

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2000 Oregon Plan Implementation Report

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. Most of the Service's Oregon Plan measures are ongoing and do not change significantly from year to year. Rather than reporting extensively on these ongoing measures, we would like to highlight areas where significant change has taken place or, in our view, needs to take place. Therefore, this report is divided into three sections: summary of ongoing activities, new initiatives, and current issues and opportunities.

Summary of Ongoing Activities

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) continued to implement its ongoing fish and wildlife conservation programs in Fiscal Year 2000. These include the following:

- **Restoration Programs.** The Jobs-in-the-Woods Program (USFWS1) funded 22 restoration projects in timber-dependent communities in western Oregon, totaling \$666,487. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (USFWS5) funded 15 restoration projects in Oregon, totaling \$182,847. The Metropolitan Greenspaces Program (USFWS6) funded 36 restoration and environmental projects totaling \$287,222. The Service also provided small operations grants and technical assistance to watershed councils (USFWS7), and technical assistance to Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Tribes, private landowners, and support to Farm Bill programs. We also are improving our monitoring and tracking of restoration activities.
- **Aquatic Resources Programs.** The Service continued working on Federal and non-Federal water resources development projects under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Clean Water Act, Rivers and Harbors Act and several other authorities, including providing input and recommendations on Federal water resources development projects and hydropower licenses, permit reviews, and environmental review. It also worked on aquatic conservation strategies at the state, riverbasin, and local levels; these strategies include state-wide fish passage improvements and fish habitat restoration projects, estuary planning, Willamette Restoration Initiative, and review of wetland conservation plans. (USFWS10,11,13,16,20)
- **Environmental Contaminants Programs.** The Service continued conducting Natural Resource Damage Assessments and responding to oil and hazardous substance spills, and reviewing proposed restoration sites (USFWS 14,15).
- **Outreach and Education.** The Service participated in numerous outreach events such as the State Fair, Salmon Festival, McLoughlin House, and Songbird Festival. It provided funding and technical assistance to Adopt-A-River, Salmon Watch, Outdoor School, Salmon Camp, SOLV, and many other events. (USFWS 17,18,19)
- **Endangered Species Act and Northwest Forest Plan Implementation.** Activities in support of the Northwest Forest Plan included participating in watershed analyses, late-successional reserve assessments, aquatic conservation strategy implementation, and adaptive management area planning (USFWS8). The Service issued biological opinions for activities of Federal agencies, including formal consultations, informal consultations, and technical assistance, involving wetlands, riparian habitats, riverine and deep water

habitats (USFWS9). It worked with private landowners and other partners on habitat conservation plans and conservation agreements (USFWS2,3). Work on bull trout recovery planning continued (USFWS21).

New Initiatives

- **Restoration and Acquisition Grants.** The Service granted \$999,000 to the Columbia Land Trust through the North American Waterfowl Management Act for land acquisition and restoration in the Lower Columbia; \$1,570,000 to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board for Coos-Coquille and Tillamook Bay wetlands protection and restoration through the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Program; and \$2,600,000 for wetland protection and improvement projects in the Siuslaw Estuary, Smith River Estuary, and Leeds Island wetlands (mouth of Umpqua River).
- **National Wildlife Refuge Land Acquisitions.** The Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge acquired 248.65 acres at a cost of \$1,614,000; the Finley National Wildlife Refuge acquired 341 acres at a cost of \$1,059,000; Bandon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge acquired 407.69 acres at a cost of \$1,155,000; Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge acquired 133.71 acres at a cost of \$2,300,000; and Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge acquired 4,261.83 acres at a cost of \$308,875,00.

Current Issues and Opportunities

- **Coastal Cutthroat Trout.** On April 5, 1999, the Service and NMFS jointly proposed to list the Southwest Washington/Columbia River coastal cutthroat population as threatened. On November 22, 1999, the Service assumed the sole regulatory jurisdiction over coastal cutthroat trout. On April 14, 2000, we extended by 6 months the timeframe to take final action on the proposed rule, because we needed additional time to review new information available since the status review was published. Final action was expected by October 5, 2000. However, on November 22, 2000, the Service announced that it will be unable to consider adding any new species to the Endangered Species List, except on an emergency basis, for the remainder of the 2001 fiscal year because all available funding must be allocated to conduct critical habitat designations required by court orders or settlement agreements. As a result, this population of coastal cutthroat trout is not receiving protection under the Endangered Species Act that it may need. Nevertheless, the Service is working in the following ways to promote conservation of coastal cutthroat trout: It is conferencing with Federal agencies on issues such as transportation and dredging to identify conservation opportunities; providing technical and ESA assistance to City of Portland, Multnomah and Clackamas counties and Metro; and developing tools to assist with recovery, such as working with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to develop a 4(d) rule for angling and developing cooperative research plans.
- **Restoration Activities.** Section 7 consultations and Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act reviews with the Army Corps of Engineers on State-led efforts such as the Regional General Permit for large wood and boulders (RGP), the statewide programmatic general permit (SPGP), and discussions about the State assumption of the Clean Water Act Section 404 program have or will provide both consultation streamlining and Endangered Species Act coverage for permit applicants, especially those seeking to carry out

restoration projects. In spite of these accomplishments, we understand that many private landowners still are hesitant to conduct restoration projects because they fear Federal involvement; we look forward to working with the State and NMFS on that issue. We also look forward to working with the State and NMFS on developing a common definition of restoration and identifying types of projects that meet this definition, which we hope will lead to expedited permitting.

- **Willamette Restoration Initiative.** The Service, like other Federal and State agencies and stakeholders, helped the Willamette Restoration Initiative (WRI) develop a strategy for restoring the health of the Willamette Basin, and contributed funding for WRI operations and activities. The Service places a high priority on the Willamette Basin because it is home to many Federal trust resources and two National Wildlife Refuges. The Service has identified the Willamette Basin as a pilot area for demonstrating an ecosystem approach, to unite Service programs and develop partnerships. In support of this, a new position has been created to coordinate Service Willamette Basin activities, and the coordinator is expected to be in place this summer. The WRI offers the Service an outstanding opportunity to forge new partnerships, especially with private landowners, to achieve conservation objectives in the Willamette Basin. The Service hopes to continue to work with and support the WRI through its restoration, endangered species, refuges and fisheries programs (at this writing the future of the WRI is uncertain).
- **Oregon Forest Practices.** The Oregon Forest Practices Act is a key component of the Oregon Plan. The Forest Practices Advisory Committee, comprising forest industry, environmental and fishing organizations, developed proposals for new rules to be considered by the Board of Forestry. Federal agencies were not invited to participate in this process. The committee recommendations seek to meet water quality standards and protect and restore salmonids, but do not attempt to specifically address sufficiency for particular Federal laws or regulations, such as the Endangered Species Act or Clean Water Act. We would like to work with the State to ensure that the best available science is used to support the changes to forest practices that are necessary to protect water quality and fisheries. To this end, we would welcome an opportunity to work with the State during the Board of Forestry's review of the proposals from the Forest Practices Advisory Committee.
- **Monitoring Oregon Plan Effectiveness.** Tracking the activities of State and Federal agencies to implement the Oregon Plan is a necessary part of doing business, but the real accomplishments of the plan will be shown by improved watershed conditions and improved fish populations. Monitoring the Oregon Plan's effectiveness should receive at least as much support as tracking agency activities. We commend the Oregon Plan Monitoring Team for its efforts to develop a monitoring strategy that will address the key questions about Oregon Plan effectiveness, and will continue to support that effort.