

Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund



2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan

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Contents

<i>Introduction Letter from Co-Chairs [not yet drafted]</i>	1
<i>Vision and Purpose</i>	2
<i>Strategic Plan Overview</i>	4
<i>Strategic Priority Rationale and Goals</i>	
<i>Operational Excellence</i>	5
<i>Broader Awareness and Understanding</i>	6
<i>Strategic Partnerships</i>	7
<i>Funding and Investment Priorities</i>	8
<i>Executing the Plan</i>	8
<i>Add; Verbatim Comments (p 11)</i>	

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Introduction

[Add language – letter from Karl and Mauricio]

s/ Dr. Karl Wenner
Chair

s/ Mauricio Valadrian
Vice-Chair

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Vision and Purpose

Vision

The Department of Fish and Wildlife and 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:



Purpose

The purpose of the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (OCRF) is to provide the State Department of Fish and Wildlife with 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 Strategy [\[make hyperlink\]](#) is a blueprint for conserving Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats before they become more difficult to protect. OCRF was established by the Oregon State Legislature in 2019 (HB 2829) and is financed through state general fund allocations as well as gifts, grants, contributions or other donations that are received by the department expressly for the Fund.

HB 2829 also created the OCRF Advisory Committee, a nine-member group appointed by the Governor. The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to advise the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission on how to expend and obligate funds from the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund to carry out activities that serve to protect, maintain, or enhance fish and wildlife resources in Oregon. In carrying out this work, the following definitions apply:

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.

The Advisory Committee solicits, reviews proposals, and selects a variety of projects each grant cycle and prioritizes projects that implement the Oregon Conservation Strategy. The OCRF will also invest in outdoor recreation opportunities 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, the Department, and the Oregon Wildlife Foundation, featuring valuable input from a variety of interested parties—including grant applicants, staff from the Department of Fish and Wildlife, Fish and Wildlife 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 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.
- 🐾 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.
- 👤 Emphasize equity and access as key objectives, with grace and consideration for all types of organizations.

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



Broader Awareness and Understanding: *Build on progress to enhance commitment to Oregon wildlife, and OCRF's role in the causes of conservation and recreation.*



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



Funding and Investment Priorities: *Assess impact of our investments, adapt decision criteria to meet new and changing needs, and support adequate resources to sustain our contributions.*



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

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 broader awareness and understanding of OCRF's role, impact and the value of investments in Oregon's habitats and wildlife-related recreation.</p>
<p>Rationale:</p>	<p>Actively sharing stories of OCRF-sponsored projects helps recognize the important work of grant recipients—and the need to continue and expand these investments. Storytelling of OCRF successes helps encourage new applicants and builds a strong case for long-term funding sustainability.</p>
Goals	Actions
<p>Augment communication of positive outcomes from OCRF grants and integrate into the committee's core processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure resources to support the Advisory Committee's communication needs. • Develop a comprehensive communication plan, covering objectives, resources, responsibility and timing. • Articulate a clear sense of purpose, conservation needs and opportunities and urgency. • Develop poignant stories of OCRF successful project and program outcomes, using multiple media, for use and sharing by ODFW and by OCRF partners. • Engage grant recipients in supporting OCRF awareness-building efforts.
<p>Improve access and visibility across the spectrum of potential grant applicants who might benefit from OCRF funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct research into types of organizations and initiatives that may qualify for OCRF funding. • 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 but untapped applicant groups or types.

Priority: **Develop and enhance strategic partnerships to help strengthen the scope and impact of OCRF investments.**

Rationale: There are many organizations in Oregon with roles and objectives that are complimentary to the OCRF and the Advisory Committee's work. We must work together to leverage our overall efforts and guard against redundant or conflicting initiatives. Coordination and alignment will be key to achieving our vision.

Goal	Actions
Increase engagement and explore collaboration opportunities with existing and potential partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct outreach to build understanding of current capabilities and capacity of the OCRF Coalition partners. • Expand our existing partnership with the Oregon Wildlife Foundation in service of our shared missions. • Explore ways to grow private business partnerships, especially in areas supporting wildlife recreation. • Develop contacts and build new mutually beneficial partnerships with Oregon's tribes.

Priority: **Critically assess our funding and investment priorities to achieve the greatest possible benefit.**

Rationale: As a relatively new provider of resources, the OCRF Advisory Committee and the Department have an especially important responsibility to ensure our project selection criteria are serving as intended and support the longevity of the OCRF. We must be able to sustain OCRF's broad purpose and vision, be responsive to innovative ideas, while remaining flexible and receptive to meet short-term funding opportunities.

Goals	Actions
Ensure OCRF funds continue to be directed to the most critical priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Department of Fish and Wildlife 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 the OCRF Advisory Committee can successfully distribute both short-term targeted funds alongside traditional investments.

- 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.
- Investigate approaches by other states or organizations to identify additional funding for OCRF priorities.
- Establish an administrative cost requirement for funds received by the OCRF that is reasonable, transparent, and scalable and that allows the Department to adequately staff and support the OCRF grant program.

Priority:

Build and sustain operational excellence, focused on clarity, communication and continuous improvement in achieving our purpose

Rationale:

The impact of OCRF funds depends on ensuring applicants can prepare and 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.

Goals

Actions

Increase understanding of OCRF's decision making process with grant applicants and ODFW staff.

- Review grant language to determine if changes are required to address climate change or other key criteria/outcomes.
- Assess the overall 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 Department of Fish and Wildlife application reviewers before and after each grant cycle and implement improvements as needed.

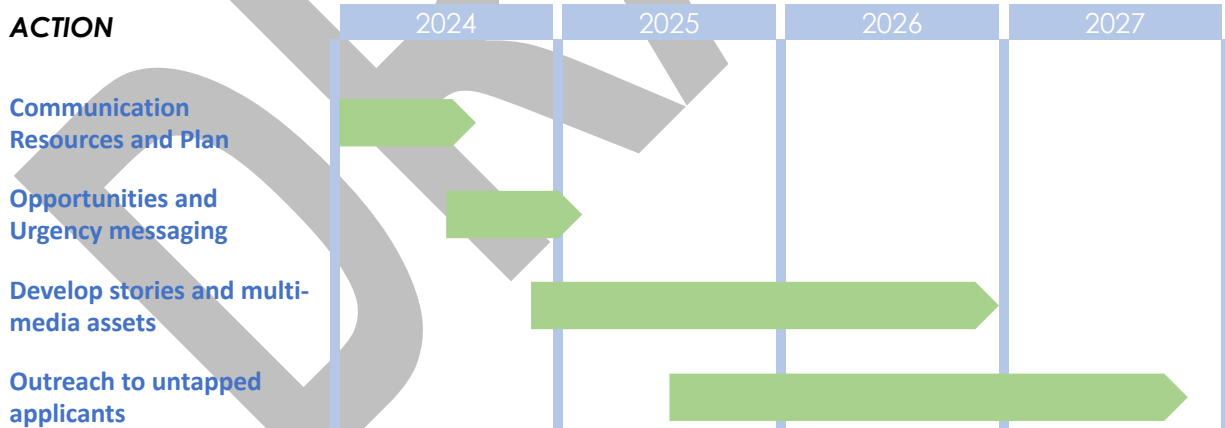
Build/sustain commitment and collaboration of Advisory Committee members so the group can continue to execute its responsibilities and make effective decisions on OCRF direction and funding.

- 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 and convene at least one in-person meeting per year.
- Collaborate with the Governor's Office to evaluate committee member term lengths and reappointment options that provide flexibility and promote continuity.

Executing the Plan

To achieve the goals outlined above, the Advisory Committee and the Department 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.

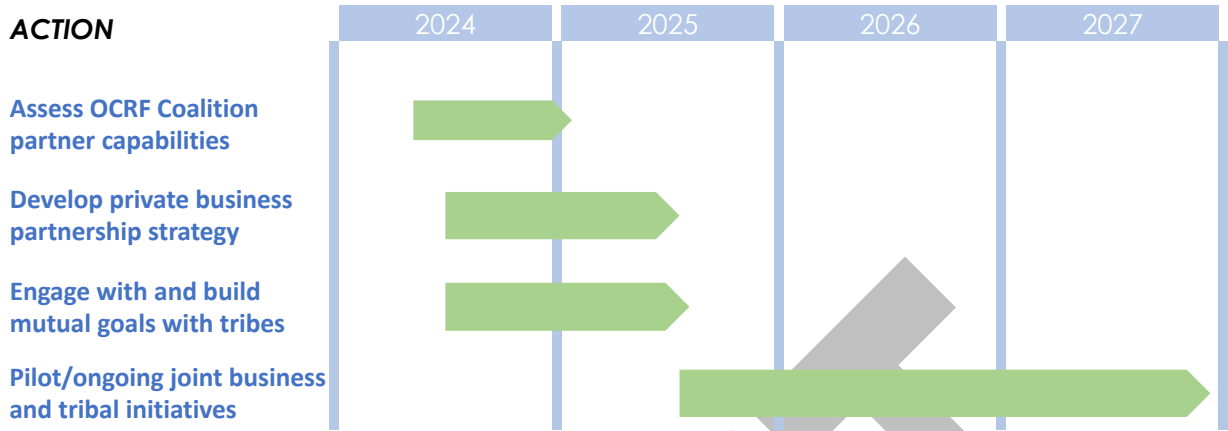
BROADER AWARENESS & UNDERSTANDING



PROGRESS INDICATORS

- ✓ 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 applications received from "non-traditional" groups by ___ percent by 2027 grant cycle.

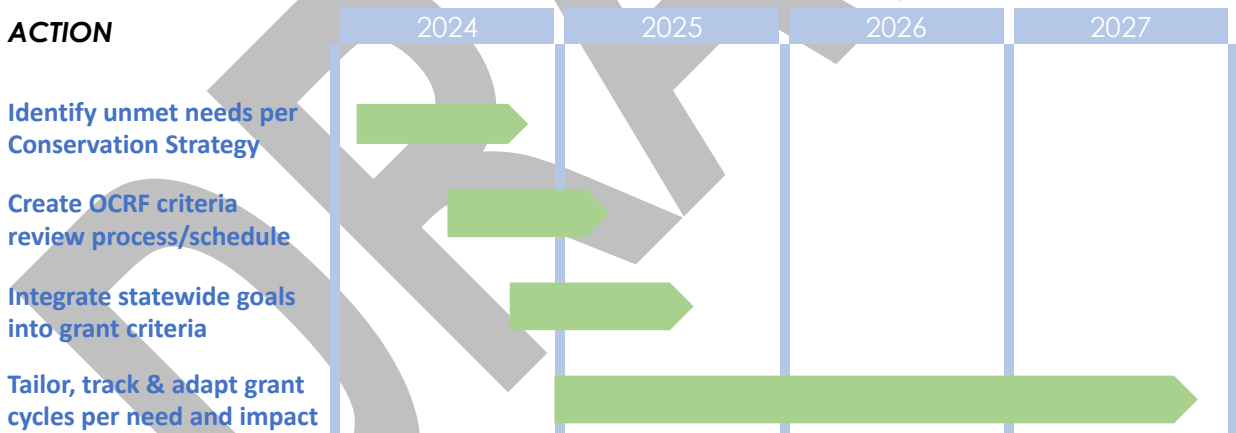
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS



PROGRESS INDICATORS

- ✓ Complete outreach and feedback/evaluation with Coalition partners.
- ✎ Prepare guidelines and scenarios for appropriate private business collaboration opportunities.
- 🗨 Create joint goal statements with ___ tribes per year (by end of 2027?).
- 📊 Initiate and evaluate success of ___ private business partnership projects by end of 2027.

FUNDING AND INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

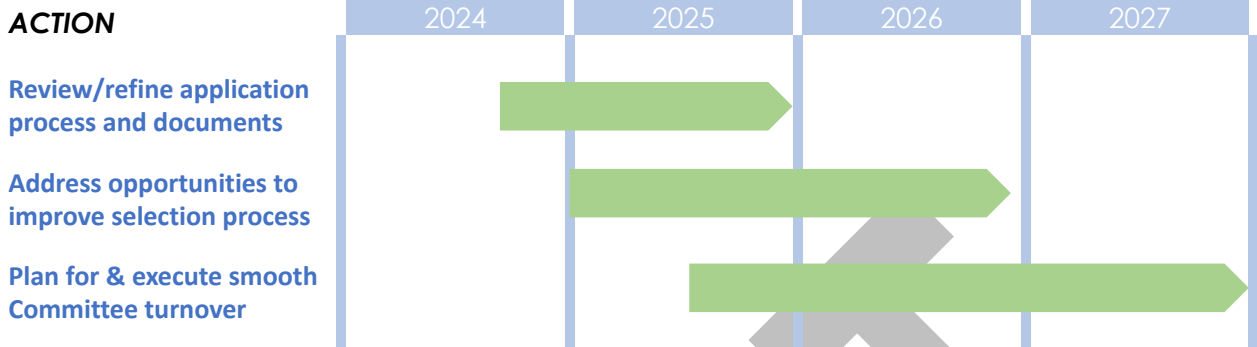


PROGRESS INDICATORS

- ✓ Complete joint OCRF/ODFW unmet needs review against Oregon Conservation Strategy.
- ✎ Achieve positive feedback from interested parties on criteria review process.
- 🗨 Document grant criteria addressing factors such as equity and climate impact.
- 📊 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.

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

ACTION



PROGRESS INDICATORS

- 👤 Positive applicant comments on clarity of grant application process and guidance.
- 👤 Improved Committee member and interested party feedback on grant decisions/rationale.
- 👤 Quality of onboarding of new Committee members.
- 👤 Completed adjustment of Committee term requirements to support continuity and new ideas.

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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

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