

2025

Annual Tribal Report



OREGON
WATERSHED
ENHANCEMENT BOARD

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
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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.

As described in the following report, OWEB engaged extensively with Tribes in 2025 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 2025, OWEB provided grant funds to Tribes through the agency's first Tribal Project Development grants. 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 the Oregon Environmental Restoration Program to establish the Tribal Nations Fund as a result of the Monsanto vs Oregon Settlement. Another key milestone in 2025 was the signing of a programmatic agreement with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding cultural resource compliance; OWEB is working closely with NMFS, Tribes, and grantees to implement this agreement.

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. OWEB's Tribal policy and the most recent Annual Tribal Report 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 2025 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 who 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 with Kelly as the Co-chair 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 are highly

valued board members focused on the mission of OWEB and share their practical experiences as OWEB grantees and technical expertise as natural resource professionals.



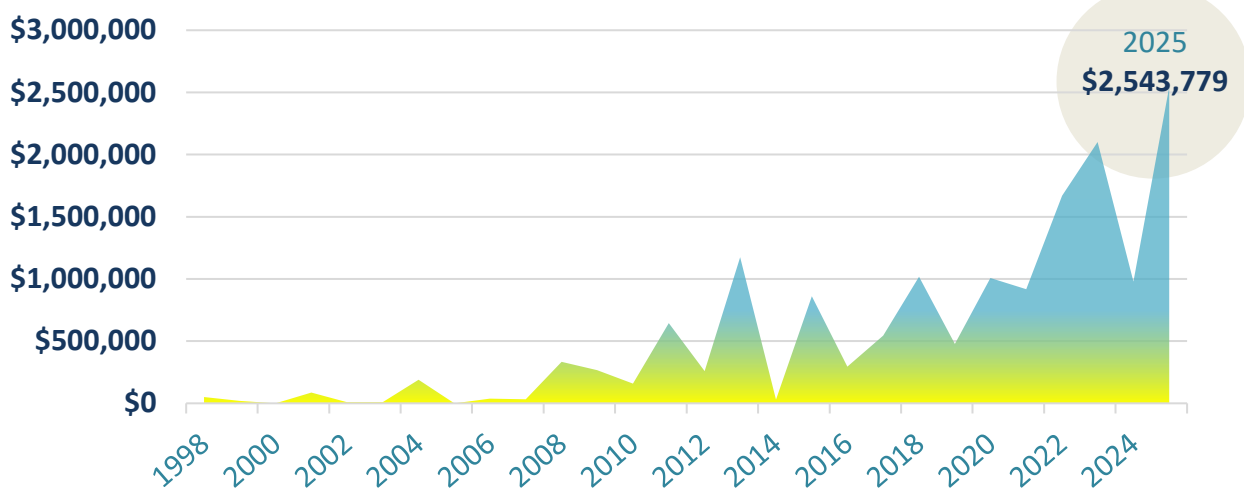
▲ Photo 1. OWEB Board members, staff and local partners on a field tour hosted by the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation, July 2025.

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 \$15,716,941 in grants to Tribal governments. Across all grant programs, OWEB provided \$2,543,779 to Tribes in 2025, the most in a single year to date.** 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, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), and land trusts, 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 Tribes to implement restoration actions.

OWEB Grant Funding to Tribes



▲ Figure 2. Annual OWEB grant funding provided to Tribes from 1998 to 2025.

In addition to being grantees, 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.

Since 1999, Tribes have contributed match funds to 424 completed projects. Across all grant programs, Tribes have provided a grand total of \$22,439,941 in cash and \$4,013,933 of in-kind support to OWEB grants.

In 2025, Tribes contributed to 21 completed grants—across all OWEB grant programs, Tribes provided \$1,030,315 in cash and \$557,979 of in-kind support. This significant match contribution demonstrates the critical role of Tribes in implementing watershed restoration in Oregon.

Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP)

The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHP), established by the Oregon Legislature in 2017, provides voluntary incentives that support agricultural practices that benefit both working lands and natural resources such as fish, wildlife, and water quality. The Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission (Commission), composed of 12 members appointed by the OWEB Board—including one representative of Tribal interests—oversees the program and advises the Board on funding and policy matters.

Amanda Lowe has served as a Soil Conservationist with the Department of Natural Resources for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and as the Tribal representative on the Commission since January 2024. Amanda brought her expertise in integrating culturally significant First Foods into land management practices and has been instrumental in ensuring Tribal perspectives are reflected in OAHP’s work through her participation in a recent rulemaking advisory committee (RAC). The RAC recommended a suite of updates to the administrative rules governing the program, including the addition of evaluation criteria considering engagement with and support from Tribes. The new OAHP Rules were adopted by the OWEB Board in January 2025. Amanda is stepping off the Commission in January of 2026, and OWEB is currently recruiting for her replacement in hopes of selecting a new Tribal representative at the January 2026 OWEB Board meeting.

In 2025, the Oregon Legislature allocated an additional \$2 million to the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Fund, marking the third round of funding for the program. A solicitation for working land conservation easement project grants closed November 13, 2025, with awards expected in April 2026.

Natural and Working Lands Fund

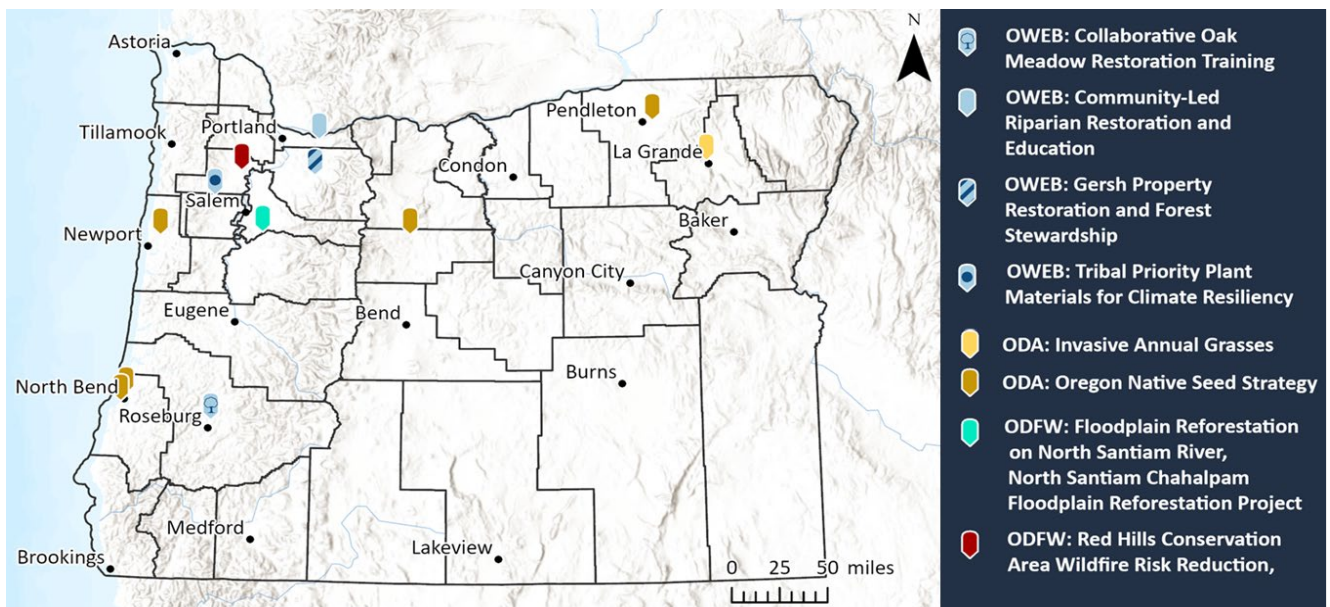
In 2023, House Bill 3409 allocated \$10 million to four state agencies to incentivize natural climate solutions on Oregon’s natural and working lands, while also supporting the social, economic, and health benefits of local communities. OWEB received \$2.25 million for grants to support the adoption of natural climate solutions, with a mandate to prioritize projects

administered or proposed by Tribes and environmental justice communities. These funds were awarded in 2025 through two grant offerings:

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

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

As part of OWEB's implementation of these grant offerings, the agency engaged with Tribal and environmental justice communities. OWEB used Tribal input to inform the Natural and Working Lands grant offering. OWEB promoted this grant offering through our key Tribal contacts list and through the Pacific Northwest Climate Change Network newsletter. OWEB hosted three pre-application consultations with Tribes, and while we did not receive any applications from Tribes as lead applicants, 4 of the 6 funded projects have a Tribal component or partnership. The projects that were funded range from incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge to building a seed collection process for restoration on the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde lands.



▲ **Figure 3.** Map of project locations that were funded by OWEB, Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) across all the Natural and Working Lands grant offerings, several had a direct benefit to Tribes who participated in the project development and implementation.

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. The Small Grant Project offering is an easy-to-engage-in, competitive grant program that awards up to \$20,000 for on-the-ground restoration projects. Tribes are also eligible to apply for this grant offering.

At their July 2025 meeting, the OWEB Board approved the 2025-2027 spending plan, which included \$4,760,000 allocated to the Small Grant Program—a \$2 million increase over the previous biennium. The Small Grant Program consists of two project types:

- Small Grant Team Contact grants
- Small Grant Projects grants

The new Small Grant Team Contact grant offering provides grant funding to administer one (1) Small Grant Team in each of the 28 OWEB Small Grant Areas around the state. Tribes with reservations, Tribal lands, ceded lands, or Usual and Accustomed Areas located partially or entirely within the team's area are invited to participate in the small grant teams. Recognizing that effective engagement requires resources, this grant funding supports outreach efforts to engage new Small Grant Team members and potential applicants for program funding. Grant funding also supports the facilitation of application review processes as Small Grant Teams accept, review, and recommend or deny Small Grant project applications for funding.

Open Solicitation Grant Program

OWEB solicits these grant applications twice a year through the Open Solicitation grant program to fund Restoration, Technical Assistance, Monitoring, and Engagement projects. OWEB's Regional Program Representatives (RPRs) have regular contact with Tribal staff—before grant applications are submitted and throughout the life of each grant—to ensure Tribes can meet their goals and objectives. Tribes often partner with Watershed Councils, SWCDs, and land trusts by helping manage the projects and receiving funding to implement projects as contractors. Tribal participation is critical to partner success and crucial in making a meaningful impact on the health of our watersheds and communities in Oregon. In addition, Tribes may be applicants, landowners, contractors for project implementation, partners, board members of the applicant's organization, supporters of the applicant (such as writing letters of support), and provide cash match funds.

While no Open Solicitation grants were awarded to Tribes in 2025, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation completed significant work on two restoration projects this year using funds from previously awarded OWEB grants.

Birch Creek Instream Enhancement & Floodplain Restoration

This 77.6-acre parcel, which encompasses Birch Creek and its associated floodplains between approximately river mile 1.8 to 2.7, is the first of a multi-phase landscape restoration and protection project in the Umatilla Basin. This project will serve as an example of restoring floodplains to benefit fish and wildlife and help protect downstream communities and infrastructure from impacts like the damage that occurred during two extreme flood events in 2020.



▲ **Photo 2.** Post-restoration conditions in Birch Creek. Restoration was completed with OWEB funds by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in 2025.

Meacham Creek River Mile 10-11 Floodplain and In-Stream Habitat Restoration

The floodplain and in-stream habitat restoration project in Meacham Creek at river mile 10-11 marked the fifth year of floodplain restoration. This restoration project was designed to improve floodplain connectivity and habitat conditions for Endangered Species Act-listed Middle Columbia summer steelhead and Columbia River bull trout, as well as Chinook salmon, Pacific lamprey, and other first food species that utilize the watershed.



▲ **Photo 3.** Post-restoration conditions in Meacham Creek, implemented with OWEB funds by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in 2025. **Click** on the image above to watch a short drone video of this restoration project area.

Open Solicitation Grant Program – Regional Technical Review Teams

Restoration, Engagement, and Technical Assistance applications received through OWEB's Open Solicitation grant program are reviewed by 1 of 6 Regional Technical Review Teams. Monitoring applications are reviewed by the Oregon Plan Monitoring Team (OPMT). All these teams are comprised of state, federal, and Tribal natural resource professionals. All 6 Regional Review Teams have at least one Tribal natural resource professional participating in the review process. In 2025, 6 Tribal agency representatives participated in OWEB Regional Review Teams, including representatives from the Nez Perce Tribe, 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. Efforts are being made to recruit a Tribal natural resource professional to participate on the OPMT, and we hope to have a Tribal member participate on this monitoring team in 2026.



▲ Photo 4. OWEB Southwest Region Technical Review Team, which includes representatives from the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians Natural Resources Department, attends a site visit during the application review phase.

Land and Water Transaction Programs – Notification Process

Project managers for OWEB's four transaction programs (Land Acquisition, Water Acquisition, Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program, and Drinking Water Source Protection) worked closely with OWEB's Tribal liaison in 2025 to review the Tribal notification process of grant applications received and of funding recommendations. This effort improved the consistency of how Tribal comment opportunities are communicated. It also reduced the quantity of emails sent to Tribes because we have combined comment opportunities when possible. We are always open to improving these processes and welcome feedback from Tribal staff who receive these emails.



▲ Photo 5. Chaa-lamali cultural burn (credit: Alejandro Mejia).



▲ Photo 6. Camas seed on bare ground post-fire at Camp Creek Hills (credit: Sara Worl).

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 and, when applicable (i.e., for proposed fee-simple projects), informs them of the public hearing date. OWEB also 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 2023, OWEB started focused, individual conversations with natural resources staff from the 9 federally recognized Tribes in Oregon and the Nez Perce Tribe regarding 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 some misperceptions that have impacted 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. Staff met individually with all the Tribes in the Spring of 2024. Issues raised included concerns about use of conservation easements with sovereign Tribal governments, ensuring Tribal access for First Foods harvest on lands protected under the program, and ensuring the ability of Tribes to adaptively and actively manage lands consistent with traditional ecological knowledge and values.

In 2025, based on feedback from Tribes, land trusts, and the Governor's Office, the agency embarked on a modernization process of its Land Acquisition grant program. The process includes 4 workstreams:

1. Board-level work on foundational issues
2. Tribal workstream
3. Initial streamlining before the 2025 grant cycle
4. Potential rulemaking beginning in 2026

The Tribal workstream specifically focuses on substantive and process issues of concern to Tribes, building on previously identified challenges and opportunities. Following up on survey and interview results, OWEB leadership and staff conducted legal research and identified potential policy options that could help address potential barriers to Tribal government access to the Land Acquisitions program.

In October 2025, OWEB sent letters to each of the federally recognized Tribes that summarized the potential policy options and sought additional feedback on Tribal priorities for these potential program changes. OWEB's executive director and Tribal liaison have reached out to each Tribe to gauge interest in meetings to discuss the policy options. The Tribal workstream will begin to merge into the Board Acquisitions, Restoration, and Emerging Issues (ARE) Committee discussions where possible, while recognizing the sovereignty and unique role of Tribes. The December 2025 ARE Committee meeting includes a Tribal panel to hear directly from federally recognized Tribes. The panel provides a great opportunity for the board to hear directly from Tribes regarding their interest in OWEB's Land Acquisition grant program, thoughts on conservation easements and how they affect conservation efforts, habitat considerations, and other uses (e.g., cultural uses). Finally, we hope to hear thoughts about which potential program changes OWEB staff should prioritize to improve this important program's accessibility to Tribes. This feedback will directly inform OWEB Land Acquisition program changes anticipated in 2026 and beyond.



▲ Photo 7. Large wood placed at Meacham Creek.

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, and Lawrence Schwabe, the Hydrosystem Compliance Specialist for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, are participating on this review team and bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the review process.



▲ *Photo 8. Water Acquisition Panel discusses the program with the OWEB Board at the October 2025 board meeting in Astoria. (seated at left) **Anton Chiono**, Habitat Conservation Project Leader from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Department of Natural Resources participating with state agency representatives and local partners.*

At the October 2025 OWEB Board meeting, a Water Acquisition Panel of project developers and technical experts discussed considerations that inform scoping, developing, valuing/appraising, and implementing Water Acquisition projects. This Water Acquisition Panel included Anton Chiono, of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Anton provided a key Tribal perspective to the Board to emphasize the importance of organizational capacity and the amount of work that occurs to develop projects before they are submitted for funding consideration.

Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program

In June 2023, the Oregon Legislature passed [House Bill \(HB\) 2010](#) that, combined with other legislation, allocated \$5 million to establish the Drinking Water Source Protection (DWSP) grant program at OWEB. Through the DWSP grant program, OWEB has awarded grants to public water suppliers to protect, restore, or enhance sources of drinking water through land acquisition and conservation.

In April 2025, the OWEB board approved six grants to public water suppliers to protect, restore, or enhance sources of drinking water through land conservation and protection. One project, awarded to the Neskowin Regional Water District, was developed with engagement with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.



▲ Photos 9 and 10. Dogbane plant material and cordage made at the Carbon and Culture Symposium hosted by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Focused Investment Partnership Program

A Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) is an OWEB investment that:

- ✓ Addresses a board-identified Focused Investment Priority of significance to the state;
- ✓ Achieves clear and measurable ecological outcomes;
- ✓ Uses integrated, results-oriented approaches as identified through a strategic action plan;
- ✓ Is implemented by a high-performing partnership.

In 2025, 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. Currently, there are 14 active FIP initiatives in OWEB's portfolio. A majority of these 14 partnerships include Tribes as core partners who help direct and receive funding to restore watershed conditions.

In January 2025, OWEB staff initiated a process to seek Tribal input prior to the OWEB Board approving the ecological priorities of significance to the State to be addressed by Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) Initiatives. “At least every five years, the Board shall approve ecological priorities of significance to the State to be addressed by Focused Investment Partnership Initiatives.” (OAR 695-047-0030). OWEB developed several opportunities for Tribes to share their input before the board is scheduled to adopt new ecological priorities at the January 2026 Board meeting.

In January, OWEB staff presented at the State/Tribal Natural Resources Workgroup to provide an overview of the effort to update the FIP ecological priorities, what input we are seeking, the different opportunities to share input, and the overall timeline for the board to decide. In February, OWEB sent out an online survey to Tribes that was open until June to ask them a series of questions to better understand their thoughts on updating existing ecological priorities and adding new ecological priorities. In addition, OWEB held two virtual Tribal listening sessions in April to have a focused conversation with Tribal natural resources staff to better understand the feedback we received and anything specific details they wanted to share with OWEB. OWEB also offered to meet in person and for Tribes to provide written comments via email to OWEB staff. Broadly, these engagement efforts pointed towards updating the existing ecological priorities with new information, and in some cases, new maps. The draft ecological priority with the most substantive revisions is the “Aquatic Habitat for Native Fish,” which has merged with “Coho Habitat and Populations along the Coast” and expanded to include habitat for other aquatic species. This process has assisted OWEB to ensure that the new priorities—that will be approved by the OWEB Board in January 2026—reflect important Tribal considerations. Following the January board meeting, OWEB expects to announce the solicitation for new FIP initiatives to begin in the 2027-2029 biennium.

Once FIP initiative funds are awarded to high-performing partnerships, Tribes that are part of the partnerships may receive grant funding from OWEB. **During 2025, 5 grants totaling \$1,724,824 were awarded to Tribes:**

- One grant was amended to add \$410,456 to an existing grant agreement with the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians.
- One grant of \$500,000 was awarded to the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.
- Three grants totaling \$814,368 were awarded to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

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. In 2025, the Harney Basin Wetlands FIP technical review team welcomed Nathan Jones from the Burns Paiute Tribe, who is an asset at providing comments to evaluate projects. In addition, Collin Williams, from the Burns Paiute Tribe,

participates in the Oregon Sage Grouse Partnership FIP to evaluate projects that restore sage steppe habitats in eastern Oregon.

In 2025, the East Cascades Oak Partnership was issued a grant to the Columbia Land Trust, who is working on the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs reservation's lands, to implement an oak understory restoration project.

Focused Investment Partnership (FIP) Technical Assistance Program

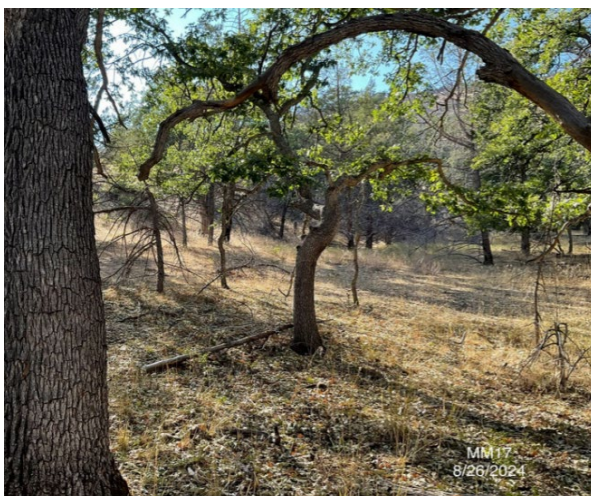
FIP Technical Assistance grants offer two tracks:

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.

The Partnership Technical Assistance grant offering closed in early November 2025 with 16 applications received. Many of these applications propose to partner with Tribes on the development and implementation of strategic action plans across the state. Awards for this offering will be made at the OWEB Board meeting in April 2026. The Board's 2025-2027 spending plan includes \$1.2 million in Partnership Technical Assistance funding.

CTWS Mutton Mountains Oak Understory Restoration

This OWEB Restoration grant for \$101,000 leverages \$25,000 in match provided by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. In collaboration with the Columbia Land Trust, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs will implement a project within the Mutton Mountains region of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon to restore native vegetation communities. Due to the presence of roots gathered by Tribal members since time immemorial, a robust post-treatment monitoring effort will be provided as match by the Tribes. Monitoring will track the response of the oak understory to restoration and look at the residual herbicide that remains in plant matter up to five years after project implementation. Information garnered from this study will aid biologists in determining when it is safe for Tribal members to gather in areas treated with Rejuvra (an herbicide).



▲ Photos 11, 12. Pre-restoration conditions in the Mutton Mountains. Site of a future restoration project to be implemented with OWEB funds by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

Klamath Water Quality Improvements Grant Program (Interim Measure 11)

Interim Measure 11 (IM 11) from the Amended Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement (KHSa) 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 IM11 is nutrient reduction projects. PacifiCorp, in consultation with the Interim Measures Implementation Committee, developed a list of project categories to be implemented that will fulfill the objective of IM11. PacifiCorp has provided funding of up to \$6,433,500 million to design, engineer, and implement projects. These grants are funded by OWEB through the Klamath Water Quality Improvements Grant Program.

A steering committee, facilitated by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, assists OWEB with program implementation. OWEB is the Fiscal Agent and will continue to 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.

Four projects were funded in 2025; all of them will implement important restoration actions to improve water quality and fish habitat in the Upper Klamath Basin. These projects are vital given the presence of fall Chinook salmon in the upper basin one year after dam removal. Another grant offering will occur in 2026, and the Tribes in the Klamath Basin are eligible to apply for funds to fulfill the objective of IM11.



▲ Photo 13. Pre-restoration conditions along the Upper North Fork Sprague River, future site of a habitat and floodplain restoration project to be completed with funds from an OWEB-administered grant offering that is funded from the KHSa IM 11.

New Grant Programs

Tribal Project Development Grant Program

In 2025, OWEB continued to apply what we learned from the 2021 assessment of how OWEB's granting practices impact the ability of federally recognized Tribes to apply for and receive grant funding to meet their watershed enhancement goals and objectives. In 2024, OWEB developed its first-ever Tribal set-aside grant program in response to feedback from 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) in 2024 and 2025 to offer Tribal Project Development grants. At the July 2025 OWEB Board meeting, the board approved an additional \$1 million to the 2025-2027 Spending Plan for this grant offering. Along with OWEB's lottery funds, a total of \$2 million is available — \$200,000 for each federally recognized Tribe in Oregon and the Nez Perce Tribe. These funds are available to support Tribal capacity to participate in salmon recovery efforts in Oregon and to engage in work associated with implementing the Programmatic Agreement between OWEB and NOAA.

OWEB staff continued to communicate the intent of the grant program and encourage Tribes to apply for these funds. Since the grant offering opened on October 25, 2024, we have received and funded 8 applications, for a total of \$799,955 provided to the following Tribes:

Burns Paiute Tribe, Returning the Agai to their Homewaters: Developing the Malheur River Salmon Reintroduction Plan

Nez Perce Tribe, Wallowa River Spring Creeks Floodplain Project

Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians Tribal Project Development

Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Lower Tony Creek Instream Habitat Restoration Project: Design and Engineering

Coquille Indian Tribe, Coquille Indian Tribe - Salmon Recovery and Monitoring Project

Confederated Tribes Umatilla Indian Reservation, Monitoring Stage zero restoration in the Grand Ronde Basin.

Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Grand Ronde Salmon Strength Initiative

Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians Cultural Resources Assessments

In addition, OWEB is currently reviewing an application that the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians submitted on December 1, 2025, and we anticipate providing a grant in early 2026 to support their Misery Creek Restoration Project Planning and Monitoring project. The Tribal Project Development grant offering has helped make 2025 the highest year of OWEB funding being provided to Tribes. These projects represent the Tribes' ambitions and interests to develop projects that benefit salmon and steelhead in Oregon.

Starting in 2026, OWEB will reach out to all the federally recognized Tribes in Oregon and the Nez Perce Tribe to notify them that there is an additional \$100,000 available to meet their salmon restoration project development needs.

Oregon Environmental Restoration Program

In 2024, Governor Kotek signed Senate Bill 1561 into law, creating the Oregon Environmental Restoration Fund (proceeds from Oregon's settlement with the Monsanto Company). This fund will invest in new projects and programs to restore Oregon's environment and benefit communities that were harmed by PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) and other toxins.

The Legislature established the Oregon Environmental Restoration Council (Council) to oversee responsible and restorative distribution of the funds and tasked the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) to administer the funds.

The Oregon Environmental Restoration Fund will function similarly to an endowment over the next 50 years. The settlement money will be managed by the Oregon State Treasury and will earn investment and interest income. On a biennial basis, the Council will authorize OWEB to distribute that income to three sub-funds. One of those funds is the Tribal Nation Natural Resource Program Fund. It will receive 25% of the biennial disbursement, which will be paid out in equal amounts to each of the nine federally recognized Indian Tribes in the state of Oregon. Tribes may use the funds to invest in stewardship of their natural resources.

In 2025, OWEB hired three new staff to implement the Oregon Environmental Restoration Program. Over the past six months, those staff, in partnership with the Governor's Natural Resources Office, have met individually with representatives of federally recognized Tribes in Oregon to 1) share an overview of the proposed steps and timeline for establishing the Tribal Nation Natural Resource Fund and 2) hear what processes would be effective for Tribal input and engagement in developing the Fund.

In October 2025, the Governor-appointed Oregon Environmental Restoration Council had its inaugural meeting. Chuck Sams III is a co-chair of the Council and most recently served as the Director of the National Park Service (appointed by President Biden in 2021). Sams is Walla Walla and Cayuse and is an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR). The Council's first order of business was to initiate rulemaking on the Tribal Nation Natural Resource Program Fund. Program staff will continue to work in partnership with Tribes to review and develop rules that define eligible expenditures and reporting requirements for the Tribal Nations Fund, with the goal of having the Fund established in early 2026.

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 2025, Fisheries Habitat Program Supervisor for the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Stefan Kelly, hosted a field trip to the Oxbow Conservation Area (see photo below) to explain the recently completed phase of restoration at the Tribally owned property along the Middle Fork John Day River.



▲ Photo 14. Stefan Kelly, Fisheries Habitat Program Supervisor for the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs describes the recently completed restoration actions in 2025 along the Middle Fork John Day River with OWEB funding.

Promotion of Communication between OWEB and Tribes

Tribal Liaison

In conformance with OWEB's Tribal policy, OWEB's designated staff, 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 2025, OWEB's Tribal liaison continued to notify OWEB employees and board members of the provisions of ORS 182.162 to 182.168 to emphasize the importance of OWEB's Tribal policy. These provisions are discussed intentionally at multiple touchpoints throughout the year, including at the all-staff meeting when information is requested to write the annual Tribal report. The provisions are also reviewed when the final report is presented to staff and the OWEB board in celebration of what we have accomplished to develop and foster relationships 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 gave a presentation at the January 2025 board meeting to describe how the provisions of ORS 182.162 to 182.168 and OWEB's Tribal policy provide the guiding framework for OWEB's government-to-government relationship with Tribes. This presentation also highlighted the accomplishments that were summarized in the 2024 Annual Tribal Report.

Cultural Resources Protection

OWEB continues to emphasize the importance of grantees and grant project managers to comply with regulations that protect cultural resources. OWEB grants pay for the expenses to comply with cultural resource regulations and to 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 delegates Section 106 responsibilities of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) to OWEB. On August 12, 2025, OWEB, NMFS, along with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, signed the Programmatic Agreement (PA) for PCSRF projects, delegating Section 106 responsibilities of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) to OWEB. These responsibilities will include 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 the PCSRF projects.

In anticipation of signing the PA, Courtney Shaff, OWEB's Monitoring and Reporting Program Manager, along with Shane James, OWEB's Cultural Resource Specialist, reached out to federally recognized Tribes in Oregon and the Nez Perce Tribe to schedule meetings. These meetings aimed to foster relationships, discuss the implementation of the PA, and gather input from Tribal staff on how to conduct consultations with their respective Tribes. Many of these meetings occurred in 2024 but continued into the current year. At the time of this reporting, OWEB had the opportunity to meet with the cultural and natural resources staff from the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, as well as the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon. These 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 as we start reviewing projects for cultural compliance. 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 15. OWEB's Cultural Resources Specialist surveys Spring Creek Fish Ladder.

As part of the terms of the PA, OWEB developed the Workers Environmental Awareness Training (WEAT). This training was designed to provide information on the types of cultural resources that may be encountered on the project site, Oregon's laws that exist to protect these resources, and the procedures to follow in the event of an inadvertent discovery. This training will be available on the State's Workday Learning account for all construction personnel, including contractors or state employees who work on certain PCSRF projects. It is our hope that this training will provide valuable information that can help protect our shared heritage for individuals beyond the reach of our grants.



▲ **Photo 16.** Camas flowers in the Camp Creek Hills burn unit, April 2025, as a result of the OWEB grant “Regenerating Native Plant Communities with Cultural Fire” to the Long Tom Watershed Council in coordination with the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians.

Rulemaking

At their July 2025 meeting, the OWEB Board initiated rulemaking for OWEB's Water Acquisition grants program. OWEB formed a Rulemaking Advisory Committee (RAC) to provide input on revisions to the program rules. All Tribes were invited to participate in the RAC, and Anton Chiono, with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, also volunteered to participate. We anticipate meeting with the RAC through Spring 2026 to develop revisions to the rules for OWEB Board consideration. OWEB staff will send an email with the draft rules to each Tribe and invite them to provide written or verbal comments before the OWEB Board approves the revised rules.

Task Force on Oregon Tribal Cultural Items

In 2020, OWEB completed its survey and reported its findings in OWEB's Cultural Items Survey Report for the Task Force on Oregon Tribal Cultural Items. Based on guidance from the State Archivist and the Task Force, OWEB provided notification to the Tribes before any paper files were purged. OWEB has not purged any electronic files to date. As of December 15, 2023, OWEB is not purging any paper or electronic files based on a directive by the Department of Justice due to litigation. OWEB has designated its Tribal Liaison, Ken Fetcho, as the Tribal Cultural Items Contact Person for the agency.

In October 2025, OWEB staff attended the Tribal Liaison training hosted by Danny Santos at the Joint Culture Cluster and State/Tribal Natural Resources Workgroup. Danny provided an update on Executive Order 24-06 to re-establish the Task Force on Oregon Tribal Cultural Items that helped clarify expectations of state agencies. OWEB continues to conduct its survey work and make maps, photos, records, case files, or other materials, which may be of interest to the Tribes, available via our online databases and upon request. OWEB's Tribal Cultural Items Survey Report and Responses to Comments that were provided to the Task Force on November 14, 2019, and July 29, 2020, describe the information that OWEB stores. To request a copy of these documents or for more information on the items we manage, please [contact OWEB's Tribal Liaison](#).

In 2026, OWEB will continue to make the cultural items we manage available to Tribes in our online grant database and respond to inquiries from Tribes on specific information they are interested in. OWEB will notify Tribes if and when OWEB begins to purge our paper files and will make that information available to the Tribes if they are interested in it. OWEB will continue to manage sensitive information in a manner that is not accessible in our online databases and store it in a manner that allows us to share it with Tribes. Finally, OWEB looks forward to attending the Orientation for State Agency Tribal Cultural Items Liaisons in 2026.



▲ Photo 17. Technical review team members discuss a stream restoration project at a site visit along the Hood River, that includes representatives from the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs.

Meetings with Tribes

The Tribal liaison continues to attend the State/Tribal Natural Resources Workgroup quarterly meetings to provide relevant updates and to better understand issues of importance to the Tribes. Additionally, in 2025, Shane James, OWEB's Cultural Resource Specialist, regularly attended the Cultural Cluster quarterly meetings and assisted the Culture Cluster in updating its Charter. The Tribal liaison, Executive Director, and the Environmental Restoration Program Manager attended the 2025 Government-to-Government Summit that was co-hosted by the Coquille Indian Tribe in North Bend, OR, on October 7th and 8th. OWEB staff enjoyed an evening of networking at the pre-summit reception and the cultural exchange at the Coquille Community Plank House. The evening's events were a great way to connect with the Tribes and other state

agencies before the Summit began the following day. OWEB had the opportunity to further connect with Tribal and state leadership to better understand Tribal issues that arose at the summit. OWEB staff engaged in the day's networking activities, including the breakout group exercise that provided an opportunity to connect and develop a deeper level of understanding of Tribal staff's roles and day-to-day activities.



▲ Photo 18. Governor Kotek and Tribal partners celebrate the signing of several bills at the 2025 Government-to-Government Summit co-hosted by the Coquille Indian Tribe.

In 2025, OWEB staff continued to work with Tribes' natural resources staff to receive input on OWEB program development and to pursue learning opportunities to improve our capacity to promote collaboration with Tribes. In February 2025, Burns Paiute Tribe Natural Resources staff and Diane Teeman, who at the time was Cultural Resources Director of the Burns Paiute Tribe, presented at an OWEB All-staff meeting. The presentation was a great opportunity for OWEB to learn more about the Burns Paiute Tribe's natural and cultural resources priorities. This presentation focused on the Burns Paiute Tribe's history, how their government is structured, and the Wildlife program's efforts to restore the Tribe's conservation properties.

In May 2025, the Executive Directors of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and the Oregon Water Resources Department jointly met with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Board of Trustees and Natural Resources leadership. This was an opportunity for them to learn the Confederated Tribe's history, culture, and current initiatives to help the agencies align their efforts with Tribal values and priorities, ultimately leading to more effective and inclusive resource management. This meeting supported coordinated dialogue between the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the three agency directors, and the leadership on water policy and other natural resource issues. OWEB leadership remains available to meet in person with the Tribal staff and leadership in 2026, individually or in coordination with other state agency leadership, to have an opportunity to learn what is important to each Tribe and to identify areas of collaboration.

In July 2025, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation's Natural Resources Director Eric Quaempts and Fish Habitat Program Manager Michael Lambert hosted OWEB's Executive Director, Sara O'Brien, on a tour of the Meacham Creek watershed. Director Quaempts also spoke during a dinner with the OWEB Board, outlining CTUIR's First Foods and River Vision approach to natural resource management and connecting the First Foods approach with OWEB's mission and work.

In addition, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Fisheries Program staff led the OWEB Board and staff on a tour of the Umatilla River-Birch Creek floodplain reconnection project. This tour highlighted fish and wildlife habitat enhancement activities to realign Birch Creek's main channel to its historic meandering channel, and the Umatilla River into the floodplain areas previously restricted by a levee. This tour included the local and state partners who are working together to implement this important project. Being on-site with agency leadership and Tribal partners provided valuable insights into the challenges in implementing large-scale river restoration projects along working lands.



▲ Photo 19. Jude Love, Fisheries Habitat Biologist from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation speaks to OWEB staff, board members, and local partners during a field trip along the Umatilla River and Birch Creek, July 2025.

In July 2025, OWEB staff met with the Klamath Tribes to discuss the Tribes' newly established Watershed Council. OWEB staff met with Willa Powless, Shahn timer Rich, and Derek Kimbol to discuss their interest in receiving Watershed Council Capacity funds and various grant offerings the Klamath Tribes are eligible for. OWEB staff followed up after the meeting to provide more details.

The Klamath Tribes are encouraged to participate in rule-making for the Watershed Council Capacity grant program that will be revisited in 2026.

In September 2025, OWEB's Deputy Director and Environmental Restoration Program Manager attended the Tribal Water Task Force meeting in Bend to discuss next steps for ongoing collaboration on shared water policy interests. OWEB is committed to participating in a future Tribal-State Water Policy Forum in 2026. We look forward to engaging with Tribal and state leadership to address water resource challenges and solutions.

Also in September 2025, Alexa Schmidt, OWEB's Water and Climate Coordinator, attended the [Carbon and Culture Symposium](#) that was hosted by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. The symposium brought Tribal knowledge keepers, land managers, academics, state government, and others together to consider natural and geologic carbon sequestration activities on Tribally owned and managed lands. Alexa presented about OWEB offerings for natural climate solutions and the forthcoming Tribal Nation Fund (part of the Environmental Restoration Program).



▲ Photo 20. Dogbane cordage making workshop at the Carbon and Culture Symposium hosted by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, September 2025.

We hope that by expanding OWEB staff's learning and Tribal engagement opportunities, 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 the Tribes on their lands to learn more about their cultural and natural resources priorities in 2026.