
**FINAL PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
FOR
VOLUNTARY PUBLIC ACCESS HABITAT INCENTIVE PROGRAM
FOR OREGON**



**United States Department of Agriculture
Farm Service Agency**

June 2011

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Finding of No Significant Impact

Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program for Oregon

June 2011

Introduction

The United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency proposes to implement a new program authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill) in Oregon. The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) provides grants to State and tribal governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreation and to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land. The VPA-HIP is administered by the State or tribal government that receives the grant funds.

The State of Oregon, through the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) proposes to increase enrollment in its current Access and Habitat (A&H) public access program by increasing per acre incentive payments to eligible landowners through two targeted initiatives and to create a new public access program: the Willamette Goose Hunter Access.

Preferred Alternative

With VPA-HIP grant funds and supplemental state and private funds, ODFW proposes to use federal VPA-HIP funds to supplement the existing A&H public access program, establish a new Willamette Goose Hunting Access program, and provide funds for habitat enhancement for big game habitat within Oregon's Wildlife Management Units. Additional funding from VPA-HIP would be expected to bring in an additional 100 to 125 new willing landowners and open an additional 200,000 acres of private lands to public access. ODFW also hopes to improve an additional 3,000 acres of wildlife habitat with the VPA-HIP funding.

Reasons for Finding of No Significant Impact

In consideration of the analysis documented in the Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulations 1508.27, the preferred alternative would not constitute a major State or Federal action affecting the human and natural environment. Therefore, this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been prepared and an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. This determination is based on the following:

1. Long-term beneficial impacts and short-term localized impacts would occur with the preferred alternative. Neither of these impacts would be considered significant.
2. The preferred alternative would not affect public health or safety.
3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area (cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, and ecologically critical areas) would be preserved with implementation of the preferred alternative.
4. The potential impacts on the quality of the human environment are not considered highly controversial.

5. The potential impacts on the human environment as described in the PEA are not uncertain nor do they involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The preferred alternative would not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.
7. Cumulative impacts of the preferred alternative in combination with other recent, ongoing, or foreseeable future actions are not expected to be significant.
8. The preferred alternative would not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
9. The preferred alternative would have long-term beneficial impacts to wildlife and their habitats, including endangered and threatened species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
10. The preferred alternative does not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law imposed for the protection of the environment.

Determination

On the basis of the analysis and information contained in the PEA and FONSI, it is my determination that adoption of the preferred alternative does not constitute a major Federal action affecting the quality of the human and natural environment. Barring any new data identified during the public and agency review of the Final PEA that would dramatically change the analysis presented in the PEA or identification of a significant controversial issue, the PEA and this FONSI are considered Final 30 days after date of initial publication of the Notice of Availability.

APPROVED:



Signature

June 29, 2011

Date

Cover Sheet

Proposed Action: The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the state of Oregon have agreed to implement a new Voluntary Public Access – Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP). USDA is provided the statutory authority by the provisions of the Food Security Act of 2008, and the Regulations at 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1410. VPA-HIP provides grants to state and tribal governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreation and to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land. The VPA-HIP is administered by the state or tribal government that receives the grant funds.

Type of Document: Programmatic Environmental Assessment

Lead Agency: USDA, FSA

Sponsoring Agency: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Cooperating Agency: None

Comments: This Programmatic Environmental Assessment was prepared in accordance with USDA FSA National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementation procedures found in 7 CFR 799, as well as the NEPA of 1969, Public Law 91-190, 42 United States Code 4321-4347, 1 January 1970, as amended.

A Notice of Availability was released on July 6, 2011 announcing a 30-day comment period. A copy of the document can be found on the USDA FSA website: www.fsa.usda.gov. Comments will be accepted until August 7, 2011. Comments may be submitted via e-mail to: dhbanwart@tecinc.com

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency proposes to implement a new program authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill) in Oregon. The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) provides grants to state and tribal governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreation and to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land. The VPA-HIP is administered by the state or tribal government that receives the grant funds.

Proposed Action

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) proposes to use federal VPA-HIP funds to expand the existing Access and Habitat (A&H) Program, establish a new Willamette Goose Hunting Access Initiative, and provide funds for habitat enhancement for big game habitat on enrolled public access areas. Additional funding from VPA-HIP would be expected to bring in an additional 100 to 125 new willing landowners and open an additional 200,000 acres of private lands to public access. ODFW also hopes to improve an additional 3,000 acres of wildlife habitat with the VPA-HIP funding.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase the total acres of private lands enrolled in Oregon's public access programs and to provide habitat improvement where appropriate utilizing VPA-HIP funds. The funds would be used to provide a per acre reimbursement for public hunting access and potentially for habitat improvement on private lands. The need for VPA-HIP funds is to meet the increasing demand for public hunting access to high quality wildlife habitat located on private lands. Oregon has had success in the past with the A&H Program, the Upland Cooperative Access Program (UCAP), and several other targeted initiatives that are partly supported by other state and private funding sources. However, even with ODFW's extensive network of support for public access and wildlife habitat improvement, the demand for participation in public access programs outweighs the available funding.

Environmental Consequences

This Programmatic Environmental Assessment has been prepared to analyze the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing the Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) or the No Action Alternative. Under the Proposed Action, ODFW would utilize VPA-HIP funds to expand enrollment in the A&H Program, create the Willamette Goose Hunting Access Initiative, and improve big game habitat within Oregon's Wildlife Management Units. VPA-HIP funds would be used to offer increased landowner payouts and perform habitat improvement projects where appropriate. Under the No Action Alternative, A&H and UCAP would continue as currently administered, but the Willamette Goose Hunter Access Initiative would not be created. The potential environmental consequences of implementing the Proposed Action would be beneficial overall to the natural environment and increase hunting recreational opportunities in the state. A summary of environmental consequences is provided in Table ES-1.

Table ES-1 Summary of Environmental Consequences

Resource	Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)	No Action Alternative
Biological Resources (Vegetation, Terrestrial Wildlife, and Protected Species)	Any habitat improvement projects would have minor, short-term adverse impacts to biological resources from the disturbance of soils and habitats. However, there would be long-term beneficial impacts from creating higher quality habitat for wildlife. ODFW monitors game populations and controls hunting pressure through its permit process. This process would continue; therefore, increasing opportunities for hunting in the state would not impact game populations.	Habitat improvement activities would still occur under other grants or state programs, but the funding sources would be limited. A&H would continue as it is currently administered, but expanded enrollment would be limited. The Willamette Goose Hunter Access Initiative would not be implemented and agricultural damage would continue from the large goose population. The beneficial impacts to wildlife habitat from the additional habitat improvement projects under the Proposed Action would not be realized.
Recreation	Recreational hunting opportunities would increase throughout the state with the expansion of the A&H Program enrollment and the creation the Willamette Goose Hunter Access Initiative. In those areas where habitat improvement activities occur, some temporary limitation to public entry may be necessary until the project is firmly established. However, long term beneficial impacts to recreation are expected from the increased opportunities and the improved habitat quality for wildlife.	A&H would continue to be administered as it is currently, but with limited funding for expansion. The beneficial impacts from increasing recreational hunting opportunities would not be realized.
Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice	Direct beneficial impacts to the local economy would come from payouts to landowners for allowing access and the goods and services purchased for habitat improvement projects. Indirect beneficial impacts could also occur from purchases (lodging, meals, and goods) from traveling sportsmen. There would be no disproportionate impacts to minority or low income populations; therefore, there are no environmental justice concerns.	Increased enrollment in public access programs would not occur and there would be no VPA-HIP grant funding. The beneficial impacts from the spending of VPA-HIP funds for increased landowner payouts and habitat improvements would not be realized. No Environmental Justice impacts would occur.
Water Resources (Surface Water and Wetlands)	Short-term, localized impacts to water quality could occur from habitat improvement projects that disturb soil near water resources. However, long-term, beneficial impacts to water quality would be realized from restoring vegetation cover along or near stream banks which would reduce erosion potential.	Habitat improvement activities would still occur under other grants or state programs, but the funding sources would be limited. Long-term benefits to water resources from increased funding for habitat improvement would not be realized.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A&H	Access and Habitat	PEA	Programmatic Environmental
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality		Assessment
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations	SWCD	Soil and Water Conservation District
CREP	Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program	UCAP	Upland Cooperative Access Program
EA	Environmental Assessment	U.S.	United States
EO	Executive Order	USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
FSA	Farm Service Agency	USCB	U.S. Census Bureau
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act	USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service	USEPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ODFW	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife	VPA-HIP	Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program

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CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The United States (U.S.) Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) proposes to implement a new program authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill) in Oregon. The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) provides grants to state and tribal governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreation and to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land. The VPA-HIP is administered by the state or tribal government that receives the grant funds.

The VPA-HIP is a competitive grants program that is only available for state and tribal governments. The grant funding may be used to expand existing public access programs or create new public access programs, or provide incentives to improve wildlife habitat on enrolled lands. Program objectives are to:

- Maximize participation by landowners;
- Ensure that land enrolled in the program has appropriate wildlife habitat;
- Provide incentives to improve wildlife habitat on Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) lands, if available;
- Supplement funding and services from other Federal, state, or tribal government or private resources; and
- Inform the public about the location of public access land.

The state of Oregon, through the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), proposes to use VPA-HIP grant funds to expand its existing public access programs and create a new access initiative to provide the public with more opportunities to hunt, and to improve wildlife habitat on private lands.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Oregon has had great success with its ongoing public access programs that provide hunting access to private lands. Currently, ODFW assists with the administration of Oregon's Access and Habitat (A&H) Program and the Upland Cooperative Access Program (UCAP). Each is explained in more detail in sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2.

1.1.1 Access and Habitat Program

ODFW's A&H Program was established in 1993 by the Oregon Legislature and is funded from a surcharge levied on hunting license purchases. The overall goal of the program is to assist landowners with allowing public hunting access and to improve habitat quality for wildlife on private lands. Administratively, the program consists of a seven member Board that reviews proposed access/habitat improvement projects and provides recommendation to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission for projects that meet the purpose and scope of the program. The Commission then passes final approval for projects and levies A&H Program funds to allow project execution.

Before a project is submitted to the A&H Board for consideration it must first be approved by the A&H Regional Council. Projects are submitted to one of the six Regional A&H Coordinators who then evaluate habitat conditions for a particular project using an established Project Evaluation form (Appendix A). This evaluation takes into account appropriate habitat for species of interest, and if habitat improvement is being considered, that the benefit of the improvement is worth the cost. Projects earn numerical scores for each criterion met, and projects that provide both access and improvement usually score higher than those projects that only allow access. The evaluation form is also used to assist in making funding decisions.

The A&H Program has been very popular since it was created in 1993 and has approved over 400 access and habitat improvement projects. This has resulted in opening over 7 million acres of private land to public hunters and directly improving over 1 million acres of wildlife habitat. Annually, there are more project proposals than available funding and due to the cycle of enrollment, many longer term enrolled properties are due for renewal over the next two years. Many landowners have re-enrolled and program funding is nearly exhausted for the next two years. This lack of funding has stalled new enrollment, causing the program to stagnate.

1.1.2 Upland Cooperative Access Program

ODFW's UCAP was developed to target private lands with high quality habitat for upland game bird hunting opportunities. This program is only available to landowners in Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, and Morrow Counties. UCAP is a cooperative agreement between landowners and ODFW, whereby landowners allow hunters access to their lands and ODFW provides signage, hunting permission slip booklets, patrolling and enforcement, and a monetary payout of up to \$1 per acre for accessible lands. Funding for UCAP currently comes from the purchase of Game Bird Stamps through ODFW.

Interested landowners can contact ODFW district biologists for UCAP project proposals. This includes access and habitat improvement. An ODFW biologist and the Upland Game Bird Coordinator review the project proposals and determine the projects that best fit the goals of the program before funding the activity. Landowners that enroll in UCAP have the option of limiting access to public hunting. Those landowners that limit public hunting access have their lands marked as "Hunting by Written Permission", while landowners that provide open public hunting access have their lands marked as "Welcome to Hunt".

In 2009, UCAP contracted with 40 different landowners, and resulted in the enrollment of 110,000 acres of land for public upland game bird hunting access. It was estimated that in 2009 this allowed for 2,300 use days for hunters.

1.2 THE PROPOSED ACTION

ODFW proposes to use federal VPA-HIP funds to expand the existing A&H Program, establish a new Willamette Goose Hunting Access Initiative, and provide funds for habitat improvement for big game habitat on enrolled public access areas. Additional funding from VPA-HIP would be expected to bring in an additional 100 to 125 new willing landowners and open an additional 200,000 acres of private lands to

public access. ODFW also hopes to improve an additional 3,000 acres of wildlife habitat with the VPA-HIP funding.

1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase the total acres of private lands enrolled in Oregon's public access programs and to provide habitat improvement where appropriate utilizing VPA-HIP funds. The funds would be used to provide a per acre reimbursement for public hunting access and potentially for habitat improvement on private lands. The need for VPA-HIP funds is to meet the increasing demand for public hunting access to high quality wildlife habitat located on private lands. Oregon has had success in the past with the A&H Program, UCAP, and several other targeted initiatives that are partly supported by other state and private funding sources. However, even with ODFW's extensive network of support for public access and wildlife habitat improvement, the demand for participation in public access programs outweighs the available funding.

1.4 REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

This Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) has been prepared to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (Public Law 91-190, 42 U.S. Code 4321 et seq.); implementing regulations adopted by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508); and FSA implementing regulations, Environmental Quality and Related Environmental Concerns – Compliance with NEPA (7 CFR 799). The intent of NEPA is to protect, restore, and enhance the natural and human environment through well-informed Federal decisions. A variety of laws, regulations, and Executive Orders (EOs) apply to actions undertaken by Federal agencies and form the basis of the analysis presented in this PEA.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF EA

This PEA assesses the potential impacts of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative on potentially affected environmental and economic resources.

- Chapter 1.0 provides background information relevant to the Proposed Action, and discusses its purpose and need.
- Chapter 2.0 describes the Proposed Action and alternatives.
- Chapter 3.0 describes the baseline conditions (i.e., the conditions against which potential impacts of the Proposed Action and alternatives are measured) for each of the potentially affected resources and the potential environmental impacts to those resources.
- Chapter 4.0 describes potential cumulative impacts and irreversible and irretrievable resource commitments.
- Chapter 5.0 discusses mitigation measures utilized to reduce or eliminate impacts to protected resources.
- Chapter 6.0 contains a list of the persons and agencies contacted during the preparation of this document.
- Chapter 7.0 contains references.

- Chapter 8.0 lists the preparers of this document.
- Appendix A contains a sample A&H Program Project Evaluation Form
- Appendix B provides agency correspondence.

CHAPTER 2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

ODFW proposes to use \$2,338,203 in VPA-HIP grant funds and supplemental funds to increase enrollment in the A&H Program, focusing on three initiatives that would allow hunting access to private lands and to provide for potential habitat improvement on lands open for public hunting. Specifically, VPA-HIP funds would be levied for:

- Per-acre payouts to landowners willing to allow public hunting access that will range from \$1 to \$3 and will be based upon restrictions the landowner wishes to place on hunting access and the quality of habitat available for hunting purposes;
- Reimbursements for habitat improvement activities that occur on private lands where landowners agree to allow public access;
- Hiring of two seasonal employees to assist with implementation of newly developed public access program priority areas;
- Expansion of the hunter-use evaluation system; and
- Enroll 100 to 125 new landowners, opening up approximately 200,000 acres of public access for hunting, and improving approximately 3,000 acres of wildlife habitat.

In order to accomplish the overall goals for public access programs and the use of VPA-HIP funds, ODFW proposes to enhance the existing A&H Program through two initiatives and establish a new program, the Willamette Goose Hunting Access Initiative. The components of the Proposed Action are described below in Sections 2.1.1 through 2.1.4. The areas targeted through the initiatives are shown in Figure 2-1.

2.1.1 Enhance A&H Program

VPA-HIP funds would be used to expand the existing A&H Program. Two initiatives have been identified: the Columbia Basin Upland Initiative and Access Area Enhancement.

2.1.2 Columbia Basin Upland Initiative

The Columbia River flows along the northern border of Oregon and drains the northern portion of the state. The Columbia Basin also has over 50 percent of Oregon's enrolled CREP lands. Specifically, VPA-HIP funds would be used to provide incentive payments for public access to private lands within five counties in the area: Morrow, Gilliam, Umatilla, Sherman, and Wasco Counties. This area is comprised of mostly private land and has historically provided a large proportion of the upland game bird hunting opportunities within the state. This would also provide an overlap of lands that are eligible for enrollment in UCAP, however, landowners would only be allowed to enroll in one program.

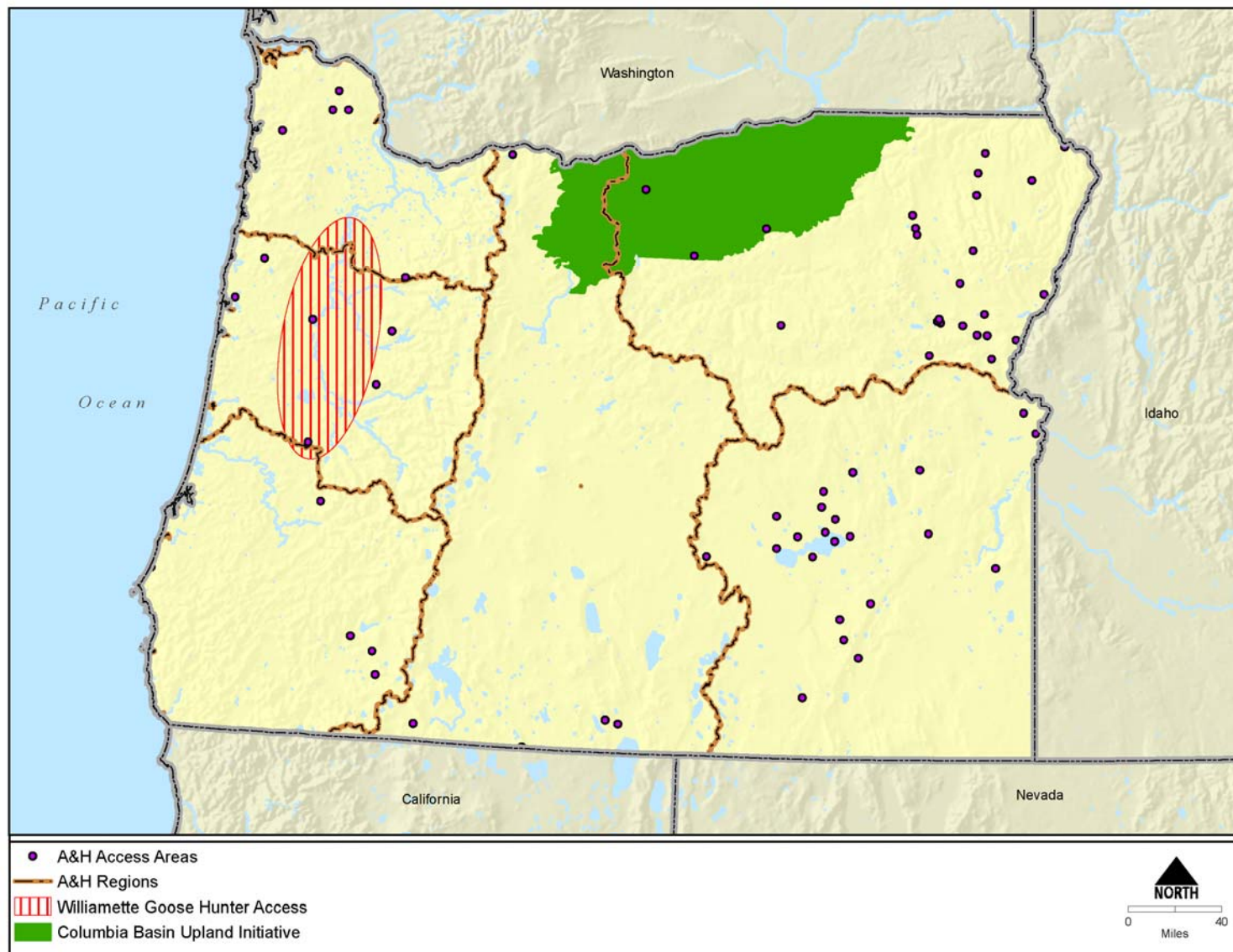


Figure 2-1. Target Areas for VPA-HIP Funding Initiatives in Oregon

Currently ODFW upland bird stamp funds in combination with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) funds are used to employ an upland habitat biologist that works in cooperation with the Morrow County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the NRCS to improve habitat on private lands that are made available for public hunting. Landowners that make their land available on a “Welcome to Hunt” basis receive 100 percent of labor and materials for approved habitat improvement projects. A&H funds are used for reimbursement of supplies and materials. Additional funding for habitat improvement is provided by the SWCD, NRCS, and the local chapter of Pheasants Forever. A sliding scale is used for payouts to landowners that provide public access, with higher payouts for increased public hunting access. Landowners that wish to not provide public hunting access may receive technical assistance, but no reimbursements for habitat improvements.

With VPA-HIP funds, ODFW proposes to expand the current program into Gilliam and Umatilla Counties and to provide access payouts to the landowners ranging from \$1 to \$3 per acre, depending on access restrictions. Landowners with enrolled CREP lands would be targeted for access enrollment. VPA-HIP funds would not be used for any habitat improvement projects under the Columbia Basin Upland Initiative, as there are already funding sources for habitat improvement. If successful, the program could be expanded into Sherman and Wasco Counties as well.

2.1.3 Access Area Enhancement

ODFW proposes to use VPA-HIP funds to enhance big game habitats on current A&H enrolled properties. Specifically, ODFW would target mule deer and elk habitat. Mule deer habitat improvement would focus on public access projects located in Wildlife Management Units identified as target areas by ODFW’s Mule Deer Initiative. VPA-HIP funds would be used by ODFW to expand A&H contributions to the Blue Mountains Elk Initiative, a program that is funded by several state, private, federal, and tribal partners. Projects conducted through these initiatives include juniper removal, noxious weed eradication, water improvements, and aspen fencing. Generally, these types of improvements would be done through mechanical means, such as mowing or disking; through prescribed burning; or through chemical herbicide applications. Water improvements would be broadly defined as activities that promote wildlife access to water in arid habitats. This could involve improving natural springs or providing stock tanks or other devices that hold water during the dry season that improve wildlife access to water.

2.1.4 Willamette Goose Hunting Access Initiative

The Willamette Valley is located in western Oregon and supports one of the most complex goose populations in North America. This area has seven Canada goose subspecies that are either resident or use the area for wintering, including cackling and dusky Canada geese, two subspecies of special concern. Over the past three decades overall goose population numbers have been increasing and their impacts to agricultural production have become severe. Goose hunting in the area has been identified as a key management tool to both help control goose populations and to prevent severe agricultural losses by creating a disturbance that keeps the geese moving and limits their time in the agricultural fields.

In order to allow goose hunting, ODFW must operate mandatory goose check stations to monitor the type and number of birds that are harvested. Limited funding and resources have reduced the number of legal hunting days available for hunting geese in this area. This makes hunter compliance inconvenient enough to cause many to abandon goose hunting. Private landowners have also been reluctant to coordinate access to their lands with hunters due to the time commitment involved.

VPA-HIP funds would be used by ODFW to coordinate a by-permission goose hunting registration system to ease the time commitment of private landowners. Funds would also be used to extend the availability of the mandatory goose check stations. Finally, the VPA-HIP funds would be used to compensate those landowners that would allow public hunting access with payouts ranging from \$1 to \$3 per acre.

2.2 ALTERNATIVES

CEQ regulations (40 CFR §1502.14) require the lead agency to identify all reasonable alternatives for implementing a Proposed Action. The Federal Register notice announcing the rule for VPA-HIP (Vol. 75(130), page 39135) explicitly states the purpose of VPA-HIP is to provide grants to state and tribal governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation and to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land. Each VPA-HIP application received by USDA FSA underwent a selection screening process to identify those proposals that met the program objectives (listed in Introduction Section 1.0).

ODFW considered using VPA-HIP funds for more habitat improvement activities, especially under the Columbia Basin Upland Initiative. However, it was determined that there were already sufficient funding sources for habitat improvement and other programs that could provide that service. As such, ODFW decided to use the majority VPA-HIP funds to provide per acre incentive payments for public access. This would maximize landowner participation and increase the total lands available for public hunting in the state of Oregon.

2.3 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, the use of VPA-HIP funds would not occur in Oregon. The Columbia Basin Upland Initiative and Area Access Enhancement activities would continue to occur, but would do so at a diminished capacity due to limited funds. The Willamette Goose Mitigation would not occur without funding from VPA-HIP and agricultural impacts from goose populations in the Willamette Valley would continue to be severe. As such, any increased public access opportunities for hunting on private lands would not be realized. Any environmental benefits from habitat improvement would also not occur. Additionally, none of the potential beneficial monetary impacts from increased incentive payouts to landowners would occur. Any indirect economic benefits from the increased payouts and increased hunting opportunities would also not occur.

2.4 RESOURCES ELIMINATED FROM ANALYSIS

CEQ regulations (40 CFR §1501.7) state that the lead agency shall identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not important or which have been covered by prior environmental review, narrowing the discussion of these issues in the document to a brief presentation of why they would not have a dramatic effect on the human or natural environment.

The Columbia Basin Upland Initiative and the Willamette Goose Hunting Access Initiative consist primarily of administrative type changes (i.e., increasing or creating landowner payouts and hiring employees to assist in administration of program initiatives). The physical impacts to the environment associated with the habitat improvement activities that would be partly funded by VPA-HIP money under Access Area Enhancement are addressed in Section 3.0. Thus from a programmatic level, the Proposed Action would have little to no impact on the following resource areas:

Air Quality. The Proposed Action would have little impact to air quality in Oregon. Expanding participation in any of the public access programs and increasing landowner payouts would have no impact on air quality. If prescribed burning were used for habitat improvement activities, there could be short-term, temporary impacts to local air quality. Oregon in general has good air quality, but does have three areas considered in *non-attainment* for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Ambient Air Quality Standards: Eugene-Springfield, Klamath Falls, and Oakridge. These three areas all are considered in *non-attainment* for airborne particulate matter concentrations (USEPA 2011). Prescribed burns are already used by ODFW for habitat improvement activities and would be conducted with efforts to adequately manage smoke and to provide for fire safety of the general public and the surrounding environment. As part of the project evaluation, landowners are required to obtain all necessary permits required by state and local governments. This would include any necessary permits for open burning associated with a prescribed burn used for habitat improvement.

Noise. The Proposed Action would not create any new permanent sources of noise to the environment. Expanding public access to new lands may introduce gunfire noise on lands where public hunting may not occur. This noise would be intermittent and occur during daylight hours during specified hunting seasons. In addition, the requisite size of land needed for safe hunting would reduce the potential for gunfire noise to be heard outside the property. Habitat improvement activities could require the use of heavy equipment. These activities would be localized, temporary in nature, and would only occur during typical working daylight hours.

Human Health and Safety. No components of the Proposed Action would directly impact human health or safety. The goal of the Proposed Action is to increase public access to privately-held land that supports an abundance of wildlife, thereby allowing hunting. While hunting does pose a slight safety risk, this activity would occur on private land with controlled access. Oregon hunting regulations require hunters to receive the appropriate education and meet minimum age requirements before a permit can be issued. All habitat improvement requiring the use of heavy machinery would be done in accordance with existing safety guidelines.

Land Use. The Proposed Action would not result in any changes to land use designations. The Proposed Action would occur on private lands on a voluntary basis and would not require the alteration of land use.

Transportation. No aspect of the Proposed Action entails any alteration of the current transportation system in the state of Oregon. Increasing acreage available for enrollment in public access programs could cause an increase in the number of vehicles traveling to a newly enrolled area. However, it is highly unlikely this would be considered an impact to the transportation system.

Cultural Resources. The Proposed Action would not directly or indirectly impact any cultural resources, either architectural or archaeological. ODFW currently has an agreement with the Klamath Tribe and would consult with the Tribe for any ODFW project taking place in Crook, Deschutes, Harney, Jackson, Lake, and Klamath Counties. Generally, habitat improvement projects such as juniper removal, noxious weed eradication, and prescribed burning would not impact any cultural resources. However, if habitat improvement activities would require earth moving or excavation, ODFW would have a cultural resource specialist on site to ensure that if an inadvertent discovery of cultural resources was made that work would cease and proper actions would be undertaken, including notification of the State Historic Preservation Officer and evaluation of the find. VPA-HIP funding stipulates that no structures may be impacted using the funding, this includes demolition of existing structures or construction of new structures. As such, it is highly unlikely that any cultural or traditional resources would be impacted under the Proposed Action.

Coastal Zones. Oregon is a coastal state and as such is bound to manage coastal resources as stipulated by the federal Coastal Zone Management Act. No habitat improvement activities are directly targeted for coastal areas; however, if habitat improvement activities were undertaken in a coastal county, there would ultimately be a long-term benefit for Oregon's coastal zone. Therefore, there would be no negative impacts to the coastal zones.

Other Formally Classified Lands. The Proposed Action can only be implemented on privately owned lands. The only formal classification applicable on private land would be Prime and Unique Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. The Proposed Action would not include removing these lands from agricultural production. Therefore, there would be no impacts to any other formally classified lands.

CHAPTER 3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This chapter provides a description of the existing environmental conditions that have the potential to be affected from implementation of the Proposed Action and the potential environmental impacts that may occur to those resources. Resource areas potentially impacted by the Proposed Action and covered in this PEA include:

- Biological Resources (Vegetation, Terrestrial Wildlife, and Protected Species)
- Recreation
- Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice
- Water Resources (Surface Water and Wetlands)

As described in Chapter 2, this PEA describes the potential impacts from implementing VPA-HIP funds in Oregon on a programmatic level. Prior to any landowner enrollment, ODFW staff would conduct a site visit to determine habitat quality and land eligibility for public access programs. Site-specific analysis for any proposed habitat improvement projects would also be carried out by ODFW staff. The site-specific analysis in combination with the programmatic level analysis provided in this PEA serves as the full NEPA documentation. Projects determined to have potential significant impacts would be abandoned or a separate Environmental Assessment (EA) would be prepared.

Environmental consequences to each resource area are described for the Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) and the No Action Alternative:

- **Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative):** utilize VPA-HIP funds to expand public access enrollment in A&H through the three targeted initiatives: Columbia Basin Upland Initiative, Access Area Enhancement, and Willamette Goose Hunter Access Initiative. VPA-HIP funds would also be used for habitat improvement activities on Access Area Enhancement lands identified as target lands by ODFW's Mule Deer Initiative or the Blue Mountains Elk Initiative.
- **No Action Alternative:** continuation of existing public access program as it is currently administered. No expansion or additional financial incentives for enrollment would occur.

3.1 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Biological resources are any living features of the natural environment that add to the intrinsic value of the local area. In this PEA, biological resources include vegetation, terrestrial wildlife, and protected species. Biological resources are included in this PEA because habitat improvement projects have the potential to temporarily disturb the natural environment during implementation but would also result in long-term positive improvements to the natural environment. Also, expanding the public access programs and increasing hunting opportunities may increase the potential for impacting game populations.

3.1.1 Affected Environment

The Proposed Action covers the entirety of Oregon. A very brief overview of the vegetation within Oregon is presented in Section 3.1.1.1, terrestrial wildlife that could potentially be affected by hunting is described in Section 3.1.1.2, and protected species that could potentially be impacted are described in Section 3.1.1.3.

3.1.1.1 Vegetation

The state of Oregon contains eight ecological regions (ecoregions). Ecoregions are divided based on the dominant vegetation found within the area. The eight ecoregions of Oregon are the Blue Mountains, Coast Range, Columbia Plateau, East Cascades, Klamath Mountains, Northern Basin and Range, West Cascades, and Willamette Valley (see Figure 3-1). The common vegetation of each ecoregion is described below.

Blue Mountains. The four main habitat types found in the Blue Mountains ecoregion include grasslands, sagebrush steppe and shrubland, riparian, and ponderosa pine. Grasslands in the Blue Mountains ecoregion are dominated by needle-and-thread, dropseed, threeawn, muhly, Idaho fescue, junegrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, green fescue, mountain fescue, needlegrass, and bluegrass. Sagebrush steppe and shrubland habitats in the Blue Mountains ecoregion are dominated by low sagebrush, silver sagebrush, rigid sagebrush, basin big sagebrush, Wyoming big sagebrush, mountain big sagebrush, threetip sagebrush, bitterbrush, and rabbitbrush. Riparian habitat in the Blue Mountains ecoregion contains bigleaf maple, alders, aspen, cottonwood, dogwood, willow, Oregon white ash, pines, and spruce. Ponderosa pine habitat in the Blue Mountains ecoregion is dominated by ponderosa pine, but may also include lodgepole, western juniper, aspen, western larch, grand fir, Douglas fir, incense cedar, sugar pine, and white fir. The understory contains shrubs, herbaceous plants, and grasses (ODFW 2006).

Coast Range. The seven main habitat types associated with the Coast Range ecoregion are oak and woodland savannas, coastal bluffs and montane grasslands, coastal dunes, estuaries, riparian, late successional conifer forests, and freshwater wetlands. Oak and woodland savannas are dominated by grassland species, but also contain widely spaced Oregon white oak and conifers. Coastal bluffs and montane grasslands are dominated by perennial bunchgrass, forbs, mosses, and dwarf shrubs. Coastal dune vegetation varies from sparse to forested; common vegetation found within this habitat includes dunegrass, seashore bluegrass, grey beach peavine, large-headed sedge, beach morning glory, yellow sand-verbena, silver burweed, evergreen huckleberry, shore pine, Sitka spruce, western hemlock, and Douglas fir. Riparian habitat in the Coast Range ecoregion contains bigleaf maple, alders, aspen, cottonwood, dogwood, willow, Oregon white ash, pines, and spruce. Late successional conifer forests in the Coast Range ecoregion are dominated by Sitka spruce and Douglas fir in the overstory, but may also contain western hemlock, western redcedar, big leaf maple, and red alder. The understory is dominated by salmonberry, vine maple, salal, evergreen huckleberry, sword fern, deer fern, and an assortment of mosses and lichens (ODFW 2006). Estuaries and freshwater wetlands are discussed in Section 3.4 Wetlands.



Figure 3-1. Ecoregions within Oregon

Columbia Plateau. The three main habitat types located in the Columbia Plateau ecoregion include riparian and wetland, sagebrush steppe, and grassland. Riparian habitat in the Columbia Plateau ecoregion contains bigleaf maple, alders, aspen, cottonwood, dogwood, willow, Oregon white ash, pines, and spruce. Sagebrush steppe in the Columbia Plateau ecoregion is dominated by needle-and-thread, bitterbrush, Indian rice grass, sagebrush, western juniper, basin wildrye, and bluebunch wheatgrass. Grasslands in the Columbia Plateau ecoregion are dominated by needle-and-thread, dropseed, threeawn, muhly, bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, Sandberg's bluegrass, balsamroot, and other shrubs and forbs (ODFW 2006). Wetlands are described in Section 3.4.

East Cascades. The four main habitat types associated with the East Cascades ecoregion include wetlands, oak woodlands, large ponderosa pines, and riparian. Oak woodlands in the East Cascades ecoregion are dominated by Oregon white oak, but may also contain ponderosa pine, California black oak, Douglas fir, and canyon live oak. The understory is usually open, but may contain shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers. Large ponderosa pine habitat in the East Cascades ecoregion is dominated by ponderosa pine, but may also include lodgepole, western juniper, aspen, western larch, grand fir, Douglas fir, incense cedar, sugar pine, and white fir. The understory contains shrubs, herbaceous plants, and grasses. Riparian habitat in the East Cascades ecoregion contains shrubs such as willows, creek dogwood, western birch, and hawthorn (ODFW 2006). Wetlands are described in Section 3.4.

Klamath Mountains. The five main habitat types found in the Klamath Mountains ecoregion are riparian, wetland, grassland, late successional conifer forests, and pine-oak woodland. Riparian habitat in the Klamath Mountains ecoregion contains bigleaf maple, alders, aspen, cottonwood, dogwood, willow, Oregon white ash, pines, and spruce. Grasslands in the Klamath Mountains ecoregion are dominated by perennial bunchgrass and forbs, but also include some scattered deciduous and coniferous trees. Late successional conifer forests in the Klamath Mountains ecoregion are dominated mostly by Douglas fir, with white fir, sugar pine, ponderosa pine, incense cedar, Port-Orford cedar, Jeffrey pine, and knobcone pine also present in the overstory. The subcanopy is dominated by tanoak, canyon live oak, golden chinquapin, and Pacific madrone. The understory is usually dominated by shrubs, but may also contain forbs and graminoids. Pine-oak woodlands in the Klamath Mountains ecoregion are dominated by Oregon white oak, ponderosa pine, California black oak, Douglas fir, and canyon live oak (ODFW 2006). Wetlands are described in Section 3.4.

Northern Basin and Range. The four main habitat types located in the Northern Basin and Range ecoregion include aspen woodlands, big sagebrush shrublands, riparian, and wetlands. Aspen woodlands are dominated by aspen trees with a forb, grass, or shrub understory. Common grasses include Idaho fescue, pinegrass, Great Basin wildrye, and blue wildrye; common shrubs include sagebrush, snowberry, serviceberry, and roses. Big sagebrush shrublands in the Northern Basin and Range ecoregion are dominated by big sagebrush with an understory of perennial bunchgrass. Riparian habitat in the Northern Basin and Range ecoregion is dominated by willow, birch, alder, and chokeberry. Riparian meadows contain grasses, sedges, and rushes (ODFW 2006). Wetlands are described in Section 3.4.

West Cascades. The four main habitat types found in the West Cascades ecoregion are old-growth Douglas fir, grasslands, wetlands and wet meadows, and riparian. Old-growth Douglas fir habitats are dominated by Douglas fir, western hemlock, grand fir, western redcedar, incense cedar, sugar pine, and white fir. The understory is dominated by vine maple, salal, sword fern, Oregon grape, western rhododendron, huckleberries, twinflower, deerfoot vanillaleaf, and oxalis. Grasslands found in the West Cascades ecoregion are dominated by green, Roemer, alpine, and western fescue; California brome; timber oatgrass; broadleaf lupine; and beargrass. Riparian habitat in the West Cascades ecoregion contains bigleaf maple, alders, aspen, cottonwood, dogwood, willow, Oregon white ash, pines, and spruce (ODFW 2006). Wetlands and wet meadows are described in Section 3.4.

Willamette Valley. The four main habitat types associated with the Willamette Valley ecoregion include grasslands, oak woodlands, riparian, and wetlands and wet prairies. Grasslands in the Willamette Valley are dominated by grasses, forbs, and wildflowers. Oak woodlands in the Willamette Valley ecoregion are dominated by Oregon white oak, but may also contain ponderosa pine, California black oak, Douglas fir, and canyon live oak. The understory is usually open, but may contain shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers. Riparian habitat in the Willamette Valley ecoregion contains bigleaf maple, alders, aspen, cottonwood, dogwood, willow, Oregon white ash, pines, and spruce (ODFW 2006). Wetlands and wet prairies are described in Section 3.4.

3.1.1.2 Terrestrial Wildlife

Oregon contains an abundance of wildlife found throughout the various habitats in the state. Big game species found in Oregon include deer, bighorn sheep, black bear, cougar, pronghorn antelope, Rocky Mountain goat, western gray squirrel, and elk (ODFW 2011). Migratory game bird species that can be hunted in Oregon include mourning dove, band-tailed pigeon, duck, merganser, coot, snipe, black brant, geese, and crow. Non-migratory game bird species in Oregon include blue grouse, ruffed grouse, chukar, Hungarian partridge, rooster pheasant, California quail, mountain quail, sage grouse, and turkey (ODFW 2010a). Furbearer species that occur in Oregon include bobcat, red fox, gray fox, raccoon, marten, rabbit, coyote, mink, muskrat, weasel, spotted skunk, striped skunk, opossum, river otter, nutria, badger, beaver, and porcupine (ODFW 2010b).

3.1.1.3 Protected Species

Oregon contains numerous species that are protected by federal or state Endangered Species Acts. The ODFW website lists all threatened and endangered species that have been documented throughout the state. Protected game species in Oregon include moose, spruce grouse, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, and migratory birds. The hunting of these species is strictly controlled through licensing and bag limits, and is regulated by ODFW (ODFW 2010a). Currently, there are no open hunting seasons for moose, spruce grouse, or the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse.

3.1.2 Environmental Consequences

Impacts to biological resources would be considered significant if activities resulted in reducing the wildlife populations to a level of concern, removing land with unique vegetation characteristics, or incidental take of a protected species or its habitat.

3.1.2.1 Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)

Under the Proposed Action, additional habitat improvement projects similar to those currently done by ODFW would occur on privately-held farms, ranches, and forest land throughout Oregon under the VPA-HIP. These projects would be consistent with overall strategies to conserve habitat and wildlife important to Oregon. In general, the activities associated with installing these projects would result in minor, short-term impacts, which include disturbance to local vegetation and wildlife. However, the goal of these projects is long-term habitat improvement and sustainability of wildlife. Programmatic-level impacts to vegetation, terrestrial wildlife, and protected species are described below. Additionally, with the Willamette Goose Hunter Access Initiative, there would likely be an increase in the number of hunter-use days available for goose hunting.

Vegetation and Terrestrial Wildlife

Under the Proposed Action, it is expected that implementation of the habitat improvement projects would increase habitat value by controlling less favorable vegetation species in preference for native species that provide greater habitat value. In general, habitat improvement would remove invasive or nuisance species to allow for preferred native species to dominate the habitat. Removal of nuisance species can be done by hand, mechanically, or with prescribed burning depending on the habitat type, size of project area, and local conditions. In some cases, preferred vegetation species may be seeded or planted to increase the habitat value, while in other cases the habitat would be allowed to naturally regenerate after removal of invasive species. Installation of the restoration activity could result in short-term, minor impacts to vegetation and disturbance to local terrestrial wildlife. However, once the restoration activity is completed, there would be long-term improvement in habitat value and subsequent conservation of important wildlife.

ODFW goes to great lengths to ensure hunting a game species does not negatively affect the status of the species. All game species are managed for the long-term viability of the populations. Expanding participation in the current programs and increasing hunting opportunities would not result in adverse impacts to game species' populations given the existing ODFW control through the permit process.

Protected Species

Under the Proposed Action, it is expected that implementation of the habitat improvement projects would increase habitat value by controlling less favorable species in preference for native species that provide greater habitat value. This would result in long-term positive impacts to the habitat and associated wildlife. Installation of the habitat improvements could result in short-term, minor impacts to local

terrestrial wildlife. However, once installed there would be long-term improvement in habitat value and subsequent conservation of protected species.

With implementation of Willamette Goose Hunter Access Initiative, there would likely be an increase in the number of hunter-use days for goose hunting in the Willamette Valley. As with any other species regulated by ODFW, many efforts are made to ensure that hunting does not negatively impact the status of a species. Goose hunting within the Willamette Valley would be tightly controlled and there would not be a negative impact to the long-term viability of the goose populations. Increasing hunting pressure would also help disturb geese that are utilizing cultivated fields as a food source, and would help decrease the detrimental impacts to grain and grass seed production caused by the large goose population.

3.1.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, ODFW would not receive funding under the VPA-HIP. The No Action Alternative would not allow for any of the positive impacts from the implementation of VPA-HIP funded habitat improvements. The A&H Program and UCAP would continue to be administered as they are currently, though any new enrollment would be unlikely due to insufficient funding sources. The Willamette Goose Hunter Access Initiative would not be created; therefore, there would be no increased hunting to assist in limiting the agricultural damage done by the large goose population. Overall, under the No Action Alternative, the long term positive environmental benefits from activities associated with the public access programs would be diminished.

3.2 RECREATION

Recreation includes those outdoor activities that take place away from the residence of the participant. Oregon offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities to its residents. Recreational activities that are common in Oregon include hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, camping, golfing, boating, hiking, biking, backpacking, and horseback riding. For this PEA, recreation focuses on hunting opportunities available to the public in the state of Oregon.

3.2.1 Affected Environment

Hunting is regulated by ODFW and a valid hunting permit is required to hunt within Oregon. Separate hunting permits/tags may be required for each type of game and certain individual species. Hunting licenses are valid for the calendar year they are purchased. Additional hunting permits that can be purchased in Oregon include game bird validations, migratory bird validations, a generic hunting license, and furbearer permits. Game bird species that require a separate hunting permit in Oregon include band-tailed pigeon, black brant, sage grouse, and turkey. All game bird hunting requires a Harvest Information Program validation. Waterfowl hunting requires a valid hunting license, a waterfowl validation, and a Federal Duck Stamp. Upland game bird hunting requires a valid hunting license, permit, and an upland game bird validation (ODFW 2010a). Licenses and permits/tags can be obtained online, through an ODFW office, or at local retail stores.

3.2.2 Environmental Consequences

Impacts to recreation would be considered significant if they drastically reduced, increased, or removed available public lands designated for recreation or significantly degraded the quality of the recreation. Impacts to environmental conditions such as air, water, or biological resources within or near public recreational land in such a way to affect its use would also be considered significant.

3.2.2.1 Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)

The Proposed Action has the potential to provide long-term, beneficial impacts to recreational resources in Oregon. Expanding the A&H Program would create more recreational hunting opportunities on private land for the citizens of Oregon. Establishing the Willamette Goose Hunting Access Initiative would create more opportunities for citizens to hunt geese in Oregon, and would help control the large goose populations in the Willamette Valley. During the installation of habitat improvement projects there could be short-term, negative impacts to recreational resources because the land may not be accessible or activities could disturb wildlife and game species. However, the increased funding for habitat improvement would also lead to long-term, higher quality hunting opportunities. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have long-term, beneficial impacts to recreational resources in Oregon.

3.2.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, ODFW would not receive funding under the VPA-HIP. The No Action Alternative would not allow for any of the positive impacts from the implementation of VPA-HIP funded habitat improvements. The A&H Program and UCAP would continue to be administered as they are currently, though any new enrollment would be unlikely due to insufficient funding sources. Gilliam and Umatilla Counties would not be incorporated into the Columbia Basin Upland Bird Initiative. The Willamette Goose Hunter Access Initiative would not be created, and the expanded hunting opportunities targeted at limiting large goose populations would not occur. Overall, under the No Action Alternative, the long term positive recreational benefits from activities associated with the public access programs would be diminished.

3.3 SOCIOECONOMICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Socioeconomics for this PEA includes an investigation of population and demographic statistics as well as a discussion on the payouts to landowners from public access programs.

EO 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, requires a Federal agency to “make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing as appropriate, disproportionately high human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.” A minority population can be defined by race, by ethnicity, or by a combination of the two classifications.

According to CEQ, a minority is defined as being one of the following groups: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, not of Hispanic origin, or Hispanic. A minority population is defined as one of these groups exceeding 50 percent of the population in an area or the

minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully greater than the minority population percentage in the general population (CEQ 1997). The U.S. Census Bureau (USCB) defines ethnicity as either being of Hispanic origin or not being of Hispanic origin. Hispanic origin is further defined as “a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central America, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race” (USCB 2001).

Each year the USCB defines the national poverty thresholds, which are measured in terms of household income and are dependent upon the number of persons within the household. Individuals falling below the poverty threshold are considered low-income individuals. USCB census tracts where at least 20 percent of the residents are considered poor are known as poverty areas (USCB 1995). When the percentage of residents considered poor is greater than 40 percent, the census tract is considered an extreme poverty area.

3.3.1 Affected Environment

3.3.1.1 Population and Demographics

As of April 2010, Oregon had a population count of 3,831,074, which represents a 12 percent population growth from the 2000 Census. Population growth is substantially less than the 20.4 percent population growth from the 1990 to 2000 Census. This slow growth has been attributed to two economic recessions. The population growth rate is expected to remain low over the next decade with only a 1.1 percent growth rate forecast from 2010 to 2020 (Office of Economic Analysis 2011). Historically, the majority of the population has been concentrated in urban areas, with urban populations growing to 2,978,551 in 2010. Rural populations have had a slow steady rise over the past 30 years, to a total of 852,523 in 2010 (USDA Economic Research Service 2011).

Oregon’s population is predominately white, with 83.6 percent of residents claiming this ethnicity in 2010. Other races within Oregon rank as follows: Asian, 3.7 percent; African American, 1.8 percent; American Indian or Alaska Native, 1.4 percent; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 0.3 percent; and Hispanic 11.7 percent. Hispanics make up the largest minority population in Oregon (USCB 2011).

In 2009, an estimated 14.3 percent of people in Oregon were below the poverty level. This is equal to the poverty level for the nation as a whole. Of persons 25 years or older, 88.3 percent have a high school education, with 28.3 percent of residents having attained a bachelor’s degree or higher. Both of these statistics are higher than the national averages of 84.6 percent and 27.5 percent, respectively (USCB 2011).

3.3.1.2 Employment, Income, and Public Access Programs

Recent economic trends show that Oregon’s economy appears to be on “firmer ground” with the state ranking 7th in the nation for non-farm job growth from March 2010 to March 2011. This is a substantial increase in ranking from the rank of 32nd in March 2010 (Office of Economic Analysis 2011). Unemployment was at 10 percent in March 2011, a full percentage point below March 2010, and is slightly higher than the national rate of 8.8 for March of 2011 (Office of Economic Analysis 2011).

Median household income in 2009 was \$48,325, slightly lower than the national average of \$50,221. Per capita income for 2009 was estimated to be \$25,893, again slightly lower than the national average of \$27,041 (USCB 2011).

Outdoor recreation makes up an important portion of expenditures within the state. In 2008, it was estimated that nearly 2.8 million people (both residents and non-residents) participated in hunting, fishing, shellfish harvesting, or wildlife viewing in Oregon. This totaled approximately \$2.5 billion in expenditures within the state. Residents also spent an additional \$1.5 billion on specialty equipment and other activity related purchases from retail establishments and suppliers based in Oregon (Dean Runyan Associates 2009).

The Proposed Action has the potential to directly impact Oregon's privately held farms, ranches, and forested lands. In 2007 there were 38,553 farms comprising 16,399,647 acres of land in Oregon. This yields an average farm size of 425 acres (USDA 2007). From 2002 to 2007 the number and size of farms has declined in Oregon. Currently, landowners enrolled in A&H and UCAP can receive monetary compensation for allowing hunting access to their land, as well as reimbursement for habitat improvement activities if open hunting access is allowed. Payouts are based on the amount of acreage that is enrolled and the level of public access that the landowner is willing to provide. Historically, the average per acre payout for public access through A&H has been \$2.50 per acre.

3.3.2 Environmental Consequences

3.3.2.1 Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)

Under the Proposed Action ODFW would use \$17,888,203 in state, federal, and other funds over three years to continue and expand participation in the A&H program and create a new Willamette Goose Hunter Access Initiative in Oregon. Specifically, ODFW would use \$2,338,203 in federal VPA-HIP grant funds to increase incentive payouts for the Columbia Basin Upland Initiative; perform habitat improvements under the Access Area Enhancement through A&H; and to create the Willamette Goose Hunter Access Initiative to allow more goose hunting opportunities in the Willamette Valley. The federal funds would also be used to hire two assistants to help administer the Columbia Basin Upland Initiative and the Willamette Goose Hunter Access Initiative.

Ultimately, all payouts to private landowners would offer a direct economic benefit to those landowners with eligible properties that voluntarily enroll. The level of monetary compensation would depend on the number of suitable acres enrolled and the amount of hunting access a landowner would be willing to allow.

Indirectly, the increased hunting opportunities on enrolled private lands would be slightly beneficial to local economies. Traveling sportsmen and wildlife watchers would spend dollars at local eateries, hotels for lodging, gas stations, and for any other goods and supplies that might be necessary for the recreational activity. Increasing the amount of high quality lands for hunting and wildlife watching within Oregon may attract out of state sportsmen, thereby bringing in more economic gain for local communities. Given

the already large demand for these types of outdoor activities, any additional opportunities for public access would be beneficial to Oregonians and local retailers providing goods for these outdoor activities.

Goods and services (i.e., seed, plantings, equipment) necessary to perform any of the habitat improvement activities would likely be purchased locally. This would provide a one-time economic benefit to the local suppliers in or near the land being improved.

Additionally, through implementation of the Willamette Goose Hunter Access Initiative, there would be a decrease in the depredation of agricultural products by goose populations in the Willamette Valley. Landowners who enroll could experience a slight economic benefit from a decrease in crop damage if the program is successful.

Under the Proposed Action, there would be no disproportionate impact to minorities or low income populations in Oregon. The public access programs are voluntary and would only target landowners with suitable habitat. Once enrolled, participants must give equal access to all sportsmen with a valid hunting permit.

3.3.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, ODFW would not receive funding under the VPA-HIP. The No Action Alternative would not allow for any of the positive impacts from the introduction of the VPA-HIP funding into the economy, nor would it allow for the expansion of hunting opportunities on private lands, which also brings economic benefit via lodging and purchase of goods and supplies. The A&H Program and UCAP would continue to be administered as they are currently, though any new enrollment would be unlikely due to insufficient funding sources. The Willamette Goose Hunter Access Initiative would not be created; therefore, there would be no increased hunting to assist in limiting the agricultural damage done by the large goose population. Overall, under the No Action Alternative, the long term positive environmental benefits from activities associated with the public access programs would be diminished.

3.4 WATER RESOURCES

For this analysis, water resources include surface water quality and wetlands. The Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and the Water Quality Act are the primary Federal laws that protect the nation's waters including lakes, rivers, aquifers, and wetlands.

3.4.1 Affected Environment

3.4.1.1 Surface Waters

Surface water in Oregon includes thousands of miles of perennial rivers and streams and numerous lakes and reservoirs. The western side of Oregon borders the Pacific Ocean. Surface water is an important resource in Oregon because it is necessary for drinking water, recreational opportunities, wildlife sustainment, and agricultural production. The quality of these surface waters impacts how they can be utilized by the populace.

Important rivers are found in each ecoregion throughout the state. Important rivers in the Blue Mountains ecoregion include the Deschutes, Grande Ronde, Imnaha, John Day, Malheur, Powder, Silvies, Snake, Umatilla, and Wallowa Rivers. Major rivers in the Coast Range ecoregion include the Alsea, Chetco, Coos, Coquille, Illinois, Lewis and Clark, Necanicum, Nehalem, Nestucca, Rogue, Siletz, Siuslaw, Trask, Umpqua, Yaquina, and Youngs Rivers. Important rivers found in the Columbia Plateau ecoregion include the Columbia, Deschutes, John Day, Umatilla, and Walla Walla Rivers. Major rivers that run through the East Cascades ecoregion are the Deschutes, Hood, Klamath, Metolius, Link, Williamson, Sycan, and Sprague Rivers. Major rivers in the Klamath Mountains ecoregion include the Applegate, Rogue, Chetco, Coquille, Umpqua, and Illinois Rivers. Important rivers found in the Northern Basin and Range ecoregion include the Donner and Blitzen, Malheur, Owyhee, and Silvies Rivers. Important rivers in the West Cascades ecoregion include the Clackamas (Oak Grove Fork), McKenzie, Rogue, Umpqua, Breitenbush, Middle Santiam, North Fork Willamette, and Middle Fork Willamette Rivers. Important rivers in the Willamette Valley ecoregion include the Willamette, McKenzie, Santiam, Sandy, Mollala, Clackamas, Tualatin, Yamhill, Luckiamute, and Long Tom Rivers (ODFW 2006).

3.4.1.2 Wetlands

Wetlands are broadly considered “waters of the U.S.” and are defined by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as areas that are inundated and saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions (USACE 1987). Wetlands provide valuable habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Wetlands are found within all eight of Oregon’s ecoregions. There are seven types of wetlands predominantly found in Oregon, which include: alkaline wetlands; deciduous swamps and shrublands; marshes; playas; seasonal ponds and vernal pools; wet meadows; and wet prairies.

Alkaline Wetlands. Alkaline wetlands generally form in depressions in arid areas. These wetlands are mostly located in the East Cascades and Northern Basin and Range ecoregions. Vegetation in alkaline wetlands is dominated by salt tolerant species grasses, rushes, sedges, and shrubs (ODFW 2006).

Deciduous Swamps and Shrublands. Deciduous swamps and shrublands are located in depressions around lakes, ponds, or rivers. Vegetation in deciduous swamps and shrublands is dominated by woody vegetation, including willows, hardhack, alder, red-osier, dogwood, Pacific crab apple, and ash (ODFW 2006).

Marshes. Marshes form in depressions or along the fringe of lakes or slow-flowing streams. The dominant vegetation in marshes includes mostly water-adapted plants. Plant species found in marshes include sedges, bulrush, spikesedge, rushes, cattails, wildflowers, and floating vegetation (ODFW 2006).

Playas. Playas are formed during seasonal flooding in the Northern Basin and Range ecoregion. Vegetation in playas is usually sparsely vegetated with grasses that are surrounded by a ring of shrubs. Common species found in playas include iodine bush, black greasewood, spiny hopsage, saltbush, alkali grass, wildrye, and saltgrass (ODFW 2006).

Seasonal Ponds and Vernal Pools. Seasonal ponds and vernal pools generally hold rainwater during the winter and spring and dry out during summer months. Vernal pools are created in depressions, and the vegetation varies greatly depending on the habitat in which the pool forms (ODFW 2006).

Wet Meadows. Wet meadows are found on gentle slopes along stream headwaters, in mountain valleys bordering lakes and streams, near seeps, in large river valley bottoms, or in open wet depressions among montane forests. Vegetation in wet meadows is dominated by tufted hairgrass, sedges, reedgrass, spikesedge, rushes, and wildflowers (ODFW 2006).

Wet Prairies. Wet prairies generally form in lowlands or floodplains in depressions surrounded by forests. Most wet prairies are created by snowmelt. The dominant vegetation in wet prairies includes grasses, sedges, and wildflowers (ODFW 2006).

3.4.2 Environmental Consequences

Impacts to water resources would be considered significant if implementation of the Proposed Action resulted in violating laws or regulations established to protect water resources, or actions resulted in major deterioration of water quality.

3.4.2.1 Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)

Surface Water

Under the Proposed Action, it is expected that implementation of the habitat improvement projects would increase habitat value by controlling less favorable species in preference for species that provide greater vegetation and wildlife value, as well as long-term decreases in erosion. Land disturbing activities during habitat improvement near riparian areas could cause a minor short-term increase in sediment loads in runoff, however, sound erosion and sediment control measures would be utilized during these activities. Once the restoration activity is complete, there would be long-term benefits associated with the stabilization of habitat near surface waters.

Wetlands

The Proposed Action would not directly impact wetland areas; however, it is expected that like with the beneficial impacts described with surface waters, improving adjacent habitats to wetlands would increase wetland habitat value. Installation of the habitat improvement measure could cause a minor, short-term impact by increasing sediment loads in runoff; however, erosion and sediment control measures would be utilized during project implementation. Once the habitat has been restored, there would be long-term benefits from the stabilization of nearby areas.

3.4.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, ODFW would not receive funding under the VPA-HIP. The No Action Alternative would not allow for any of the positive impacts from the implementation of VPA-HIP funded habitat improvements. The A&H Program and UCAP would continue to be administered as they are currently, though any new enrollment would be unlikely due to insufficient funding sources. The

Willamette Goose Hunter Access Initiative would not be created; therefore, there would be no increased hunting to assist in limiting the agricultural damage done by the large goose population. Overall, under the No Action Alternative, the long term positive environmental benefits from activities associated with the public access programs would be diminished.

CHAPTER 4.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

4.1 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

CEQ regulations stipulate that the cumulative impacts analysis within an EA should consider the potential environmental impacts resulting from “the incremental impacts of the action when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions” (40 CFR 1508.7). CEQ guidance in considering cumulative impacts involves defining the scope of the other actions and their interrelationship with the Proposed Action. The scope must consider geographical and temporal overlaps among the Proposed Action and other actions. It must also evaluate the nature of interactions among these actions.

Cumulative impacts are most likely to arise when a relationship or synergism exists between the Proposed Action and other actions expected to occur in a similar location or during a similar time period. Actions overlapping with or in proximity to the Proposed Action would be expected to have more potential for a relationship than those more geographically separated.

In this PEA, the affected environment for cumulative impacts includes all of Oregon since the public access programs are available statewide. In addition to VPA-HIP, several other Federal and state programs in Oregon focus on conservation. Federal programs include the CRP, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and the Wetlands Reserve Program. Wildlife conservation in the state of Oregon is a multi-agency coordinated effort, with many non-governmental agencies or organizations providing funding or technical assistance for habitat improvement projects.

The potential long-term impacts from habitat improvements performed using VPA-HIP funds in combination with other wildlife habitat conservation strategies would have overall long-term, beneficial impacts to wildlife populations and habitat in Oregon. Increasing public awareness of the presence of important wildlife and game species and minor activities they can do to improve habitat on their land would create an environment to support a sustained wildlife population. Therefore, cumulative impacts are expected to be beneficial to the natural environment.

4.2 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

Irreversible and irretrievable commitments are related to the use of nonrenewable resources and the effect that the use of these resources has on future generations. Irreversible effects primarily result from the use or destruction of a specific resource that cannot be replaced within a reasonable time frame. Irretrievable resource commitments involve the loss in value of an affected resource that cannot be restored as a result of the action. Under the Proposed Action, long-term beneficial impacts are expected to wildlife populations, game species, and their habitats. There would be no irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources.

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CHAPTER 5.0 MITIGATION MEASURES

The purpose of mitigation is to avoid, minimize, or eliminate significant negative impacts on affected resources. CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1508.20) state that mitigation includes:

- Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action.
- Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation.
- Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment.
- Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action.
- Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

CEQ regulations state that all relevant reasonable mitigation measures that could avoid or minimize significant impacts should be identified, even if they are outside the jurisdiction of the lead agency or the cooperating agencies. This serves to alert agencies or officials who can implement these extra measures, and will encourage them to do so. The lead agency for this Proposed Action is FSA. The state partner agency is ODFW.

There are no expected long-term, significant negative impacts associated with implementation of the VPA-HIP in Oregon. ODFW staff or representatives would complete site specific environmental evaluation before giving recommendations for habitat improvements on eligible lands. In those site specific instances where a wetland, threatened or endangered species, or a cultural resource may be present, consultation with the appropriate lead agency would identify specific mitigation measures required to eliminate or reduce the negative impacts to an acceptable level.

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CHAPTER 7.0 REFERENCES

- Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). 1997. Council on Environmental Quality. Guidance under the National Environmental Policy Act.
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CHAPTER 8.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

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APPENDIX A – ACCESS AND HABITAT PROJECT EVALUATION FORM

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Access and Habitat Program Project Evaluation Form



Program Objective: The Access and Habitat Program's motto, "Landowners & Hunters Together for Wildlife," conveys the program's basic mission to foster partnerships between landowners and hunters for the benefit of the wildlife they value. The program also seeks to recognize and encourage the important contributions made by landowners to the state's wildlife resource.

Project Name: _____ **Project #:** _____

	Access Acres	Habitat Acres	Habitat Category: <small>(range: 1-6; see flow chart on page 4. Not applicable to access-only projects)</small>	Total Score:	0
"Welcome" Private				Total Possible:	36
By-Permission Private					
Inaccessible Public*					
Accessible Public*					

Instructions:

Project Type	Complete these sections		
	General Criteria	Access Criteria	Habitat Criteria
Access Only	X	X	
Habitat Only	X		X
Access & Habitat	X	X	X

Mark 1 point in the corresponding "Project Score" box for EACH criterion that is met. Example: for question 2, if partnerships include 4 sports groups, award points for the first 2 criteria. Do not mark more than 1 point per box. Point schedule is designed to weigh access-only and habitat-only projects equally.

Definitions:

Inaccessible Public*: Access will be provided through private land to public land that is completely landlocked (surrounded) by private land, legally precluding public hunting access. Total area includes only public land within the boundary of private ownership.

Accessible Public*: Access through private land will improve accessibility to public land. Public land may be extremely difficult to access otherwise, but is not legally surrounded by private land. Total area includes only public land that is closer (in linear distance) to the landowner's access point(s) than any other public access point.

* Access to public land **MUST** be provided on a "Welcome to Hunt" basis

General Criteria

(mark a "1" in the "Project Score" box for EACH criterion that is met)

1. *Habitat Condition*

Score 1 point only if the property contains the resource in sufficient abundance/quality to support target species referenced in questions 11, 15, 16 and 19 (during at least one season of the year). For habitat projects, use the predicted future condition. Justify your score.

Project
Score

Food:	
Water:	
Cover:	
Space:	

2. <i>Partnerships</i>	Partners contributing financial or in-kind support:	
	1 or more Sports groups.....	<input type="text"/>
	3 or more Sports groups.....	<input type="text"/>
	Educational programs / non-governmental organizations.....	<input type="text"/>
	Other government agencies or ODFW programs (i.e. OWEB, R&E).....	<input type="text"/>
		Project Score
3. <i>Matching Funds</i>	Total matching funds (monetary and in-kind)	
	> 1% matching funds.....	<input type="text"/>
	> 25% matching funds.....	<input type="text"/>
	> 50% matching funds.....	<input type="text"/>
4. <i>Under-rep. Location*</i>	Project is in an under-represented watershed in the A&H Program	<input type="text"/>
5. <i>Under-rep. Species*</i>	Project provides access to under-represented species in the watershed.....	<input type="text"/>
6. <i>Damage</i>	Project would mitigate current damage to private property:	
	Wildlife damage occurring on private property.....	<input type="text"/>
	Landowner participates in ODFW damage control programs.....	<input type="text"/>
7. <i>Public Land</i>	Project located in Wildlife Management Unit with <50% public land.....	<input type="text"/>
* See p. 5		
		<div>General Total</div> <div>General Possible</div>
		<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>

Access Criteria - Applies to **private land** access that would be provided under the proposed project.
(mark a "1" in the "Project Score" box for EACH criterion that is met)

Habitat Criteria

(mark a "1" in the "Project Score" box for EACH criterion that is met)

Project
Score

15. *Location importance:* Applies to species that the habitat work will benefit. Question structured to equally weigh big game and game bird projects - score "1" if either item in each bracket is true:

{ Area populations < 90% of management objective (deer and elk).....
or:
Project will increase wintering populations of upland birds/waterfowl.....

{ Area populations < 75% of management objective (deer and elk).....
or:
Project will increase breeding populations of upland birds/waterfowl.....

16. *Conservation Strategy* Project addresses Oregon Conservation Strategy (OCS) concerns:

Project action benefits Strategy Habitat or Strategy Species.....

[above] **AND** action occurs in Conservation Opportunity Area (COA).....

Project
Score

17. *Critical Habitat*

Applies to the specific GAME habitat that the project will maintain or enhance. Use accompanying flow chart and definitions to determine habitat category. Definitions are slightly amended from OAR Division 415 to be game-specific.

Project meets requirements of Habitat Categories 1-4.....

Project meets requirements of Habitat Categories 1-2.....

18. *Habitat Impact*

Describes the predicted impact that the project will have on the habitat. Habitat work must benefit game species.

Project will increase the habitat quantity/quality >25% per unit treated.....

Project will increase the habitat quantity/quality >50% per unit treated.....

Description of habitat impact:

19. *Population Impact*

Describes the predicted impact that the habitat improvements (excluding external variables such as weather, etc.) will have on game animals on the project site. Provide estimates for all targeted species.

Local abundance of at least one game species should increase >25%.....

Local abundance of at least one game species should increase >50%.....

Estimated Abundance

Species	Estimated Abundance	
	Pre-treatment	Post-treatment

Habitat Total

Habitat Possible

0
10

Grand Total

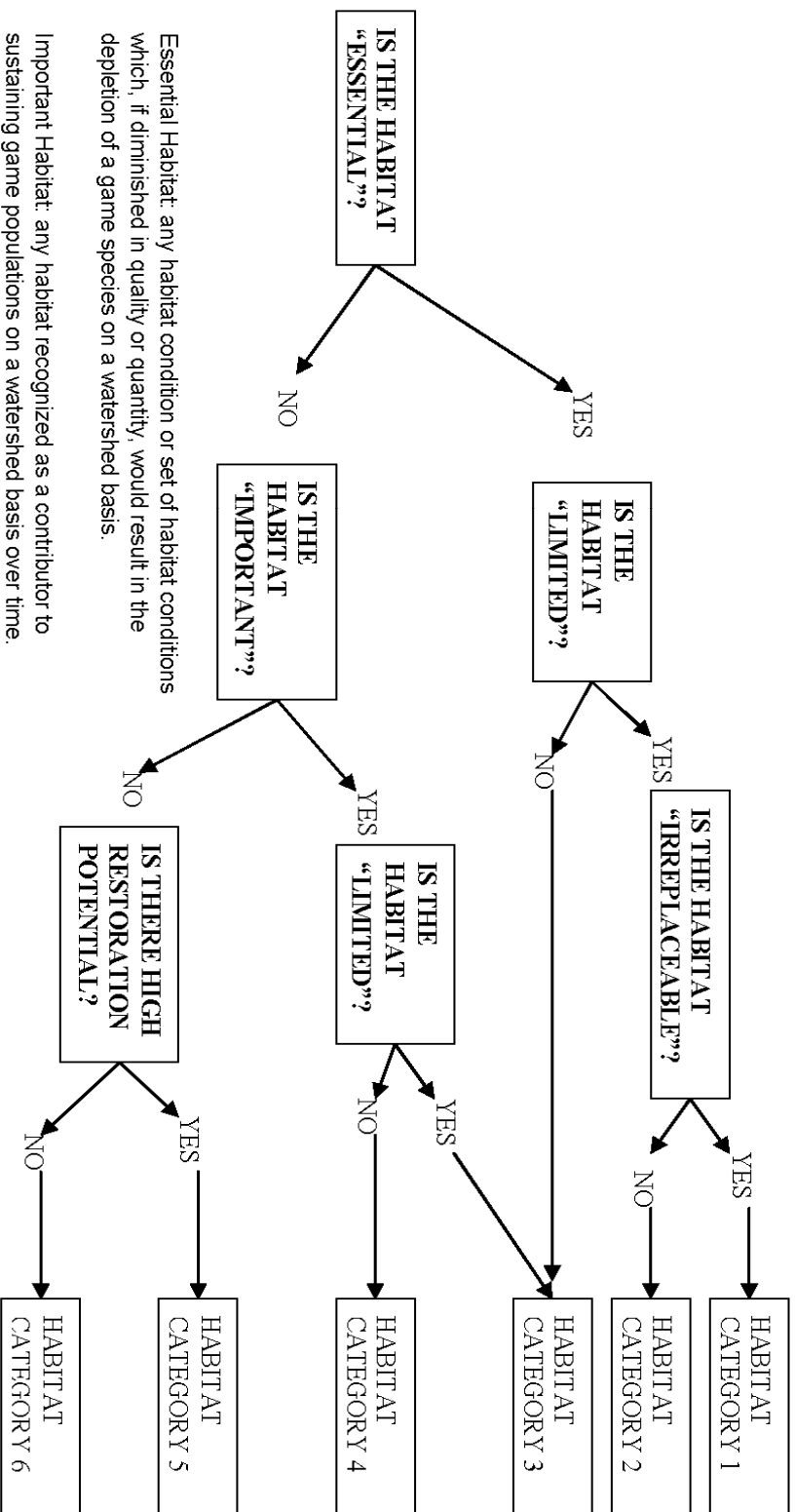
Total Possible

0
36

20. *Miscellaneous*

Describe other project details that may help with prioritization or fee assessment (i.e. current market value of similar hunting leases in the vicinity)..... **NO POINTS**

Habitat Category Flow Chart



Essential Habitat: any habitat condition or set of habitat conditions which, if diminished in quality or quantity, would result in the depletion of a game species on a watershed basis.

Important Habitat: any habitat recognized as a contributor to sustaining game populations on a watershed basis over time.

Limited Habitat: an amount of habitat insufficient or barely sufficient to sustain game populations on a watershed basis over time.

Irreplaceable Habitat: successful in-kind habitat mitigation to replace lost habitat quantity and/or quality is not feasible within an acceptable period of time or locations, or involves an unacceptable level of risk or uncertainty, depending on the habitat under consideration and the game populations that are affected. "Acceptable", for the purpose of this definition, means in a reasonable time frame to benefit the affected game species.

Access and Habitat Project Evaluation - Appendix

Under-represented Species

Approved 1/27/09

Definition: game species that exist in the watershed district in huntable numbers, but that the general public does not have reasonable hunting access to (via public land, current A&H properties, etc.)

Watershed	Species
Malheur	sage grouse, bighorn, pheasant, waterfowl, turkey
South Willamette	waterfowl, turkey, valley quail
North Coast	predators, waterfowl
Grande Ronde	sage grouse, mountain goat, bighorn
Rogue	dove, waterfowl
Deschutes	waterfowl, quail
John Day	mountain goat, bighorn
Umpqua	waterfowl, dove
Klamath	waterfowl, quail
North Willamette	waterfowl

Under-represented Watershed Districts

Approved 1/27/09

Definition: ODFW watershed districts that support 3 or fewer active A&H projects.

Watershed District	Active Projects	Under-represented Districts
North Willamette	1	
Klamath	1	
South Willamette	2	
Umpqua	2	
Deschutes	4	
John Day	4	
North Coast	5	
Rogue	5	
Grande Ronde	9	
Malheur	20	

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APPENDIX B – AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE

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June 29, 2011

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Farm and Foreign
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FROM: Matthew T. Ponish
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National Environmental Compliance Manager

SUBJECT: Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Oregon

The United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Services Agency (FSA) on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and the State of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has prepared a Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to examine the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing a Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program for Oregon. The PEA examines the Proposed Action and the no action alternative environmental baseline on natural and socioeconomic resources.

A copy of the Final PEA/FONSI has been provided on CD for your convenience. The Final PEA is also available at the following website:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=ecrc&topic=nep-cd>.

The agency is accepting comments until **August 7, 2011**.

Comments may be e-mailed to: Dana Banwart at dhbanwart@tecinc.com

Written comments may be mailed to:

TEC Inc.
11817 Canon Blvd., Suite 300
Newport News, VA 23606

We appreciate your review and look forward to receiving your comments.

Matthew T. Ponish

Enclosure: 1 CD



June 29, 2011

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We appreciate your review and look forward to receiving your comments.

Matthew T. Ponish

Enclosure: 1 CD



June 29, 2011

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Farm and Foreign
Agricultural
Services

Farm Service
Agency

1400 Independence
Ave, SW
Stop 0513
Washington, DC
20250-0513

TO: Gerry Pavelek
Oregon Duck Hunters Association
3592 Buena Vista Rd. S.
Jefferson, OR 97352

FROM: Matthew T. Ponish
United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency
National Environmental Compliance Manager

SUBJECT: Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Oregon

The United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Services Agency (FSA) on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) and the State of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has prepared a Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to examine the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing a Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program for Oregon. The PEA examines the Proposed Action and the no action alternative environmental baseline on natural and socioeconomic resources.

A copy of the Final PEA/FONSI has been provided on CD for your convenience. The Final PEA is also available at the following website:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=ecrc&topic=nep-cd>.

The agency is accepting comments until **August 7, 2011**.

Comments may be e-mailed to: Dana Banwart at dhbanwart@tecinc.com

Written comments may be mailed to:

TEC Inc.
11817 Canon Blvd., Suite 300
Newport News, VA 23606

We appreciate your review and look forward to receiving your comments.

Matthew T. Ponish

Enclosure: 1 CD