

Agenda Item Summary

BACKGROUND

The Oregon Conservation Strategy (OCS) and the Oregon Nearshore Strategy (ONS) are broad, overarching strategies for the long-term conservation of Oregon's native fish and wildlife. They were developed in 2005 as part of a nation-wide effort funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to reduce the number of future federal Endangered Species Act listings. The goals of the strategies include: 1) maintaining healthy fish and wildlife populations by maintaining and restoring functioning habitats, 2) preventing declines of at-risk species, and 3) reversing declines in these resources where possible.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) has initiated a 10-year comprehensive revision of the OCS and ONS as required by the USFWS. The Department must review and update both strategies by October 1st, 2015 in order to continue to receive State Wildlife Grant (SWG) funding. SWG funds are used to cover Conservation Program staff positions and projects, and to assist in the implementation of the Oregon Nearshore Strategy and the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan.

Revision of the OCS is being led by the Conservation Program in the Wildlife Division, while the revision of the ONS is being led by the Marine Resources Program. Both programs are working in close coordination to streamline the process between the two parallel efforts.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Revision of the Oregon Conservation Strategy will have extensive public involvement. A notification letter was sent to inform partners, interested parties, and organizations state-wide of the agency's plan to review and update the OCS, and to invite them to participate in the revision process. A Technical Review Team (TRT) and Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) have been organized to allow opportunities for interested parties to provide input during the revision process. The TRT and SAC are comprised of a diverse group of organizations, including: hunting, angling, agriculture, and forestry interest groups; conservation organizations; business interests; and professional society representation. Updates and presentations on the revision process have also been provided in the ODFW Conservation Newsletter, at Conservation Leaders Group Meetings, and at various partner conferences.

The revision process for the Oregon Nearshore Strategy has been announced on the website (URL: <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/mrp/nearshore/>) that the revision process is underway, and letters have gone out to agency partners. Key ocean stakeholders and coastal leaders have also been informed of the revision process.

ISSUE 1

Update on the progress of the Oregon Conservation Strategy and Oregon Nearshore Strategy revision process

ANALYSIS

The Conservation Program has initiated the 10-year comprehensive revision of the Oregon Conservation Strategy (OCS). The OCS is not undergoing a complete re-write, instead staff are reviewing the document and updating the information, tools, and resources as needed. Efforts will be focused on key areas of the OCS that have proven of great use to partners and staff, and have experienced the most scientific advancements in the past 10 years. These key sections include the: 286 Strategy Species, 11 Strategy Habitats, 165 Conservation Opportunity Areas, and 7 Key Conservation Issues. The information associated with each of these sections (e.g., their limiting factors, research data gaps, recommended conservation actions, and available tools/resources) will be updated using new data and resources that have been developed within the past 10 years.

Staff are also working to completely web-enable the OCS. By creating a web application, users can more easily navigate through the document, quickly find the information they are looking for, and link to additional tools and resources. In addition, staff are working to map the datasets or GIS layers associated with each section. This will allow users to view maps associated with specific sections in the OCS by clicking a link (ex. Strategy Species linked to a species range map).

Conservation Program staff are working with programs across the agency to develop a completed draft by March 2015. The Technical Review Team, made up of external technical experts, is scheduled to review the revised content from March – April 2015. The Department will hold approximately five meetings with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee from April – June 2015 to review content and provide direction. In the summer of 2015, the revised draft will be posted on the ODFW website for a 30-day review period for public comment. The final drafts of the revised OCS and ONS will be brought in front of the Commission for approval by September 2015, and submitted to the USFWS by October 1, 2015.

The Oregon Nearshore Strategy (ONS) 10-year revision process is also under way in the Marine Resources Program, in close coordination with the OCS process. While these are two distinct documents, they are considered to comprise a cohesive conservation plan for Oregon. The ONS has been a valuable tool for discussing needs and priorities for the progress of nearshore resource management and research. The goals, principles, and recommendations have been used by agency, policy and stakeholder representatives throughout the state to promote activities that aid in the conservation of marine resources. For the 10-year revision, staff are seeking ideas on how to strategically update the document and the scope of issues it addresses, with the goal of further improvements of its utility.

The process for updating the ONS closely follows that of the OCS and shares many of the steps. The primary components of the ONS, the species, habitats, concerns and recommendations, will be reviewed and updated to ensure that they reflect the current status of the resource and best serve the Department and its partners, to work towards improved understanding and management. Further integration of the two strategies will happen primarily through the development of a combined species list. The ONS will continue to be a stand-alone document, in recognition that marine resources demand a different approach for voluntary conservation actions and that the stakeholder and partner base is unique. Marine Program staff will be working with technical and stakeholder partners over the next five months to prepare the public comment draft for release in the summer of 2015, in conjunction with the OCS public comment draft. The updated ONS will be approved concurrently with approval of the OCS in the fall, 2015.

OPTIONS

**STAFF
RECOMMENDATION**

NA – Information only

DRAFT MOTION

EFFECTIVE DATE