



## *Stream Restoration Partnership*

### Current Status and Opportunities – November 2009

#### REVIEW DRAFT

We continue to face a slate of issues and opportunities that are complex and interconnected at various levels, and impact voluntary restoration on private lands in various ways. At the big picture level, these include:

- Climate change and the need to develop an understanding of the range of likely effects in the Pacific Northwest and what it will take to manage fish and wildlife resources.
- Limited resources in a deep economic recession.
- The Federal stimulus funding coming to Oregon under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has brought additional unanticipated resources for job creation and presents opportunities to accelerate restoration projects.
- The broad and growing support of landowners for voluntary restoration projects, and the rising voices from our youth – the next generation - that recognize the restoration imperative.

There are several recent developments since the initiation of this Oregon Solutions project team in February 2008 that are directly influencing the need and support for a *Stream Restoration Partnership* to more effectively engage, coordinate and work with private landowners with voluntary restoration projects. These recent developments include:

**Conservation Plan & Recovery plan advancements.** This includes implementing the recently adopted Oregon Coastal Coho Conservation Plan and the Mid-Columbia Recovery Plan, continued commitments to finalize the Lower Columbia Recovery Plan and the Willamette Recovery Plan in the coming months, and to develop the Snake River Recovery Plan in 2010.

In mid-2009 **Oregon DEQ** published a report assessing the water quality in the Willamette Basin. The Willamette basin is the hub of the state's population and economy with 70% of the state's population, 75% of the state's employment, and 12% of the state's land area. The basin contains some of the state's most challenging water quality issues. Warm water is the single most extensive impairment in the Willamette basin. Nearly 70% of the stream and river extent in the basin violates the temperature criteria for protecting sensitive cold water fish like salmon and trout.

Concurrently, in this recessionary time of extremely difficult budgets for state and local agencies and non-profits, additional restoration project funding for private lands is coming to Oregon through the federal **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)**. Stimulus funding is arriving via the Farm Bill programs and NRCS, the USFS, NOAA Fisheries, EPA and DEQ, BLM and USFWS programs. The monthly Oregon Plan Core Team meetings are providing a forum for sharing of information and coordination.

The **Oregon Plan Core Team** chose to review and act on streamlining restoration project permitting in Spring 2009. The Core Team, originally chartered by state natural resource agencies in 2002, has been meeting monthly. The meetings are routinely attended by the Federal agency partners to discuss coordination of restoration project permitting issues and stimulus funding.

The **Oregon Plan Regional Management Teams**, intended to provide the forum under the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds (ORS 541.351 to 541.420) for state natural resource agencies to guide and prioritize watershed protection and restoration activities and management actions at the regional level, were re-established in 2009. Four regional management teams have been reconstituted and an updated charter has been drafted for each by the Governor's Office. One purpose of the Regional Management Teams is to improve coordination and communication across agencies to facilitate cooperative and collaborative resource management.

At the state agency level, there have been significant developments. The 2009 Oregon Legislature approved a bill that allows the **Department of State Lands** to exempt certain types of restoration projects from state permitting requirements. This will allow the Department to focus limited regulatory resources on permitted projects that are not expected to have a "net conservation benefit". An initial rule-making is underway. In June, the **USFS and BLM** received a programmatic permit that covers 13 categories of aquatic restoration projects on federal lands and projects on private lands completed under the "Wyden Amendment". In September, the **USFWS** Oregon State Office developed a new policy for Section 7 reviews related to restoration projects.

The on-going implementation efforts to support and accelerate voluntary restoration projects include:

- The Freshwater Trust StreamBank web-tool initiative continues to identify opportunities for greater use of technology with the goal of ultimately allowing landowner coordinators to access a "one-stop shop" for voluntary restoration projects.
- The Inter-agency Fish Passage Barrier Work Group started work in January 2009 and was able to vet a Culvert Toolbox developed by ODFW that, when finalized, will expedite and enhance many culvert replacement projects.
- The increasing use of technology, including
  - consideration of additional web-based tools;
  - continued pursuit of electronic permit applications;
  - greater use of electronic notification by those using programmatic;
  - design of the ODFW Culvert Toolbox to assist with project design, management and permitting;
  - efforts to develop, refine and share restoration project databases; and
  - expansion of LIDAR coverage and its use for focusing and planning restoration projects.
- Access to programmatic restoration permits is successful and working well for moving many restoration projects more quickly through the regulatory process. Restoration projects on over 50% of the state's land base now have access to the recently signed USFS/BLM Aquatic Restoration Consultation and issued through 2012. Other restoration programmatic are available for many projects with a federal funder nexus (including BIA, USFWS Partner Program, NOAA Restoration Center, and BPA programmatic). Private landowners completing restoration projects solely with private dollars and OWEB, NRCS or NGO funding have access to the USACOE SLOPES IV restoration programmatic.

- The Willamette Partnership's on-going efforts and partnering to organize the metrics and infrastructure for ecosystem services markets and a Willamette Marketplace in particular.
- The DEQ interest and work to complete an Internal Management Directive to build off the water quality trading program in the Tualatin Watershed and expand the understanding and availability of trading opportunities in other areas of the state.

Additional information:

- Oregon Coast Coho Conservation Plan  
[http://www.oregon.gov/OPSW/cohoproject/coho\\_proj.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/OPSW/cohoproject/coho_proj.shtml)

This Conservation Plan maintains and enhances support of the Oregon Plan and meets the requirements of Oregon's Native Fish Conservation Policy (NFCP) (OAR 635-007-0502 to 0509).

- Middle Columbia Sub-Domain ESA Steelhead Recovery Plan  
<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Salmon-Recovery-Planning/Recovery-Domains/Interior-Columbia/Mid-Columbia/Mid-Col-Plan.cfm>

The final recovery plan was just released on the Federal Register. This recovery plan is the product of extensive collaboration among many stakeholders in the Middle Columbia domain, NOAA Fisheries, the State of Oregon, and the State of Washington. Oregon's Middle Columbia River Steelhead Conservation and Recovery Plan is contained within NOAA's full bi-state recovery plan.

- ESA Recovery Planning for Salmon and Steelhead in the Willamette and Lower Columbia River Basins  
<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Salmon-Recovery-Planning/Recovery-Domains/Willamette-Lower-Columbia/upload/W-LC-Strategy.pdf>

[http://www.salmonrecovery.gov/RecoveryPlanning/Lower\\_C\\_Summary\\_060209.pdf](http://www.salmonrecovery.gov/RecoveryPlanning/Lower_C_Summary_060209.pdf)

Recovery planning efforts are currently underway and are anticipated to be completed in 2010.

- Snake River Recovery Planning  
 NOAA Fisheries hopes to complete a draft of the comprehensive Snake River Recovery Plan in 2010 that will include northeast Oregon.
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality – Willamette Basin Rivers and Streams Assessment  
<http://www.deq.state.or.us/about/eqc/agendas/attachments/2009oct/F-WillametteBasinAssessmentRpt.pdf>

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has aggregated various compatible data sets to evaluate stream and river status for the entire basin, for land use types and for 12 subbasins

using a range of biological, water quality and physical habitat condition indicators. Randomly selected sites are compared with least human impaired reference sites to evaluate the role of natural conditions and human activity to the current stream and river status.

- USDA Farm Bill and NRCS Oregon Office

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 is landmark legislation for conservation funding and for focusing on environmental issues. The conservation provisions help farmers and ranchers meet environmental challenges on their land. This legislation was intended to simplify existing programs and create new programs to address high priority environmental and production goals.

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/pdf/ProgSum.pdf>

The NRCS State Office is receiving significant additional stimulus funding for private landowners to access these conservation programs.

<http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/>

- USFS and BLM Regional General Permit for Aquatic Restoration

Reflecting 4-plus years of effort, the Army Corps of Engineers issued a Forest Service/BLM Regional General Permit (RGP) for aquatic restoration in late June. The RGP completes the last of four steps in streamlining regulatory processes for Forest Service/BLM aquatic restoration projects in Oregon, the other three steps being the NMFS Aquatic Restoration Biological Opinion (ARBO), USFWS ARBO, and the Department of State Lands General Permit (GP). Because the GP/RGP activity types, project design criteria, and reporting requirements are identical and essentially the same as those in the ARBOs, all GP/RGP projects will be consistent with the ARBOs.

GP/RGP highlights and items of interest include “Programmatic authorization”. The permits provide up-front authorization for 13 aquatic restoration categories that are covered in the NMFS and USFWS ARBOs. Categories include the following: 1) Large Wood, Boulder, and Gravel Placement; 2) Reconnection of Existing Side Channels and Alcoves; 3) Headcut Stabilization and Associated Fish Passage; 4) Streambank Stabilization; 5) Fish Passage Culvert and Bridge Projects; 6) Irrigation Screen Installation and Replacement & Weir Removal; 7) Floodplain Overburden Removal; 8) Reduction of Recreation Impacts; 9) Riparian Exclusion Fencing that include Stream Crossings and Water Gaps; 10) Riparian Planting; 11) Road Treatments; 12) Removal of Legacy Structures; and 13) Riparian Juniper Treatment.

The Geographic Area for the permits includes all Forest Service and BLM administered lands in Oregon as well as “Wyden Projects (over 50% of the state’s land area). The expiration date is 12/31/2012, which matches the ARBO.

- Willamette Partnership

Ecosystem Service Markets, Counting on the Environment Project and related information:

<http://www.willamettepartnership.org/about-markets>