



In Oregon, Thirty Years of Success

For more than 30 years, the Endangered Species Act has helped prevent the extinction of our national treasures. Because of the act, beloved symbols of America such as the bald eagle and the peregrine falcon are thriving and native species to Oregon such as the Columbia white-tailed deer and bull trout are recovering due to habitat conservation efforts.

Only nine of the 1,800 species protected by the act have been declared extinct since its passage in 1973. Such an astonishing success rate makes the act a true symbol of our nation's commitment to protecting our natural heritage for future generations. It is also an example of the progress that can be made when communities work together to conserve their local wildlife and habitat. With the participation of communities, business and government, less than one percent of development projects reviewed under the act have been halted, proving that we can conserve wildlife without sacrificing progress. With the creation of jobs from tourism and outdoor recreation related to endangered species, it can truly be said that people all over Oregon benefit from the act.

Oregon currently has 56 endangered and threatened species (39 animals and 17 plants).

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Columbia White-Tailed Deer

First noticed by Lewis and Clark along the lower Columbia River in 1806, the Columbia white-tailed deer once extended along the lower Columbia River and throughout the Willamette and Umpqua basins in lands sandwiched by the Cascade and Coast ranges. But the draining of their wetland habitats and unrestricted hunting reduced whitetails to two populations, one in Douglas County and the other in lower Columbia. The deer were deemed endangered 10 years before the Endangered Species Act was passed, when the population was estimated at less than 500 animals.

To save the deer, county, state and federal authorities launched a recovery plan that set a goal of rebuilding the Umpqua herds to 1,500 animals. The

federal Bureau of Land Management acquired a 6,580-acre ranch and designated it whitetail habitat. By 1996, Douglas County sported a whitetail population of around 5,000 animals, and the Umpqua's whitetails became the first mammal dropped from state's endangered species rolls. The federal government delisted the Douglas County population in 2003, making the Columbia white-tailed deer's recovery a true Endangered Species Act success story.

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Bull trout

Steelhead and Bull Trout

Throughout the 20th century, most of the summer flows in the Walla Walla River were diverted for irrigation. During the summer, all water flowing through the main stem of the river was diverted at the Little Walla Walla Diversion, Smith Ditch Diversion, and Eastside Ditch Diversion in Milton-Freewater, Oregon. As a result, the river would dry up, leaving many trout stranded in pools where they would eventually die. In addition to irrigation, the natural flow and health of the river has been affected by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood control levees, gravel mining, urbanization, forest management, livestock grazing, and flood control operations. All this contributed to a steady decline in the population of steelhead and bull trout and their subsequent listing as threatened species.

But something different happened in the Walla Walla Basin. The irrigation districts agreed to stop diverting all of the river's water, working out the details of an agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that was shared with and approved by conservation groups. Beginning in 2000, three irrigation districts pledged to keep a minimum water flow in the river to help the fish. While there is a long way to go to recover steelhead and bull trout in the Walla Walla River, there is no longer any need for "fish rescues" from stranded pools. The river channel has also begun to meander more, and vegetation is growing again in the gravel-cobble channel. These improvements point to a brighter future for these trout species.

Economic Benefits of Protecting Wildlife and Habitat

Ecotourism represents a huge economic force in the country. Each year, millions of Americans travel and pay to view wildlife and take in all that nature has to offer. Much of this activity takes place on the hundreds of national wildlife refuges spread across the country. Nationwide, visits to wildlife refuges generated more than \$1.3 billion in income for local and state economies and an additional \$150 million in tax revenues. Indeed, national wildlife refuges received nearly twice as many visitors in 2004 than Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Yellowstone, Acadia, Grand Teton, and Statue of Liberty national parks combined. And the vast majority of those visitors came from outside the area, further testament to the ability of these special places to draw people and dollars to a region.

In Oregon alone, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in the southeastern part of the state generated \$2.6 million in

economic activity for the local area, to name just one of Oregon's natural treasures.

For more information on protecting endangered plants and animals and the success of the Endangered Species Act, please visit www.saveesa.org.



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