

Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund



2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan

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Introduction

On behalf of the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund's Advisory Committee and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, we are pleased to present this, our first Strategic Plan.

In the four years since the fund's establishment, the Committee has been dedicated to fulfilling our mission and laying the groundwork for long-term investment in the conservation needs of the state. Launched during the early days of the pandemic, we overcame many obstacles by staying focused on how best to contribute to the health of Oregon's wildlife and opportunities for people to observe and appreciate our natural environment. Evidence of this progress has been the growing number of worthy applicants from all over the state, representing many fields of study and human dimensions, mirroring the amazing biodiversity of our state.

As a result of the hard work and commitment of our committee members and our coalition of supporters, we successfully raised over \$1.3 million in private dollars, which was matched by the Oregon Legislature. The monies raised were provided to a wide variety of deserving projects that have gone on to produce fantastic results. We are proud of those early projects and have subsequently adapted as legislative circumstances dictated, deploying significant funds towards projects addressing our state's most pressing conservation needs.

As we move forward, the OCRF Advisory Committee recognized the need to optimize our efforts to further support conservation needs across the state; a cause that is near and dear to our hearts and one in which the needs are vast. This strategic plan is the result of discussions over the past several months—with input from a variety of interested parties to whom we have listened closely—focused on the current needs and (especially) future direction of OCRF. It reflects a consensus around both practical and aspirational objectives and serves as a milestone in the growing maturity of a new resource for the people and wildlife of Oregon.

We hope this plan will be a useful tool to inform the public, elected officials, other organizations, and anyone interested and involved in wildlife conservation and recreation, on what OCRF is “all about.” At the same time, it will serve as our guide for action, sparking and coordinating important steps to build on our successes. You can expect regular updates, progress and adjustments based on new needs and continued learning.

Thank you to all who have contributed to our planning process, and to all who support Oregon fish and wildlife. We look forward to working with you to accomplish great things.

s/ Dr. Karl Wenner
Chair

s/ Mauricio Valadrian
Vice-Chair

Vision and Purpose

Vision

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (OCRF) Advisory Committee jointly envision an Oregon where native fish and wildlife populations thrive in healthy habitats across the state's lands and waters—and where all Oregonians embrace their role in supporting and enjoying our state's natural resources.

Achieving this vision means:

CONNECTING all Oregonians, including youth, families, diverse and underserved communities with the outdoors.

ADVANCING the science and research needed to improve our understanding of Oregon's diverse species.

GROWING healthy ecosystems to benefit Oregon's fish and wildlife and improve the health of our environment for future generations.

Purpose

The purpose of the OCRF is to provide additional resources to carry out activities that serve to protect, maintain, or enhance fish and wildlife resources in Oregon and to support nature-based recreation consistent with the [Oregon Conservation Strategy](#). The Oregon Conservation Strategy is a comprehensive, science-based plan that helps government agencies, landowners, conservation groups, hunting and fishing organizations and other partners coordinate their efforts to improve fish, wildlife and their habitats in Oregon's terrestrial, aquatic, and nearshore ecosystems.

OCRF was established by the Oregon State Legislature in 2019 with Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 496.252 and is financed primarily through state general fund allocations as well as gifts, grants, contributions, or other donations that are received by the department expressly for the Fund.

[ORS 496.254](#) states that “The Oregon Conservation and Recreation Advisory Committee is established as an advisory committee to the State Fish and Wildlife Commission and the State Department of Fish and Wildlife.” It goes on to state that “the committee shall review department policies regarding the use of the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund moneys and make recommendations to the commission and the department regarding use of the fund moneys for implementing and administering department activities”. Fund moneys serve to protect, maintain, or enhance fish and wildlife resources in Oregon. In carrying out this work, the Advisory Committee has adopted the following definitions:

Conservation:
Improving the health of Oregon's ecosystems and populations of fish and wildlife species.

Recreation:
Any activity undertaken to enjoy, appreciate, or support fish, wildlife and their habitats.

In collaboration with ODFW, the Advisory Committee solicits, reviews, and recommends to the commission a variety of projects each grant cycle that prioritize implementation of the Oregon Conservation Strategy. The OCRF also solicits and invests in outdoor recreation projects that connect Oregonians to the natural world and increase equity for underserved communities. OCRF accomplishments through December 2023 are shown below.



Strategic Plan Overview

Development of this Strategic Plan has been a collaborative effort between the OCRF Advisory Committee and ODFW, featuring valuable input from a variety of interested parties—including grant applicants, staff from ODFW, ODFW Commissioners and Legislators. Comments in general were very encouraging, with OCRF receiving positive feedback on its role in managing and distributing funds for a wide range of conservation and recreation projects, transparency, and response to changing needs and opportunities for investment in Oregon's wildlife and outdoor experiences.

Opportunities that emerged from the outreach included:

- ✓ Achieving the OCRF vision will require more focused identification and prioritizing of key habitats and species as noted in the Oregon Conservation Strategy.
- ✳ Efforts to connect with non-traditional groups should be continued and expanded.
- ↻ Broaden sharing of project outcomes and success stories to maintain/encourage contributions to the fund.
- ↻ Expand partnerships to advance common objectives.
- ✓ Emphasize equity and access as key objectives, with grace and consideration for all types of organizations.

With this input as background, the Advisory Committee engaged in a series of working meetings, arriving at consensus on the following four strategic priorities:



Operational Excellence: *Continue efforts to improve the function of the Fund and its support for applicants.*



Strategic Partnerships: *Strengthen our network and promote mutual success of agencies and organizations with aligned goals.*



Broader Awareness and Understanding: *Build broader public awareness of the successes and importance of the OCRF to Oregon's wildlife and people and encourage participation in the program.*



Funding & Investment Priorities: *Assess the impact of our investments, adapt decision criteria to meet new and changing needs, and promote OCRF's successes in service of the full range of program goals.*

Details on the rationale, goals, and actions for each of these priorities is found on the following pages.

Strategic Priority Rationale & Goals

Looking ahead to our continued development and contributions to Oregon's wildlife, habitats and people's enjoyment of our natural environment, the Advisory Committee and the Department will focus on the following four key priorities. Goals and actions will be refined, as appropriate, to meet new and changing needs.

<p>Priority:</p>	<p>Build and sustain operational excellence, focused on clarity, communication, and continuous improvement in achieving our purpose</p>
<p>Rationale:</p>	<p>The impact of OCRF funds depends on ensuring applicants can present effective proposals, and Advisory Committee members can focus on evaluating and selecting those with greatest potential benefit. In addition, we should evaluate our work each grant cycle to make ongoing improvement a priority.</p>
Goals	Actions
<p>Increase understanding of OCRF's decision making process with grant applicants, ODFW staff and ODFW Commissioners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review grant language to determine if changes are required to address climate change or other key criteria/outcomes. • Select projects with the greatest potential benefit and assess the quality of grant applications as they relate to critical conservation strategy priorities. • Review the feedback process to make improvements as needed to ensure understanding of the Advisory Committee's view of the proposed project and quality of the application. • Identify actions to better support an easy to follow and inclusive application preparation process. • Assess the process for engaging ODFW application reviewers before and after each grant cycle and implement improvements as needed. • Increase opportunities for grant awardees to engage and inform the Advisory Committee of project successes and challenges. • Regularly update ODFW Commission on projects and advancements of OCRF.

<p>Sustain commitment and collaboration of the Advisory Committee members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an orientation and onboarding process for new Advisory Committee members that builds understanding of our purpose, procedures, and challenges. • Identify ways to increase interaction and communication among Committee members in accordance with open meeting guidelines convening at least one in-person meeting per year. • Evaluate and recommend committee member term lengths and reappointment options that provide flexibility and promote continuity.
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<p>Priority:</p>	<p>Develop and enhance strategic partnerships to help strengthen the scope and impact of OCRF investments.</p>
<p>Rationale:</p>	<p>There are many organizations in Oregon with roles and objectives that are complimentary to the OCRF and the Advisory Committee's work. We will work together with partners to leverage, coordinate and align our efforts to fully achieve the goals and vision of OCRF.</p>

Goal	Actions
<p>Increase engagement and explore collaboration opportunities with existing and potential partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand existing partnership with OWF in service of our shared missions and support their efforts to fundraise and build private business and donor partnerships. • In collaboration with the Oregon Wildlife Foundation (OWF), engage with OCRF Coalition partners to assess their current interest and capacity. • Develop contacts and build new mutually beneficial partnerships with Oregon's tribes. •

Priority:	Build broader awareness and understanding of OCRF's role, impact, and the value of investments in Oregon's habitats and wildlife-related recreation.
Rationale:	Actively sharing stories of OCRF-sponsored projects helps recognize the important contributions of grant recipients—and the need to continue and expand these efforts. Sharing those stories with a broad base of stakeholders can help encourage new participants and builds a strong case for sustainable funding to support OCRF's broad purpose and goals.
Goals	Actions
Augment communication of positive outcomes from OCRF grants and integrate into the committee's core processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work collaboratively with OWF to develop a comprehensive communication strategy that analyzes OCRF's main audiences, develops OCRF brand and messaging, identifies key messages for marketing and communication in multiple media formats. • Agree on and execute short-term actions to be taken while communication strategy is in development. • Articulate a clear sense of purpose, conservation needs and opportunities and urgency. • Develop poignant stories of OCRF successful project and program outcomes for use and sharing by ODFW and by OCRF partners. • Participate in events and tours that showcase and celebrate OCRF funded projects. • Engage grant recipients in supporting OCRF awareness-building efforts and set appropriate expectations.
Improve access and visibility across the spectrum of potential grant applicants who might benefit from OCRF funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop materials and networks to reach currently untapped potential grant applicants. • Test communication, criteria and application processes to identify and eliminate any unintended obstacles to high-potential non-traditional applicants.

Priority: **Critically assess our investment priorities to achieve the greatest possible benefit for Oregon’s fish, wildlife, and people.**

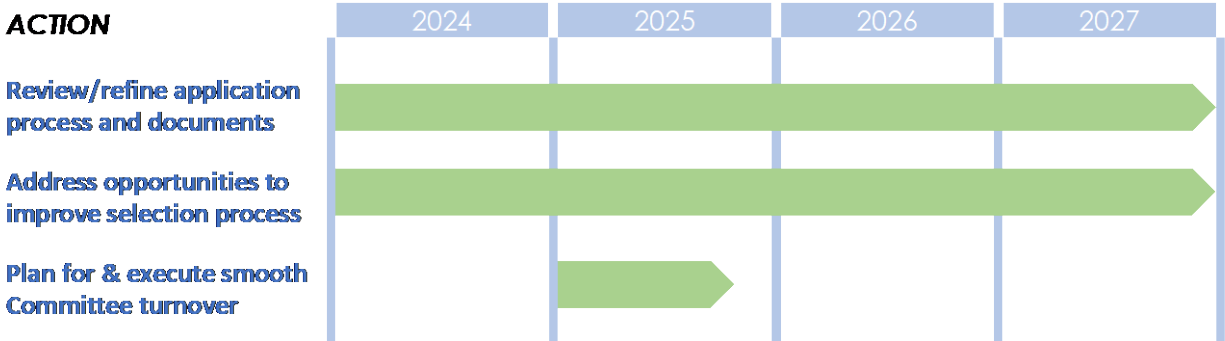
Rationale: As a relatively new provider of resources, the OCRF Advisory Committee and ODFW have an especially important responsibility to ensure project selection criteria are serving as intended and support the longevity of the OCRF.

Goals	Actions
<p>Ensure OCRF funds continue to be directed to the most critical priorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with ODFW to interpret the updated Oregon Conservation Strategy and set priorities that channels OCRF funds to the most critical, unmet needs. • Develop an OCRF Point of View on how best to focus available funds and establish a timeline for regular review and adjustment of funding decision criteria. • Identify ways to enhance integration of statewide objectives, including Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Climate Change mitigation. • Ensure recreation projects are evaluated in the context of improving engagement of the public in wildlife watching, hunting and fishing opportunities and in other outdoor recreation opportunities related to and in support of healthy fish, wildlife and habitats.
<p>Ensure the OCRF Advisory Committee can successfully distribute both short-term targeted funds alongside traditional investments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailor grant cycles as needed based on current priorities and/or in response to specific issues (e.g. fire or drought) and sources of funding. • Support OWF and other OCRF partners in their efforts to help sustain OCRF's broad conservation purpose and priorities, including efforts to secure funding in full service of the program goals. • Establish an administrative cost requirement for funds received by the OCRF that is reasonable, transparent, and scalable and that allows ODFW to adequately staff the OCRF.

Executing the Plan

To achieve the goals outlined above, ODFW and the Advisory Committee have mapped a high-level implementation and assessment strategy. Details will be added to ensure effective execution and we will continually review progress and refine the plan as needed.

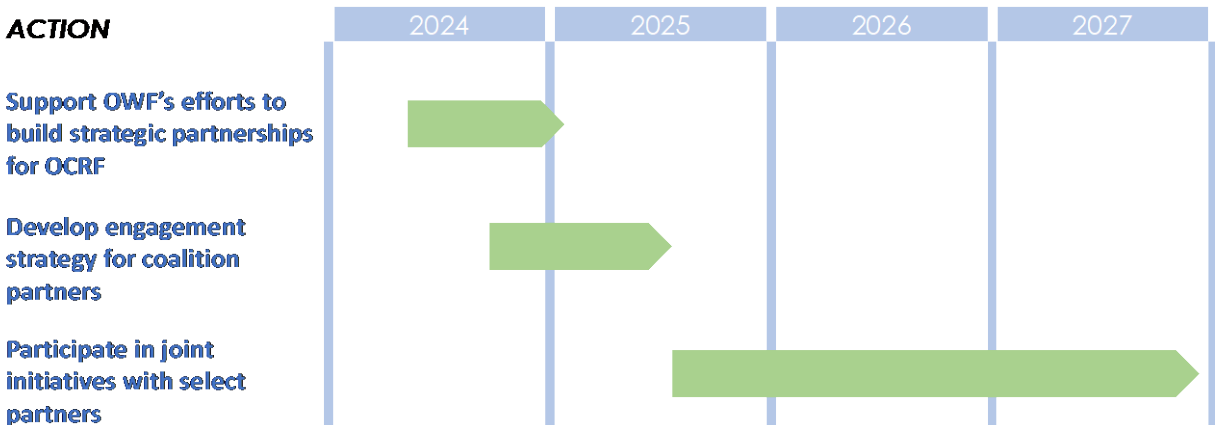
OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE



PROGRESS INDICATORS

- ✓ Positive applicant comments on clarity of grant application process and guidance.
- * Improved Committee member and interested party feedback on grant decisions/rationale.
- 🔗 Onboarding checklist and orientation is available for new committee members.
- 🔗 Completed adjustment of Committee term requirements to support continuity and new ideas.
- ✓ At least five project presentations at Committee meetings and one project site visit per year.

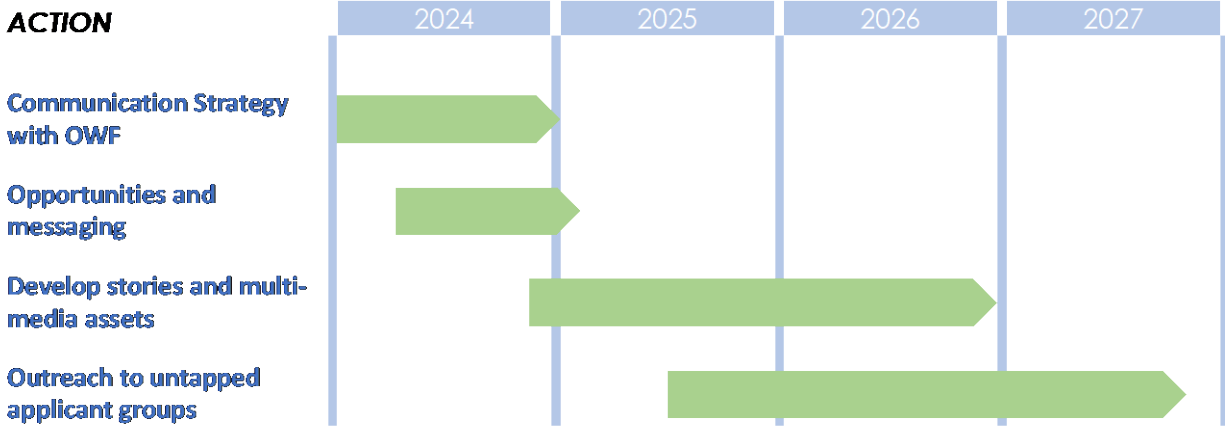
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS



PROGRESS INDICATORS

- * Collaborate with OWF to establish a core group of partners with commitment to and capacity to represent the needs and opportunities of the OCRF and to advance common objectives.
- 🔗 Complete outreach and feedback/evaluation with Coalition partners..
- * Prepare guidelines and scenarios for partner organizations to support the OCRF.

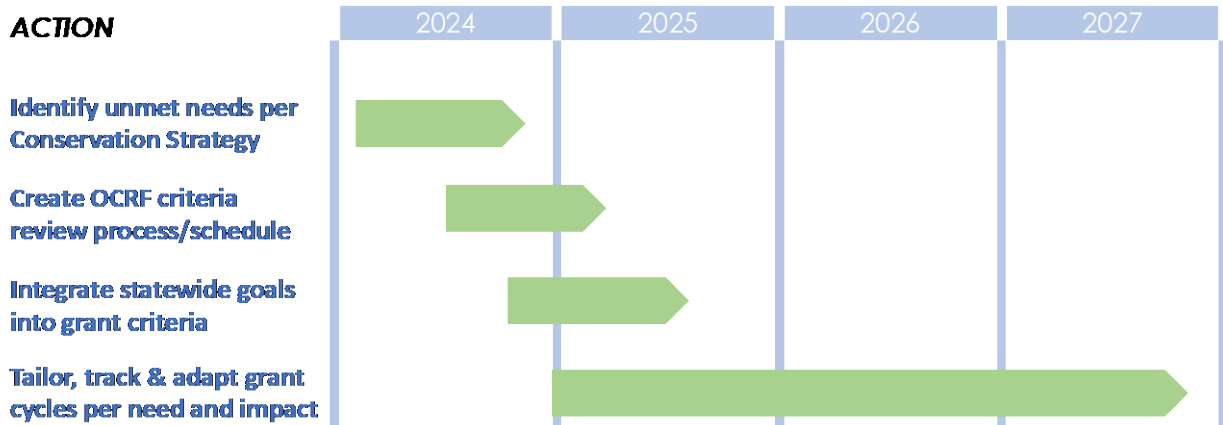
BROADER AWARENESS & UNDERSTANDING



PROGRESS INDICATORS

- ✓ Collaborate with OWF to secure contract with a well-qualified communications consultant.
- * Positive response to updated messaging from multiple and diverse interested parties.
- ↻ Complete minimum two success story narratives and multi-media packages per year.
- Increase the number applications received from “non-traditional” groups.

FUNDING AND INVESTMENT PRIORITIES



PROGRESS INDICATORS

- ✓ Complete joint OCRF/ODFW needs review against Oregon Conservation Strategy.
- * Update grant criteria addressing factors such as equity and climate impact and/or other changes related to targeted monies.
- ↻ Provide regular updates on learnings/adjustments based on short-term needs and project outcomes.
- ✓ Level of administrative support funding is adequate to achieve OCRF strategic and program goals..
- Flexible funding available to advance program goals based on recommendation of the Advisory Committee.

ADD: VERBATIM COMMENTS

These are quotes taken from the outreach effort that we intend to include as “call outs” through the plan document. Layout and specific selection TBD.

I would love to look back and see that there OCRF is larger, more vibrant, and doing more than ever. It could achieve so many great things for the state!!
– Oregon legislator

I appreciate that the Advisory Committee membership represents diverse communities and interests. They tackle the issues of the moment in a thoughtful way. - grant applicant

Conservation of non-game species, and the recreation component- bringing out a different group of people to experience nature- is an important element of the Advisory Committee's work. - – OCFW staff member

The OCRF has helped push conservation goals forward. – ODFW staff member

I'm impressed with how nimble the Advisory Committee has been as new funding comes their way. ODFW staff member

It is important to ensure that projects are on track and achieving their intended outcomes. - coalition member

Market the good work that the OCRF supports. The projects speak for themselves!! - grant applicant

I love the OCRF because it funds things that have few opportunities for funding, and I appreciate it. KEEP GOING! - grant applicant

They are growing, and have a great reputation, so it's easy folks to put money into OCRF and they know it will get taken care of. – coalition member

Protecting key habitats, habitat connectivity and conservation should be key priorities. – coalition member

The committee members themselves are a strength of the OCRF! Strong group of folks and I'm always interested in what they have to say. We should feel blessed to have them. – coalition member

Each OCRF project has been meaningful. – grant applicant