U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The Coastal Program

Success in Oregon

Caring for Our Coastal Habitats

Western snowy plover habitat on the southern Oregon Coast. Photo by Kathleen Castelein/Oregon National Heritage Information Center.

The Coastal Program in Oregon

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program is a non-regulatory program that relies on partnership building to protect and restore wetland, riparian, and upland coastal habitats. Since its establishment in 2002, the Coastal Program in Oregon has collaborated with Federal, State, tribal, and private partners to improve fish habitat, control invasive species, conduct habitat assessments, and provide technical assistance. In addition, a variety of outreach and education programs are being implemented to increase awareness and promote stewardship of Oregon's coastal habitats.

Coho salmon in an Oregon coastal stream. Photo by David Pitkin/USFWS.

Oregon's Scenic Coast

The Oregon Coast region consists of 320 miles of sandy and rocky shoreline and contains a wealth of habitats: sand dunes, rock islands and headlands, estuaries, streams, riparian wetlands, wooded uplands, and remnant old growth forests comprised of Sitka spruce and Western hemlock. These habitats habor federally threatened and endangered species including the western snowy plover, coho salmon, northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, Oregon silverspot butterfly, and western lily, and support some of the most important seabird nesting colonies in the United States. Coastal rocks and sand spits provide breeding and haul-out sites for seals and sea lions.

There are a variety of land ownerships along the coast. These include federally owned lands such as the Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge's tidal estuaries, the Bureau of Land Management's New River Area of Critical Environmental Concern, and the United States Forest Service's Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area; state-owned lands such as the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's Bandon State Natural Area; and private lands.

Coastal Program Goals

The Oregon Coastal Program is working to restore tidal wetlands which have declined by more than 40 percent in fourteen of seventeen coastal estuaries. These wetlands provide valuable habitat for a diverse array of fish and wildlife including waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, small mammals, amphibians, and anadromous fish.

One of the most valuable services of the Oregon Coastal Program is the ability to provide resources to watershed councils in Oregon's coastal communities. The councils were established by Oregon through legislation to focus on watershed restoration.

Another important role is to participate and assist the Washington/Oregon Snowy Plover Working Group. This interagency group coordinates monitoring and recovery initiatives for the western snowy plover and includes Federal, State, and local agencies from Oregon and Washington.

The Oregon Coastal Program is working to control invasive species, such as European beachgrass. This grass was first introduced in the early

Habitat restoration site at the Siletz Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Central Oregon Coast. Photo by David Pitkin/USFWS.

1900's for dune stablilization. It outcompetes native vegetation and encroaches on habitat of the western snowy plover.

The Oregon Coastal Program strives to educate the public on the importance of restoring and protecting our natural resources. Educational initiatives are underway to provide resources to school districts and information to the public on natural resource stewardship.

Project Examples

Estuarine Wetland Restoration. The Oregon Coastal Program, in partnership with Ducks Unlimited, the Siletz Indian Tribe, and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, is working to restore 100 acres of estuarine wetland at Siletz Bay National Wildlife Refuge. This project is one of the largest estuarine wetland restoration projects on the Oregon Coast.

Snowy Plover Habitat Restoration. In cooperation with the Oregon National Guard and the Forest Service, the Coastal Program will restore 270 acres on the central Oregon Coast by mechanically removing European beach grass and restoring open sand habitat for the plover. The Forest Service will maintain and manage the site and the Guard will use the project as a training exercise.

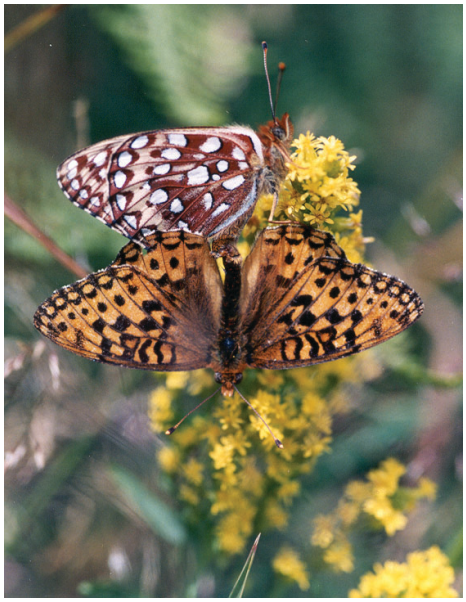
Development of techniques for restoring coastal grasslands. The Oregon Coastal Program is implementing on-the-ground experiments to determine the best techniques for restoring coastal grasslands for the threatened Oregon silverspot butterfly. The Nature Conservancy, Clatsop County Soil and Water Conservation District, the North Coast Lands Conservancy, and the Army National Guard's Camp Rilea are project cooperators.

Prioritization of watersheds. The Oregon Coastal Program is cooperating with Siuslaw, Nehalem, Umpqua and Smith River Watershed Councils, Pacific Coast Joint Venture, and local communities to identify and prioritize sites in the Siuslaw, Nehalem, and Umpqua River estuaries for tidal wetland restoration using GIS analysis and field investigations.

Western snowy plover. Photo by David Pitkin/USFWS.

Snowy plover media package. The Oregon Coastal Program is working with the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and the Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center to produce a snowy plover media package. The media package includes short video clips and a compact disc with images of plovers, habitat, threats, management and monitoring methods.

The Coastal Program initiated a pilot project with the Lincoln County School District to facilitate environmental education opportunities for students on the central Oregon Coast. Coastal Program funding will pay for transportation costs associated with field trips to coastal wetland habitats.



Oregon silverspot butterflies mating. Photo by Richard Szlemp/USFWS.

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