

Property tax benefit



What is the property tax benefit of this program?

The 1997 Oregon Legislature created the Wildlife Habitat Conservation and Management Program to encourage landowners to protect and enhance significant fish and wildlife habitat on private lands. Through this program, landowners who manage their property for wildlife by protecting, enhancing or restoring native habitat may qualify for a property tax benefit.

The program, administered by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), is a cooperative effort that rewards landowners for stewardship of native wildlife and habitat on their own land. Property enrolled in the program is eligible for a wildlife habitat special assessment, with property taxes assessed at the same rate as farm or forest special assessment.

Does my county or city participate in the program?

Not all counties and cities participate in the wildlife habitat program. Interested landowners should first call their local planning or assessor's department to determine if the county or city is participating, or visit: www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/whcmp for a current list of participating counties and cities.

Program objective

The objective of the wildlife habitat program is to protect, enhance or restore significant native wildlife species and habitats. The program emphasizes:

- Restoration of the composition, structure or function of native habitat;
- Native habitats that are scarce, becoming scarce or of special ecological significance;
- Native habitats that are important for ecological restoration to prevent additional loss of native habitats or species; and
- Habitat for federal and state threatened, endangered or sensitive species.

Is my property eligible?

Each participating county or city has identified specific land use zones (exclusive farm use, mixed farm and forest use, or forest use) and/or significant wildlife habitat areas that are eligible for the program. Interested landowners should call the local planning or assessor's department to determine if their property is in an eligible area. A county or city official needs to fill out a form provided by ODFW to certify that the property is eligible. The form is available at: www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/whcmp.



Developing a plan



How do I develop a wildlife habitat conservation and management plan?

An interested landowner with eligible property develops a wildlife habitat plan in conjunction with a cooperating agency. A cooperating agency can be ODFW, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, a city or county, a soil and water conservation district, extension service or other qualified persons.

How do I submit my plan for approval, implementation and review?

The landowner submits their completed wildlife habitat plan to their local ODFW office and to their local county or city planning department simultaneously. ODFW will verify that initial implementation is under way and review the plan for approval. Once the plan is approved, the landowner can apply to the county to receive the wildlife habitat special assessment. ODFW will continue to periodically monitor the property.

Can I withdraw from the program?

If the plan is not being implemented, or if the landowner chooses to withdraw from the program, the county assessor removes the land from wildlife habitat special assessment. If the land still qualifies for a previous farm or forest special assessment, the landowner may not owe back taxes. If the land does not qualify for another special assessment, the landowner may owe back taxes.



Conservation and management practices

Each Wildlife Habitat Conservation and Management Plan identifies landowner practices that benefit native wildlife species and their habitats. These may include:

- Protecting existing native vegetation;
- Restoring, enhancing or creating wetlands, riparian areas or other native habitats;
- Planting native trees, shrubs, grasses and other native vegetation;
- Removing or controlling invasive, non-native plant or animal species;
- Leasing or selling instream water rights;
- Using prescribed burns to maintain fire-dependent native vegetation;
- Improving habitat diversity and structure by adding boulders and logs in streams or snags and downed wood in uplands;
- Installing fencing to exclude livestock and protect habitat and plant communities;
- Removing artificial features such as buildings, pavement, fences and culverts and placing new structures that minimize impacts on native habitat areas; and
- Using farm or forest management practices that protect, restore or enhance wildlife habitat.

Can I build a dwelling?

If a landowner wants to establish a home on property in the wildlife habitat program, the dwelling must meet all local and state requirements, the same as for property not in the program. This program does not make it easier or harder for a landowner to obtain approval for a house on the property. The house location and landscaping need to avoid impacts on native wildlife and habitat.

Interested?

For more information about the Wildlife Habitat Conservation and Management Program or other landowner incentive programs, call your local ODFW office or the ODFW headquarters office in Salem, or go to:
www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/whcmp.



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WILDLIFE HABITAT CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



Rewarding

Private Landowners

for Helping Wildlife

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife