

# The Farm Bill and Oregon



The federal Farm Bill provides over \$100 million annually in conservation dollars through cost-share assistance, rental payments, easement payments, and technical assistance provided in Oregon. That investment helps Oregon farmers and ranchers be better stewards of the state's land, water, soils, woods, and wildlife, and it provides conservation and economic benefits throughout Oregon.

**Working Lands** – in 2019, the Conservation Stewardship Program committed nearly \$37 million in payments to Oregon farmers and ranchers, covering 214,524 acres of farm and ranch land. CSP contracts helped farmers improve their grazing management systems, adopt high-level Integrated Pest Management, and install wildlife-friendly fencing and other practices. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program provided \$32 million for contracts that included 178,948 acres of farm and ranch land in Oregon. EQIP funds help farmers and ranchers put in place nutrient management plans, adopt conservation practices like cover crops and conservation crop rotations, and put in place rotational grazing systems for livestock.



Gary Wilson, NRCS

*The Conservation Stewardship Program helps farmers improve their grazing systems.*

**Conservation Reserve Program** – Over 2,000 Oregon farms have Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts, covering over 440,000 acres of land. The contracts provide \$28 million in annual rental payments to farmers. 80% of those

acres are CRP General contracts, often highly erodible cropland that has been planted to grassland vegetation. 16% are high-value Continuous CRP enrollments, including the Oregon Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

Oregon has over 47,000 acres enrolled in a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) initiative that pays farmers to take irrigated land out of production, planting trees and shrubs that shade streams and securing some 11,500 acre feet of water per year for instream flows -- all benefitting rare salmon and trout species. The remaining 4% of CRP acres are CRP Grassland contracts that protect and conserve existing grasslands vulnerable to conversion. Nation-wide, about one-third of CRP acres are in CREP and other special initiatives, so Oregon could be doing more to target CRP dollars in the state.

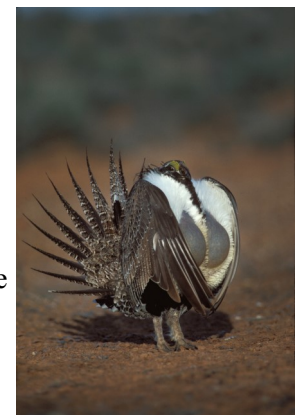


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*Buffer strips protect Oregon streams from polluted runoff from nearby crop fields.*

**Wetland and Grassland Easements** – in 2018 the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program provided \$8 million that helped fund a conservation easement on 8,500 acres in Oregon. From 2014 to 2019, over \$21 million provided funding for easements on over 30,000 acres in Oregon, including easements that protect prime agricultural land from urban development.

**Focused Conservation** – the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) has helped target USDA conservation dollars where they will do the most good and will leverage state and private funds. In Oregon, 25 RCPP projects meet local conservation needs, including restoring sage grouse habitat on grasslands in eastern Oregon, protecting and restoring oak woodlands and savannahs in southern Oregon and the northern Willamette Valley, and increasing irrigation efficiency in the John Day River watershed. Funds allocated through those RCPP initiatives are included in the numbers shown above for ACEP, CSP, and EQIP. Oregon targets EQIP funds through state-wide initiatives, as



Ron Nichols, NRCS

well as local initiatives that provide funding for specific practices that address targeted conservation needs in a local area.

**Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education** — the SARE program funds on-farm research, driven by farmers, to identify, test, and provide educational outreach on farming and ranching methods that reduce the use of off-farm inputs, improve productivity, and address conservation issues. Recent projects in Oregon have addressed challenges for growers of berries, broccoli, cabbage, grapes, hazelnuts, and olives, and forage for livestock producers.

**Farming Opportunities Training & Outreach** — The 2018 Farm Bill combined the Beginning Farmers & Ranchers Development Program and the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers program (Section 2501) into a Farming Opportunities Training & Outreach program. Past grants have funded development of advanced training for beginning farmers and the establishment of Teaching Farms at three Oregon State University research farms.

**Local Agriculture Market Program** — the 2018 Farm Bill combined several USDA programs that support farmers markets, local and regional food systems, and value-added initiatives by farmers into the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP). Past grants in Oregon have funded a project to help five farmers markets support new farmer vendors, and helped an organic farm produce and market a new hard apple cider.

## *Other Conservation Programs*

**Conserving Wetlands** – the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) funds partnerships that leverage state, federal, and private dollars to deliver wetland conservation projects. Since its inception, the program has provided \$21 million in federal funds to leverage \$81 million in partner contributions that are conserving nearly 115,000 acres of wetlands in Oregon. Another \$9 million in NAWCA grants have leveraged \$37 million in partner contributions to conserve over 58,000 acres of wetlands through 10 regional projects that include Oregon and neighboring states. Oregon has lost nearly 40% of its historic wetlands, which provide vital habitat for migrating birds and local wildlife, filter polluted runoff, recharge groundwater, and help reduce flooding.

**Land & Water Conservation Fund** — The Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was established in 1964 to direct a portion of federal offshore oil and gas lease revenue into conservation projects across the nation. LWCF projects acquire, build, and maintain public parks, ballfields, and swimming pools; improve access to public land through the purchase of inholdings and easements; and support hunting and fishing access on public lands. In Oregon, more than 1,300 projects have benefitted from more than \$313 million in LWCF funding. That includes protection of Table Rocks near Medford, the East Moraine of Wallowa Lake, thousands of acres in the Columbia River Gorge, Hells Canyon National Recreation Area and nearly 20,000 acres of private forest surrounded by Mt. Hood National Forest.

## *Izaak Walton League and Oregon*

The Izaak Walton League of America was founded in 1922 to conserve outdoor America for future generations. The League's 54 founders, all avid anglers, named the organization after Izaak Walton, 17<sup>th</sup> century author of *The Compleat Angler*, a classic book about the art and spirit of fishing. We are one of the earliest of America's conservation organizations, setting a course to defend wild America by changing public policy.

The first Izaak Walton League chapter in Oregon was formed in 1922 in Portland. Today the Izaak Walton League has 4 local Chapters in Oregon, and 650 active members in the state. Our organization has been involved in agricultural policy since the 1930s, when the League asked Congress to address soil conservation and a League resolution called for a national program to retire fragile fields in mountainous areas from agricultural use.

