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NRCS Farm Bill Information

December 13, 2022

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Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)



- No IRA funds will be disbursed after 9/30/2031
- Provides \$20 billion to support USDA’s conservation programs that yield climate-related benefits while building resilience in agricultural operations. *(For practices, enhancements and activities that improve soil carbon, reduce nitrogen losses, or reduce, capture, avoid, or sequester CO2, methane, or NOx emissions associated with ag. production)*
 - \$8.45 billion for the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#)
 - FY23- \$250 million
 - FY24- \$1.75 billion
 - FY25- \$3.0 billion
 - FY26- \$3.45 billion
 - \$3.25 billion for the [Conservation Stewardship Program](#)
 - FY23- \$250 million
 - FY24- \$500 million
 - FY25- \$1.0 billion
 - FY26- \$1.5 billion
 - \$1.4 billion for the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#) (for easements or interests in land that will most reduce, capture, avoid, or sequester CO2, methane or NOx emissions associated with land eligible for the program)
 - FY23- \$100 million (EPD said most of this FY’s \$ would be pushed to FY24)
 - FY24- \$200 million
 - FY25- \$500 million
 - FY26- \$600 million
 - \$4.95 billion for the [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) (shall prioritize partnership agreements that support the implementation of conservation projects that assist...)
 - FY23- \$250 million
 - FY24- \$800 million
 - FY25- \$1.5 billion
 - FY26- \$2.4 billion
 - \$1 billion for conservation technical assistance
 - \$300 million to measure, evaluate, quantify carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emission reductions from conservation investments

IRA Law <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ169/PLAW-117publ169.pdf>



NRCS Climate Change Adaptation Plan

NRCS finalized the NRCS Climate Change Adaptation Plan, an agency-specific plan that identifies and prioritizes climate vulnerabilities and actions to integrate climate change into its programs, operations and decision-making. The plan provides a framework organized around seven main action areas: –

- **Action Area 1:** Increase climate literacy and staffing capacity to deliver assistance that is reflective of climate change
- **Action Area 2:** Enhance science, research, and data for understanding, measuring, and tracking climate-related impacts and outcomes
- **Action Area 3:** Integrate climate information into current business procedures, assessments, and opportunities
- **Action Area 4:** Ensure current and future conservation investments are reflective of climate change needs
- **Action Area 5:** Assess and address disproportionate climate change impacts on vulnerable communities
- **Action Area 6:** Strengthen partnerships and collaboration to address climate change
- **Action Area 7:** Address risks to agency infrastructure

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/guides-and-instructions/nrcs-climate-adaptation-plan>



Climate- Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Activities

NRCS climate-smart agriculture and forestry mitigation practices are divided into mitigation categories and delivered through NRCS programs such as EQIP and CSP

- **Soil Health** – Reducing emissions and enhancing soil carbon sequestration.
- **Nitrogen Management** – Implementing the 4Rs of nitrogen management and reducing nitrous oxide, a potent greenhouse gas. The 4Rs are Right Source, Right Rate, Right Time and Right Place.
- **Livestock Waste Management** – Reducing potent methane emissions from manure.
- **Grazing Land Management** – Reducing emissions and building soil carbon stocks in grazing systems.
- **Agroforestry, Forestry and Upland Wildlife Habitat** – Building carbon stocks in perennial biomass and soils.
- **Restoration of Disturbed Lands** – Improving the quality of previously mined or degraded lands to increase soil and perennial biomass carbon stocks.
- **Rice Production** – Reducing methane emissions from rice fields by minimizing methane production during the growing season.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/climate/climate-smart-mitigation-activities>

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Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Activities List ^[1] FY2023



Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF)

- CSAF is a nationally required ranking pool under general EQIP
- The CSAF pool will be administered statewide by basin level categories with geospatially determined ranking points for priority areas within each category
- Oregon leadership is working on determining more specific details on implementation plan requirements for CSAF
- This pool will be rolled out in a 2nd EQIP sign-up alongside EQIP-CIC and other LCIs

The full CSAF list can be viewed here:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/climate/climate-smart-mitigation-activities>

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Climate Change Mitigation Practice Categories	Code	Conservation Practice Standard Name ^[2] (units)	CSP Enhancement Code	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Bundle and Enhancement Activity			
Soil Health			B000BFF1	Buffer Bundle#1*			
			B000CPL24	Cropland soil health management system*			
			B000CPL25	Climate smart advanced soil health*			
		327	Conservation Cover (acres)	E327A	Conservation cover for pollinators and beneficial insects		
				E327B	Establish Monarch butterfly habitat		
		328	Conservation Crop Rotation (acres)	E328A	Resource conserving crop rotation		
				E328B	Improved resource conserving crop rotation		
				E328E	Soil health crop rotation		
				E328F	Modifications to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter		
				E328G	Crop rotation on recently converted CRP grass/legume cover improvement		
				E328N	Intercropping to improve soil health		
				E328O	Perennial grain crop conservation rotation		
		329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (acres)	E329A	No till to reduce soil erosion		
				E329B	No till to reduce tillage induced particulate matter		
				E329C	No till to increase plant-available moisture		
				E329D	No till system to increase soil health and soil organic matter content		
				E329E	No till to reduce energy		
		332	Contour Buffer Strips (acres)	None Available			
		340	Cover Crop (acres)	E340A	Cover crop to reduce soil erosion		
				E340B	Intensive cover cropping to increase soil health		
				E340C	Use of multi-species cover crops to improve soil health		
				E340D	Intensive orchard/vineyard floor cover		
				E340F	Cover crop to minimize soil erosion		
				E340G	Cover crop to reduce water quality degradation by utilizing		
				E340H	Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressure		
				E340I	Using cover crops for biological strip till		
				345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till (acres)	E345A	Reduced tillage to reduce soil erosion
						E345B	Reduced tillage to reduce tillage induced particulate matter
		E345C	Reduced tillage to increase plant-available moisture				
		E345D	Reduced tillage to increase soil health and soil organic matter				
		E345E	Reduced tillage to reduce energy use				
		386	Field Border (acres)	E386A	Enhanced field borders to reduce soil erosion along		
	E386B			Enhanced field borders to increase carbon storage			
	E386C			Enhanced field borders to decrease particulate matter			
	E386D			Enhanced field borders to increase soil health			
	E386E			Enhanced field borders to increase soil organic matter			
	393	Filter Strips (acres)	E393A	Extend existing filter strip to meet			
	412	Grassed Waterways (acres)	E412A	Enhance a grassed waterway			
	484	Mulching (acres)	E484A	Mulching to improve soil health			
			E484B	Reduce particulate matter			
			E484C	Reduce particulate matter			
	585	Stripcropping (acres)	E484C	Reduce particulate matter			

NEW Organic Transition Initiative (OTI)

Organic Transition Initiative (OTI)

NRCS will invest \$70 million of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) to incentivize producers who are transitioning to organic production by providing financial and technical assistance for organic management activities.

\$5 million will be used to fund Regional Coordinators to assist with organic transitioning planning.

NOT the same as the National Organic Initiative (NOI)

What we know so far:

- Initiative is to be rolled out by NHQ in January 2023.
- OTI contracts will not be held to the same contract payment limitations as NOI however, 2018 FB payment limitations will still apply (EQIP)
- Although the initiative encourages climate-smart agriculture it is not part of IRA and is funded through the CARES act.
- Eligible practices will be limited
- Interim practice Organic Management (823) will be required.
- Separate allocation to the state will be provided.
- This pool will be rolled out in a 2nd EQIP sign-up alongside EQIP-CIC and other LCIs

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Updates: Manual 440 Part 530- Working Lands Conservation Programs

The annual updates for Part 530 – Working Lands Conservation Programs Manual are now posted to eDirectives:

- **AMA and EQIP:** Increased number of separate payments allowed for management practices from 3 to 5. *There is also a new note related to the Brush and Herbaceous Weed MGT practices.*
- Clarified that when verifying control of land, which should happen at least annually and at the time of obligation rather than enrollment, NRCS must document what documentation was reviewed.
- Added policy that NRCS must adjust payment rates accordingly when transferring contracts from non-HU to HU producers and vice versa.
- EQIP: Expanded flexibility for States in establishing separate funding opportunities for BFR and SDR applicants.
- CSP: In accordance with the Chief's waiver, removed language prohibiting producers who previously failed to renew a CSP contract from reapplying within two years as well as the accompanying exhibit (530.320H).
- CSP: Added policy on making payments for comprehensive conservation plans.



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OTAC review of 2023 Ranking and
Geographic Area Rate Cap

 **Agricultural Conservation
Easement Program
(ACEP)**



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ACEP Components



Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE)

- NRCS provides cost-share assistance to eligible entities for the purchase of agricultural land easements on eligible land from eligible landowners. Entity holds the easement.

Purpose of ALE

- Protect the agricultural use, viability and related conservation values of eligible land by limiting non-agricultural uses.
- Protect grazing uses and related conservation values by restoring and conserving eligible land.



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ACEP Components



Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE)

- NRCS purchases easements directly from eligible landowners through a reserved interest deed in eligible land to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands and associated habitats. NRCS holds the easement.

Purpose of WRE

- Restore, protect, and enhance wetlands on eligible land while maximizing wetland wildlife habitat.



ACEP-WRE Easement Compensation



- **Appraised fair Market Value (FMV)** of offered land – only potential easement area appraised
- **Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC)** applied to FMV as determined by appraisal
 - GARC is 85% of FMV – offer to landowner will be 85% of FMV

Appraised FMV	GARC	Permanent Easement	30 Year Easement	30 Year Contract
\$300,000	85% FMV	\$255,000	\$191,250	\$191,250

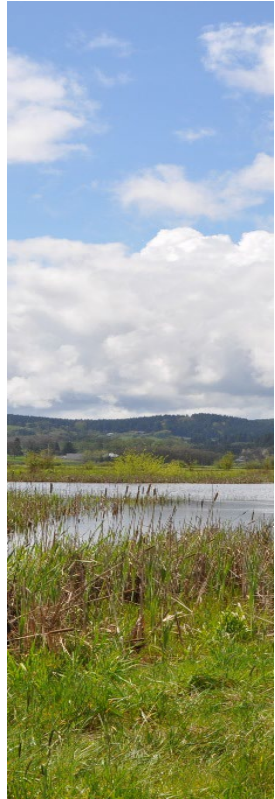


ACEP-WRE Easement Compensation



Sources and Considerations

- Neighboring states, Washington and Idaho, are proposing the 85% FMV GARC for FY'23
- Location of high priority areas included in the Oregon Conservation Implementation Strategies and Long-Range Plans.
- Oregon Technical Advisory Committee (OTAC) has supported 85% FMV GARC since FY'17.



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ACEP-WRE Easement Compensation



Sources and Considerations

- Based on contracted AWMA in 2014
- Applied a 20% reduction for a GARC of 80 % FMV
- Increased to 85% in 2017
- Increased to be comparable to the adjacent states and to provide compensation to the landowner for the rights they are giving up with the WRE easement.
- The high priority areas in Oregon are located in the higher real estate development areas so to be consistent with the market, we propose to stay with the 85% FMV.



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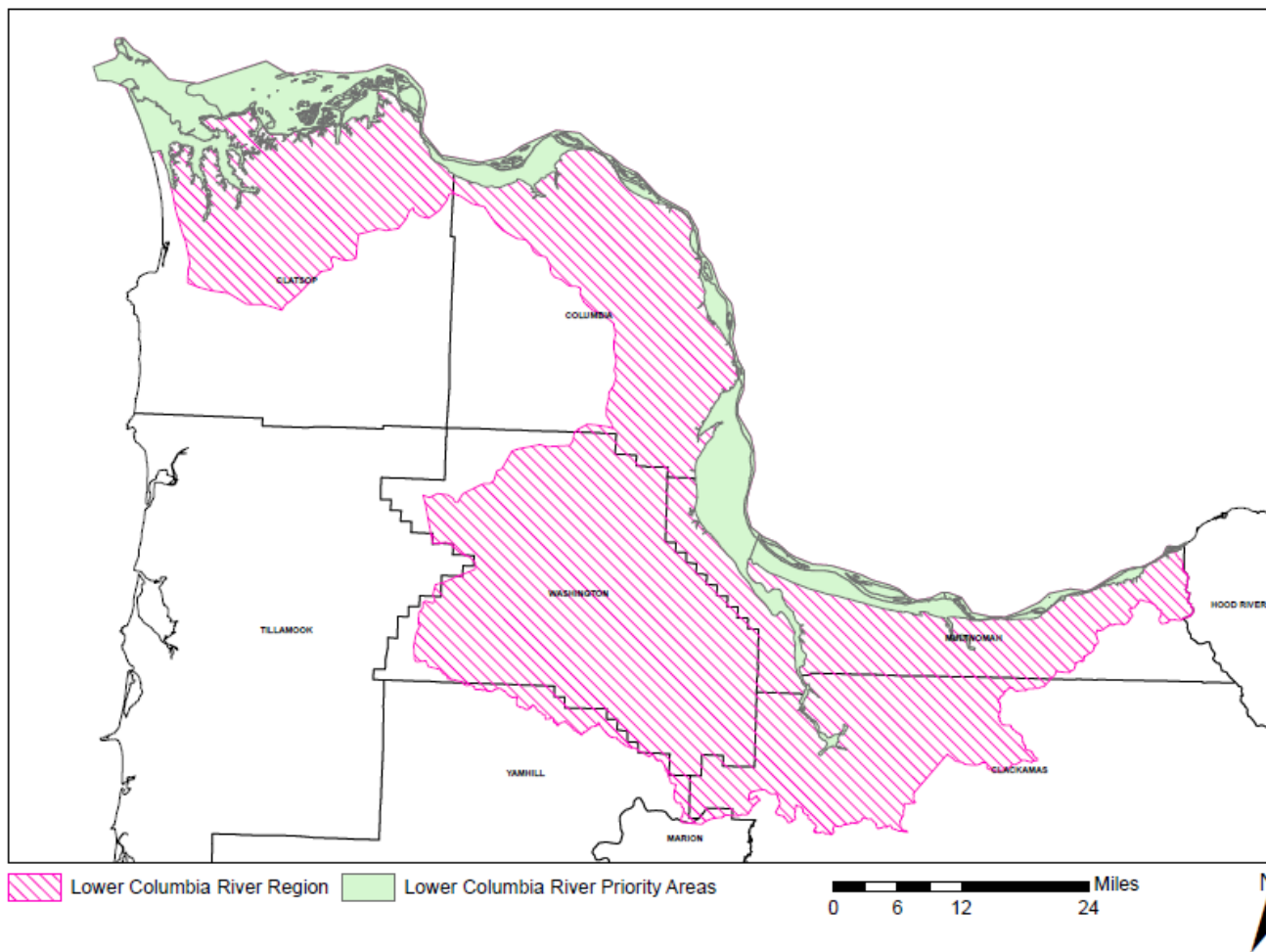
WRE Priority Areas

- Lower Columbia River pacific flyway and estuaries
- Coastal Coho priority estuaries and riparian areas
- Nelson's Checkermallow Recovery Zone
- Other areas included in local Conservation Implementation Strategy



Lower Columbia River Priority Area

2023 ACEP – WRE Priority Geographic Area Lower Columbia River Priority Area



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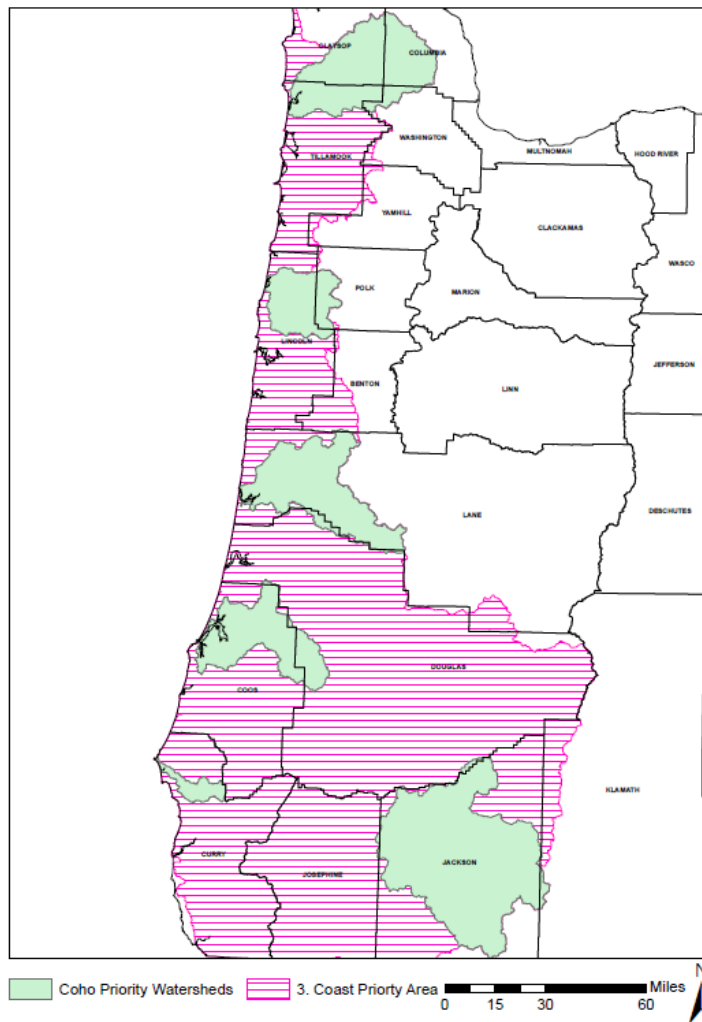
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Coastal Coho Priority Watersheds



2023 ACEP – WRE Priority Geographic Area
Oregon Coastal Coho Priority Area



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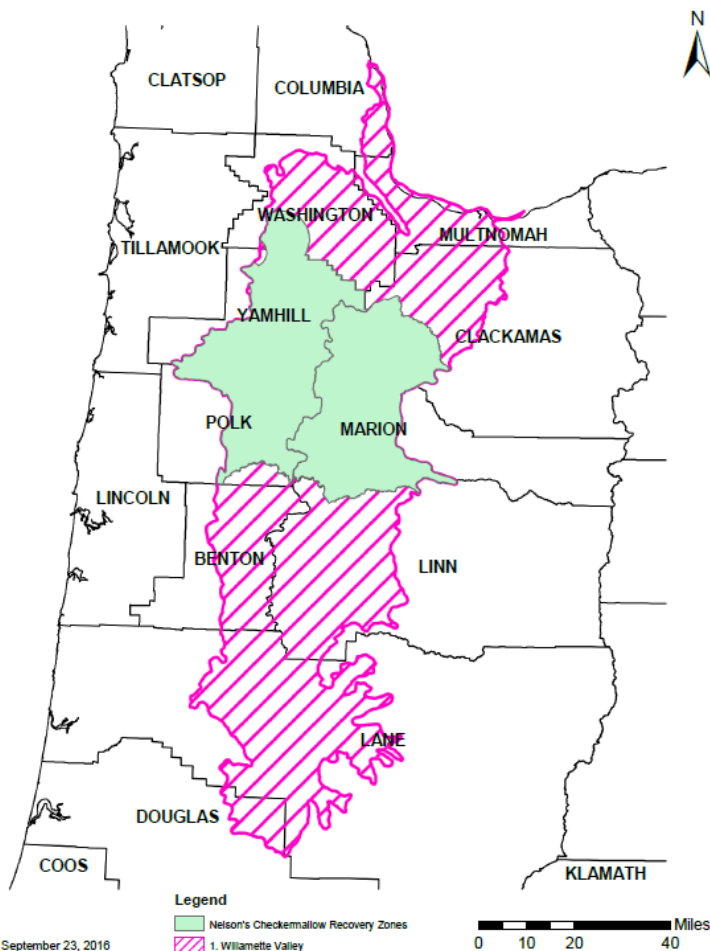
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Nelson's Checkermallow Recovery Zones



2023 ACEP – WRE Priority Geographic Regions Nelson's Checkermallow Recovery Zones



Map Date: September 23, 2016



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ACEP-ALE Ranking Criteria

14 National Criteria = 50% points

1. Percent of prime, unique, and important farmland in the parcel.
2. Historically underserved group, small scale farmer, limited resource landowner, new or beginning farmer or rancher or veteran landowner.
3. Percent of cropland, pastureland, grassland, and rangeland in the parcel.
4. Ratio of the total acres of land in the parcel to be protected to average farm size in the county.
5. Decrease in the percentage of acreage of farm and ranch land in the county.
6. Percent population growth in the county.
7. Population density per square mile.
8. Existence of a farm or ranch succession plan or similar plan established to address farm viability for future generations.
9. Proximity of the parcel to other protected land.
10. Proximity of the parcel to other agricultural operations and agricultural infrastructure.
11. Maximizing the protection of contiguous acres devoted to agricultural use.
12. Whether the land is currently enrolled in CRP in a contract that is set to expire within 1 year.
13. Whether the land is grassland that would benefit from protection under a long-term easement.
14. Parcel contains historical or archaeological resources that will be protected by easement area



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ALE Priority Areas

- **Priority Grasslands in ODFW Conservation Strategy**
- **Portland Metro Area**
- **Mid-Columbia River Steelhead Recovery Plan Area**
- **Southern Oregon Northeastern California Migratory Bird Habitat (SONEC)**
- **Sage Grouse Habitat (Future)**



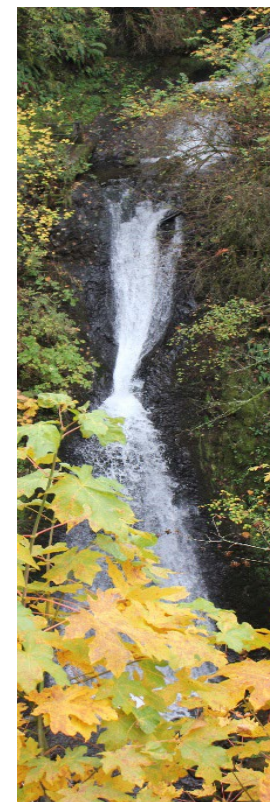
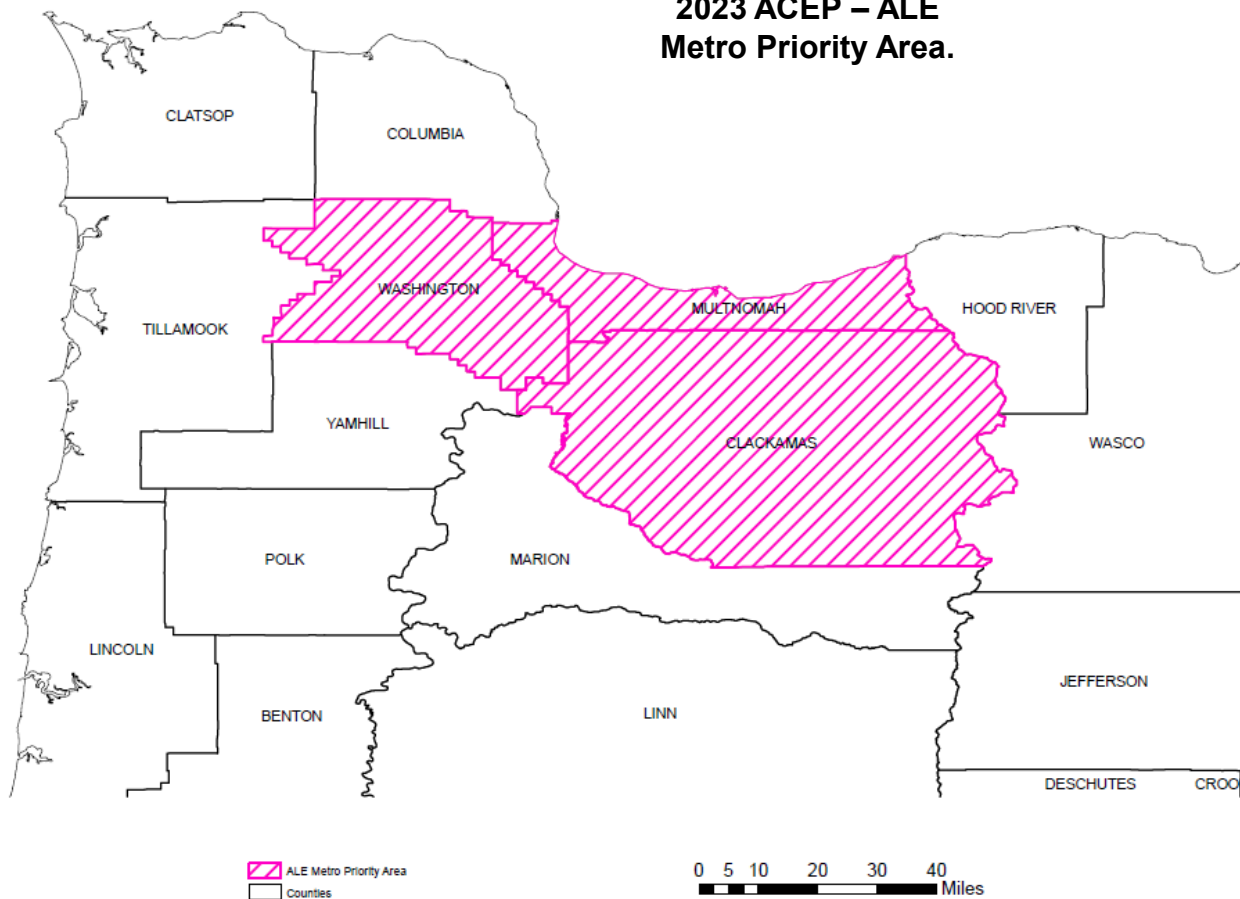
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Metro Priority Area

2023 ACEP – ALE
Metro Priority Area.



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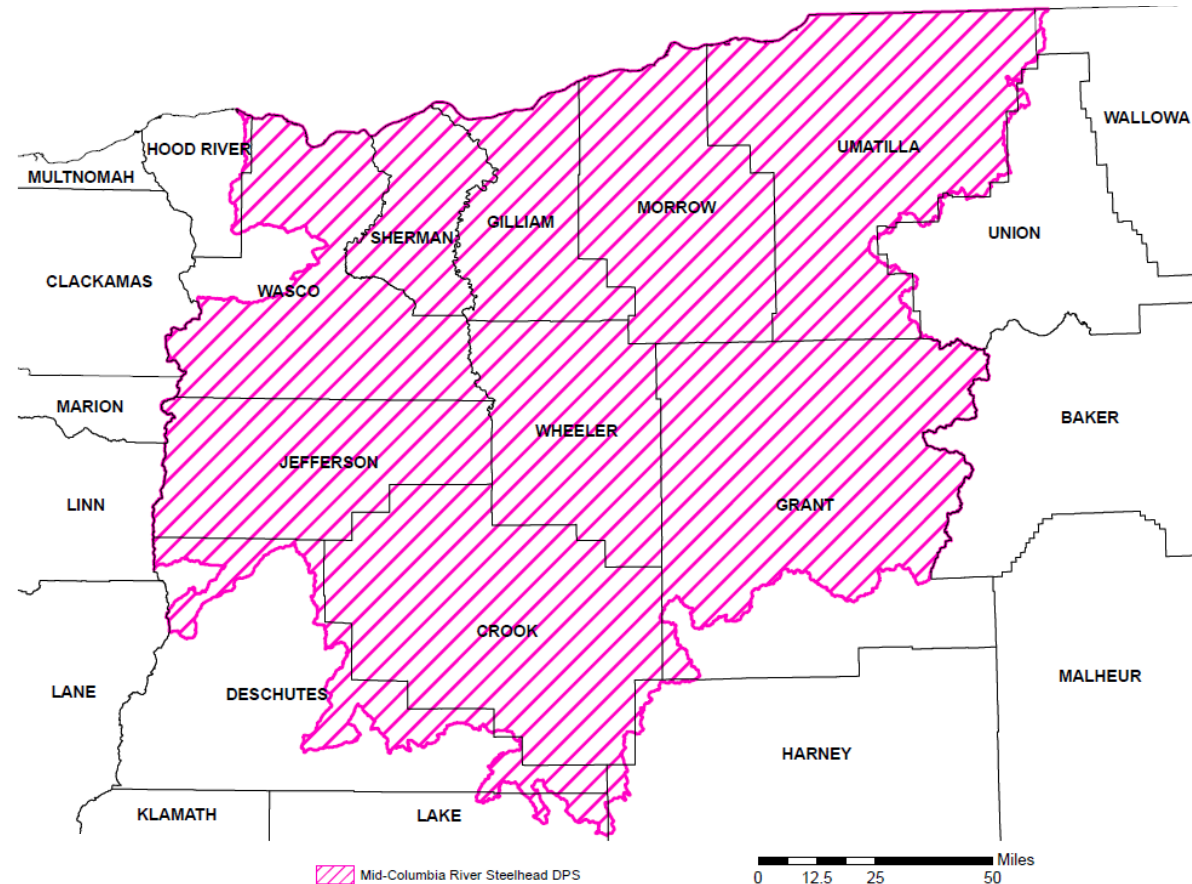
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Mid-Columbia River Steelhead



2023 ACEP – ALE Priority Area. Mid-Columbia River Distinct Population Segment (DPS)



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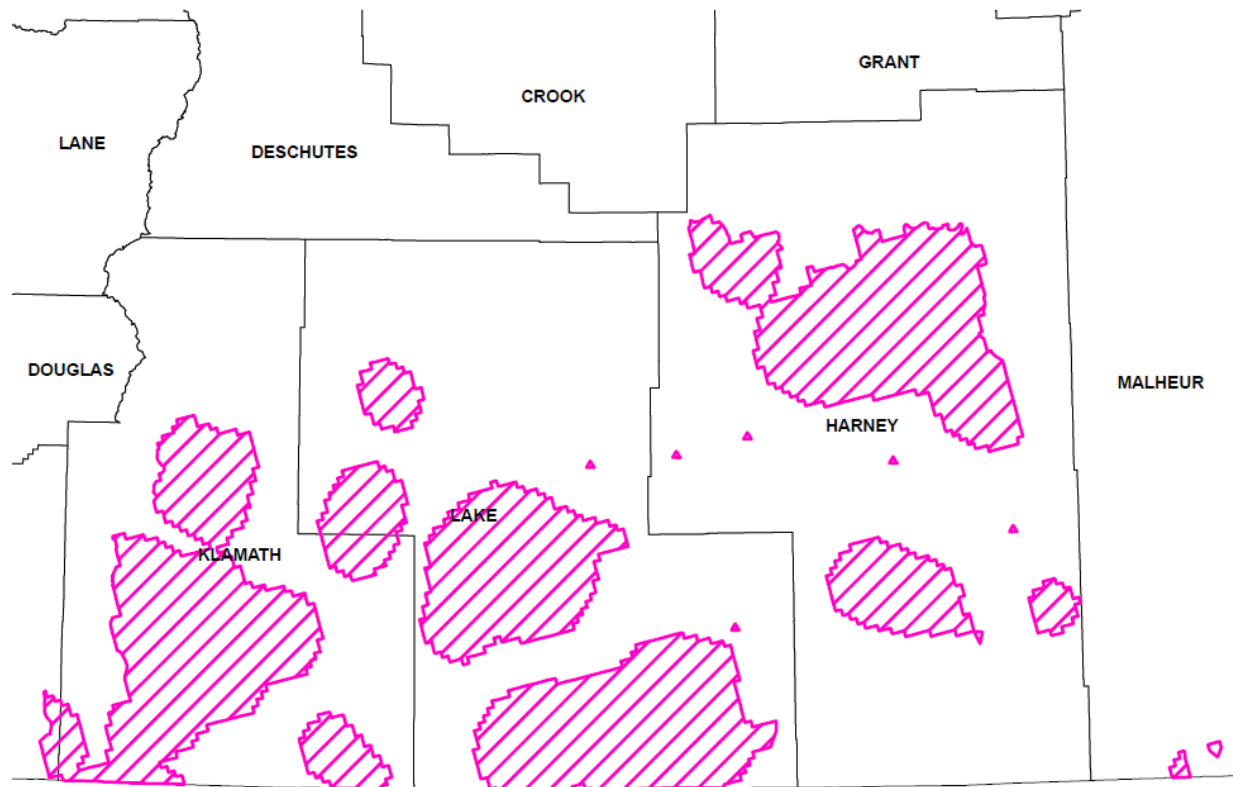
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SONEC Spring Waterbird Priority Areas



2023 ACEP –ALE Priority Areas SONEC Spring Waterbird Priority Areas



SONEC Spring Priority Areas

0 12.5 25 50 Miles



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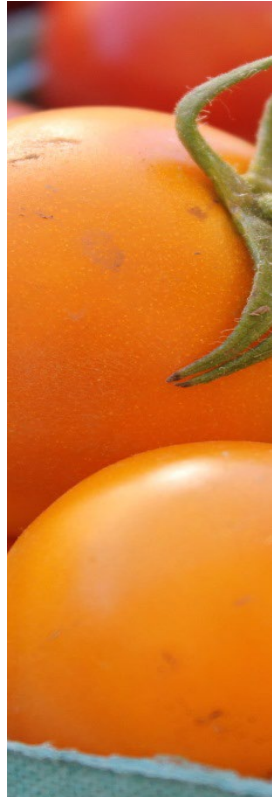
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