

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Focal Areas

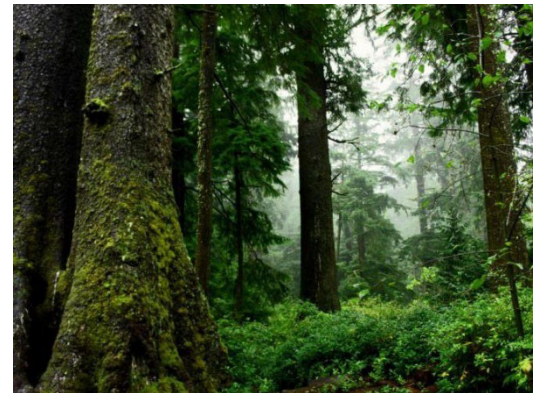


Wildlife Habitat Restoration

Background

Habitat is the foundation of healthy fish and wildlife populations. Without sufficient quantity and quality of available habitat, fish and wildlife populations cannot sustain their essential life history requirements for survival and recovery. Significant impacts to, and losses of, habitat have occurred in Oregon over the last 200+ years, leading to declines of many [Oregon Conservation Strategy](#) species and habitats. Functional and productive ecosystems are important not only for fish and wildlife, but for maintaining a vibrant agricultural and recreational economy for Oregonians and ensuring a resilient landscape in the face of climate change.

In Oregon's forestlands, a combination of fire suppression and historical management practices have led to unnaturally dense forests at high risk of drought, insect- and disease-induced mortality, and uncharacteristically intense and large wildfire. These factors are negatively impacting habitat conditions for many of Oregon's forest-dependent fish and wildlife. These conditions are anticipated to become more severe with climate change unless there is a concerted effort to increase forest health through landscape-scale restoration. Forest habitats include mixed conifer forests, oak and aspen woodlands, and riparian habitats.



Grasslands, wetlands, and sagebrush habitats also provide critical habitat for wildlife species, providing food, shelter, and breeding locations for birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates. Native grasslands are one of the most imperiled habitats in the western United States and are disappearing rapidly around the globe. Wetlands not only provide habitat for a large suite of fish and wildlife, but they also improve water quality, store water, and reduce the severity of floods. Sagebrush habitats in Oregon are both extensive and diverse, but they are susceptible to large-scale fire, invasive species, and juniper encroachment.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is working to focus IIJA funds on projects that restore habitat structure and function, sustain working lands, and allow for the return of natural disturbance regimes in natural systems, and help build resiliency to a drier and warmer future. Not only do these habitat restoration projects help recover and improve habitat for fish and wildlife, but they also help rebuild and maintain Oregon's natural infrastructure that provide essential ecosystem services such as clean water, carbon sequestration, recreation, and a sustainable agricultural product supply.





ODFW Implementation Strategies

ODFW is currently focused on two main strategies for receiving IIJA funding through the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) Program and competitive granting programs. The GNA allows state agencies and tribal governments to perform forest, rangeland, and watershed restoration activities on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. The overarching goal of GNA is to improve forest, rangeland, and watershed healthy by increasing the pace, scale, and quality of restoration activities on federal lands.

ODFW is currently coordinating with federal, state, and nongovernmental organizations to keep informed of funding opportunities, collaborate on project proposals and grant applications, and ensure federal priorities align with State of Oregon priorities. Due to the short-term nature of IIJA funds, ODFW is prioritizing habitat restoration projects that are National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) approved and meet one or more of the following criteria:

- benefits Oregon Conservation Strategy Species, Habitats, or Conservation Opportunity Areas,
- meets federal and/or state species management or recovery plan goals and objectives,
- prioritized by the [Oregon Connectivity Assessment and Mapping Project](#) (OCAMP),
- modeled as an ODFW Aquatic Habitat Priority,
- ranked on the [Statewide Fish Passage Priority List](#), or
- is a federal funding agency funding priority.

ODFW continues to work on identifying habitat restoration projects for IIJA funding and welcomes collaboration with partners. The agency is focused on opportunities where projects can be implemented by staff, through business contracts, or as subawards to conservation partners.

Potential IIJA Funding Opportunities

There are several current and potential IIJA funding opportunities for achieving this goal of restoring resilience in Oregon's wildlife habitats and working lands for ODFW and partners. These grant programs include the:

- *Ecosystem Restoration* allocates \$160 million to USFS and \$40 million to BLM nationally for implementing restoration projects on Federal land using GNAs.
- *Legacy Road and Trail Remediation Program* designates \$250 million to USFS for decommissioning and repairing roads and trails to mitigate impacts to sensitive ecosystems and watersheds. ODFW is currently scoping fish and wildlife passage projects, as well as road and trail closure projects to reduce human disturbance in sensitive wildlife habitats.
- *NFWF American the Beautiful Challenge* includes IIJA funds from the DOI, USFS, and USDOD totaling approximately \$85 million a year for projects that connect and restore lands, waters, and wildlife.

Keep checking ODFW's IIJA website for updated information (<https://dfw.state.or.us/IIJA/>)

