



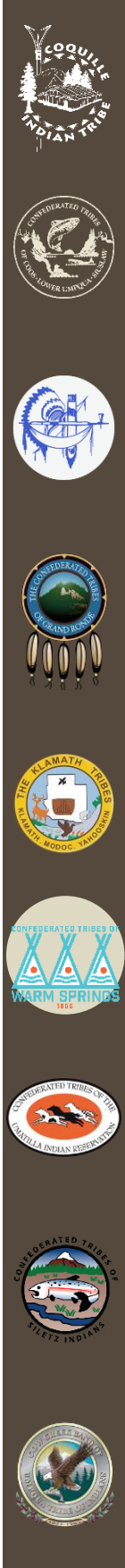
OREGON
WATERSHED
ENHANCEMENT BOARD

2024

Annual Tribal Report



Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
775 Summer Street NE, Suite 360, Salem, OR 97301-1290



Agency Overview

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The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) is a state agency that administers grants to organizations for voluntary conservation actions. OWEB grant programs support healthy watersheds, protect farm and ranchlands, build local partner capacity, protect drinking water, encourage natural climate solutions, foster landscape resiliency, and support environmental restoration. The agency offers a suite of grant and fiscal administration services depending on the fund source and customer needs. OWEB is led by an 18-member policy oversight and decision-making board. Board members represent the public, federally recognized tribes, five state natural resource agency boards and commissions, Oregon State University Extension Service, and six federal land management and natural resource agencies.

OWEB works with the nine (9) federally recognized tribes in Oregon and the Nez Perce Tribe to address watershed-scale restoration needs. OWEB operates grant programs that tribes can apply for to fund a variety of watershed management, protection, and restoration projects. Tribes can leverage those funds to meet their natural and cultural resource restoration goals and objectives.

On May 8, 2024, Oregon Governor Tina Kotek announced that Sara O’Brien was selected to be OWEB’s new Executive Director. Director O’Brien began her new role on June 24, 2024. Sara was the Executive Director of Willamette Partnership prior to joining OWEB and served in this role since 2018. In her role leading Willamette Partnership, Sara fostered a highly collaborative environment within the organization and prioritized partnership with and support to tribal government partners and indigenous organizations. Sara is a strong advocate for developing and strengthening relations with the federally recognized tribes in Oregon. Tribal partners can expect a continued emphasis on strong tribal engagement and customer service at OWEB during Sara’s leadership.

As described in the following report, OWEB engaged extensively with tribes in 2024 in a variety of ways. OWEB continued implementing recommendations from a report identifying opportunities for improvement in OWEB’s grantmaking to tribes, and we have continued awarding grants to tribes and to partnerships that included tribes. OWEB thoughtfully engaged tribes in new program scoping as well as ongoing program improvement in the rulemaking process, while also respecting that tribal capacity does not always allow for this engagement.

In 2024, OWEB received the agency’s first federal funding award that supports tribal project development grants and is extremely pleased to be offering this new program specifically offered to tribes. This program was developed in direct response to feedback from tribal staff and with significant tribal input in program design. OWEB also worked

closely with tribes regarding cultural resource protection as OWEB prepares to implement new cultural resource responsibilities.

Tribal Policy

In 2018, OWEB revised its [tribal policy](#) by working with the Legislative Commission on Indian Services (LCIS) and incorporating tribal input. In 2024, OWEB’s leadership and tribal liaison continued to work together to communicate the intent of OWEB’s Tribal Policy and identify opportunities for staff to work effectively with tribes. Tribal policy and the most recent Annual Tribal Reports may be found on the [Tribal Engagement webpage](#).

Summary of Programs and Process for Involving Tribes

OWEB works closely with tribes and seeks involvement in programs and decision-making processes at all levels of the organization. Examples of specific involvement by tribes include, but are not limited to, solicitation of information concerning proposed land or water acquisitions, participation in grant review teams, participation on Rules Advisory Committees (RACs) and additional opportunities to provide input on changes to administrative rules. The following sections describe the agency’s interactions during 2024 with the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon and the Nez Perce Tribe.

OWEB Board and Grant Programs Tribal Participation

Board Membership

The Governor appoints a tribal representative as a voting member of the OWEB Board. We have been extremely grateful for the tribal representation on the OWEB Board since 2000. The tribal representatives that have participated as Board members since 2000 are listed in the table below. The position is currently occupied by Kelly Coates, Natural Resources Program Director of the Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Tribe of Indians and has been in this role since November 2021. Kelly was recently elected to serve as Co-chair of the OWEB Board in July, 2024.

Board Member	Tribe	Period of Time Served
Delores Pigsley	Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians	1.01.2000 – 6.30.2001
Bobby Brunoe	Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs of Oregon	9.10.2001 – 6.30.2005 7.01.2005 – 6.30.2009
Eric Quaempts	Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation	7.01.2009 – 6.30.2013 7.01.2013 – 1.31.2017
Jason Robison	Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians	3.15.2017 – 7.28.2021
Kelly Coates	Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians	11.20.2021 – present

▲ *Figure 1. Summary of OWEB Board tribal representatives from 2000 to present.*

Additionally, board member Lindsay McClary serves in a public voting position. Lindsay is the Restoration Ecologist/Fish & Wildlife Policy Analyst for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, and her term began on March 1, 2022, following Senate confirmation. We are extremely grateful to have these two voting members participating on the OWEB Board. Kelly and Lindsay help identify opportunities for collaboration and ensure the OWEB Board and staff are aware of their responsibilities to involve and consider tribal interests. They also share their practical experiences as OWEB grantees and technical expertise as natural resource professionals.



▲ Photo 1 (left to right). Kelly Dirksen, Kyle McLaughlin, Stephanie Page, Lawrence Schwabe, Ken Fetcho, Lindsay McClary, Sara O'Brien, and Liz Redon on a field tour at the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde's Takilth Property.

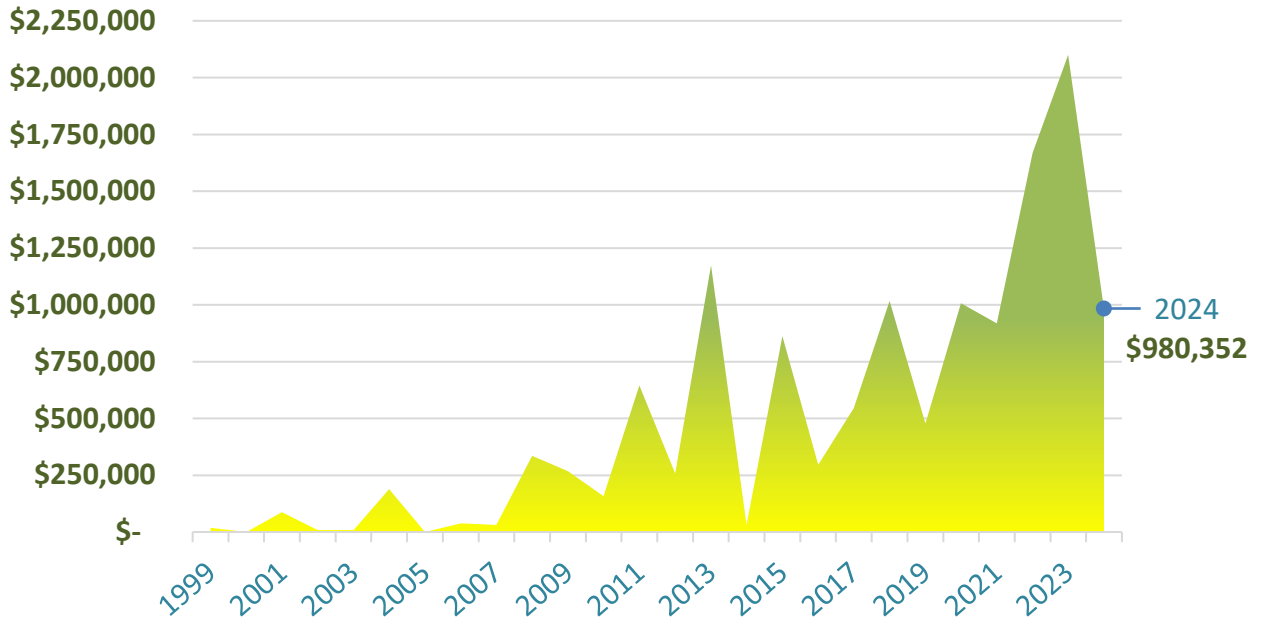
Grant Programs

Grant Applicants

OWEB grants are available to a broad range of entities, including tribes [ORS 541.375(1)]. **Since 1998, OWEB has awarded \$13,173,162 in grants to tribal governments.** Across all grant programs, OWEB provided \$980,352 to tribes in 2024. See the graph below of annual OWEB funding provided to tribes since 1998. It is important to note that this summary only includes grants that go directly to tribal governments. Tribes also receive OWEB funds from

grants to other organizations such as watershed councils and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) that then provide funding to tribes via contracts. The amount of funds that tribes receive as a contractor from an OWEB grant is much harder to consistently calculate over time due to the limitations in our funding database. However, this report will provide a few examples of OWEB grants to other grantees and how they worked with the tribe to implement restoration actions.

OWEB Grant Funding to Tribes



▲ Figure 2. Annual OWEB grant funding provided to tribes from 1998 to 2024.

In addition to eligibility on their own, tribes are often members of, or partners with, local organizations such as watershed councils. Oregon law describing watershed councils (ORS 541.388) specifically identifies “federally recognized Indian Tribes” as potential members of these local organizations. Tribes are critical partners in watershed restoration in Oregon and often contribute vital match funds to grant projects. In 2024, 12 completed grants included tribal contributions. **Across all grant programs, tribes provided \$1,631,680 in cash and \$130,884 of in-kind support to OWEB grants in 2024.** This significant match contribution demonstrates the critical role in implementing watershed restoration in Oregon as sovereign nations.



▲ *Photo 2. During construction conditions along Fivemile Creek, located upstream of Tahkenitch Lake, Douglas County. Click on the image above to watch a short drone video of this restoration project area.*



▲ *Photo 3. Post-restoration conditions completed in 2023 by the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians along Fivemile Creek to increase channel complexity and floodplain connection, additional funds from OWEB were provided in 2024 to complete Phase 2 of this restoration project. Click on the image above to watch a short drone video of this restoration project area.*

Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP)

OAHP was established by the Oregon legislature in 2017 to provide voluntary incentives to support practices that maintain or enhance both agriculture and natural resources such as fish, wildlife, and water quality on agricultural lands. The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission (Commission) oversees the program and makes funding and policy recommendations to the OWEB Board. The commission consists of 12 members who are appointed by the OWEB Board—including one member selected by the OWEB Board who is a representative of tribal interests. Amanda Lowe was appointed to this position in January of 2024. Amanda is the Soil Conservationist in the Department of Natural Resources for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, where she has worked for the last seven years to integrate the protection and sustainability of culturally significant First Foods into the management of working lands.

In 2024, the legislature allocated \$4,541,680 to the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Fund to support grantmaking for the second time. In November 2024, the Commission met to consider 10 grant applications to support the purchase of conservation easements on farm and ranch lands throughout the State.

Natural and Working Lands Fund

In 2023, House Bill 3409 allocated \$10 million to four state agencies to incentivize natural climate solutions on Oregon’s natural and working lands, while also supporting the social, economic, and health benefits of these solutions for local communities. OWEB received \$2.25 million for grants to support the adoption of natural climate solutions, with a mandate to prioritize projects administered or proposed by tribes and environmental justice communities. These funds are being distributed through two grant offerings:

Open Solicitation: \$1.5 million for Restoration and Technical Assistance grants which combine carbon sequestration or mitigation activities and community co-benefits.

Oregon Agriculture Heritage Program (OAHP): \$750,000 in funding for the development of agricultural Conservation Management Plans and then annual payments for the ecosystem service benefits for the implementation of approved plans.

As part of OWEB’s implementation of these grant offerings, the agency committed to conducting a public engagement process, with a focus on Tribal and environmental justice communities. In September 2024, OWEB opened a survey about the priorities, needs, and barriers around these funds. The survey was announced through a presentation at the State/Tribal Natural Resources Working Group, through our Tribal Liaison, and via the GovDelivery listserv. Of the 112 survey responses, 7 were from tribes and 4 were from organizations working with native communities. Responses from these 11 respondents show a high level of interest in riparian restoration, restoring deep-rooted perennial grasses, and improved forest management as well as some interest in agricultural practices. Respondents from tribes and organizations serving Native communities were especially interested in supporting Traditional Ecological Knowledge and cultural burns, restoring first

foods, and providing employment opportunities for tribal members to implement restoration projects.

Additionally, OWEB held three group listening sessions and met individually with people who were interested in providing input but unavailable for a group session. The three listening sessions and the individual conversations have highlighted the prioritization of tribes and environmental justice communities in the legislative intent and made clear the need for OWEB to focus on targeted outreach, inclusive and clear application materials, and ongoing support for applicants.

OWEB will use these results to inform the Natural and Working Lands grant offering, with the Open Solicitation and OAHF applications opening in early 2025.



▲ *Photo 4. Field tour of completed stream restoration project funded by OWEB's FIP grant program along the Clackamas River on the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Property at Austin Hot Springs.*

Small Grant Program

In OWEB's Small Grant program (OAR Chapter 695, Division 35), tribes are eligible to be members of Small Grant Teams in each of the state's 28 Small Grant areas. These Small Grant Teams have access to \$100,000 per biennium to recommend grants of up to \$15,000 each for watershed restoration projects. Other team members include watershed councils and SWCDs.

All Small Grant Teams have completed organizing for the 2023-2025 biennium. Tribes with reservation, tribal, ceded lands, or usual and accustomed areas located partially or entirely within the team's area are invited to participate on Small Grant Teams. Representatives

from all nine of the federally recognized tribes in Oregon participate on 20 of the 28 Small Grants Teams. Some tribes sit on several teams and some teams have more than one tribe participating.

Open Solicitation Grant Program

OWEB solicits grant applications twice a year through the Open Solicitation grant program. During 2024, 3 grants totaling \$371,374 were awarded to tribes:

- **Two** grants **totaling \$297,124** to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- **One** grant for **\$74,250** was provided to the Nez Perce Tribe



▲ *Photo 5. Pre-restoration conditions on the Lostine River.*



▲ *Photo 6. Post-restoration conditions in the Lostine River. Restoration was implemented with OWEB funds by the Nez Perce Tribe in 2024.*

OWEB's Regional Program Representatives (RPRs) have regular contact with appropriate tribal staff. They meet with interested tribes before grant application submission and throughout the life of each grant to ensure tribes can meet their goals and objectives. Tribes often partner with watershed councils and SWCDs by helping manage the projects and at times receive funding to implement projects as contractors. In addition, tribes may be applicants, provide cash match funds, be landowners, contractors for project implementation, partners, board members of the applicant's organization, or supporters of the applicant (such as writing letters of support). Tribal participation is critical to partner success and crucial in making a meaningful impact on the health of our watersheds and communities in Oregon.

Open Solicitation Grant Program – Regional Review Teams

Applications received through OWEB's Open Solicitation grant program are reviewed by 1 of 6 Regional Review Teams, comprised of state, federal, and tribal natural resource professionals. All 6 Regional Review Teams have at least 1 tribal natural resource professional participating in the review process. In 2024, 7 tribal agency representatives participated in OWEB Regional Review Teams, including representatives from the Nez Perce Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

Land Acquisition Grant Program

OWEB's Land Acquisition grant program provides funding for projects that acquire interests in land from a willing seller to address the conservation needs of priority habitats and species. OWEB notifies all tribes after receiving a land acquisition application to solicit input in the decision-making process. In addition, all tribes are notified when a public hearing date is set to include them in this part of the review process. Finally, OWEB notifies all the tribes once a funding recommendation has been made by OWEB staff allowing tribes to provide additional input before the OWEB Board's funding decision.

In July 2024 OWEB provided \$2,280,584 to the Deschutes Land Trust to acquire a 734-acre parcel that features ponderosa and lodgepole pine forests, wet and dry meadows, wetlands, and 2 miles of Paulina Creek. Project partners include the USFS, the City of La Pine, Deschutes River Conservancy, the Klamath Tribes, and the citizens of La Pine. This project received written and verbal testimony to express support from the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

In 2023, OWEB started focused, individual conversations with natural resources staff from the 9 federally recognized tribes in Oregon and the Nez Perce tribe to discuss OWEB's Land Acquisition grant program. This outreach builds on a 2021 external assessment of how OWEB grant practices impact tribes ([Alli Miller 2021](#)). The assessment was completed and presented to the OWEB Board in October 2021. The outreach also builds on work by Jennifer Arnold to complete the [Partnership Learning Project Report 3](#) that was presented to the board in October 2023.

These assessments found existing barriers and misperceptions that impact tribes' abilities to pursue and receive OWEB land acquisition funds. OWEB staff aimed to better understand each tribe's interest in this grant program, discuss any questions or concerns they may have, and help identify barriers and solutions to tribes accessing these funds. OWEB continued to meet individually with all the tribes into the Spring of 2024 to hear from each of them.

In early 2024, OWEB staff briefed interim leadership regarding feedback from focused conversations with each tribe's natural resources staff about OWEB's Land Acquisition grant program. OWEB prioritized the next steps, including providing clarification about tribal access for First Foods harvest and conducting legal research to explore options for granting with tribal sovereigns. OWEB started working on these next steps after the appointment and onboarding of a permanent executive director in July 2024. Staff will work with OWEB's tribal liaison to follow up with each tribe once follow-up information and options are ready for discussion. The intent of this work is to increase tribal engagement with and access to OWEB's Land Acquisition grant program in the future.

Water Acquisition Grant Program

OWEB's Water Acquisition grant program provides funding for programs or projects that acquire an interest in water from a willing seller to increase instream flow. Like the Land Acquisition grant program, OWEB notifies tribes after a water acquisition grant application is received and once a recommendation has been made. This allows multiple opportunities to provide input during the decision-making process. Additionally, staff engaged tribes to recruit a representative on the Water Acquisition grant program review team to help review and recommend projects for funding. Anton Chiono, Habitat Conservation project leader for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is participating on this review team and brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the review process.

Focused Investment Partnership Program

In 2024, tribes continued to participate in the Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) grant program. The program's implementation funding provides opportunities for tribes and others to work collaboratively on long-term, landscape-scale programmatic restoration initiatives. These initiatives create measurable outcomes within priority areas that were identified by the OWEB Board.



▲ *Photo 7. (Left to Right) Elva Manquera, Lindsay McClary, and Jaime Stephens attend a Klamath Siskiyou Oak Network Focused Investment Partnership field tour as part of the project review process.*

OWEB invested in the following four new FIP Initiatives in April 2024:

- **Integrated Wetlands Management in Harney Closed Lakes Basin** includes the Burns Paiute Tribe as a core partner and serves on the technical review team
- **Hood River Basin Aquatic Habitat Restoration Initiative** includes the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs as a core partner
- Lake County All Lands Restoration Initiative
- **Oregon Sage-Grouse Habitat Initiative** technical review team includes Collin Williams, rangeland ecologist with the Burns Paiute Tribe.

Once FIP initiative funds are awarded to high-performing partnerships, tribes that are part of the partnerships may pursue and receive grant funding from OWEB. **During 2024, two grants totaling \$550,000 were awarded to tribes:**

- One grant was amended to add \$400,000 to an existing grant agreement with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.
- One grant of \$150,000 was awarded to the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

Below is a summary of 3 FIP grants that have gone to local partners who are working with tribes to implement projects with their expertise on tribal lands or public lands that are important to tribes.

CTWS Side Channel Restoration Implementation

This OWEB restoration grant for \$233,338 leverages \$426,000 in match provided by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. In the summer of 2024, the Clackamas River Basin Council (CRBC), in collaboration with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, implemented a large-scale restoration project on tribally owned land in the upper Clackamas River watershed. The project addressed unauthorized camping and site modification at the hot springs, restored Clackamas River connectivity to two relic side channels, installed large wood to benefit fish habitat, and installed riparian plantings on seven acres. This project benefits salmon, steelhead, bull trout, and Pacific lamprey.



▲ *Photo 8. Screenshot of large wood being placed in side channel of the Clackamas River on the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs property. Click on the image above to watch a short video produced by the Clackamas River Basin Council to learn more about this collaborative project.*

Brave Buffalo Oak Habitat Restoration Project

This OWEB restoration grant for \$35,000 to Lomakatsi Restoration leverages \$85,000 from the USFS Mt. Hood Indian Youth Service Corp Project. Lomakatsi will implement a project at the Brave Buffalo Memorial Sundance Camp on the Mt. Hood National Forest, an active inter-tribal Native American ceremonial area in the heart of the East Cascades Oak Partnership priority geography in Wasco County. The project will promote oak survival and adaptation on 23 acres and will include ecological thinning of conifers encroaching on Oregon white oaks and culturally burning the materials generated from the thinning.

CTWS Oak Prescribed Burn and Mastication Project

This OWEB restoration grant for \$138,197 leverages approximately \$74,000 in match provided by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs (CTWS). CTWS will implement an oak thinning and beneficial burn project on their reservation in 2025. Planned treatments include mastication and reseeding efforts on 50 acres, a prescribed burn and seeding on 54 acres, and thinning on 15 acres to increase oak vigor, reduce conifer encroachment, and improve understory conditions.

In addition to participating as a core partner and receiving funding to implement projects, tribes play a crucial role in the FIP Grant Program by serving on the technical review teams to help evaluate and provide constructive feedback on project-level applications. For example, the Klamath Siskiyou Oak Network, funded in 2022, has 2 tribal representatives on the technical review team, Lindsay McClary from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Joe Scott from the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.

Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) Technical Assistance Program

FIP Technical Assistance grants offer two tracks:

1. Partnership *Development* to produce or enhance a Strategic Action Plan and governance documents.
2. Partnership *Capacity* to support Strategic Action Plan coordination and implementation.

Partnership Technical Assistance applications were received in May 2024 and were awarded by the OWEB Board in July 2024. Thirteen (13) applications were received by the deadline, requesting a total of \$1.65 million. Two (2) applications applied for *Capacity* funding and 11 applications applied for *Development* funding. Applications were submitted from all of OWEB's 6 regions. Five (5) partnerships received grant funding and 3 of the funded partnerships include tribes as partners:

- **Deschutes Partnership** includes the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation.
- **John Day Basin Partnership** includes the Burns Paiute Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation and Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation.
- **Clackamas Basin Partnership** includes the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation.

New Grant Programs

Tribal Project Development Grant Program

In 2024 OWEB continued to apply what we learned from the 2021 assessment of how OWEB's granting practices impact federally recognized tribes' ability to apply for and receive grant funding to meet their watershed enhancement goals and objectives. OWEB developed its first-ever tribal set-aside grant program in response to feedback we received from the federally recognized tribes that additional capacity funding is needed to engage in

the development of restoration projects and that OWEB grant programs are extremely competitive.

To help fund this new grant program, OWEB requested and was awarded \$900,000 from NOAA's Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) to offer Tribal Project Development grants. At the July 2024 OWEB Board meeting, the board approved an additional \$1 million to the 2023-2025 Spending Plan for Tribal Project Development Grants. These funds will be available to support tribal capacity to participate in salmon recovery efforts in Oregon and to engage in work associated with implementing the Programmatic Agreement (in development) between OWEB and NOAA. Funds must be used in PCSRF-eligible geographies and on PCSRF-eligible project types. The one exception to this is the Burns Paiute Tribe, which will be able to work in a broader geography because they will be awarded using Lottery funds.

The details of this offering were developed in close coordination with OWEB Board members Kelly Coates and Lindsay McClary. In addition, OWEB hosted four informational webinars with tribes to discuss the details of the offering and answer any questions. These webinars were well attended, and tribal feedback helped us refine guidance on what projects are eligible for funding under this new grant program. The grant offering opened on October 25, 2024. Applications have a rolling deadline to provide flexibility for tribes to receive internal approval before applying to OWEB. We have heard from most tribes that they plan to apply by March 2025.

Klamath Water Quality Improvements Grant Program (Interim Measure 11)

Interim Measure 11 from the Amended Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement (KHSAs) includes funding to address water quality improvements in the Klamath River via restoration and conservation actions in the Klamath Basin in Oregon. The emphasis of Interim Measure 11 (IM11) is nutrient reduction projects. PacifiCorp, in consultation with the Interim Measures Implementation Committee, developed a list of project categories to be implemented to fulfill the objective of IM11. PacifiCorp has provided funding of up to \$6,433,500 million for design/engineering and implementation of projects. This funding will be administered by OWEB through the Klamath Water Quality Improvements Grant Program.

A steering committee, facilitated by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, was established to assist OWEB with program implementation. OWEB is the Fiscal Agent and will award IM11 funds for projects approved by the Steering Committee until the funds are exhausted. The Steering Committee is comprised of members from the following organizations: Oregon Water Resources Department, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Bureau of Reclamation, Yurok Tribe, Karuk Tribe, The Klamath Tribes, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board and Aquatic Ecosystem Sciences.

This grant offering is currently open and the tribes in the Klamath Basin are eligible to apply for funds to fulfill the objective of IM11.

Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program

In June 2023, the Oregon Legislature passed [House Bill \(HB\) 2010](#) that, combined with other legislation, allocates \$5 million to establish the Drinking Water Source Protection (DWSP) grant program at OWEB. Through the DWSP grant program, OWEB will provide grants to public water suppliers to protect, restore, or enhance sources of drinking water through land acquisition and conservation. While the legislation does not specifically mention tribes, it does focus on water suppliers that serve rural communities and/or lower-income populations, which is generally inclusive of tribes.

OWEB led a rulemaking process in the first half of 2024. Tribes were invited to participate on the Rulemaking Advisory Committee (RAC). While tribes were unable to participate on the RAC, OWEB staff sent an email with the draft rules to each tribe and invited them to provide written or verbal comments before the OWEB Board approved the new rules. In addition, OWEB staff worked with other agencies, including the US Environmental Protection Agency, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, and Oregon Health Authority, to ensure that the language in rule was specifically inclusive of tribes. As a result, “Tribal Public Water Suppliers” are listed as eligible applicants, and all aspects of the rule set (OAR 695-048) have been reviewed through a lens of tribal inclusivity.

OWEB staff have conducted a significant amount of tribal engagement to develop this new program, including a survey of potential applicants, a presentation to the State-Tribal Natural Resources Work Group, attendance at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) Tribal Water Summit, an informational webinar, and program announcements. In addition, OWEB’s tribal liaison emailed this information directly to tribes to encourage their engagement in this new grant program. Recently, OWEB staff began collaborating with the University of Oregon to announce this grant program webinar through the PNW Tribal Climate Change Network newsletter to encourage tribal participation in the survey, webinar, and program announcements.

Once the grant cycle closes in December 2024, OWEB will send applications to tribes so that they know of the projects proposed in their areas and invite their feedback on these proposed projects. In addition, OWEB has been working with the tribes to recruit them to participate on the review team. As of now, Lawrence Schwabe, from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde has agreed to participate on the review team and we are hoping other tribes will join.

Other Grant Program Involvements

The Upper Middle Fork John Day River Intensively Monitored Watershed (IMW) is a long-term, large-scale monitoring effort to evaluate watershed restoration projects. OWEB participates on the steering team and assists with securing funding for several aspects of the program. The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs continues to be a key participant in

the Upper Middle Fork John Day River IMW and received \$19,000 in funding this year to continue their important work in this long-term watershed monitoring effort. In 2024, Supervisory Monitoring Biologist Lauren Osborne and Watershed Restoration Coordinator for the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Stefan Kelly contributed greatly to the success of the [2024 IMW Summary Report](#) by contributing chapters, hosting a field trip to the Oxbow Conservation Area (see photo below) and presenting findings to the OWEB Board during their October 2024 meeting.

In May 2024, OWEB awarded a Telling the Restoration Story grant in the amount of \$39,978 to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde to use existing data to show how OWEB funds have supported the integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into prairie restoration. With participation from the Institute for Applied Ecology (IAE), the project will summarize three phases of collaboration on Plants for People efforts. The products will provide an important example of how to integrate TEK with the OWEB funding model (OWEB has funded many restoration projects through Lottery funds, which come with some constitutional constraints). There is growing awareness about the challenges of restoring upland sites related to removing historic land management practices by tribes who created these habitats, but there is a lack of understanding of how to reintroduce TEK as a restoration strategy within the OWEB funding model. The proposed products from this project are anticipated to connect TEK with fish and wildlife habitat restoration, while also describing important cultural connections.



▲ *Photo 9. Field tour of Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs' Oxbow Conservation Area located along the Middle Fork John Day River, September 2024.*

Tribal Liaison

In conformance with OWEB's tribal policy, OWEB's designated staff person, Ken Fetcho, continues to operate as a tribal liaison for the agency. The tribal liaison is responsible for ensuring that OWEB's programs and policy development adhere to our tribal policy. This includes coordinating program and policy notices to tribal natural resource key contacts and providing training to staff as appropriate.

In 2024, OWEB's tribal liaison continued to notify OWEB employees of the provisions of ORS 182.162 to 182.168 and its tribal policy to emphasize the importance of OWEB's tribal policy to new employees and board members. These provisions are discussed intentionally at multiple touchpoints throughout the year. These provisions are reviewed at the all-staff meeting when information is requested to write the annual tribal report. They are also reviewed when the final report is presented to staff in celebration of what we have accomplished to develop and foster relations with tribes in Oregon.

Starting in 2019, each new employee and board member is briefed on the tribal policy and receives a copy of the current annual tribal report. In addition, the tribal liaison co-presented with Board Member Kelly Coates at the January 2024 board meeting to describe OWEB's Government-to-Government relationship with the federally recognized tribes. This presentation described how the provisions of ORS 182.162 to 182.168 and OWEB's tribal policy provide the guiding framework for this relationship and highlighted the accomplishments that were summarized in the 2023 Annual Tribal Report. The presentation also spotlighted specific examples of how the guiding framework and OWEB's mission create a positive atmosphere for a collaborative and productive relationship to meet joint goals and objectives that improve natural and cultural resources.

The tribal liaison met with Trey Wall, Natural Resources Director, and Diane Teeman, Cultural Resources Director of the Burns Paiute Tribe, to explore the potential to plan future training for OWEB staff. The purpose of the training is to learn more about the Burns Paiute Tribe and learn how OWEB can be a better partner in areas of mutual interest. OWEB is interested in learning more about how the Burns Paiute Tribe's government is structured, their cultural and natural resource priorities, and how this might influence how they pursue our funding. This training was originally scheduled to occur in October 2023 but has been rescheduled for OWEB's all-staff meeting in February 2025.

Cultural Resources Protection

OWEB continues to emphasize the importance of grantees and grant project managers complying with regulations that protect cultural resources. OWEB grants pay for the expenses to comply with cultural resource regulations and legally implement watershed improvement projects.

In 2022, OWEB and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) began developing a Programmatic Agreement for projects funded by the Pacific Coastal Salmon Restoration Fund (PCSRF). This agreement will delegate the Section 106 responsibilities of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) to OWEB. Implementation of this agreement is anticipated in early 2025. As part of this agreement, OWEB will take on several responsibilities, including reviewing projects, determining eligibility, and assessing a project's effect on historic properties. Additionally, OWEB will consult with other federal, state, and tribal governments involved in PCSRF projects.

In early 2024, OWEB hired Shane James, OWEB's cultural resource specialist, to implement the Programmatic Agreement. Previously, Shane worked at the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office for several years and is passionate about restoring natural and cultural resources. Starting in March 2024, Courtney Shaff, OWEB's monitoring and reporting program manager, along with Shane James, reached out to Oregon's federally recognized tribes and the Nez Perce Tribe to schedule meetings. These meetings provided an opportunity to form relationships to discuss the implementation of the Programmatic Agreement and to gather input from tribal staff regarding how consultation with their respective tribes should be conducted.

OWEB has had the opportunity to meet with cultural and natural resources staff from several tribes, including the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians, the Coquille Indian Tribe, and the Klamath Tribes. These productive meetings have exceeded our original intentions by connecting various aspects of individual programs to the shared goal of salmonid recovery. OWEB is committed to meeting with the remaining tribes in the coming months as we finalize the Programmatic Agreement. This effort will provide an opportunity to help OWEB further foster our relationships with the tribes in Oregon as we work on a topic of the utmost importance to tribal governments.



▲ *Photo 10. Mid-construction conditions along Birch Creek. Restoration implemented by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in 2024 with funding from OWEB.*

Environmental Restoration Fund/Environmental Restoration Council

In the February 2024 regular legislative session, the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 1561 which established the Environmental Restoration Council (ERC). The council will be responsible for overseeing the administration of the Environmental Restoration Fund (ERF), consisting of the proceeds from the State of Oregon vs Monsanto settlement over polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). The legislation includes important provisions regarding funding distribution to tribal governments. The legislation also created significant new responsibilities for OWEB.

During the first few decades, the ERF will operate like an endowment, with OWEB responsible for administering the interest generated at the direction of the Council. OWEB is allowed a certain percentage of the total settlement fund (0.25%) for administration and received an initial \$5 million allocation to implement this legislation. The rest of the interest will be distributed according to a formula in the legislation. ERF will flow into 3 funding groups. One of the funding groups is the Tribal Nation Natural Resource Program Fund; it will receive 25% of the interest distribution. Transfers from this fund will be distributed in equal amounts to each of the 9 federally recognized tribes in Oregon unless the council adopts a different proportion by rule.

OWEB will work in coordination with the Governor's Office to establish and provide staff support to the ERC. OWEB received several new positions as part of this legislation, including a program manager who will work closely with the ERC.

OWEB worked with the Governor's Office on the recruitment and hiring process for the program manager and selected Nicole Maness. Nicole comes to OWEB from the Willamette Partnership and will start her new role on January 2, 2025. After Nicole begins her new role, OWEB will continue to work with the Governor's Office to establish the ERC, adopt the rules outlined in SB 1561, and develop priorities and processes for funding distribution. This work will involve extensive engagement and coordination with tribal governments, disproportionately impacted communities, and agency and organizational partners.

Small Grant Program Rulemaking

At their July 2023 meeting, the OWEB Board initiated rulemaking for OWEB's Small Grant program. OWEB formed a Rulemaking Advisory Committee (RAC) to provide input on how potential changes may be incorporated. All tribes were invited to participate on the RAC because tribal participation in the Small Grant program includes all 9 federally recognized tribes in Oregon and the Nez Perce Tribe. Annaliese Ramthun with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde served on the RAC; we greatly valued her time and input into this process. In addition, OWEB staff sent an email with the draft rules to each tribe and invited them to provide written or verbal comments before the OWEB Board approved the revised rules.

At the October 2024 meeting, the board approved amendments to the OWEB Small Grant program administrative rules that, among other changes, broaden applicant eligibility to the program and expand opportunities to participate on the Small Grant Teams that help administer the program.

Meetings with Tribes

The tribal liaison has continued to attend the State/Tribal Natural Resources Workgroup quarterly meetings in 2024 to provide relevant updates to tribes and to better understand issues of importance to the tribes. In addition, Shane James, OWEB's new Cultural Resource Specialist has regularly attended the Cultural Cluster quarterly meetings in 2024 to provide updates on the Programmatic Agreement that OWEB is negotiating with NOAA and the State Historic Preservation Office and better understand cultural resources issues tribes are working on in Oregon.

In 2024, OWEB staff accelerated efforts to directly engage with tribes' natural resources staff to receive input on OWEB program development and to pursue learning opportunities to improve their capacity to promote collaboration with tribes. In June 2024, Dr. Alexa Maine was invited to provide a presentation at OWEB's all-staff meeting. Alexa is a biologist with the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation's Freshwater Mussel Research and Restoration Project. Alexa's presentation taught staff about the cultural and ecological significance of freshwater mussels and how they fit into the natural resources department's

First Food Policy to inform the restoration and stewardship of their traditional homelands. Alexa highlighted their efforts to educate restoration practitioners to incorporate freshwater mussels early into the restoration planning effort to avoid unintended negative impacts on these imperiled species. This training was extremely valuable in helping OWEB staff learn about specific OWEB-funded restoration projects that have negatively impacted freshwater mussels. Alexa emphasized that these impacts can be avoided by encouraging our grantees to survey for these important species during the restoration scoping and design phase—before implementation occurs.

OWEB’s Water Acquisition Coordinator and Drinking Water Source Protection Specialist both attended the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) Changing Currents Water Summit in North Bend, Oregon. This provided an opportunity to learn more about tribal priorities, concerns, and accomplishments around water availability for communities and aquatic species. Staff provided an overview of OWEB grant opportunities for watershed restoration and land and water acquisition projects. In addition, OWEB’s Climate and Water Coordinator attended the National Tribal and Indigenous Climate Conference. One session on collaborative approaches to climate change described the community consultation that went into a mural designed to incorporate culturally significant foods into public art—to learn how the conference integrated art, spirituality, and shared resilience into the agenda. Another session on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) in federal decision making provided a helpful history of the efforts to get TEK recognized and considered in US governmental processes. This conference was beneficial for understanding Indigenous-led contributions to climate mitigation and the ongoing resilience strategies communities are using to respond.

In June 2024, OWEB’s Executive Director, Deputy Director, Willamette Region Program Representative, and Tribal Liaison met in person with natural resource program staff from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde to tour their Native Plant Nursery, and recently acquired lands through funding from the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program. This tour included a visit to a completed restoration project that removed conifers to improve native oak habitat and a visit to a planned project site that will restore streamside native vegetation by removing an aging hazelnut orchard. Spending a day with the tribes’ natural resources staff provided OWEB an opportunity to hear about their approach to restoration and what factors are considered to scope, fund, and implement restoration projects that improve watershed health. This meeting was also valuable in discussing other funding opportunities OWEB has available to implement and monitor restoration projects on their tribal lands and with neighboring partners.

In July 2024, board member Lindsay McClary led the OWEB Board on a tour of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde’s Rattlesnake Butte property. The tour focused on managing prairie and oak woodland habitats through traditional prescribed burning. Historically, the eastern coastal foothills would have featured many similar hilltop “balds” of open prairie, providing a rich habitat for various species. Lindsay McClary shared how prescribed burns were used to clear leaf litter, insects, and old acorns from under oak trees, to prepare for the next acorn harvest. The tour emphasized the importance of training

youth in cultural burning practices to prevent wildfires and support firefighting efforts. Being on-site with agency leadership and tribal partners provided valuable insights into enhancing wildfire resiliency.

In August 2024, the new executive directors of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and the Oregon Water Resources Department jointly reached out to the federally recognized tribes in Oregon to offer to meet with each tribe. This was an opportunity for them to learn more about each tribe's history, culture, and current initiatives to help them align their efforts with tribal values and aspirations, ultimately leading to more effective and inclusive resource management. To date, the directors have met with the Klamath Tribes tribal council, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Tribal Council, and plan to meet with the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation Board of Trustees and Natural Resources leadership on December 19th. These meetings have supported coordinated dialogue between the three agency directors and the leadership of each tribe on water policy and other natural resource issues. The directors would like to continue to meet in person with the remaining tribes in 2025 to ensure they have an opportunity to learn what is important to each tribe to identify areas of collaboration.



▲ *Photo 11. OWEB staff and board members attend a field trip at Rattlesnake Butte hosted by Lindsay McClary OWEB Board member and Natural Resources staff from Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, July 2024.*

We hope that by expanding OWEB staff's learning opportunities and tribal engagement we are increasing OWEB's capacity to develop and foster our relationships between OWEB and each federally recognized tribe in Oregon. OWEB looks forward to continuing to meet with all the tribes on their lands to learn more about their cultural and natural resources priorities in 2025.