

Spatial Prioritization of Oak and Prairie Conservation Opportunities

Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas Counties, Oregon



Oregon white oak (*Quercus garryana*)

In the greater Portland-Vancouver region, Oregon white oak (*Quercus garryana*) and prairie ecosystems provide important habitat for hundreds of plant and wildlife species. They are among the most iconic and culturally important landscapes of the region, yet they are imperiled. Oregon white oaks have been impacted by conversion to other land uses and vegetation changes due to fire suppression.

To begin efforts to conserve Oregon white oak habitat by addressing the need for regional data, the Intertwine Alliance

Oak Prairie Working Group (OPWG), a coalition of agency, tribal, nonprofit, and community partners, was formed in 2012. The OPWG began its work with a focus on oak mapping, but expanded to address stewardship, restoration, and education related to native oak and prairie habitats. In 2018, the OPWG completed a 10-year Strategic Action Plan.

To further inform investments in land protection, restoration, and education and outreach in both rural and urban areas, the OPWG sought to complement the Strategic Action Plan with a

Spatial prioritization guides conservation of one of the most imperiled ecosystems in North America.

spatial prioritization of oak and prairie conservation opportunities across the RCS planning area. For help in doing this, they turned to Biohabitats.

After reviewing existing the data and combining them into a single data set, Biohabitats will review previous studies and habitat prioritizations, identify differences in key variables, and develop a prioritization approach that integrates extensive and detailed oak data. Biohabitats is assessing the areas surrounding priority polygons to create, improve, and maintain habitat connectivity. Working closely with the OPWG and applying a predictive connectivity analysis for the study area, Biohabitats will produce a coherent base map to identify

areas of opportunities, core areas, corridors, critical gaps, as well as barriers to connectivity. Biohabitats also is conducting a gap analysis to determine where the OPWG is lacking important habitat data and will present solutions for filling those gaps.

The base map provides the OPWG with a powerful tool to guide the conservation, restoration, and connection of high value oak and prairie ecosystems in the greater Portland region.

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