** back to native habitat. In partnership with ODFW, the Tribe has completed the initial replanting of **30 acres of floodplain forest** in the Chahalpam Wildlife Area. Subsequent plantings and maintenance of plantings are scheduled to occur through June 30, 2027.

Carbon Capture in Oregon Coastal Estuaries: Replacing the failing tide gate at Kennedy Slough and protecting and restoring tidal channels at the Glover Ranch now provides juvenile salmon improved access to **40 acres** of important flooded estuarine habitat during the winter and upstream access to **6.88 miles** of tidal and freshwater streams. The Esther Creek Tide Gate replacement provides **2.5 miles** of tidal and freshwater stream access to four Habitat Conservation Plan covered species. This project also restored **13 acres** of coastal wetlands, increasing resiliency for coastal communities.



Department of Forestry

Native Seed Orchard: The current inventory in the Oregon Seed Bank at the J.E. Schroeder Seed Orchard is valued at approximately **\$14 million**. This project is being implemented to ensure climate-ready orchards can meet the demand of natural climate solution implementation and forest resiliency aims. Efforts to build capacity around additional species are also underway including acorn collection from the iconic Oregon white oaks of the Willamette Valley.

Watershed Enhancement Board

Restoration & Technical Assistance Grants – Open Solicitation Programs: After a significant **3-month long public engagement process** to design the NCS grant offerings, OWEB awarded **five restoration projects** and **one technical assistance award**.

Conservation Management Planning, Technical Assistance, and Payment for Practices: This program funded **five projects** creating a combined impact area of **38,235 acres**.



ODFW staff, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs staff, and contractors on-site at the Red Hills Conservation Area Wildfire Risk Reduction Project (P6)

Leveraging Funds

The Fund investment package was designed to include programs and projects that have potential to leverage additional funds from federal and other sources. Since the Commission’s approval of the Natural & Working Lands Fund Proposal in January 2024, the \$10 million in state funds allocated to the Fund has been leveraged to support an additional \$11,253,733 in grant funding requests and agency or grantee funding and in-kind matches — more than doubling the state’s investment.

Table 5. Leveraged and Additional Funding by Natural & Working Land Fund Projects and Programs

As of July 2025, the following N&WL Fund projects and programs have leveraged or requested additional funding.

Project or Program	Leveraged and Additional Funding
Invasive Annual Grasses (ODA; P1)	The project leveraged over \$1.76 million in federal funds from the Natural Resource Conservation Service. The agency has already received \$438,402 and will receive additional installments through FY 2028. ODA has identified the potential to leverage more than \$20 million in federal funding over the next five years.
Oregon Native Seed Strategy (ODA; P2)	The project leveraged \$3.2 million in federal funds from the NFWF America the Beautiful grant program. ODA has also pledged match to two pending applications that would leverage another \$1.3 million, if funded.
Floodplain Reforestation on the North Santiam River (ODFW and partners; P3)	The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde secured \$1.6 million in restoration funds from state, federal, and non-government sources.

Carbon Capture and Restoration in North-Central Oregon Rangelands (ODFW; P4)	This program has leveraged \$241,914 in state funding, \$20,000 from the Mule Deer Initiative (Pittman-Robertson funds/federal) to supplement the plantings, and a shared position with the NRCS.
Carbon Capture in Coastal Estuaries (ODFW; P5)	The program successfully leveraged \$1.1 million in N&WL Fund monies to receive an additional \$2.98 million from state and federal sources.
Natural Climate Solutions Biologist and Assistant Biologist (ODFW; P7 & P8)	Through the Natural Climate Solutions Biologist and Assistant Biologist, ODFW has leveraged \$229,500 in additional funds for habitat restoration through Pittman-Robertson Funds (US Fish & Wildlife Service) and private funds.
Establishment of Climate-Ready Seed Orchards (ODF; P11)	Federal fund award of \$160,000 has been used to further the implementation of climate adapted orchard development and the overall goals of a robust and long-lasting seed source for reforestation efforts in the state.
Restoration and Technical Assistance Grants (OWEB; P12)	This program is leveraging \$350,000 in federal funding from the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Proposed projects will leverage approximately \$631,000 in other funding and in-kind match.
Conservation Management Planning, Technical Assistance, and Payment for Practices (OWEB; P13)	The position is supported by \$350,000 in federal funding from the same cooperative agreement as above to support the Water and Climate Coordinator position, which advances climate adaptation and mitigation across the grantmaking portfolio. Proposed projects will leverage \$83,339 in other funding and in-kind match.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Per statute, the Commission is directed to report on additional funding needs in the annual report to the legislature. Appendix A provides details about individual program or project investment needs and opportunities identified by the Fund Agencies. Summarized here briefly, three major themes emerged:

- **Project/Program Funding Continuity and Expansion:** Momentum is beginning to build on projects and programs that were initiated with the first allocation of the Fund. With additional funding, agencies could continue what they have started, expand their landowner networks, and scale up their projects to generate more landscape-scale and community-scale benefits.
- **Tribal Nation Collaboration Capacity Funding:** Agencies reported that building capacity for co-development of projects and programs between the agencies and the nine federally recognized Tribes is necessary for meeting needs of immediate projects and for fulfilling agency missions.
- **Agency Staff Capacity Funding:** Agencies identified a strong need to retain positions funded in the first allocation of the Fund and saw great potential for expanding the State’s natural climate solutions work by increasing staff capacity. Across the board, more staff means more touchpoints with partners and private landowners, additional ability to seek other funding opportunities, more collaborative engagement, and more opportunity to build tools that bring transparency to stakeholders.

By mid-2026, the Commission will have adopted net carbon sequestration and storage goals. The agencies responsible for implementing natural climate solutions will have completed cross-agency work on natural climate solutions, associated metrics, and agency programs, and information they require to carry out the broad directives of the statute, which will inform Fund proposals. With this information, additional funding to facilitate the development of a cross-agency implementation plan would give the Commission and agencies a clear roadmap for future N&WL investments, and would help to accelerate project implementation with future Fund allocations.



The Lower Smith Slough, one site of ODFW's Carbon Capture on Coastal Estuaries project (P5)

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**Oregon Climate
Action Commission**



APPENDIX A: INVESTMENT AREA DESCRIPTIONS

The program and project descriptions shared in this appendix are compiled by each agency. They provide details about each program and project and relevant updates since the [2024 Annual Fund Report](#).

Oregon Department of Agriculture | P1: Invasive Annual Grasses

Budget and Funding

Fiscal Year	NWL Fund Allocation	NWL Funds Issued	Other Funds Leveraged (Federal/State/Private)	Other Funds Issued
2023	\$360,000			
2024		\$0	NRCS: Up to \$1,760,000 over 5 years	
2025		\$26,387		\$438,403
Totals	\$360,000	\$26,387	Up to \$1,760,000 over 5 years	\$438,403

Spend Plan Summary: Natural & Working Lands Funds

Fiscal Year	N&WL Fund Budget	FTE	Admin & Personnel
2024	\$44,000	0.4	0
2025	\$44,000		\$4,400
Totals	\$396,000		10%

Description of Investment

Program/Project Description

High-functioning rangelands are a crucial component of carbon storage and sequestration across Oregon and this project’s primary focus will be on preserving and protecting intact or high value perennial bunchgrass habitat and rangeland. This project is facilitated by a partnership with USDA-NRCS and will implement an Invasive Annual Grass (IAG) Management Strategy (i.e., Defend and Grow the Core) that will support numerous State Policies for Natural Climate Solutions outlined in HB 3409 and the conservation practices outlined in the Institute for Natural Resources’ Natural and Working Lands Report. This project engages partners at the state, federal, tribal and local levels to support control efforts and management of invasive annual grasses to preserve, protect and restore rangelands and forests and prevent conversion to ecosystems dominated by invasive annual grasses.

The focus of this project is to provide technical assistance to landowners and land managers that supports coordination, collaboration, and outreach efforts to identify priority treatment areas and high value partnerships for invasive grass management. These efforts help prioritize projects that align with the goals and objectives identified by the Global Warming Commission, HB3409, the USDA Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative, USDA Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, Western Weed Action Plan, Oregon Sagecon Partnership, and others aimed at protecting rangeland and forests from numerous threats like invasive annual grasses, fire and climate change.

By immediately leveraging over \$1.76 million in federal funds, ODA will provide technical assistance and subject matter expertise to landowners, land managers and Tribal partners who seek to adopt practices

that prevent conversion of rangelands to annual dominated ecosystems, reduce wildfire risk and restore deep-rooted perennial grasses. Acting as liaison to federal partners, ODA will provide further technical assistance by connecting landowners and land managers to the appropriate existing and emerging funding opportunities that support adoption of Natural Climate Solutions and other conservation practices.

The protection and restoration of these landscapes will protect and improve their resilience to catastrophic wildfire, protect and improve drought resilience, and increase the climate resilience of wildlife habitat. This project will also expand existing program efforts for the prevention and control of priority State-listed noxious weed species that threaten perennial bunchgrass communities, shrublands, and savanna habitats in the areas identified by the defend and grow the core strategy. ODA staff will identify, develop, and coordinate the implementation of on-the-ground projects among partners, as well as monitor their effectiveness to improve future outcomes. ODA may also subaward funds as grants for the implementation of on-the-ground work that addresses State priorities. This project complements the work proposed by other agencies and demonstrates that ODA's priorities are in sync with partners statewide. This request of \$360,000 will support 0.4 FTE over five years by leveraging \$1.76 million from USDA-NRCS to support another 1.6 FTE.

2025 Implementation Update: ODA filled the first of two rangeland health specialist positions in December, 2024, to support the Noxious Weed Control Program and NRCS in implementation of an Invasive Annual Grass (IAG) management framework. The IAG management framework provides technical assistance, services, and funding to promote and support rangeland health and functionality.

Project activities in 2025 have focused mostly on technical assistance and consultation with existing regional working groups. The working groups will collaborate to identify critical needs and information gaps that will be prioritized by the Rangeland Health Specialists and inform the 20- and 10-year plans for IAG management on Oregon rangelands.

ODA staff has provided 36 field-based consultations for IAG treatments and other technical assistance to landowners and land managers in 10 counties as of July 2025. Activities have included project site evaluation and cursory inventories of plant communities, treatment recommendations, identification of potential funding streams that align with project goals or habitat types and assistance with development of regional strategic action plans for invasive annual grass management.

ODA is currently engaged in field trials in Northeast Oregon, in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, private landowners, and the Eastern Oregon Ag Research Station (Union) to evaluate the effects of invasive annual grass treatments on First Foods and culturally significant plant species (CSS). Information gathered here will inform strategies for larger scale treatments to ensure that First Foods and CSS are protected. ODA has notified other tribal officials of the project and the agency's desire to incorporate tribal priorities and perspectives into its planning efforts moving forward.

ODA is also a part of a Tech Transfer Partnership with the Nature Conservancy, OSU and the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts. Further engagement includes the Baker LIT, Malheur Range Partnership, Harney County Wildfire Collaborative and technical assistance in the creation of a new 4-County Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

NOTE: Due to early uncertainty with federal funding, ODA charged a majority of project expenses to federal funds in an effort to capture as many of those dollars as possible, before any rescindments could take place. This creates the appearance of a large "underspend" on NWL funds thus far. With federal funding for this project remaining stable, our spend plan will revert to a more balanced approach.

Next Steps: Complete the recruitment, selection and onboarding of an NRS-3 level Rangeland Health Specialist, with an anticipated onboarding date of January, 2026. This onboarding date was pushed back from the previous target of July, 2025 due to the uncertainty of federal funding in early 2025. ODA has recently received positive assurances regarding the federal funds associated with this project and have mutually agreed with NRCS that an early 2026 start will be sufficient to achieve project goals.

With a full year of partner engagement, ODA staff will focus on developing the 20-year goals and 10-year action plans in 2026 through coordination of multiple regional working groups. These plans will guide this work into the future in a way that empowers landowners, addresses gaps in understanding and ensures outcomes that create resiliency across the rangelands of Oregon while maintaining productivity for range-based agriculture and protecting or enhancing wildlife habitats. Further effort will be put into leveraging additional federal funds to benefit private landowners by enrolling them in NRCS conservation programs.

The 20/10 plans will also be informed by spatial analysis using existing and emerging datasets that will prioritize key geographies and habitats based on current ecological state, probability of successful restoration, available funding mechanisms (e.g.- RCPP) and opportunity to capitalize on existing partnerships or momentum in those areas.

Needs and Opportunities

- ***State Funding Source***
ODA's Rangeland Health Program will largely focus on promoting the proper and effective management of Invasive Annual Grasses to help protect, improve and restore rangeland ecological functions. While some funding is available for this work, it is ephemeral and insufficient for the scope of work at hand. A state allocated fund for on the ground projects that protect and promote healthy rangelands would be very useful in providing the catalyst for communities to plan and implement rangeland health work in ecologically important geographies. This is especially true since federal funds are most recently focusing on natural resource production and fuels management in Wildland Urban Interfaces where rangelands often don't exist or are already compromised to a great degree.
- ***Federal Partnerships***
The Rangeland Health Program should work closely with federal partners to prioritize important cores of healthy rangelands and to take advantage of federal partnerships and funding opportunities.
- ***Rangelands Advisory Board***
A critical need for this work to be effective is the creation of an interdisciplinary and interjurisdictional Oregon Rangelands Advisory Board that will maintain focus on healthy rangelands across the state over time. The first task of this group would be to produce a 20-year plan with 10-year objectives for healthy Rangeland's in Oregon.
- ***Research***
Research into effective restoration techniques and plant materials that preserve and protect both our native rangelands and their ecological functions is also of high importance.
- ***Pre- and Post-Fire Planning***
The promotion of pre-fire planning that helps prevent large wildfires and helps protect cores of healthy rangelands across Oregon's rangelands is essential to the success of this project. This work needs to proceed in cooperation with the Rural Fire Protection Districts, Oregon Department of Forestry's work with private land fire protection, the State Fire Marshall's office, etc. Similarly, the ability for the state to provide post fire response funds for rangelands is

especially important since grasslands are very vulnerable to IAG invasion post fire and the proper treatments post fire can protect rangelands from the IAG invasion.

Ability of Agency to Implement the Program

By using this investment to leverage federal funds, it will allow ODA to create capacity with 2 FTE over 5 years. ODA is well positioned and well partnered for this work as the state authority on State-listed noxious weeds and threatened and endangered plants. The agency has the technical expertise and the infrastructure to support this project and the need for ODA to serve in this role has been identified through numerous planning and consultation efforts, but the agency has lacked the capacity to do so in a meaningful way.

Federal, State, and/or Private Funds Information

The Commission’s investment of \$360,000 has been leveraged to secure over \$1.76M of federal funds via the cooperative agreement with NRCS with funds derived from various federal mechanisms including BIL, IRA, Farm Bill and others. Long-term federal funding leverage may exceed \$20 million over five years with ODA acting as a liaison between the NRCS, project managers, and landowners to access existing funding opportunities provided through the USDA Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative, the USDA Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, and others while ODA will also contribute to additional efforts to secure federal funds from opportunities like the America the Beautiful Challenge.

2025 Update: In June 2024, ODA finalized an agreement with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to leverage the first installment (\$430,589) of over \$1.7 million in federal funds to support 2 FTE over 5 years. This first installment of federal funds leverages over \$107,647 of the initial investment. Funds will be added to this agreement periodically, as federal biennial allocations are made, to leverage approximately \$317,000 per year through AY2029 for a total of approximately \$1.7 million of federal funds leveraged. With NWL funds fully matched, efforts will be focused on providing technical assistance to develop proposals with partners and stakeholders and enrolling landowners into programs offered by federal agencies that provide payments for practices and/or fund restoration projects that support natural climate solutions.

Connection to Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities

Including forested rangelands and prairie ecosystems, nearly half of Oregon is covered by rangeland. All of this land is ancestral tribal land and nearly every modern-day tribal land holding is impacted by invasive annual grass and noxious weeds, extreme wildfires driven by climate change and degraded habitats. This work prioritizes inclusion of tribal partners and considers tribal priorities such as first foods, culturally significant species and priority habitats. To make meaningful progress towards restoration and long-term conservation of Oregon’s rangelands, it is essential to engage and partner with Oregon Tribes.

2025 Update: On July 23, 2024, ODA gave a presentation on the project to tribal representatives at the State-Tribal Natural Resource Cluster meeting. ODA is currently engaged in field trials in Northeast Oregon, in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, private landowners, and the OSU Ag Research Station to evaluate the effects of invasive annual grass treatments on First Foods and culturally significant plant species (CSS). Information gathered here will inform strategies for larger scale treatments to ensure that First Foods and CSS are protected. ODA has notified other tribal officials of the project and the agency’s desire to incorporate tribal priorities and perspectives into its planning efforts moving forward.

Measurable Outcomes for Reporting

Metrics for Tracking Outcomes	FY 2024	FY 2025
Acres treated/restored	None to report	TBD- (fall is treatment window)
Acres protected	None to report	TBD- longer term measurable
Funds Leveraged	\$113,589	\$317,000
10-Year Action Plan	None to report	In progress
Assistance Provided	None to report	50+ landowners/managers

Oregon Department of Agriculture | P2: Oregon Native Seed Strategy

Budget and Funding

Fiscal Year	NWL Fund Allocation	NWL Funds Issued	Other Funds Leveraged (Federal/State/Private)	Other Funds Issued
2023	\$530,000			
2024		\$235,663		
2025		\$260,027	\$3,200,000	
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$530,000</i>	<i>\$495,690</i>	<i>\$3,200,000</i>	

Spend Plan Summary: Natural & Working Lands Funds

Fiscal Year	N&WL Fund Budget	FTE	Admin & Personnel
2024	\$212,097		\$23,566
2025	\$317,903	0.5	\$29,362
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$530,000</i>		<i>\$52,928</i>

Description of Investment

Program/Project Description

The Oregon Native Seed Strategy protects, conserves and improves the resiliency of rangelands in Oregon from the effects of climate change. High-functioning rangelands are a crucial component of carbon sequestration across Oregon. Implementation of the Strategy supports numerous priorities of HB3409 and State Policies for Natural Climate Solutions and practices outlined in the Institute for Natural Resources’ Natural Working Lands Report for rangeland and forest sectors, including: reducing wildfire risks, prevention of conversion to annual-dominated systems, restoration of deep-rooted perennial grasses impacted by invasive species and increased climate resilience of wildlife habitat.

As myriad agencies, landowners and land managers prioritize and implement rangeland conservation and restoration projects, there is a defined need for ecologically appropriate native seedstock that is not currently met. Natural & Working Lands Funds are supporting Tribal participation in the ODA-led Oregon Native Seed Collective (ONSC) working group and have provided \$125,000 dollars of financial assistance for Tribal farmers, Tribal nurseries and Tribal native plant programs. ODA partnered with agencies, landowners and land managers to source and collect target species identified by the ONSC with priority given to restoration workhorse species as well as historically underutilized specialist species.

ODA is leveraging existing partnerships to facilitate the development of a farmer’s cooperative that supports growers and processors of native seed crops. The cooperative will jointly seek further federal funding opportunities such as the USDA’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, Value-Added Producer

Grant Program, and others. With existing program staff and through agreements with partners, ODA is collecting, cleaning and banking priority native species. A portion of collected seeds will be redistributed to seed growers, free of charge, to help minimize risk to farmers and encourage participation in the cooperative while also bringing native seed to the supply chain.

Together, project activities are ensuring that landowners, land managers and tribal partners have access to the tools, technical expertise and financial resources required to meet their native seed needs as they endeavor to protect and restore Oregon rangelands. With access to technical assistance, markets, and native seed, landowners, land managers, and Tribal communities are empowered to adopt practices that prevent conversion to invasive annual plant dominated systems, restore deep-rooted perennial grasses, and reduce wildfire risk.

Approximately 20% of this investment is supporting seasonal staff at ODA with a focus on seed collection. The remaining 80% is supporting Tribal financial assistance and incentives, technical assistance to landowners and managers, and on-the-ground work by project partners. This project complements the work proposed by other agencies and demonstrates that ODA's priorities are in sync with partners statewide.

2025 Implementation Update: In June 2024, ODA executed a \$235,663.28 contract for services with The Understory Initiative (TUI). In 2025, TUI has focused on providing technical assistance to landowners, hosting workshops for native seed producers and farmers interested in the sector. Assistance included establishing multiple new seed beds, seed bed prep, innovative plug and paper pot pilot, greenhouse construction, seed room construction, grower coordination meetings. TUI also built out a shared equipment library with tools, seed cleaning machines and other resources that are available to co-op members. These shared resources minimize capital outlays by individual members, maximize efficiency and minimize exposure to risk.

TUI has developed the Oregon Restoration Growers Guild platform to improve coordination, knowledge transfer, and digital infrastructure for producers statewide. In addition, TUI has engaged with 6 Oregon Tribes with four of them receiving direct technical assistance.

In February, ODA published the final draft of the Oregon Native Seed Strategy in print and online. The document has created a great deal of excitement across the conservation discipline and with native seed/plant producers. Multiple state agencies and non-profits have adopted this framework and are making efforts to assist in implementation. The ONSS has inspired numerous workshops and conferences and has been featured at multiple symposia and professional meetings since publishing.

ODA staff presented at multiple Tribal Natural Resource and Cultural Cluster meetings to introduce the Tribal Grant opportunity and solicit feedback from prospective applicants. Feedback was used to ensure that the grant offering provided a mechanism for equitable distribution of funds, minimized administrative and reporting burdens and that grant awards would support Tribal priorities. ODA awarded \$125,000 to five tribes to support Tribal native plant programs by developing infrastructure, supporting staff, purchasing supplies to further native plant production and support investments in First Foods and Culturally Significant Species. This support has helped tribes improve food security and have access to seed and plant stock for restoration projects that will create resilient landscapes and increase carbon storage.

ODA staff has been engaged in seed collection and banking with a focus on key species, habitats and geographies that are vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Efforts have led to the preservation of 16 species from 8 different counties. This work continues through October 2025, and seeds collected will

be used for development of foundational seed lots and amplification that will allow distribution to native seed and plant growers for further production to support restoration projects and increase seed supply.

Next Steps: ODA will continue to work with TUI during the execution of the current contract to provide feedback and guidance. TUI recently requested an extension of their contract through 2026, which ODA granted, to maximize the impacts of fieldwork and efforts to provide technical assistance and increase engagement in native seed co-ops. This extension will facilitate sustained support for growers, managers and Oregon Tribes and helped prevent hasty decisions in light of federal funding uncertainty. Necessarily, this extends our overall spend plan by one year, through 2026.

Members of the Oregon Native Seed Collective are currently seeking financial support for the development of a business plan that will support the next steps in implementing the Oregon Native Seed Strategy. ODA will provide technical assistance and support to these efforts. In September of 2025, ODA will be meeting with Oregon Tribes that were funded by the grant program to ensure that they are on-track and provide any support necessary. Extensions will be granted, if necessary. We are especially interested in gathering feedback about the process so that we can make necessary improvements should there be future opportunities to provide financial assistance to Tribes.

In September 2025 ODA will notify the Commission of an amendment to the overall spend plan to extend expenditures to 2026. This extension is partly due to TUI’s ability to accomplish project goals for less than was originally estimated during the proposal process and to develop a strategy for the expenditure of interest funds that have accrued. ODA will notify the Commission of our intent for the expenditure of these dollars when a plan is finalized.

ODA is in the early stages of a comprehensive final report and will continue working on this as we move forward. The report will be submitted to the Commission upon project completion and financial closeouts are complete.

Needs and Opportunities

The success of Oregon’s Natural & Working Lands Fund investment in native seed development has created significant momentum for expanding implementation of the Oregon Native Seed Strategy. With \$3.2 million in federal funds already leveraged and demonstrated success in tribal engagement, technical assistance delivery, and grower network development, additional opportunities exist to scale these efforts statewide and create sustainable market infrastructure.

Critical needs and opportunities include:

1) ***Statewide Strategy Integration and Institutional Adoption***

The Oregon Native Seed Strategy presents opportunities for systemic integration into existing agency operations and planning processes without requiring dedicated funding. State agencies can modify existing procurement policies to prioritize ecologically appropriate native seed, incorporate Strategy principles into standard restoration protocols, and integrate native seed requirements into environmental permitting processes. Critical integration opportunities include embedding Strategy principles into wildfire response protocols and emergency rehabilitation standards, ensuring that post-fire restoration efforts utilize ecologically appropriate native seed rather than non-native alternatives, when available. Additionally, updating grazing lease requirements and land use planning guidelines to include native seed restoration components would create systematic incentives for landowners to participate in habitat restoration while supporting the native seed market. This integration transforms the Strategy from guidance document to operational practice across institutional partners.

2) *Expansion of Regional Seed Hubs and Grower Networks*

Building on the Central Oregon seed hub (based in Deschutes County), additional investment is needed to fully develop Eastern Oregon’s production capacity and establish new hubs in underserved ecoregions. Current grower networks require expanded technical assistance, expansion of equipment libraries, and infrastructure development to meet projected restoration demands across Oregon’s 62 million acres of rangeland and forestland. Significant expansion is needed to recruit new growers, develop specialty crop production for historically underutilized species, and provide risk mitigation programs that encourage farmers to diversify into native seed production. This would increase the geographic distribution of production capacity and the diversity of species available commercially.

3) *Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) Program Development*

Following the Bureau of Land Management model, Oregon needs a state-level IDIQ contract system to provide predictable markets for native seed producers while ensuring reliable supply for restoration projects. This program would create sustainable funding mechanisms through seed sales revenue, supporting long-term market stability and encouraging private sector investment in native seed production.

4) *Enhanced Tribal Capacity Building*

Expanding the successful \$125,000 tribal grant program to support additional tribes and increase funding levels for infrastructure development, staff capacity, and culturally significant species production. This investment directly supports tribal sovereignty while advancing statewide restoration goals.

5) *Research and Development Infrastructure*

Investment in seed storage facilities, processing equipment, genetic diversity research, and development of production protocols for priority species that are currently unavailable commercially is greatly needed. This infrastructure would bridge the divide between wild collection and commercial production for Oregon’s most critical restoration species.

These investments would leverage existing partnerships and infrastructure while creating the market conditions necessary for a self-sustaining native seed industry that supports Oregon’s climate adaptation and ecosystem restoration objectives.

Ability of Agency to Implement the Program

ODA is well positioned and well partnered to implement this project as the drafting agency of the Oregon Native Seed Strategy and leader of the Oregon Native Seed Collective. ODA has an active working group with relevant partners who meet monthly to draft the Strategy, and therefore, many partners are invested in project implementation. Further, ODA already has agreements in place to facilitate the Strategy’s implementation such as an agreement with the Rae Selling Seed Bank at Portland State University, among others.

Description of Current Federal, State, and/or Private Funds Leveraged or Anticipated

This project has already helped leverage over \$3 million in federal funds. The published Oregon Native Seed Strategy will provide the framework for myriad projects by ODA and members of the Oregon Native Seed Collective over the next 20 years, creating an opportunity to leverage this investment repeatedly over that time. Finally, a driving force behind the development of the native seed

cooperative is to better position farmers to compete for existing and emerging funding opportunities, providing innumerable opportunities to indirectly leverage this investment into the future.

2025 Update: ODA provided match to a successful application to the NFWF America the Beautiful grant program that was funded for \$3.2M dollars. The project leverages existing work funded by NWL and will further implementation of the ONSS through the hosting of the Oregon Native Seed Summit and by implementing practices that support natural climate solutions on rangelands in Central Oregon.

ODA has also pledged match to two pending applications that would leverage another \$1.3M dollars, if funded. These projects support restoration of habitat for pollinators and provide technical assistance to landowners and land managers on Eastern Oregon’s rangelands to implement practices that support natural climate solutions.

Connection to Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities

This project removes barriers for Indian tribes, environmental justice communities, landowners, and land managers to engage in natural climate solutions and provides access to funding to support natural climate solutions. This investment provided an initial \$100,000 in financial assistance to Oregon Tribes, Tribal nurseries and Tribal native plant programs. \$25,000 of accrued interest was added to the available funds in this category at the end of 2024, for a total of \$125,000. Tribal representation in the ONSC ensures that tribal values and culturally significant plants and habitats are incorporated and prioritized into statewide planning efforts. As such, this proposal should be prioritized as set forth in Section 56 of HB 3409.

2025 Update: In January 2025, ODA awarded \$125,000 directly to the five Oregon Tribes that submitted proposals. ODA/TUI-expended funds and the tribal grants supported the successful collection and cleaning of seven culturally significant plant species for tribal conservation and restoration efforts, supported infrastructure improvements that will facilitate increased production of species for restoration, and support First Foods and Culturally Significant Species. Work continues through the end of AY25, and grantees will submit final reports that detail accomplishments and impacts of these funds.

TUI also engaged with Oregon Tribes that did not apply for the grant funds (Klamath, Siuslaw) to provide technical assistance and consultation related to production of native seeds and plants, with a focus on First Foods and CSS. Tribal efforts by TUI and their partners will be reported in detail as part of their final report to ODA and results will be incorporated in ODA’s report(s) to the Commission as they are available.

Measurable Outcomes for Reporting

Metrics for Tracking Outcomes	FY 2024	FY 2025
Species conserved	6	20+ (ongoing)
Oregon Tribes supported	TBD – In progress	7 (see narrative for details)
Technical assistance provided	TBD – In progress	5 tribes received grants, 8 native seed/plant growers received technical assistance
Policies supported	TBD – In progress	TBD – In progress
Funds leveraged	TBD – Up to \$2 million anticipated	\$3.2M (secured), \$1.3M (pending)

Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife | P3: Floodplain Reforestation on North Santiam River

Budget and Funding

Fiscal Year	NWL Fund Allocation	NWL Funds Issued	Other Funds Leveraged (Federal/State/Private)	Other Funds Issued
2023	\$412,500			
2024			\$1,600,000 secured by Tribe (Federal, State, Private)	\$100,530 federal
2025		\$218,482		\$132,188 federal
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$412,500</i>	<i>\$218,481.33</i>	<i>\$1,600,000</i>	

Spend Plan Summary: Natural & Working Lands Funds

Fiscal Year	N&WL Fund Budget	FTE	Admin & Personnel
2024			
2025	\$218,482	0	\$0
2026	\$169,018	0	\$0
2027	\$25,000	0	\$0
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$412,500</i>		<i>\$0</i>

Description of Investment

Program/Project Description

The Floodplain Reforestation on the North Santiam River project will reestablish 30 acres of floodplain forest within the 462-acre Chahalpam Wildlife Area by planting agricultural fields with native riparian hardwood trees and shrubs in high densities to achieve canopy cover in five to seven years utilizing the Rapid Riparian Revegetation (R3) method. This project requires no additional positions and will cost \$412,500.

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde successfully re-acquired the 462-acre Chahalpam property through ODFW’s Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program (WWMP). Although WWMP funds habitat acquisitions and provides some funding for operations and maintenance from Bonneville Power Administration, it does not provide restoration funding to achieve desired future conditions. Natural & Working Lands funds are covering project management, plant materials, and contractual costs for planting and three years of plant establishment.

This project will increase net carbon sequestration and restore floodplain function through reestablishing floodplain forest on 30 acres. The restoration of ecological function of historic habitat will

increase the complexity necessary for fish and wildlife and improve habitat conditions for 18 terrestrial and aquatic species, including ESA-listed spring Chinook salmon and winter steelhead, State sensitive and culturally important Pacific lamprey, and several Oregon Conservation Strategy species including Northwestern pond turtle, Northern red legged frog and willow flycatcher.

This project will help meet a collective call for restoring riparian habitats in the Willamette Valley by converting agricultural lands back to historic floodplain forest habitat. Contributing to restoring riparian habitats at a landscape level, this project has a larger resource benefit. Locally, Chahalpam is permanently protected by conservation easements and habitat restoration efforts will be secured investments that compound with others over time. Regionally, the site is situated in the Santiam Confluences Conservation Opportunity Area and its restoration contributes to priorities identified by the OCS (ODFW 2016) and the Willamette Synthesis (TNC 2010). This project also contributes to the USFWS’s Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program as it is located within the Willamette Valley Focus Area for riparian habitats.

Carbon Sequestration and Climate Resiliency: In the face of climate change, this project will contribute to resiliency by re-establishing native forest habitat and understory on 30 acres previously managed as agriculture. Trees and shrubs will capture carbon throughout their lifetime, which will help reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Replanting the floodplain forest will have additional localized co-benefits of increased water storage in the riparian area and reduced stream temperatures through shading, benefiting aquatic habitat during more frequent, intense, and extended heat events and droughts anticipated in the Willamette Valley under climate change. The replanted floodplain forest will also attenuate high flow events and slowly release water in winter as precipitation patterns shift to rain-dominated-systems.

This project specifically addresses this section of HB 3409: “ODFW shall use moneys allocated from the fund to promote natural climate solutions and mitigate the future impacts of climate change” and, “Relying on existing programs...to support investments in natural climate solutions on natural and working lands. Ensure the benefits of natural climate solutions are equitably distributed among landowners, Indian tribes, land managers and environmental justice communities.” The project also uses the recommended practice of “restore functioning riparian areas.”

Historical Context: Since time immemorial, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde has been the historical caretaker of the Willamette Valley. The native plants and animals are intrinsic resources to the Tribe as they form the foundation to historic traditions and values. The North Santiam River (River) holds significant historical and cultural importance, once being the home of the Santiam band of the Kalapuya. Most noted for their indigenous burning of the Valley, the Kalapuya have deep connections to place along the river and its salmon resources.

The habitats of this River were historically complex and diverse. The open, low gradients fostered multi-channeled, densely braided, and dynamic side-channel, back-channel and off-channel habitats. However, conversion of floodplain forest to agricultural production led to devastating impacts on natural river processes.

Project Site: Along the River, the Tribe successfully re-acquired Chahalpam in 3 phases through ODFW’s Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program during 2013 – 2019. Chahalpam totals 462 acres, contains more than a mile of riverfront, and crosses both banks of the river. The Tribe owns the property, and the Bonneville Power Administration holds three conservation easements, permanently protecting the entire site as fish and wildlife habitat. Chahalpam has three land management plans that identify desired future habitat conditions and describe management actions to achieve those. The site has a Combined

Habitat Assessment Protocol (CHAP) analysis that identifies baseline habitat conditions for which restoration efforts can be measured against. A Floodplain Restoration Alternatives Analysis identifies actions to improve floodplain connectivity, complexity, and function.

2025 Implementation Update:

- Intergovernmental Agreement with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (CTGR) was finalized in 2024.
- Project phase 1 (initial replanting) is complete, and subsequent plantings and maintenance of the plantings are scheduled to occur through June 30, 2027.
- Native tree and shrub planting efforts were completed in February 2025. A total of 77,350 riparian hardwood trees and shrubs were planted across 32 acres for a planting rate of 2,417 stems per acre.
- 96 lbs of slender hairgrass was acquired, delivered, and planted across 32 acres in March 2025 at a rate of 3 lbs per acre.
- Plant establishment activities conducted May 31-June 2, 2025: 32 acres of line/circle spray around each plant and spot spray targeting invasive weeds.
- Completed one community engagement activity site visit with members from the Tribal Council, CTGR Natural Resources Department, and ODFW Director and Natural and Working Lands staff.
- **Next Steps:**
- Conduct 2 more years of plant establishment activities (watering, weed suppression and mowing) annually by June 30 of 2026 and 2027.

Needs and Opportunities

- *Plant Establishment Activities*
To date, the Tribe has replanted 159 acres of agricultural land back to native habitat. Of those acres, 114 (72%) are still in the plant establishment phase with activities such as watering and weed suppression scheduled for the next 3 – 5 years. The activities needed on the 114 acres are not currently funded at this time. Additionally, the Tribe will replant 30 more acres in 2026 (funded by BPA) and will also require plant establishment activities for the next 3 – 5 years (not currently funded).
- *Planting Activities*
The Tribe is scheduled to replant the remaining agricultural land at Chahalpam in 2028 totaling 42 acres; this entire project is not currently funded and costs will include plant materials, planting, and plant establishment activities.

Ability of Agency to Implement the Program

Work is being completed by the Tribe, who has a long track record of successful restoration projects as well as a large staff and youth volunteers who can do this restoration work.

Description of Current Federal, State, and/or Private Funds Leveraged or Anticipated

Since re-acquisition, the Tribe has secured \$1.6 million in restoration funds for Chahalpam from multiple sources including federal, state, local, and non-governmental organizations. The Tribe has a proven track record for seeking and receiving funds and implementing those funds on-the-ground for improving habitat conditions. N&WL funds will contribute to the following projects that are in-progress:

- \$54,848 from the Bureau of Land Management, Secure Rural Schools for plant establishment efforts on 62 acres of re-planted floodplain forest;

NATURAL & WORKING LANDS FUND ANNUAL REPORT – 2025

- \$396,315 from the Bonneville Power Administration, Anchor Habitats Investments for improving floodplain forest on 19 acres and improving three fish passage issues;
- \$287,984 from the Bonneville Power Administration, Anchor Habitats Investments for replanting 49 acres;
- \$102,785 from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Invasive Species Program for improving floodplain forest on 40 acres;
- \$195,579 from the US Fish & Wildlife Service, Tribal Wildlife Grant for re-planting 40 acres of floodplain forest and conducting plant establishment efforts; and
- \$18,059 from Natural Resources Conservation Service, Conservation Stewardship Program to reestablish oak habitat on seven acres.

In the Tribe’s experience, “grant funds attract other grant funds,” and the N&WL funds will be used to leverage future restoration dollars on the site. Habitat restoration is a layered process with several actions over a long period of time to achieve desired future conditions, often with multiple co-benefits. Additional federal funds to be sought for continued restoration efforts may include but are not limited to: NRCS: Environmental Quality Incentives Program; US FWS: Tribal Wildlife Grant; BPA: Anchor Habitats Investments; BLM: Secure Rural Schools; BIA: Invasive Species or Endangered Species Programs; NOAA: Coastal Resilience for Underserved Communities or PCSRF; America the Beautiful.

Connection to Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities

This project was identified by the Tribe as the highest priority restoration site within their portfolio of WWMP properties. ODFW will pass funds directly to the Tribe for this project.

Measurable Outcomes for Reporting

Metrics for Tracking Outcomes	FY 2024	FY 2025
Acres treated/restored (by treatment type)	TBD – In progress	32 acres of native forest habitat and understory restored
Seeding/planting rates/density (by species)	TBD – In progress	Planting rates: 2417 stems/acre Grass seeding rates: 3 lb/acre
Technical assistance provided	TBD – In progress	TBD – In progress
Policies supported	TBD – In progress	TBD – In progress

Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife | P4: Carbon Capture and Restoration in North-Central Oregon Rangelands

Budget and Funding

Fiscal Year	NWL Fund Allocation	NWL Funds Issued	Other Funds Leveraged (Amount and Source, such as Federal/State/Local)	Other Funds Issued
2023	\$750,000			
2024		\$0	Shared position with NRCS	
2025		\$526,307.91	\$20K federal; \$241,914 state; shared position with NRCS	\$261,914
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$750,000</i>	<i>\$526,307.91</i>	<i>\$261,914</i>	<i>\$261,914</i>

Spend Plan Summary: Natural & Working Lands Funds

Fiscal Year	N&WL Fund Budget	FTE	Admin & Personnel
2024			
2025	\$526,308	0	\$0
2026	\$178,692	0	\$0
2027	\$45,000	0	\$0
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$750,000</i>		<i>\$0</i>

Description of Investment

Program/Project Description

This project seeks to prevent the conversion of native perennial bunchgrass communities and native shrub steppe vegetation to invasive annual grasses and restore deep rooted perennial grasses to the Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area (LDWA) as part of a comprehensive restoration project across multiple land ownerships. Natural & Working Land funds will primarily support herbicide treatments for approximately 5,000 acres of annual grasses, re-seeding with deep rooted perennial grasses, and purchase/planting of native shrubs, forbs, and other grasses. The project will cost \$750,000 and will require no new FTE.

This proposal specifically uses the recommended practice of “prevent conversion to invasive annual plant dominated systems,” and “restore deep rooted perennial grasses to areas impacted by invasive species.” It also addresses this section of HB 3409: “ODFW shall use moneys allocated from the fund to promote natural climate solutions and mitigate the future impacts of climate change” and, “Relying on existing programs where possible, securing federal matching funds or other sources of funding to support investments in natural climate solutions on natural and working lands.”

This project will support actions on ODFW’s wildlife area. N&WL funds will leverage additional conservation action and funding to go toward adjacent private and federal lands. ODFW’s Mid-Columbia Wildlife has a positive working relationship with the BLM in the Lower Deschutes and John Day basins to complete restoration activities such as treating invasive annual grasses and planting native shrubs. N&WL funds will provide incentive to the BLM to allocate more funding to these actions through collaboration with ODFW.

Similarly, Wasco County NRCS has existing programs in the county to complement these activities on private lands. ODFW shares 1.0 FTE in The Dalles with NRCS who is dedicated to working with private working lands to secure NRCS funds for conservation and will be able to leverage the NWL funds for greater investment from federal partners. NRCS has an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Rangeland Enhancement Conservation Implementation Strategy that is currently being prioritized in south Wasco County. Due to ODFW’s award of N&WL funds, the ODFW Conservation Liaison will continue to work with the Wasco NRCS to adjust the priority areas to include the private lands adjacent to or in between the southern and northern parcels of the wildlife area once the south Wasco priority area for rangeland enhancements has been sufficiently funded. Other available USDA programs, such as the FSA Conservation Reserve Program- State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (CRP-SAFE) program have been adopted by some neighboring private properties through the FY 2025 CRP sign-up. NRCS’s Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) will be promoted more for landowners within this focal area, particularly for practices and enhancements that align with the NWL recommended practices to sequester carbon. All of these programs provide incentives to private landowners to address invasive annual grasses, establish perennial bunchgrass communities, and incorporate rotational grazing through improved prescribed grazing practices.

Project Details: The ODFW Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area, Mid-Columbia Wildlife District, and NRCS Conservation Liaison have implemented a cross-boundary carbon sequestration rangeland restoration project focused on the upper and lower sections of the Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area, as well as the private and federal (Bureau of Land Management- BLM) lands in between. This area, similar to many areas across eastern Oregon, has been severely impacted by annual grass invasion, decrease of native perennial bunchgrass communities, and continued loss of valuable native shrub steppe vegetation. Historic grazing practices combined with changes to the historic fire regime and the increase in high severity wildfires have altered the plant communities across the lower Deschutes landscape.

This rangeland restoration project has two primary tactics to enhance the quality of grassland and shrub steppe habitats for the numerous wildlife species that occupy this area, all of which are recommended actions through the Oregon Natural and Working Lands proposed practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon:

- Tactic 1: Prevent conversion to invasive annual plant dominated systems.
 - 1.a. Monitor and treat moderately infested annual grass invaded areas (10-60% cover) with an existing stand of perennial grasses, forbs, and shrubs.
 - 1.b. Establish fuel breaks using existing features such as roads or ridgetops to minimize wildfire impacts.
- Tactic 2: Restore deep-rooted perennial grasses, forbs, legumes, and shrubs to areas impacted by wildfire and invasive species.
 - 2.a. Where ground disturbing practices are necessary to restore deep rooted vegetation (drill seeding and shrub planting), conduct archeological surveys prior to beginning work.
 - 2.b. Plant native shrubs, forbs, and grasses (plugs, container, or bareroot) in strategic locations best suited for survival success.

- 2.c. In areas highly infested with annual grasses (>60% cover), complete herbicide treatment to target annual grasses and re-seed with perennial grasses, forbs, and legumes.

2025 Implementation Update:

- Implementation is on-schedule.
- Herbicide treatment was applied across 4,537 acres in Fall 2024. Monitoring was completed during Spring 2025 to evaluate success of the application and determine if/where follow-up treatment was needed.
- Firebreak reseeding occurred in Winter of 2024 to protect future shrub plantings.
- Shrub grow-out contract is in place and shrubs will be planted in Late Fall of 2025.
- Archeological surveys occurred in May/June 2025 in areas where shrubs will be planted. Cost estimate was higher than actual expenses, so survey savings will be added to future restoration actions.
- State funds have been leveraged for perennial bunchgrass and forb coverage on adjacent private lands through the ODFW Access and Habitat program (\$241,914).

Next Steps:

- 41,030 shrubs (24,618 Basin big sagebrush, 12,309 antelope bitterbrush, 4,103 winterfat) will be planted in Nov/Dec 2025 (\$15K federal funds leveraged to add to NWL funds).
- Plant 1,300 riparian plants on the LDWA in winter of 2025-2026 purchased using Mule Deer Initiative Funds (\$5K federal). Build and install browse protector cages around new plants. Follow-up treatment for annual grasses may occur in Fall of 2025 or Fall of 2026 as deemed necessary following monitoring.
- Follow-up treatment for annual grasses may occur in Fall of 2025 or Fall of 2026 as deemed necessary following monitoring.
- Annual vegetation monitoring of Rejuvra treatment areas will be completed in May-June of 2026 and 2027. Protocol for future surveys will follow the Oregon Rangeland Monitoring Program protocol.

Needs and Opportunities

- Private property landowners adjacent to the Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area where annual grasses were treated and shrubs will be planted are interested in similar restoration activities. ODFW’s Farm Bill Biologist (co-funded by the NRCS) will continue to work with landowners to find available funding and to plan restoration activities with private landowners.
- ODFW is seeking to utilize \$6,000 in ODFW Mule Deer Initiative funds to purchase additional shrubs to plant within the treatment area.

Ability of Agency to Implement the Program

ODFW shares 1.0 FTE with NRCS in The Dalles, referred to as ODFW’s Farm Bill Biologist. This staff position manages this project in partnership with ODFW’s staff on the Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area, including the Mid-Columbia Wildlife District staff and the Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area Technician. ODFW’s Farm Bill Biologist’s primary job responsibility is to work with private landowners to design and implement projects like this on their land with NRCS resources. With this investment on ODFW’s lands, the ODFW Farm Bill Biologist and ODFW Wildlife District staff are focused on partnerships with private landowners in the area to have a landscape-level impact. The Mid-Columbia Wildlife District staff have led the monitoring efforts for the project. The ODFW Natural Climate Solutions Biologists (Natural and

Working Lands Biologists) are also actively involved in this project by providing project administration oversight and assistance with monitoring.

Description of Current Federal, State, and/or Private Funds Leveraged or Anticipated

This project leverages the existing NRCS investment in a shared position with ODFW. During a six-month period of 2023, this position worked with over 50 landowners on projects funded by NRCS’s EQIP and CRP programs on over 2,000 acres of private land. New federal funds to be leveraged with this project are contingent on the willingness of adjacent landowners to the wildlife area.

2025 Update: Conversations have occurred between local ODFW staff and the local BLM district about establishing a Good Neighbor Authority federally funded project for annual grass treatments, grass/forb seedings, and shrub plantings. No funds allocated yet. Rejuvra is not yet approved for use on BLM lands.

A local NRCS Rangeland Enhancement Conservation Implementation Strategy (CIS) that has funding for similar practices/treatments may be shifted to the area surrounding the Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area targeted treatment areas for private landowners to apply for funding beginning fall of 2026 or 2027. Outreach to landowners has already begun to assess producer interest. Shifting the boundary will also depend on anticipated available EQIP funding. Multiple properties near the Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area have enrolled in FSA’s CRP SAFE program, which establishes conservation cover on former agricultural lands for the benefit of wildlife. The grasses and forbs seeded to establish the cover include multiple deep-rooted perennial bunchgrasses, as well as forbs and legumes.

The Wasco SWCD hired a Coordinator for a Cooperative Weed Management Area for the Lower Deschutes. This position, and three associated seasonal technicians, helps coordinate and implement weed treatments in the targeted grassland restoration area along the Deschutes River.

This project leveraged \$20,000 Mule Deer Initiative (Pittman-Robertson funds/federal) to supplement the shrub plug plantings planned with NWL funds.

Connection to Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities

The agricultural communities surrounding the Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area will benefit from technical assistance, project planning, and conservation planning in partnership with ODFW’s NRCS Liaison and local ODFW wildlife district staff.

2025 Update: This project is engaging with rural landowners.

Measurable Outcomes for Reporting

Metrics for Tracking Outcomes	FY 2024	FY 2025
Acres treated/restored (by treatment type)		4537 acres treated with annual grass herbicide 5 acres seeded with firebreak mix
Seeding/planting rates/density (by species)		Firebreak seeding rate: 7 lb/acre
Technical assistance provided		50+ agricultural landowners
Archaeological survey clearances		254 acres surveyed

Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife | P5: Carbon Capture in Oregon Coastal Estuaries

Budget and Funding

Fiscal Year	NWL Fund Allocation	NWL Funds Issued	Other Funds Leveraged (Federal/State/Private)	Other Funds Issued
2023	\$1,100,000		\$10,000	\$10,000
2024		\$680,000	\$1,967,389	
2025		\$420,000	\$1,000,591	\$930,000
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$1,100,000</i>	<i>\$1,100,000</i>	<i>\$2,977,980</i>	

Spend Plan Summary: Natural & Working Lands Funds

Fiscal Year	N&WL Fund Budget	FTE	Admin & Personnel
2024	\$680,000		
2025	\$420,000	0	\$0
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$1,100,000</i>		<i>\$0</i>

Description of Investment

Program/Project Description

Over time, thousands of acres on the Oregon Coast have been drained, and infrastructure—such as tide gates, levees, and channels—has been built to control the tide, reduce flooding, and drain the land. This infrastructure is at, or nearing, the end of its life and is at risk of failure, putting communities at significant risk. While challenging, this issue also represents an opportunity to achieve significant improvements in estuarine ecosystem function and carbon sequestration while addressing the flooding risk to rural coastal communities. This proposal includes two projects for a total cost of \$1.1 million without the need for additional FTE.

ODFW and partners have prioritized estuary restoration projects in the Umpqua Watershed. Multiple estuary restoration projects are the targets of a large federal grant application recently submitted to NOAA and NRCS, making use of IJA and IRA. These federal funds will only be eligible to go toward the water control infrastructure. The related vegetation and habitat restoration work is not eligible for federal funding. This allocation from the Fish and Wildlife N&WL Fund will support the vegetation and habitat restoration components of two of these large tidal wetland restoration projects and leverage a large amount of federal funding. N&WL Funds will be used for each estuary restoration project to connect historic tidal channels identified through LiDar elevation data and imagery, remove earthen embankments to restore tidal inundation areas and hydrologic exchange with freshwater streams, protect and plant seagrass beds of native vegetation within estuary habitat, and remove invasive plant species to assist with establishing native spruce tidal swamps.

This project specifically addresses this section of HB 3409: “ODFW shall use moneys allocated from the fund to promote natural climate solutions and mitigate the future impacts of climate change” and, “Securing federal matching funds or other sources of funding to support investments in natural climate solutions on natural and working lands.” Each of these projects seeks to achieve tidal wetland restoration, a recommended practice in the INR Report.

Specifics for Each Project:

The Smith/Umpqua Estuary Restoration was a multi-variable project that included tide gate removal, tidal channel restoration, bridge infrastructure replacement, native vegetation planting, and water management planning. The project includes work on the Glover Estuary Enhancement project and Kennedy Slough located off the south side of the lower Smith River, near the confluence with the Umpqua River in Reedsport. Work completed over the past two years at the Glover Estuary Enhancement project included replacing two failing top-hinge tide gates with side-hinge tide gates. Two seven-foot diameter tide gates were built, side-by-side, at channel “A.” Two five-foot diameter tide gates were built at channel “J.” All structures were built using triple-wall plastic culvert pipe fitted with a marine-grade aluminum side-hinge tide gate flap. Contractors installed Muted Tide Regulators (MTRs) on the tide gates at channels “A” and “J” to allow the gates to open and allow for fish passage. MTRs were fabricated and installed by Nehalem Marine. Work completed in 2024 included regrading and reshaping 1.80 miles of channels A, B, C, D, J, and K to properly drain during each tidal cycle. There were 0.41 miles of channels E, F, G, H, and I retained in their current functioning condition during 2025. During the spring and summer of 2025, partners worked with landowners to set the MTR to provide 30 acres of tidal inundation during high tides between November 1 through April 1. The MTR was set to provide 15 flooded acres at each high tide the remainder of the year. Project landowners installed 5.38 miles of woven wire fence along the tidal channels and Smith River dike for livestock management. A fence was built along both sides of the tidal channels. An off-channel stock water system consisting of trough stations was installed at seven fields along with piping and a holding tank to move water from the well to the troughs. Partnership for Umpqua Rivers (PUR) contracted the remaining work completed in 2025 to build livestock crossing bridges over the channels at four locations. Each consisted of a 16’x24’ concrete slab set on concrete footings. The fence and gate systems were tied into the livestock crossings for exclusion of animals and to prevent them from accessing the areas of native vegetation plantings. Final work is being completed this winter (2025) to plant 5,359 native plant cuttings along 1.46 miles of tidal channels. In coordination with the landowner, who actively grazes livestock on-site, the contractor applied a ranch pasture forage seed mix, certified weed-free straw, and mulch to the banks of all channels. Approximately 300 pounds of seed were used. Despite higher-than-anticipated costs, the result has been a marked improvement in vegetative cover and pasture health. Installation of native plants is scheduled to begin during the winter of 2025. Planting materials, already staged on site, will include live stakes and bare-root plants. Species include locally sourced Hooker’s willow, red osier dogwood, Douglas spirea, Pacific ninebark, and black twinberry.

Kennedy slough project goals are completed, including replacement of a tide gate with a new 8’x8’ side hinge gate with MTR system that was cast in place concrete housing and removal of dikes to restore historic tidal channels restoring 10 acres of coho salmon winter habitat and inundating these lands for carbon sequestration. Previous tidal wetland prioritization ranked the project site as High and Medium/High for restoration and/or conservation (Brophy 2005b).

Funds from the N&WL Fund were used for each estuary restoration project to connect historic tidal channels identified through LiDAR elevation data and imagery, remove earthen embankments to restore tidal inundation areas and hydrologic exchange with freshwater streams, protect and plant seagrass

beds of native vegetation within estuary habitat, and remove invasive plant species to assist with establishing native plants. Low marsh elevational habitat at the site is expected to restore *Distichlis spicata* (salt grass), green algae (e.g., *Ulva*), *Triglochin maritima*, small spike rush (*Eleocharis parvula*), sandspurry (*Spergularia*), glaux (*Glaux maritima*), pickleweed (*Sarcocornia perennis*), three square (*Schoenoplectus pungens*) and *Bolboschoenus maritimus*.

The restoration improvements at **the Esther Creek Tide Gate and Wetland Restoration project** will provide flood resiliency in the interior of the site by improving drainage of flood waters during low tide swings via removal of a tide gate and man-made berms and improved connectivity of existing and new channel networks. All funds for this project have been allocated and final work will be completed during the July 15 -September 15 in-water-work period.

Esther Creek is a small tributary providing approximately 2.5 linear miles of stream habitat suitable for migratory fish use. It drains an area of just over 1.28 square miles. Esther Creek's headwaters are in private timber lands and flow into agricultural lands. The tide gate is located just past the confluence of Esther and Tomlinson Creek on a privately owned earthen dike structure at Esther Creek stream mile 0.2. After passing through the tide gate, Esther Creek continues to flow under Highway 131 and empties into the Tillamook River near the entrance to Tillamook Bay. Esther Creek tide gate is part of a privately owned dike creating pastureland for the landowner. A new tide gate at this site will increase fish passage, provide natural water inundation, flood protection, and prevent a failure of the current deteriorated culvert. The old tide gate is a Nehalem Marine NSG5-5mo (aluminum top hinge w/ mitigator) with a circular corrugated metal pipe, 60 feet in length and 5 feet in diameter. The tide gate was replaced with a new tide gate including a Muted Tidal Regulator (MTR) with a pipe 58 feet long and 72 inches in diameter. This will lessen velocities through the pipe and the MTR along with a water management plan coordinated with the landowner that will improve natural water exchange for tidal marsh habitat and fish passage, increasing accessibility to productive salmon winter rearing habitat. Flood drainage under existing conditions is not as efficient, resulting in decreased peak tidal water levels after successive high tides. Proposed conditions result in a substantial increase in tidal inundated area at Mean Higher High Water (MHHW) which indicates significant potential for uplift of tidal marsh habitat in the interior of the site where we anticipate most of the restored estuary will provide the carbon sequestration benefits. The existing culvert under the county-owned road that passes water into the northwest side of a historic Oxbow is substantially undersized (the existing culvert diameter is four feet, while the estimated natural channel top width is on the order of 4 to 6 feet); proposed restoration will replace the native plant species and based on sea level change in the vicinity of the project we anticipate sediment accretion in the restored wetland will provide for native vegetation establishment and carbon storage within a 13 acre area of coastal wetland habitat.

Project Background: Carbon capture, or sequestration, is a pivotal element of climate change strategies and marine ecosystems like estuaries can store carbon ten times as quickly as sediments in forests. Coastal habitats that capture and store this carbon in marine plants and sediments include sea grasses and estuaries. Seagrass can help us adapt and mitigate the effects of climate changes. Ten percent of organic carbon sequestered in the Pacific Ocean is buried in seagrass beds. Seagrass also provides 1/5 of world's largest fisheries that depend on seagrass. Flood protection and shoreline stabilization is protected through healthy and sustainable seagrass beds. Restoration of seagrass meadows and estuary function will contribute to carbon storage and the extent of the area will increase storage in the magnitude of 108 Mg/ha.

Estuaries are also exceedingly valuable for the biodiversity they harbor and the ecosystem services they provide to resident and migratory fish species. Despite their importance and value to both biodiversity

and humans, estuaries represent some of the most degraded habitats and continue to be stressed by human activities on the ocean, on land, and in freshwater. Over time, thousands of acres on the Oregon Coast have been drained, and infrastructure—such as tide gates, levees, and channels—has been built to control the tide, reduce flooding, and drain the land. This infrastructure is at, or nearing, the end of its life and is at risk of failure, putting agricultural communities at significant risk of flooding. While challenging, this issue also represents an opportunity to achieve significant improvements in estuarine ecosystem function and carbon sequestration while addressing the flooding risk to rural coastal communities.

Our vision is that Oregon has a modern tide gate infrastructure that benefits carbon storage and estuary function, fish habitat connectivity, and underserved communities. As a result, coastal agricultural communities are more resilient to the impacts of sea level rise and increased flood frequency and severity. The ecological function of Oregon’s estuaries and access to key rearing areas is improved, resulting in healthier and more abundant estuary habitats that can store carbon.

2025 Implementation Update: The Lower Smith River /Umpqua Estuary Restoration project is complete and the Esther Creek and Tillamook Estuary project is wrapping up final in-water work during the July 15-September 15 in-water-work window.

Next Steps: Monitoring of site conditions will occur at both projects throughout the next two years. Partnership for Umpqua Rivers will continue to work with the landowners in the Lower Smith River Tidal projects to maintain water inundation levels that benefit carbon sequestration goals. Trout Unlimited will continue to work with the landowner to maintain water inundation levels within the Esther Creek coastal wetlands habitat. Both projects have fully executed water management plans for tide gate operation and maintenance that will benefit carbon storage and estuary/coastal wetland function, as well as working land objectives.

Needs and Opportunities

- This project is effectively completed, there are no additional specific needs for this project.
- ODFW’s natural climate solutions biologists are working with ODFW staff and coastal partners to identify similar restoration needs and opportunities in other estuaries along Oregon’s coast. Several potential projects have been identified.

Ability of Agency to Implement the Program

ODFW passed through N&WL funds to conservation partners that completed the contractual agreements and construction of estuary restoration activities for each project. Subawards were developed with Trout Unlimited (Esther Creek) and Partnership for Umpqua River (Lower Smith River).

Description of Current Federal, State, and/or Private Funds Leveraged or Anticipated

ODFW has applied for federal funding to support the actual tide gate infrastructure needs to catalyze implementation of adaptation actions that will reduce future damage from weather and climate impacts. Through multiple NOAA and NRCS federal grants, ODFW will invest funds to repair and replace tide gates within each project, significantly reducing flood risk to natural lands-associated buildings and other infrastructure. Unfortunately, because of federal funding block pauses under IIJA/IRA contracts, ODFW and partners have not been able to implement these additional projects during this 23-25 biennium. Per OMB memorandum M-25-11 "Guidance Regarding Section 7 of the Executive Order Unleashing American Energy", all Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL/IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding is paused pending review by DOGE.

2025 Funding Update: As of July 2025, the project has leveraged an additional \$2.98 million from state and federal sources, including:

- Partnership for the Umpqua Rivers was awarded \$1,737,389 in funds from the Private Forest Accord Grant to improve tidelands in the Glover and Kennedy Sloughs.
- Trout Unlimited was awarded \$700,000 in funds from NOAA to replace the tide gate in Esther Creek.
- Business Oregon funded the design phase of the Kennedy Slough Project (\$160,000) and Esther Creek Project (\$70,000), which produced the 60% engineering designs that will be used to permit and implement the tide gate replacements for both projects.
- The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board is providing \$300,591 for the channel restoration work at the Glover Ranch and purchased the concrete farm bridges currently on site.

Connection to Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities

These large-scale infrastructure projects will provide significantly reduced flood risk to rural, agricultural communities’ built infrastructure.

Project partners include the Glover, Pike, and Viteck Families, with additional support from the Umpqua Soil and Water Conservation District, Business Oregon, and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. The Glover, Pike, and Viteck Families are the combined landowners of the Glover Ranch and Kennedy Slough project areas. They have been critical to the planning process and hold some permits. The Umpqua Soil and Water Conservation's landowner engagement has been instrumental in developing the Glover and Kennedy projects. They also plan to install 5,000 native plants along portions of the restored channels at Glover Ranch.

Projects will directly benefit the ecological habitat and biological production of Oregon Coast Coho ESU, Oregon Coast Chinook Salmon ESU, Coastal Steelhead and Rainbow Trout (Summer) ESU/SMU, and Coastal Cutthroat Trout to benefit the underserved communities in Douglas and Tillamook Counties as well as the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians. Douglas County and Tillamook County are identified as underserved communities in the Climate and Economic Justice Screening tool based on disparities for social, economic, and climate impacts to the areas where projects will be implemented. These funds will directly benefit underserved communities by protecting natural and working lands from the risk of flooding, sea level rise, and help to mitigate climate change through increased blue carbon sequestration.

Measurable Outcomes for Reporting

Metrics for Tracking Outcomes	FY 2024	FY 2025
Seeding/planting rates/density (by species)	Eventually ODFW will be able to report on plantings in coastal wetland and riparian stream habitat.	300 lbs of ranch pasture forage seed mix seeded along tidal channels
Ecological function repaired		Replaced the failing tide gate at Kennedy Slough and protected and restored tidal channels at the Glover Ranch to provide juvenile salmon improved

		<p>access to 40 acres of important flooded estuarine habitat during the winter and upstream access to 6.88 miles of tidal and freshwater streams.</p> <p>Replacement of the Esther Creek Tide Gate provided 2.5 miles of tidal and freshwater stream access to four HCP Covered species. This project also provided 13 acres of restored coastal wetland habitat to natural condition and function or a condition likely to improve climate resiliency.</p>
Hydrological restoration		<p>Provided 40 acres each high tide during winter, providing refuge for up to 10,000 salmon. Restored proper hydrology across 1.8 miles of estuarine channels and ensured an appropriate tidal flow through new tide gates.</p>

Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife | P6: Red Hills Conservation Area Wildfire Risk Reduction

Budget and Funding

Fiscal Year	NWL Fund Allocation	NWL Funds Issued	Other Funds Leveraged (Federal/State/Private)	Other Funds Issued
2023	\$170,770			
2024		\$0		
2025		\$64,140	Requested \$170,213 AERI	
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$170,770</i>	<i>\$64,140</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>

Spend Plan Summary: Natural & Working Lands Funds

Fiscal Year	N&WL Fund Budget	FTE	Admin & Personnel
2024			
2025	\$64,170	0	\$0
2026	\$106,600		
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$170,770</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>\$0</i>

Description of Investment

Program/Project Description

This project will remove Douglas-fir and non-native tree species to restore oak woodland on 30 acres of a 278.5-acre property owned by the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs of Oregon that is permanently protected under a conservation easement held by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) as part of ODFW’s Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program (WWMP). The total project cost is \$170,770 and includes no new FTE.

This oak woodland restoration project addresses the recommendation of reducing wildfire risk in forestlands. The Institute for Natural Resources Natural & Working Lands report notes that a century of fire exclusion has resulted in many western forested ecosystems carrying a “carbon debt”, i.e., an excess of carbon. This phenomenon is most typically associated with drier east-side forest types such as ponderosa pine forests, but it is just as applicable to Willamette Valley woodlands that have become overstocked and unsustainable as climate change has led to large-scale dieback and mortality in conifers on some drier sites.

Removal of encroaching Douglas-fir and non-native shrubs and trees from oak woodlands will result in a short-term reduction in carbon storage. But as the INR Report notes, citing numerous studies, fuels

reduction treatments can result in long-term climate benefits by fostering resilience, paying off the “carbon debt”, and reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire. The following treatments, identified in the INR report, will all be used in implementing the Forest Management Plan for Red Hills:

- Thinning to stocking levels more resilient to fire and drought
- Removal of trees killed or damaged by insects and diseases
- Mechanical understory removal
- Prescribed fire

Background: The Red Hills Conservation Area is a 278.5-acre property acquired by the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO, The Tribes) in 2014 and is part of the Tribes’ Conservation Lands portfolio, which includes both East-side and Willamette Valley parcels. The property is permanently protected under a conservation easement held by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) as part of the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program (WWMP). The property is in an area with extensive recent vineyard development in Yamhill County and is adjacent to the Trappist Abbey, also conserved through the WWMP.

Historically, the property was dominated by oak woodlands and grasslands, designated as Strategy Habitats in the Oregon Conservation Strategy. Native burning practices kept these lands oak-dominated for millennia prior to white settlement and fire exclusion. Human development, agriculture, and encroachment by conifer forests threaten these habitats throughout the Willamette Valley.

Douglas-fir has encroached on oak habitats throughout the property, both through ecological succession in the absence of fire as well as forestry plantations initiated by previous owners. Drought stress over the past decade has led to high mortality levels in Douglas-fir on portions of the property, creating concentrations of flammable wildland fuels that increase the risk of uncharacteristically large wildfire. In addition, invasive plants such as Himalayan blackberry, Scotch broom, false brome, English hawthorn, and orchard cherry have developed large infestations that reduce habitat quality and add to the fuel loads and wildfire risk.

This was a relatively expensive acquisition for the WWMP due to the vineyard potential of the site. As a result, the WWMP project sponsors did not request stewardship funding through the program to make the application as competitive as possible. Consequently, the Warm Springs Tribes have been left without this funding source to offset ongoing operations and maintenance costs for the site. The WWMP does not provide restoration funding for acquired properties.

The Red Hills Conservation Area Forest Management Plan (May 2024) prepared for the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs by Trout Mountain Forestry, LLC was approved as final in June 2024 by BPA, ODFW and the Tribes. The plan includes a detailed forest inventory and habitat assessment, and a multi-year phased approach to oak habitat restoration. Douglas-fir and non-native species will be removed to restore oak savanna on 24 acres and to restore native oak woodlands on 156 acres. The oak savanna restoration is excluded from this proposal based on the recommendations in the INR N&WL Report.

2025 Implementation Update:

- Implementation was delayed by one year to allow time for necessary Contract Administration steps to occur.
- The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon has a contractor agreement in place for the planned work.
- ODFW and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs have an Intergovernmental Agreement in place to facilitate the completion and transfer of funding for this project.

- Invasives species (Himalayan blackberry, Scotch broom, false brome) were treated on approximately 55 acres of oak woodland and other priority habitats. Other mechanical fuels reduction occurred for road and right-of-way access.

Next Steps: Planned fuels reduction and vegetation management activities will be initiated in September 2025 and will be overseen by the Tribes.

Needs and Opportunities

- Future NWL funding at the Tribes’ Red Hills Conservation Area would continue to support the number one management goal to “Reduce fuel loads and wildfire risk” as listed in the Forest Management Plan (FMP) (plan life: 2025-2032). The FMP has three phases of work. “Phase I” is approximately covered by the current funding of \$170,770 through 6/30/2026. The remaining six years of habitat restoration (Phase II and Phase III) as detailed in the FMP has estimated costs of approximately \$150,000, which could be an opportunity for further NWL funding awards to the CTWS.

Ability of Agency to Implement the Program

The work on this project will be completed by the Tribes in partnership with ODFW’s WWMP program staff and NWL program staff.

Description of Current Federal, State, and/or Private Funds Leveraged or Anticipated

The Willamette Valley Resilient Landscapes project, with many partner organizations including several Tribes and ODFW, submitted a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation America’s Ecosystem Restoration Initiative Grant proposal in July 2024. This grant was approved for funding, and while funds have not yet been obligated, the grant request includes \$170,213 for additional forest and vegetation treatments at Red Hills Conservation Area and leverages the Natural and Working Lands funding awarded for this project.

Connection to Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities

This project was identified by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs as the highest priority restoration site within their portfolio of WWMP properties. ODFW will pass funds directly to the Tribes for this project.

Measurable Outcomes for Reporting

Metrics for Tracking Outcomes	FY 2024	FY 2025
Acres treated/restored (by treatment type)	None to report	55 acres of brush management/weed management
Seeding/planting rates/density (by species)	None to report	None to report
Ecological function repaired	None to report	None to report
Seedlings grown (by species and estimated future impact/purpose)	None to report	None to report

Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife | P7 & P8: Natural Climate Solutions Biologist & Natural Climate Solutions Assistant Biologist

Budget and Funding

Fiscal Year	NWL Fund Allocation	NWL Funds Issued	Other Funds Leveraged (Federal/State/Private)	Other Funds Issued
2023	\$320,000			
2024				
2025		\$100,369	USFWS Pittman-Roberston (Wildlife Restoration) Funds: \$187,000; private: \$42,500	
Totals	\$320,000	\$100,369	\$229,500	\$0

Spend Plan Summary: Natural & Working Lands Funds

Fiscal Year	N&WL Fund Budget	FTE	Admin & Personnel
2024			
2025	\$100,369	1 (8 months)	\$100,369
2026	\$219,631	1	\$219,631
Totals	\$320,000		\$320,000

Description of Investment

Program/Project Description

ODFW leads or supports habitat restoration and enhancement across thousands of acres of natural and working lands each year with many existing staff located in various programs and geographies and with existing budget resources, both state and federal. Historically, the primary objectives of this work have been to maximize benefits for fish, wildlife, and working lands. With the establishment of the Fish and Wildlife Natural Working Lands Fund, we have an opportunity to get even more strategic with ODFW’s habitat restoration efforts to accelerate the state’s carbon sequestration goals. However, ODFW did not have the capacity to develop and implement this strategic focus or to measure the success of the outcomes.

ODFW hired a Natural Climate Solutions Biologist and a Natural Climate Solutions Assistant Biologist in November 2024. These biologists were hired to focus on three primary goals: 1) to add ODFW staff capacity to support and pursue federal funding opportunities, 2) to provide support to ODFW staff and partners to ensure the successful implementation of funded projects and demonstrate Oregon’s value as a project partner for federal agencies, and 3) to provide expertise to promote natural climate solutions and to ensure habitat restoration and management activities maximize co-benefits for carbon

sequestration and climate resilience across natural and working lands in Oregon. This will be accomplished by:

- Guiding ODFW Natural Climate Solutions priorities and track related federal grant opportunities.
- Assisting ODFW staff across the Habitat, Fish, and Wildlife Divisions as well as the Regions and Watersheds to develop grant applications for federal or other opportunities, connect staff with partners to leverage additional support for priority habitat improvements, and/or provide capacity to support project implementation.
- Assisting existing ODFW restoration practitioners and partners with project design and implementation to better integrate carbon sequestration practices.
- Identifying fish and wildlife habitat restoration projects that maximize climate resiliency and carbon sequestration, as well as the research needed to assess co-benefits
- Assisting with administration of new and existing federal grants for fish and wildlife habitat and natural climate solutions projects
- Working toward equitable distribution of natural climate solutions projects and benefits to landowners, Indian tribes, land managers, and environmental justice communities.
- Communicating the benefits of natural climate solutions projects to Oregon’s natural and working lands, fish and wildlife.
- Establishing and continuing partnerships and connections to advance landscape scale efforts across jurisdictions and land boundaries.
- Identifying capacity needs from partners implementing habitat restoration and fill those capacity gaps as able.
- Collaborating with other fund agencies to promote ODF, ODA, and OWEB strategies and priorities to support natural and working lands.
- This proposal specifically addressed this section of HB 3409: “ODFW shall use moneys allocated from the fund to promote natural climate solutions” and, “securing federal matching funds or other sources of funding to support investments in natural climate solutions on natural and working lands.”

2025 Implementation Update: Since hiring, the Biologist and Assistant Biologist have been involved in the following:

- Establishing partnerships across agencies and organizations, including federal, state, county, regional, tribal, private;
- Serving as the primary coordination hub for ODFW’s Natural Working Lands Funded projects around the state;
- Advancing connections and pursuing applications for funding opportunities- federal and state; staying apprised of funding opportunities that are available for natural climate solutions related habitat projects.
- Collaborating with ODFW staff and private landowners to successfully secure federal funding for a sagebrush shrub enhancement project in pygmy rabbit habitat;
- Actively working to contribute, collaborate, and advance strategies in the Oregon Native Seed Strategy, including collaborative submittal of a federal National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

(NFWF) grant (pending review) alongside NRCS, the Institute for Applied Ecology, and private agricultural landowners;

- Coordinating with ODFW wildlife area staff and regional habitat biologists to enhance native habitats, promote natural climate solutions, and improve carbon sequestration on ODFW owned and managed properties.
- Assisting multiple SWCD offices with habitat prioritization, incorporation of natural climate solutions into restoration work, and coordination for advancing projects with private landowners to seek funding through various opportunities, such as NRCS programs, OWEB funds, and NFWF grants.
- Reviewing a series of guidance documents to promote climate resilience and carbon sequestration in key habitats with the goal of publishing these documents in the coming year;
- Contributing to the ODFW NWL program webpage, which showcases natural climate solutions practices in priority habitats, and highlights ODFW’s NWL funded projects;
- Presented to approximately 30 people from SWCDs, watershed councils, conservation non-profits, and state and federal agencies about Prioritizing Natural Climate Solutions for Natural and Working Lands Habitat Restoration Projects at the 2025 CONNECT conference;
- Developing a series of guidance documents to promote climate resilience and carbon sequestration in key habitats with the goal of publishing these documents in the coming year;
- Researching and developing guidance on prescribed grazing in key habitats;
- Increasing knowledge of practices that improve carbon sequestration among partners and ODFW staff through shared information and responses to inquiries;
- Providing extra capacity to ODFW’s Wildlife Habitat Conservation Management Program, which is a cooperative program between state and local governments to incentivize private landowners to voluntarily conserve native habitat on their lands; and
- Beginning development of a habitat restoration data inventory platform to streamline ODFW’s efforts to document habitat restorations carried out, acreage treated, and practices implemented. This data inventory is being developed in part to more readily facilitate reporting carbon sequestration outcomes from Natural Climate Solutions implementation to the Oregon Department of Energy and the Oregon Climate Action Commission for use in their carbon sequestration calculations once the methods, baseline, and inventory have been established by the Commission as required by statute. This platform is currently in the design phase.

2025 Changes: When the position descriptions were developed, focusing on pursuing federal funding opportunities for habitat restoration promoting NCS was one of the major intentions. With the change in federal administration, less federal funding opportunities are available, so focus now includes both federal opportunities as well as state, local, or private funding opportunities. Establishing and maintaining partnerships is now more important than ever, as is improving how we show the public the value of promoting NCS on natural and working lands.

Next Steps: The NCS Biologist will continue to track and pursue funding opportunities for priority habitat restoration work promoting climate resilience, natural climate solutions and carbon sequestration. Existing partnerships will be maintained and new partnerships pursued. The NCS Biologist has reached out to all nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon, and will continue to establish relationships with tribal natural resource departments to provide capacity for project planning and implementation.

The NCS Assistant Biologist will continue providing technical assistance for NCS and carbon sequestration practices in priority habitats. Work will continue on the guidance documents being developed for each of ODFW’s NWL program’s four priority habitats. Once the documents are complete,

a simplified version will be produced for private landowners to provide information on how to incorporate NCS into habitat projects.

The NCS Assistant Biologist will also be focusing on the ODFW habitat inventory and the development of StoryMaps for all ODFW NWL projects and other habitat restoration projects with ODFW involvement to improve interagency and public knowledge and transparency of NWL projects occurring around the state.

Needs and Opportunities

- The NCS Biologist submitted an application through the NFWF Conservation Partners Program for funding for technical assistance through ODFW Farm Bill biologists and sustaining the two NCS biologists funded through the NWL fund. If awarded funding, these 4 positions would work directly with landowners to implement conservation practices through Farm Bill Programs, promoting climate resiliency, natural climate solutions, and practices to increase carbon sequestration on eastern Oregon working lands.
- The NCS Biologist plans to track funding opportunities and connect those opportunities with partners to advance priority habitat restoration work and bring funding to Oregon to benefit Oregon’s fish, wildlife, habitats, and working lands.
- There is great potential for the NCS Assistant biologist to assist project partners with permitting needs for coastal projects that will promote natural climate solutions and contribute to blue carbon storage.

Ability of Agency to Implement the Program

ODFW staff have already demonstrated great success tracking and pursuing federal grants under IJJA and IRA. The NCS Biologist is now a part of ODFW’s Habitat Division, in the Land Resources Program and immediately began working with existing staff who have been tracking federal grants. See evidence of ODFW’s grant tracking here: <https://dfw.state.or.us/IJJA/>.

There are a number of existing ODFW programs and staff whose ongoing work has been or could be leveraged by the NCS Assistant Biologist’s efforts to accelerate carbon sequestration. Those include:

- Nearly 200,000 acres of natural lands owned and managed by ODFW across 20 wildlife areas, each of which are staffed by wildlife area managers involved in habitat maintenance and restoration as well as agricultural activities but who historically have not had a carbon sequestration lens to their work,
- Five (5) Oregon Conservation Strategy Farm Bill Biologists, funded 80% by NRCS, who implement Farm Bill Programs and fish and wildlife habitat practices on thousands of acres of working lands annually,
- The Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program (WWMP), which has protected nearly acres 16,000 of natural and working lands with federal BPA funds and is now seeking technical and financial assistance for habitat restoration and carbon sequestration long-term on these lands,
- Eighteen (18) ODFW stream and fish habitat restoration biologists located throughout Western and Eastern Oregon whose focus is on restoring and enhancing aquatic riparian and wetland habitats at landscape scales but for whom carbon sequestration has not yet been a focus,

- Fifteen (15) ODFW Regional Habitat Biologists who review land use permit applications and design/implement upland, wetland, and estuary habitat restoration projects on natural and working lands across the state.
- Fish and Wildlife District Biologists (>24 FTE) across ODFW’s Watershed Districts who are also involved in habitat restoration projects on natural and working lands across the state, using federal and state funds and involving many diverse partners.

Description of Current Federal, State, and/or Private Funds Leveraged or Anticipated

At the end of November 2023, ODFW and partners had been awarded \$58.1 million in federal IJA and IRA funds. Additional awards have been announced in December 2023. The NCS Biologist position would have a role in ensuring that those funds are all spent in Oregon as committed and will seek to scale up the federal investment for two more years.

The Assistant Biologist could leverage carbon sequestration work out of several of ODFW’s federally funded restoration programs including USFWS’s Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration, Bonneville Power Authority, and NRCS Farm Bill. A total amount of federal funding is unknown and will be based on the partnerships and projects identified by this staff position.

2025 Update: Through the NCS biologists, ODFW has leveraged additional funds for habitat restoration via shrub plantings through Pittman-Robertson Funds. Additional federal funding opportunities are being tracked, and these positions are connecting with partners to pursue applicable grants. These positions are involved in many partnership groups around the state that are seeking federal funds, administering federal grants awarded in ODFW’s habitat division, and incorporating natural climate solutions and carbon sequestration data in support of habitat restoration.

Connection to Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities

ODFW has strong partnerships with Oregon’s nine federally recognized tribes and organizations across rural communities. Many rural, agricultural landowners are key participants in federal grants that ODFW pursues for natural climate solutions. A large percentage of the \$58.1 million referenced above has been for projects granted by the America the Beautiful Challenge (ATBC), all of these ATBC projects are led-by or strongly partnered with tribes in western Oregon.

These positions have leveraged the existing relationships between ODFW field biologists and tribal and environmental justice communities to learn about and pursue grants for their priorities in the future. Frequently, capacity to write and manage grants at this financial scale is limited for these communities or organizations and sometimes states are the only eligible applicant for the federal funding opportunities. ODFW has found that added capacity within the state allows us to develop more projects in partnerships as well as pass through more funds to these communities.

Measurable Outcomes for Reporting

Metrics for Tracking Outcomes	FY 2024	FY 2025
Federal grants leveraged		1 PR grant: \$187K federal; \$42,500 private; \$20K NWL*
Partnerships established		Minimum of 26*
Technical assistance connections established		Minimum of 70*

NATURAL & WORKING LANDS FUND ANNUAL REPORT – 2025

<p>Technical assistance documents generated</p>		<p>2 pending review; 3 in draft version *</p>
<p>Connections/applications to funding opportunities</p>		<p>Applied: -NFWF CPP- \$750K federal -ODF- PFA HCP Sec 6- \$765,187 federal* Partner applied: OWEB- ~\$290K state* Connected partners w/funding opportunities: 5*</p>

*Both biologists have contributed to these outcomes

Oregon Department of Forestry | P9: Advance Implementation of Climate-Smart Forestry

Budget and Funding

Fiscal Year	NWL Fund Allocation	NWL Funds Issued	Other Funds Leveraged (Federal/State/Private)	Other Funds Issued
2023	\$1,500,000			
2024				
2025		\$250,000 allocated		
Totals	\$1,500,000	\$250,000	\$0	\$0

Spend Plan Summary: Natural & Working Lands Funds

Fiscal Year	N&WL Fund Budget	FTE	Admin & Personnel
2024			
2025	\$1,500,000	0	\$0
Totals	\$1,500,000		\$0

2025 Budget and Spending Plan Update: The department is proceeding with existing staff as capacity allows. The areas of the department best suited to implement the projects have been identified after recent internal reorganization and work has commenced to see out the expenditure of the funds.

Description of Investment

Program/Project Description

The Department of Forestry will look to expand implementation of parts of its Climate Change and Carbon Plan (CCCP, November 2021). This holistic plan is centered around climate-smart forestry (CSF) and has eight broad goals including research and monitoring, urban forestry, and silviculture, among others. Implementation of the plan has been challenging due to limited resources; however, with these funds and additional federal investments, substantive results can be accomplished.

Through this work the department will incentivize climate-smart forestry practices directed towards natural and working lands adaptation, climate mitigation, and social resilience (the three legs of CSF). Many of the goals of the CCCP and the initial recommendations provided to the COMMISSION by the Institute for Natural Resources (INR) are complementary:

CCCP goals	INR Recommendation
Climate-smart forestry in silviculture	Improved forest management

Reforestation and afforestation	Afforestation/reforestation
Maintain and conserve forest	Prevent conversion of forest to non-forest land uses

Additional parallels exist at the action level where the CCCP recognizes managing the fire environment, urban forestry efforts, encouraging low-carbon impact materials in Oregon, among others.

The ODF is involved with other sections of HB3409 and will work within those program areas to further the state’s climate goals. These include topics like urban forestry and harvest residue utilization and the department is well partnered in those areas.

2025 Implementation Update: Implementation has lagged due to budgeting processes and staff reorganization and movement. Existing staff have been identified to take on efforts of the various projects and work will continue with these people. The department is working on outreach and coordination with intended recipients and hopes to be able to provide funds in the near future.

Next Steps: Work to finalize Intergovernmental Agreement language and implementation and set up tracking mechanisms for reporting to ODOE, OWEB, and the Commission. Establishing agreements with recipients will be the primary focus in coming months.

Needs and Opportunities

- The department is looking to leverage work that has taken place by local districts to implement CSF, particularly for smaller and disadvantaged landowners. The department will also be onboarding new staff that will be able to assist in the effort as part of their regular duties.
- The department looks forward to working with federal partners as they work to ensure that there is a seed and seedling supply that will be ready in a changing climate as well as maximizing the effectiveness of the funds for both entities.

Ability of Agency to Implement the Program

The implementation of these efforts will utilize relationships with third parties like SWCDs, WCs, and community-based organizations. These organizations are highly capable and provide place-based planning expertise and knowledge as well as landowner, Tribal, and traditionally underserved community relationships. Grant and agreement structure exists within ODF through its many different programs that provide landowner assistance. It also has extensive experience with successfully implementing intergovernmental agreements that could be used. Existing program staff have been identified to complete these efforts and the pace should increase.

Description of Current Federal, State, and/or Private Funds Leveraged or Anticipated

Funds will be used to further efforts begun by the USFS around seed production, some of which has traditionally flowed to state and private organizations and landowners.

Funds will be supplied to tribes through the urban and community forestry program which has also been working with them through federal funding and will be used in areas with high climate focus and help stretch the federal funds.

Connection to Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities

Funds that are available to CBOs and partners can flow to environmental justice communities, however, a separate project utilizing these funds is directly proposed for Tribal and environmental justice communities.

Measurable Outcomes for Reporting

Metrics for Tracking Outcomes	FY 2024	FY 2025
Acres treated/restored (by treatment type)	None to report	None to report
Seeding/planting rates/density (by species)	None to report	None to report
Ecological function repaired	None to report	None to report
Number and acres of binding covenants put in place	None to report	None to report

Oregon Department of Forestry | P10: Climate-Smart Forestry Implementation in Partnership with Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities

Budget and Funding

Fiscal Year	NWL Fund Allocation	NWL Funds Issued	Other Funds Leveraged (Federal/State/Private)	Other Funds Issued
2023	\$1,000,000			
2024				
2025				
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$1,000,000</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>

Spend Plan Summary: Natural & Working Lands Funds

Fiscal Year	N&WL Fund Budget	FTE	Admin & Personnel
2024			
2025	\$1,000,000	0	\$0
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$1,000,000</i>		<i>\$0</i>

2025 Update: The department is proceeding with existing staff as capacity allows. Additional hiring has recently taken place to refill vacancies and these will be particularly well suited to engaging with Tribes for NCS work. The areas of the department best suited to implement the projects have been identified after recent internal reorganization and work has commenced to see out the expenditure of the funds.

Description of Investment

Program/Project Description

With respect to advancing change in action necessary to realizing climate-smart practices, incentives and tax breaks have repeatedly been recognized as a meaningful and at times necessary mechanism to encourage change in practice. While we, as agencies, cannot provide tax breaks, this funding will provide a mechanism to incentivize landowners to consider climate change and take management action they may otherwise not consider or be unable to realize. These funds will be directed towards small, disadvantaged landowners and Tribes that are looking to pursue more climate-smart forest practices. The funds could be provided to Tribes and small landowners through ODF’s existing granting programs or via direct partnerships with Tribes or third parties that work with traditionally disadvantaged landowners.

While western science has, and continues to provide, a wealth of knowledge on climate and forestry, there is also a substantial amount of traditional ecological knowledge that has not been included in current silvicultural practice. Elevating this knowledge can help inform current forest managers on traditional approaches to some of today’s more sticky issues facing the state’s forests. The department

would like to partner with Tribes to provide more bi-directional communication and information transfer that can help improve holistic outcomes across forest ownerships. Additionally, embracing a commitment to integrating traditional practices into the processes and outcomes of this climate-related work, as well as general agency work, can help to build trust, respect, and ecological benefits as the climate changes. Modern scientific information can provide the technical aspects of climate change (e.g., projections, plant physiology, etc.) that are key as forest types shift.

2025 Implementation Update: Department staff have been engaged with Tribes through other grant processes and will continue to build these relationships to implement the NCS work laid out. The urban and community forestry program intends to leverage overlap to include climate considerations as applicable. Expect to provide funding and reporting mechanism to tribes and community-based organizations in the near future.

Next Steps: ODF will work to finalize Intergovernmental Agreement language and implementation, set up tracking mechanisms for reporting to ODOE/OWEB/ and the Commission. ODF will work with Urban and Community staff where there is overlap and to avoid duplication of efforts/promote climate in existing efforts. Getting agreements in place and money to the Tribal recipients will be the primary focus in coming months.

Needs and Opportunities

- Additional engagement opportunities with the tribes are always welcome. While ODF staff work closely with the Tribes on an array of matters, broad engagement and priority conversations are always a help to guiding the department as it works to fulfill its mission.
- Recent granting processes have helped to build relationships and these will be used to provide additional climate focused project funding.

Ability of Agency to Implement the Program

The implementation of these efforts will utilize relationships with third parties like SWCDs, WCs, and community-based organizations. These organizations are highly capable and provide place-based planning expertise and knowledge as well as landowner, Tribal, and traditionally underserved community relationships. Grant and agreement structure exists within ODF through its many different programs that provide landowner assistance. It also has extensive experience with successfully implementing intergovernmental agreements that could be used. Existing program staff have been identified to complete these efforts and the pace should increase.

Description of Current Federal, State, and/or Private Funds Leveraged or Anticipated

It is anticipated that additional funding will become available from the USDA Forest Service through their State, Private, and Tribal Forestry program. At this time, it is unclear as to if this will be competitive funding or provided to the states by a formula. With time this will become clearer.

Connection to Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities

Efforts will be made to partner with Tribes as directly as possible. This will likely be through the Tribes forestry or natural resource departments that manage and steward their lands. Many of these relationships exist at the local level currently and the agency will work to strengthen and build upon those existing relationships. Supporting disadvantaged forest owners has long been one of the agencies focuses. This will continue to be a priority with the recent development of the Small Landowner Office

(thanks to the Private Forest Accord) and may be utilized as a means to distribute funds to small, disadvantaged landowners.

2025 Update: ODF is working to implement efforts with Urban and Community staff as well as a new tribal liaison for the department. ODF is working with other agencies to minimize workload on recipients and amount of requests that are being made.

Measurable Outcomes for Reporting

Metrics for Tracking Outcomes	FY 2024	FY 2025
Acres treated/restored (by treatment type)	None to report	None to report
Seeding/planting rates/density (by species)	None to report	None to report
Ecological function repaired	None to report	None to report
Number and acres of binding covenants put in place	None to report	None to report
Opportunities for bidirectional learning	None to report	None to report

Oregon Department of Forestry | P11: Establishment of Climate-Ready Seed Orchards

Budget and Funding

Fiscal Year	NWL Fund Allocation	NWL Funds Issued	Other Funds Leveraged (Federal/State/Private)	Other Funds Issued
2023	\$750,000			
2024			\$160,000 (Federal)	
2025		\$750,000 allocated		
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$750,000</i>	<i>\$750,000</i>	<i>\$160,000</i>	<i>\$0</i>

Spend Plan Summary: Natural & Working Lands Funds

Fiscal Year	N&WL Fund Budget	FTE	Admin & Personnel
2024	\$300,000	2	Minimal
2025	\$450,000	2	Minimal
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$750,000</i>		<i>Minimal</i>

2025 Update: Efforts are underway to identify scope and scale of need, species to focus on, and areas of investment at existing facility to ensure that there is a successful outcome. Some of the actions identified are ensuring adequate irrigation capacity for orchard establishment, energy resilience for the seed freezer, and expansion of the species located at the seed orchard. One success has been the management planning for existing mature Oregon white oak as a source for acorns. This will be completed in the near term, and the department looks to start the process of supplying those to interested parties. This is a long-term project and needs proper planning to take place to ensure success. Will likely need to extend funds into coming biennium due to timing of receiving funds.

Description of Investment

Program/Project Description

There are over 40 million seedlings planted in Oregon forests each year. The vast majority are a single species and often are sourced from the same local seed that is used from generation to generation. Empirical observation along with climate projections and scientific findings indicate that the margins of existing forest land are experiencing decline and further expected to consist of different species types in coming decades as a function of climate change. Production of native and adapted species seed that will be viable in shifted landscapes is currently not available or in exceptionally limited supply due to narrow forest seed orchard capabilities and directives. To meet the need for native, diverse, and climate adapted species necessary to maintain the state’s forests as forests (a key to climate mitigation), the department looks to increase the utilization of its existing seed orchard in providing the seed and

potentially seedlings for Tribal, small, and disadvantaged forest landowners. This facility currently produces a substantial amount of genetically improved seed of limited species as a function of directives and funding but has tremendous capacity for additional seed production and seeks to advance its capability to meet climate and landscape needs.

2025 Implementation Update: Funds for this project are supporting:

- Orchard maintenance and revitalization;
- Preparation for additional orchard planting;
- Planning efforts for additional species at the seed orchard; and
- Facilities/equipment maintenance to ensure that the seed orchard will continue to be able to produce the desired seed into the future.
- -Management and harvest planning for existing, acorn-bearing Oregon white oak for use now and in the future
- -Irrigation and water supply planning and implementation
- -Partnering with USFS for new future climate ready orchards
- -Ensuring infrastructure is ready for future and existing seed storage (current inventory ~\$14 million).

Next Steps: Continue to work on implementation, including collection or purchase of seed, sowing, field prep, and planting. Efforts are underway to identify long term funding opportunities for maintenance until seed is ready to be harvested and provided to landowners. Infrastructure resilience work and efforts will continue to ensure long-term operation.

Needs and Opportunities

New staff at the seed orchard have brought in new ideas and interest for additional work. These are being utilized as much as possible and leveraging other funds where possible to optimize each intent is underway.

Additional efforts by the USFS to build its future ready seed inventory are helping to facilitate additional seed orchards and species plantings.

Ability of Agency to Implement the Program

ODF has an existing seed orchard facility with available space to achieve the goals of this effort. It has existing infrastructure and partnerships but will need operational funding to collect and sow the seed for the new species orchards. New staff have been hired following the departure of others and this has brought the capacity back to near full strength.

Description of Current Federal, State, and/or Private Funds Leveraged or Anticipated

Federal funds for seed and seedling efforts may become available through the Inflation Reduction Act or other mechanisms. Ongoing planning activities and efforts around seed, seedlings, and reforestation at the federal and state levels will help to identify and distribute additional funding.

2025 Update: Federal fund award of \$160,000 has been used to further the implementation of climate adapted orchard development and the overall goals of a robust and long lasting seed source for reforestation efforts in the state. The N&WL funds will help to expand or continue the work of these other funding pools.

Connection to Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities

An aspect of the ODF seed orchard responsibilities is providing seed for small landowners. This in addition to a desire to partner with Tribes will be beneficial to a successful endeavor. While this specific

effort is targeted at long-term benefits, there may be some near-term as there will be an initial need for seed collection and establishment and an economic benefit through that work.

2025 Update: ODF looks to engage with Tribes through other N&WL project efforts to ensure there is species that are of interest to Tribes included in the efforts moving ahead. This will particularly be particularly important as the department works on its other projects that interact more directly with the Tribes. Additional work to supply smaller and traditionally disadvantaged landowners will take place and utilize various programs within the agency.

Measurable Outcomes for Reporting

Metrics for Tracking Outcomes	FY 2024	FY 2025
Orchards maintained or revitalized	None to report	None to report
Orchards prepared for additional planting	None to report	None to report
Orchards prepared for additional species	None to report	None to report
Orchard facilities and equipment maintained to ensure longevity	None to report	None to report

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board | P12: Restoration and Technical Assistance Grants – Open Solicitation Programs

Budget and Funding

Fiscal Year	NWL Fund Allocation	NWL Funds Issued	Funds Leveraged by OWEB (Federal/State/Private)*	Funds Leveraged by Grantees
2023	\$1,625,000			
2024			\$350,000 committed (Federal, shared across P12 and P13)	
2025		\$1,497,476 (Committed)	Continued to leverage the \$350,000 cooperative agreement funds referenced above	Proposed projects will leverage approximately \$631,000 in other funding and in-kind match
Totals	\$1,625,000	\$1,497,476	\$350,000	\$631,000

*Additional funding leveraged by grantees included in table in Description of Investment.

Spend Plan Summary: Natural & Working Lands Funds

Fiscal Year	N&WL Fund Budget	FTE	Admin & Personnel
2024	\$25,000	0.125	\$0
2025	\$1,600,000	0.125	\$0
Totals	\$1,625,000		\$0

Description of Investment

Program/Project Description

OWEB has awarded \$1.5 million in Natural and Working Lands Funds for a range of restoration and technical assistance projects throughout Oregon. The five awarded restoration grants provide incentives to help landowners, Tribes, land managers, and environmental justice communities adopt practices that support natural climate solutions while optimizing the community co-benefits of those solutions. The technical assistance award supports the required groundwork for future implementation of natural climate solutions.

OWEB requested \$250,000 for administrative costs for the combination of our Open Solicitation and Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program investments. Administrative funds will also be used for personnel costs during 2025-2027 and future biennia and for other supplies and services such as legal costs for grant agreement review.

2025 Implementation Update: Prior to launching the Open Solicitation and OAHP grant solicitations, OWEB committed to doing outreach and engagement with a focus on engaging Tribes and environmental justice communities. From September-December 2024, OWEB staff conducted a public

engagement process, including a survey, listening sessions, and one-on-one conversations to inform the grant offerings.

The engagement process revealed strong support for the priorities outlined in HB3409, including that a diversity of landowners and land managers are able to participate in natural climate solutions and that the funds should optimize the social, health, ecological, climate resilience, or economic benefits of natural climate solutions. The engagement process also highlighted key opportunities for OWEB to clarify the evaluation criteria for applications submitted for these offerings, expand eligible practices, and modify the application template to solicit projects in line with the environmental justice related goals of HB 3409. This feedback was crucial in designing offerings that are responsive to community input and meet the intent of the legislation.

As a result of the engagement process, OWEB included additional eligible practices for the NWL funds, including cover cropping, rotational grazing, and cultural burns. OWEB also dropped match requirements from 25% to 5% for Open Solicitation applications. Additionally, the grant applications for NWL funds were set up to closely match the standard Open Solicitation and OAHP applications, with the dual goals of both helping existing grantees apply for Natural and Working Lands funds and helping potential new applicants develop familiarity with OWEB’s grantmaking and successfully apply to other OWEB offerings in the future. This funding has provided a unique opportunity for OWEB to expand its partnerships as well as the scope of the conservation activities its grantmaking supports.

The grant solicitations for Open Solicitation and OAHP closed on April 1, 2025. OWEB received twenty-two applications totaling \$5.3 million for the Open Solicitation offering. Due to the unique focus of this offering, OWEB convened a new technical review team and provided guidance on how to evaluate projects according to the legislative intent around supporting natural climate solutions and community co-benefits, as well as OWEB’s existing criteria for restoration and technical assistance applications. The review team was divided into two groups, with each group reviewing 11 applications. Each application was assigned a lead reviewer who presented a summary of the proposal and, along with a secondary reviewer, initiated discussion about the project’s strengths and concerns.

The review teams made “fund/do not fund” recommendations based on the evaluation criteria; the Institute for Natural Resources report, *Foundational Elements to Advance the Oregon Global Warming Commission’s Natural and Working Lands Proposal*; and the legislative intent. Each group then rank ordered the projects that were recommended for funding, and the funding line was drawn by taking the top projects from each group, accounting for diversity in geography, project type, and applicant type.

The six funded projects are:

- **Black Oregon Land Trust, Community-Led Riparian Restoration and Education in Corbett, Oregon:** The overarching goal of this project is to restore ecological function and improve climate resilience and community connection on 30 acres. The project is a replicable, community-oriented model that aims to educate and train BIPOC land stewards, community members, and local contractors in culturally grounded, technically sound restoration methods.
- **Institute for Applied Ecology, Tribal Priority Plant Materials for Climate Resiliency in Oak Understory Habitat:** The goal of this project is to increase the availability of tribal priority oak understory native plant materials to support cultural use and restoration projects at five sites owned by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. Project activities will contribute to a diverse understory plant ecosystem, which acts as an effective carbon sink as native bunchgrasses and wildflowers have deep root systems to mitigate drought stress and build below-ground carbon stores.
- **Clackamas River Basin Council, Gersh Property Restoration and Forest Stewardship:** This project will support ongoing post-wildfire restoration on 80 acres of forestland. The grantee will address

the impacts of the 2020 Riverside Fire through fuels and noxious weed management, riparian and forest planting, soil carbon enhancement, and forest stand improvement.

- **The Understory Initiative, Collaborative Oak Meadow Restoration Training and Seed Banking for Community Climate Resilience:** This project will use three sites to restore meadow ecosystem function and use as demonstration plots for training landowners and community members in biodiversity, soil health, and carbon sequestration strategies. These activities will help scale meadow restoration techniques not currently being utilized in Douglas County, advance local seed production, and facilitate collaborative efforts among project partners.
- **Klamath Watershed Partnership, Copperfield Wildfire Reforestation:** This project will reforest 506 acres of private land following the Copperfield Fire to ensure the timely restoration of ecological services associated with forested acres while managing for future wildfire risks in the face of a changing climate.
- **Deschutes River Conservancy, Strategy and Design Development to Support Cover-Cropping Incentivization in Jefferson County:** This technical assistance project will explore the feasibility of a cover cropping incentive program as a component of intra-district water trading. The grantee will examine the requirements of various state, federal, and private funding programs to support wider cover crop adoption.

Next Steps: OWEB is supporting funded projects with project kickoff and in the next year, will collaborate with grantees to highlight impact stories and communicate project status. OWEB is also collaborating with the Department of Energy on the workforce study and the metrics study. OWEB grantees with relevant experience have been invited to contribute to the workforce study and OWEB is working to ensure that metrics are inclusive of the type of work OWEB grantees might do in the future.

Needs and Opportunities

- The awarded restoration and technical assistance grants engage landowners and land managers in activities like developing the plant stock, technical capacity, or access to resources required to sustain and scale natural climate solutions. While many of the grantees will likely be able to leverage other funding, in the current environment, resources will be limited and more competitive. This program needs additional investment to ensure the gains of this important work are realized.
- In addition, in order to meet the legislative intent of these funds, OWEB ran a separate solicitation from the general Open Solicitation offering. Applicants submitted thoughtful and impactful projects that address both the ecological and social co-benefits of natural climate solutions; however, continued investment would elevate equity work as part of OWEB’s grantmaking and build applicants’ capacity to speak to this priority.

Ability of Agency to Implement the Program

OWEB is a state grant-making agency, with a long and successful track record of getting conservation and restoration dollars on the ground for projects around the state. For the Watershed Natural Climate Solutions Fund, OWEB has used the existing Open Solicitation grant program, which includes Restoration and Technical Assistance grants and their corresponding administrative rule and evaluation criteria.

Description of Current Federal, State, and/or Private Funds Leveraged or Anticipated

Applicants for this offering were required to leverage a minimum of 5% match to promote inclusion of smaller organizations, however many are leveraging much more. Funded projects will leverage at least \$631,000 in other funding and in-kind match.

Connection to Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities

As stated in HB 3409, funding decisions should prioritize projects or activities administered or proposed by an environmental justice community or Tribe. The technical review team was encouraged to consider this legislative intent in their evaluations and the funded projects have incorporated equity considerations, including partnering with Tribes, incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge, providing workforce development opportunities for rural youth, amongst others.

Measurable Outcomes for Reporting

Metrics for Tracking Outcomes	FY 2024	FY 2025
Acres treated/restored (by treatment type)	None to report	None to report
Seeding/planting rates/density (by species)	None to report	None to report
Ecological function repaired	None to report	None to report
Other applicable	None to report	None to report

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board | P13: Conservation Management Planning, Technical Assistance, and Payment for Practices

Budget and Funding

Fiscal Year	NWL Fund Allocation	NWL Funds Issued	Funds Leveraged by OWEB (Federal/State/Private)	Funds Leveraged by Grantees
2023	\$875,000			
2024			\$350,000 committed (Federal, shared across P12 and P13)	
2025		\$752,524 (Committed)	Continued to leverage the \$350K cooperative agreement funds referenced above	Proposed projects will leverage approximately \$83,339 in other funding and in-kind match
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$875,000</i>	<i>\$752,524</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$83,339</i>

Spend Plan Summary: Natural & Working Lands Funds

Fiscal Year	N&WL Fund Budget	FTE	Admin & Personnel
2024	\$25,000	0.125	\$0
2025	\$850,000	0.125	\$0
<i>Totals</i>	<i>\$875,000</i>		<i>\$0</i>

Description of Investment

Program/Project Description

OWEB has invested \$752,524 of Natural and Working Land Funds into grants administered through the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP) for the development of conservation management plans and a climate-smart payment-for-practices component.

OWEB requested \$250,000 for administrative costs for the combination of our Open Solicitation and Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program investments. Administrative costs will also be used for personnel costs in future biennia and for other supplies and services such as legal costs for grant agreement review.

2025 Implementation Update: The engagement process update outlined above (P12) included both the Open Solicitation and OAHP offerings. The application for the development of Conservation Management plans also closed April 1st. The program received nine applications requesting \$955,084 and has awarded five grant awards to fund the development and initial implementation of conservation management plans across 38,235 acres for a cost of \$752,524.

The five funded projects are:

- **Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council, Creswell Oaks Conservation Management Plan and Implementation Phase One:** The project will write and begin implementation of a conservation management plan on an 1,800-acre ranch near Creswell currently enrolled in a conservation easement to enhance oak habitat and fire resiliency through the expanded use of prescribed grazing and mechanical removal of understory brush.
- **Sustainable Northwest, Horseshoe Bar Conservation Management Plan:** The project will write and begin implementation of a conservation management plan across 34,542 acres near Antelope along the John Day River. The goal of the conservation management plan is to improve rangeland health through the implementation of prescribed grazing, range planting, and prescribed burning.
- **Long Tom Watershed Council, Deck Family Farm Conservation Management Plan:** The project will write and begin implementation of a conservation management plan on a 321-acre ranch near Junction City to enhance water quality and quantity as well as enhancing riparian and oak habitats on the farm through the use of prescribed grazing, wetland creation, and various plant establishment strategies.
- **Deschutes Land Trust, Garden Creek Ranch CMP:** The project will write and begin implementation of a conservation management plan on 640 acre ranch near Prineville to improve water quality, maintain soil health, improve on-farm wildlife habitat, and reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfire through the use of forest thinning, prescribed fire, riparian forest buffer establishment, and pasture planting. Deschutes Land Trust is in the process of pursuing an easement on the property.
- **Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District, Henderson Flats OAHF Conservation Management Plan:** The project will write and begin implementation of a conservation management plan across 932 acres and three contiguous farm properties managed by a single operator near Terrebonne. The goal of the conservation management plan is to integrate efforts to maintain soil health, improve irrigation efficiency, and improve on farm wildlife habitat through the implementation of reduced tillage, various planting practices, prescribed grazing and fire.

Next Steps: The five funded projects will spend the coming year developing their conservation management plans and then the following 4-5 years implementing the plans. They will report to OWEB annually on the practices implemented as a result of the plan and the impacts to fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, and carbon sequestration.

Needs and Opportunities

The awarded conservation management plan grants support land managers working with technical service providers to complete long range management plans for their agricultural operation and to compensate them for several years of implementation for the expected ecosystem services. The program is designed to pair well with existing federal conservation programs such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service’s Environmental Quality Incentive Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program, which tend to pay for the cost to install conservation measures (i.e. irrigation improvements, cover crops, etc.) but not for the ongoing contributions of those measures. While many producers will be able to leverage federal conservation programs to support implementation of their plans, the NWL funding is critical to support the integrated planning efforts and long-term support for ecosystem service delivery especially given the uncertainty around the availability of funding from state and federal sources going forward. OWEB was unable to fund all projects that applied for this funding and is unable to fund the implementation of the 20–50-year conservation management plans beyond the initial few years. More funding is needed to scale the program to meet existing demand and help

create a reliable incentive structure for farmers and ranchers who may be changing their cropping systems or taking land out of production to provide ecosystem services.

Ability of Agency to Implement the Program

OWEB is a state grant-making agency, with a long and successful track record of getting conservation and restoration dollars on the ground for projects around the state. For the OAHWP Watershed Natural Climate Solutions Fund, OWEB has used our existing Conservation Management Planning grant program, which includes a payment for ecosystem service component with project selection based on existing administrative rule and evaluation criteria. The payment for ecosystem services program was developed in partnership with Highland Economics, with payment rates calculated for existing NRCS conservation practices based on their ability to sequester carbon, provide fish and wildlife habitat, and improve water quality.

Description of Current Federal, State, and/or Private Funds Leveraged or Anticipated

Applicants for this offering were required to leverage a minimum of 5% match to promote inclusion of smaller organizations. Funded projects will leverage \$83,339 in other funding and in-kind match, with the potential to leverage much more due to the program’s alignment with NRCS conservation practices and programs. The implementation methodology for the OWEB-funded conservation management plans was specifically developed to leverage federal conservation investments and all applicants mention that they plan to work with NRCS to explore federal cost share opportunities for practices identified in their conservation management plans.

2025 Update: This program benefited from \$350,000 in federal funding from NRCS for the 2023-2025 biennium to support the Water and Climate Coordinator position, with the aim of helping OWEB advance climate adaptation and mitigation across their grantmaking portfolio.

Connection to Tribal and Environmental Justice Communities

2025 Update: As stated in HB 3409, funding decisions should prioritize projects or activities administered or proposed by an environmental justice community or Tribe. The OAHWP program adopted new rules and evaluation criteria governing the program in early 2025 and was able to incorporate new evaluation criteria focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as support from environmental justice communities and Tribes. These new evaluation criteria were used together with existing criteria to evaluate and rank the applications received and contributed to the decisions about which projects to fund.

Measurable Outcomes for Reporting

Metrics for Tracking Outcomes	FY 2024	FY 2025
Acres treated/restored (by treatment type)	None to report	None to report
Seeding/planting rates/density (by species)	None to report	None to report
Ecological function repaired	None to report	None to report
Other applicable	None to report	None to report