

## **Project Committee Notes**

### **Project Funding Budget and Grants Approved To-Date**

The Project Committee budget is \$100,000 per year, or \$25,000 per quarter. In Q1, the committee approved grants for \$29,431, and in Q2 for \$24,779. Q3 approvals were \$25,880 with deferral of a request for \$5,000, from the Oregon Coast Aquarium, to our Q4 meeting on December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

\$19,910 in budgeted funds remain for award in Q4 while the funding requested is \$39,404.22 (this figure includes the Oregon Coast Aquarium project that was deferred by the committee to Q4).

### **Project 21-21 Adopt-a-Lek**

ODFW is requesting \$10,000 for the Adopt-a-Lek program. A long-term monitoring project led by the Department, the Adopt-a-Lek (AAL) program has been instrumental in completing greater sage grouse lek attendance surveys in remote areas of southeastern Oregon. Now entering its 17th year, about 50 trained volunteers continue to monitor approximately 70 leks each spring. The additional effort AAL provides has helped Oregon exceed its statewide goal of surveying 50% of leks in every Priority Area of Conservation in the state annually. The AAL program provides a significant contribution to Oregon's sage grouse lek monitoring efforts and would not be possible without a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator. The requested funds provide a stipend to the coordinator and help defray related expenses like mileage and supplies.

### **Project 21-22 History of Oregon Ornithology**

This funding request was withdrawn

### **Project 21-23 Snow Mountain Restoration**

The South Fork John Day Watershed Council is requesting \$2,500 to remove 10 acres of Phase 1 juniper surrounding a Spring Source, and on aspects with flow into Antelope Creek. This project is taking place on the Double R Ranch. The owners have committed to helping maintain the project area and spring long-term.

### **Project 21-24 Native Youth Internships**

The Elakha Alliance is requesting \$3,000 to help establish an annual native youth internship program with 2-4 interns per year who will work to elevate the voices of native tribes in discussions about sea otter restoration, while engaging tribal members and others interested in a discussion of the ecological and cultural benefits of restoring sea otters. The requested funds will be used to pay stipends to native youth who will serve as interns during spring/summer 2022

### **Project 21-25 Red Tree Vole Study**

The National Council of Air and Stream Improvement (NCASI) is requesting \$8,000 to evaluate a robust survey technique for monitoring red tree voles, an Oregon Conservation Strategy species. Their red tree vole research is employing a new but untested method for surveying old growth canopies. They feel this method, the 'vertical climb-plot survey', improves upon previous methods of red tree vole surveying and they anticipate that it reduces sampling bias. Although this method theoretically results in increased detectability, they believe a directed investigation is necessary to assess the efficacy and to compare other survey methods

### **Project 21-26 Wallowa Wolverine and Forest Carnivores Project**

Oregon Wildlife Foundation staff requests \$5,944.22 for the 2022 field season of the Wallowa Wolverine and Forest Carnivore Project. This is a one of the Foundation's fiscally sponsored projects. It uses camera monitoring and winter tracking to determine the persistence of wolverines in Northeast Oregon and to gain valuable insights into the population status of sympatric carnivores. The aim of this project is to provide land managers with better tools for the stewardship of wolverines and other forest predators in this region.

### **Old Business**

#### **Project 21-12 Dive Propulsion Vehicles for Research & Collection**

The Oregon Coast Aquarium requested \$5,000 in funding to support to help purchase two Dive propulsion vehicles to support their research work in Oregon's offshore environment. The Oregon Coast Aquarium replied this request is not schedule sensitive so the committee will vote on it at the December meeting.

## Open Projects

### *Fish Habitat Restoration*

**North Fork Eagle Dam Removal** – The North Fork Eagle Creek, “Pheasant Lane” project will be implemented next summer. Removal of the dam on North Fork Eagle Creek opens 8 additional miles of rearing habitat for juvenile salmon and adult fish, during the fall spawning season, in low-water years.

**Seeley Creek Habitat Improvement Project** – one-half of this project was constructed in late August with large wood debris placement. The conversion of the log pond into a side channel is pending permits that won't be approved with enough time for construction to take place. The remainder of this project will be constructed during the 2022 in-water work period.

### *Wildlife Habitat Restoration*

**Metolius Winter Range Habitat Restoration** – work on this project had been delayed due to public health restrictions but is starting to pick up. This project, which includes treatment of invasive plants, management of juniper and ponderosa pine stand densities, decommissioning of forest roads and “user-created” routes, restoration of guzzlers, improved gates, and revegetation with native grasses, forbs, and shrubs will benefit multiple species but is primarily aimed at helping the mule deer population. Project work is on the Crooked River National Grassland and the Sisters Ranger District, Deschutes National Forest.

**Greater Williams Prairie Restoration Project** – similarly, work on this project was delayed because of public health restrictions. The meadow restoration component of this project is furthest along with work in the riparian zone and uplands starting to pick up. OWF recently signed a stewardship agreement for component projects in this whole-watershed restoration effort. We will be managing contracting for the commercial/pre-commercial thinning of conifer within old-growth Ponderosa pine stands and slash hand-piling that is to be accomplished later this fall/early winter (barring on-the-ground and public health restrictions.) OWF has entered into a long stewardship agreement with the Forest Service to facilitate conservation work within the project area into the future.

### *Wildlife Passage and Habitat Connectivity*

**Gilchrist Wildlife Underpass** –The single bid for this project came in higher than anticipated leaving the project about \$200K short of the funds needed to get the full ten miles built. ODFW, in partnership with ODOT is submitting a grant to the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation for the funds needed to complete all remaining elements of this project.

## On the Horizon

### *Fish Habitat Restoration*

**Warner Creek Supplemental Environmental Project** – this is the first of several projects to be implemented in the Nehalem River basin as per the Fishhawk Lake settlement agreement. A project application is being prepared and will be available for review in mid to late December.

### **Estacada Lake Habitat Improvement Project**

This proposed project is an expansion of the recently completed habitat improvements implemented by the Foundation in partnership with PGE at North Fork Reservoir. The Estacada Lake project is envisioned to address the loss of habitat diversity and spawning habitat in the transitional area between the free-flowing river and the inundation zone of Estacada Lake. The lack of complex wood jams along river margins in the Project site are evident as is the simplification of the river channel from inundation.

The proposed Project will be comprised of large woody debris jams to provide a diverse array of water depths and velocities that provide cover for pre-spawning adult fish and rearing/refuge areas for juveniles. Despite the lack of habitat complexity, the transition area experiences extremely high seasonal usage by anadromous fish and lamprey across multiple life stages. Annual juvenile occupancy can be more than 130,000 ESA listed coho, steelhead, and Chinook. Upwards of 3,000 adult Pacific lamprey passes through this reach with many electing to spawn and rear in the Project area.

## ***Wildlife Habitat Restoration***

**Crooked River Grasslands Post-Fire Recovery** – OWF in partnership with the Forest Service and ODFW is developing a project to replace wildlife water guzzlers and exclosure fencing destroyed by the Grandview Fire earlier this year.

## ***Wildlife Passage and Habitat Connectivity***

**Highway 20 Wildlife Passage Project** – The Burns Paiute Tribe is leading an effort to address wildlife-vehicle collisions in the Malheur River basin between the towns of Juntura and Harper in eastern Oregon. This stretch of US 20 bisects ecologically important winter range for mule deer, elk, pronghorn, and other native wildlife where animals are abundant during the cold season. Last spring, OWF led the effort to get this critically important project into the Federal budget through a congressionally directing spending proposal. Unfortunately, the project didn't make the final cut and was eliminated from consideration. The \$685K requested would have funded a feasibility study and construction designs for simple and complex retrofits of existing highway infrastructure (bridges, culverts, fencing) to improve wildlife passage throughout a ~20 mile stretch of Highway 20. OWF and Tribal staff have pledged to try again in 2022.

**Highway 20 Santiam Pass to Tumalo** – OWF is part of a coalition in central Oregon that includes ODFW, ODOT, Deschutes County, and Deschutes Land Conservancy. Our goal is development of a highway corridor plan for wildlife passage between Santiam Pass and Tumalo and to facilitate its inclusion into the Transportation System Plans (TSP) for Deschutes County and the Oregon Department of Transportation. To get funding for and implement wildlife passage projects in Oregon, they must be incorporated into County and or State TSPs. OWF has submitted a stakeholder engagement funding request to OWEB on behalf of this coalition.

**Southern Oregon Wildlife Crossing Coalition** – This coalition is evaluating locations on I-5 between Ashland and the California border for the retrofit of existing highway infrastructure and or construction of a dedicated wildlife over or underpass. The project leader is a recently retired staff member from Senator Merkeley's office. OWF on behalf of the coalition, has submitted a technical assistance grant request to OWEB.

**Humboldt Marten Crossing Project** – a project to help conserve a small population of Humboldt marten on the North Spit of Coos Bay. Four animals have been killed over the last three years on the same stretch of the TransPacific Parkway. There are only four known populations of coastal marten from northern California to central Oregon and each is estimated to have fewer than 100 adults each. Coos Bay is the southern extent of the central coastal Oregon population This subpopulation is estimated to have 30 adults so the loss of four animals is significant. This project is at the feasibility stage and OWF has raised some money and submitted a letter of support as part of USFWS's fundraising efforts.

## **Recently or Nearly Completed Projects**

### **Eagle Fern Dam Removal Project**

A low-head dam on the main stem of Eagle Creek, in Eagle Fern Park, was removed in September of this year. 16 miles of rearing habitat was opened for juvenile salmon and the same for adult fish during spawning season in low water years.

### **Gilchrist Wildlife Underpass Project**

Six miles of fencing (3 on each side of Highway 97) and deer guards have been installed by the contractor. If additional funds, approximately \$200K, can be secured, the balance of the planned fencing (2 additional miles on each side of Highway 97) will be built. Additional fencing will extend to the north of the wildlife underpass.

### **Seeley Creek Habitat Improvement Project**

The conversion of a log pond on the property to a side channel is pending permits but will be constructed during the 2022 in-water work period.