

2003-2007 Oregon Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Appendix L: Oregon Wetlands Priority Plan. Salem, OR: Oregon State Parks, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, 2003. (Reviewed by Kyle Walker)

Appendix L of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's 2003 Oregon Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan describes the Oregon Wetlands Priority Plan. This appendix gives a brief history of wetlands protection in Oregon, describes current wetlands protection measures, and provides a priority listing of regions and watersheds for wetland restoration and acquisition.

When settlers first arrived in Oregon, they preferred development of wetlands protection. In fact, federal funding and assistance to drain and convert wetlands facilitated much of the wetland conversion of that time period. The government also provided incentives to purchase wetlands and convert them to “productive” uses. Due to the legacy of these acts such as the Swamp Land Acts of the mid-1800s, 38 percent of Oregon's wetlands have been converted to other uses such as agricultural and commercial land.

The appendix continues to describe many of the benefits wetlands provide, such as flood control, wildlife habitat, and water quality improvement. It continues to outline recent changes in public policy that attempt to protect Oregon's wetlands, such as the Removal-Fill law and the Statewide Planning Goals that mention wetland resources.

Oregon's wetland conservation strategy, per the appendix, will include both regulatory and non-regulatory measures. These measures include the protection of wetlands and restoration sites, conserving and managing functions and values of wetlands, encouraging wetlands restoration while accommodating necessary economic activities, and promoting partnerships among agencies, organizations, and the public.

The conclusion of the appendix includes a table outlining the priority regions and watersheds for wetland restoration and acquisition. The table includes the Willamette Valley because of “historic loss, land owner interest, and proximity to development,” and the Willamette Greenway due to “greatest historical loss, rapidly urbanizing areas, water quality issues, rare plant species and wet meadow and shrub habitat types.” It also identifies the Willamette River as a Tier I EPA Priority Basin and a DEQ Critical Basin.

Critique

This document is not really a “plan” for wetlands conservation as the title might imply. Like many other wetlands conservation documents that I have read, it presents the problem, talks in very general terms about what needs to be done to solve it, but does not really propose a course of action that could be taken. For example, the document introduces Oregon's wetland conservation strategy, which proposes wetlands management by “providing protection of wetlands and restoration sites.” However, the

measures that would have to be implemented to provide protection of these sites are nowhere to be found in the document. This is not a criticism of the document per se, but an observation; this appendix, like many other wetlands conservation documents I have read, identify problems without proposing concrete ways to solve those problems. Instead of providing solutions, this document references another document that discusses solutions to wetlands problems (see “Good, James W: Recommendations for a Nonregulatory Wetlands Restoration Program for Oregon” or my review of that document).

However, this appendix does serve as a useful, concise reference for Oregonians interested in wetlands issues. Although it does not explore wetlands issues in detail, it does provide an interesting outlook on the history of wetlands in Oregon. The appendix also informs its readers about wetlands restoration programs in the area and about priority regions/watersheds for restoration measures, which could prove quite useful for the layperson interested in wetlands issues.

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