R & E Grant Application 25-27 Biennium

Project #: 25-002

Conyers Creek Habitat Enhancement

Project Information

Requested Cycle:	25-1
R&E Project Request:	$32,220
Other Funding:	$680,555
Total Project:	$712,775
Spending Start Date:	7/1/2025
Spending End Date:	6/30/2027
Project Start Date:	5/1/2025
Project End Date:	12/30/2029
Organization:	Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

Fiscal Officer

Name:	Malyssa Legg
Address:	35285 Millard Road St. Helens, OR 97051
Telephone:	5034333205 x107
Telephone 2:	
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Email:	malyssa.legg@columbiaswcd.com

Applicant Information

Name:	Crystalyn Bush
Address:	35285 Millard Rd. Saint Helens, OR 97051
Telephone:	503-433-3205
Email:	crystalyn.bush@columbiaswcd.com

Past Recommended or Completed Projects

This applicant has no previous projects that match criteria.

Location Information

Where is it?

The project will occur on private land owned or managed by another party

Landowner Information

Name:	David and Gail Hicks
Address:	75174 Conyers Creek Road Clatskanie, OR, 97016
Phone:	503-728-2056
Email:	dandghicks@hotmail.com

Name:	Paul and Heather Gibbons
Address:	75364 Conyers Creek Road Clatskanie, OR, 97016
Phone:	503-250-2197
Email:	pmgibbons@gmail.com

Site Description

Street Address, nearest intersection, or other descriptive location.

Project area is off of Conyers Creek Road just south of intersection with Himple Road.

Directions to the site from the nearest highway junction.

Take Hwy. 30 north from Portland to Saint Helens. Enter the City of Clatskanie. Turn left onto S. Nehalem Street. Stay right to go on Conyers Creek Road. Travel approximately 0.5 miles before you reach the Gibbons' residence on the left side of Conyers Creek Road.

Following project completion, public anglers will be allowed the following level of access to the project site:

No access

Please describe what leases, easements, agreements are in place to ensure angler access to the project site, and what is the length of each agreement.

NA

Dominant Land Use Type:

Rural residential

Project Location

General Project Location.

County:	Columbia
Town/City:	Clatskanie
ODFW Dist:	NWWD - Coast Range Unit
Stream/Lake/Estuary Name:	Conyers Creek
Sub-basin:	Lower Columbia - Clatskanie River
Tributary of:	Clatskanie River

Specific Project Location.

Latitude	Longitude

46.0872	-123.2201

Project Summary

Project Summary

Please provide a couple sentence summary of the proposal.

The goal of this project is to implement restoration designs to increase, restore, and enhance spawning and rearing habitat for ESA-listed salmonid species in Conyers Creek. Project elements include large wood installation, side channel and floodplain re-engagement, BDA installation, riparian revegetation, beaver habitat enhancement, fencing, and weed control.

Overall Project Goals

Describe the primary goals or outcomes of the entire project, including elements not requesting funding from R&E.

The primary short term goal of this project is to increase and improve spawning and rearing habitat for native, ESA-listed salmonid species using Conyers Creek.

The primary long term goal is to catalyze beneficial natural processes resulting in ongoing ecological uplift and greater climate change resilience within the project reach. This includes anticipated positive changes to channel morphology and planform, hydrology, plant communities, groundwater storage, and water quality.

A secondary goal of the project is increased public awareness of the benefits of conservation. This will be accomplished through the creation of outreach materials, including a professional video of the project, as well as outreach activities like project site tours and presentations.

Primary objectives of R&E funding

Please describe the measurable objectives for the R&E portion of the funding request.

Install native plants throughout ~4.0 acres of the project area in fall/winter 2026.

Conduct mechanical and chemical weed control activities seasonally from 2025-2027.

Purchase ~ 20,000 live stakes, 300 willow poles, a mix of 360 native trees and shrubs, and ~100 lbs of native seed.

Current Situation/Justification

Please describe the current situation and explain why this funding is needed.

Lidar, ground observations, and antecdotal histories reveal that Conyers Creek was once more of a braided complex of channels with a relatively wide and accessible floodplain. Over time, historic logging practices, development, and conversion of the land have led to planform simplification and habitat degradation. Conyers is heavily incised throughout much of the watershed, cut off from many of its historic side channels and floodplain, and almost completely devoid of large wood. Lack of in-stream complexity creates instability and turbidity as high flow velocities erode away sensitive banks and flush out quality spawning material. Young fish rearing in the system have very little refuge from predators and solar radiation. Riparian conditions vary, but are often heavily infested with invasive species including Himalayan blackberries, Reed canary grass, Field bindweed, and Policeman's helmet. Some stretches of Conyers within the project area lack any vegetation to protect the stream from thermal radiation and the streambanks from powerful erosive forces. Funding from this grant would provide the

funds necessary to execute the revegetation phase of this project and compliments funds sought from OWEB and the PFA for final design work, permits, construction, and monitoring activities.

Recreation and Commercial Benefit

This project will provide benefits to:

Recreational fisheries
Commercial fisheries

Explain how this project will contribute to current (and/or potential) fishing opportunities, access, or fisheries management.

Answer provided by ODFW staff: "By restoring key habitats within the Conyers Creek such as riffles, pools, and vegetated areas, the project will improve water quantity and quality, increase fish abundance, and support key ESA listed species in the basin, including salmon, steelhead, and other local fish populations. These improvements will directly benefit recreational anglers by increasing catch rates, especially during peak fishing seasons. Overall, this project will contribute to the long-term health and sustainability of fisheries in the Columbia River basin. Due to the location of this project, lower in the Columbia system and in relation to the lower Clatskanie, there are substantial benefits that will result from the completion of this project. Popular Columbia River salmon and steelhead sport fishing focuses on the lower Columbia River fisheries. The Clatskanie is one of our highest priorities for recovering these stocks and any work in the basin will benefit recreation anglers within the lower Columbia River. This project will specifically address side channel habitat which are some of our key limiting factors for ESA Listed fish species. Protecting these habitats and addressing limiting factors benefits sport and commercial fisheries."

Percent benefit split between Commercial and Recreational anglers:

30 % Commercial
70 % Recreational

Please explain, or justify, how the percentage split was determined:

Answer provided by ODFW staff: "The primary beneficiaries of habitat restoration in this area are likely to be recreational anglers. Restoration efforts will improve catch rates and fish health, especially for species important to local recreation, which can increase angler satisfaction and participation. The project's direct impact on water quality, spawning habitat, and juvenile fish survival will likely provide long-term benefits to the recreational fishing community.

While the restoration will improve fish stocks overall, commercial fisheries may see a somewhat smaller direct benefit, primarily through healthier fish populations. The lower Columbia River is an important commercial fishing area, but its fishery is more regulated, with strict quotas and management policies in place. Restoration can help sustain fish populations for commercial harvest, but the immediate benefits to commercial fishers will likely be less pronounced than for recreational anglers.

The restoration of critical habitats, such as spawning and juvenile fish rearing areas, will most likely improve fish populations across species. However, many of these benefits, such as juvenile survival and habitat stability, directly support recreational fishing by improving catch rates and fishing conditions in specific zones. Commercial fisheries will likely experience more indirect and less pronounced benefits."

This project has been identified as an ODFW priority for:

Local/watershed

Basin/regional
Statewide

Does this project directly support implementation of the ODFW Strategic Plan and/or current Fish Division priorities?

Yes

This project aligns with both priorities and strategic plans for ODFW including Habitat Restoration and Connectivity, Native Species Recovery, and Climate Adaptation. It also aligns with the following Fish Division Priorities: Improving Fish Passage and Habitat, Focus on Priority Basins, and Partnerships and Community Engagement.

Please briefly explain when this was identified as a priority and what process or workgroup was used to identified this as an ODFW priority.

The Clatskanie Basin is listed as a priority basin in the Oregon Conservation Strategy. A combination of habitat and fish surveys conducted over the last 2 decades provided the data used by ODFW and local conservation agencies to identify Conyers Creek as a priority area for restoration activities.

Identify any plan or other document that identifies this priority.

ESA Recovery Plan for Lower Columbia River Coho Salmon, Lower Columbia River Chinook Salmon, Lower Columbia River Chum Salmon, and Lower Columbia River Steelhead Salmon (NMFS, 2013). https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/16002

Lower Columbia River Conservation and Recovery Plan for Oregon Populations of Salmon and Steelhead (ODFW, 2010). https://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/crp/docs/lower-columbia/OR_LCR_Plan%20-%20Aug_6_2010_Final.pdf

Lower Columbia River Watershed Council Strategic Action Plan (LCRWC, 2020). https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58c2fb8d1b10e33e6e7dbfee/t/5eb0aa9434903e689611e16f/1588636313555/Strategic+Action+Plan_ReviewDraft_TACreviewdraft_final.pdf Identifies Conyers Creek as a priority for large wood installation and riparian enhancement based on habitat surveys.

Is this project part of an approved Salmon-Trout Enhancement Program (STEP) activity?

No

This project is intended to benefit the following species:

Fall Chinook Salmon
Other Species
Lower Columbia River Chum
Coho Salmon
Lamprey
Winter Steelhead
Cutthroat Trout

This project will benefit anglers or fishery by providing:

Habitat Enhancements

Habitat Enhancements

The primary purpose of this project is to improve/increase:

In water structure, complexity, and habitat
Water quality
Planting or vegetation management

Project Description

Schedule

Activity	Date	RE Funding
Restoration designs finalized	01, 2026	No
Contractors hired for construction and vegetation	06, 2026	No
Permits obtained	06, 2026	No
All in-stream/construction work completed	09, 2026	No
Native plants installed	03, 2027	Yes
Seasonal weed control pre-project through 3 years post project	10, 2029	Yes
Monitoring activities pre-project through 3 years post project	12, 2029	No
Outreach and education activities concluded	12, 2029	No

Permits

Permit	Secured?	Date Expected
Columbia County Land Use Compliance Review	No	12/30/2025
ODFW Fish Passage Plan	No	3/30/2026
DEQ 401 Water Quality Certification	No	03/30/2026
USACE/DSL Joint Permit	No	06/30/2026
DEQ 1200C Construction Stormwater Permit	No	06/30/2026
Columbia County Grade and Fill Permit	No	06/30/2026
ODF Notification of Operations	No	06/30/2026
ODFW Oregon Rescue/Salvage Authorization	No	06/30/2026
ODA Applicator License	No	9/30/2025

Project Design and Description

Please describe in detail the methods or approach that will be used to achieve the project objectives.

The project team (consisting of the project manager, engineer, geomorphologist, ODFW biologist, and landowners) decided on the design through discussions about project and landowner goals, appropriate restoration practices, and site constraints. An alternatives analysis was conducted in which design alternatives were evaluated based on the following criteria: 1) likelihood of achieving short term and long term project goals; 2) level of disturbance relative to anticipated ecological uplift; 3) cost versus overall benefit; 4) landowner support; and 5) risk level. Alternatives consisted of the following: 1) No action; 2) Log structures and revegetation; 3) Alternative #2 plus side channel and bank grading; and 4) Alternative #3 plus seasonal wetland restoration (selected design). The project team felt that the final alternative had the greatest chance of producing the most long term ecological benefit relative to the cost. Adding on the wetland work did not significantly increase the overall cost of the project, had high levels of landowner support, and is expected to yield greater water quality and amphibian habitat benefits. Designs align with current bioengineering practices and were developed by an engineer with many years experience in stream restoration whose company is active in these types of projects all over (and even outside of) the State.

The following restoration activities are incorporated in this project:

1) Installation of 8 large wood structures with at least 6 pieces each in specified locations throughout the project site to enhance existing pool habitat, increase in-stream complexity, and defend against future erosion/incision of the stream. This will be done using an excavator to bury the structures in the streambank with the rootwads facing into the water. Structures will be pinned together, buried and covered with at least 3' of stream substrate material consisting of pieces with a minimum diameter of 12". All logs and rootwads will be harvested onsite from a stand of ~ 40 year old Douglas fir.
2) Installation of 8 rootwad logs in 2 newly created alcoves. Alcove habitat will be

created/enhanced through excavation of depressional areas that are currently engaged only during high flows. Rootwad stems will be buried in the bank with rootwads facing into the water to provide greater refuge for juvenile salmonids.
3) Reconnection of historic Roaring Creek side channel. The confluence will be filled with onsite material and the historic channel will be restored through selective excavation and placement of streambed material (as needed).
4) Installation of 9 Beaver Dam Analogue structures in the Roaring Creek channel and downstream alcove area for wildlife habitat and water quality. BDA design will be informed by the Beaver Restoration Guidebook with several of the structures being a patented “living” structure design by Ash Creek Forestry Management.
5) Removal of drain tiles and wetland enhancement activities in the Gibbons’ pasture to increase groundwater recharge, improve water quality in Conyers Creek, and increase amphibian habitat.
6) Revegetation of all areas disturbed during construction and planting of willows and other beaver forage species in designated areas throughout the project reach to encourage beaver presence and maintenance. Plantings and plant selection will adhere to guidelines found in the Beaver Restoration Guidebook. ~300 large willow poles will be installed to provide beavers with immediate forage and discourage foraging of newly planted live stakes. Plantings will be installed throughout ~1.5 acres of riparian, ~ 2.0 acres of floodplain, and 0.25 acres of emergent wetland areas with native species. Seasonal weed control activities will support establishment of native species.
7) Installation of fencing along riparian and wetland boundaries in Gibbons' pasture to prevent any future livestock from accessing the riparian area or enhanced wetland area.

Engineering

Does the project involve capital improvement, engineering, site grading or other construction?

Yes

Not associated with ODFW

Project Management and Maintenance

What is the life expectancy of R&E funded construction, structures, equipment, supplies, data or fishery?

R&E funds will go towards the purchase and installation of plant material and weed control activities. Depending on plant survival, the life expectancy of conifer trees to be planted is well over 100 years. We may supplement plantings in the future, but do not anticipate replacing plantings entirely.

Who is responsible for long term management, maintenance, and oversight of the project beyond what is funded by R&E.

The Columbia SWCD is responsible for short term maintenance/management of the project (with the exception of fencing) and will continue to monitor project effectiveness and changes to the site at regular intervals for the foreseeable future. After 3 years, the landowners are responsible for the maintenance and management of all project elements. We expect project elements like large wood structures, BDAs, and plantings to change over time, hopefully in a way that creates long term ecological uplift to the area. One of the primary goals of this project is to encourage greater beaver activity at the site, which would ultimately result in long-lasting changes to the local hydrology, stream planform and morphology, plant communities, and water quality.

Will the project require ongoing maintenance?

Yes

Some elements of the project may require some level of ongoing maintenance. This would mainly pertain to plantings which may require weed control past the 3 year mark and fencing on the Gibbons' property, which may need to be mended from time to time.

Is there a plan to collect baseline data and to conduct monitoring efforts to measure the effectiveness of the project?

Yes

Baseline data has already been collected in the form of a habitat and snorkel survey conducted in the summer of 2024 as well as the creation of an aerial orthoimage of the pre-project conditions produced in December 2023. Monitoring efforts will include post project habitat and snorkel surveys to record changes in habitat features, number of large wood structures/pieces, pool size and depth, and fish counts. Post project aerial images will be commissioned in the winter of 2026 (following project implementation) and at the Year 3 and 5 marks to monitor changes to hydrology, planform, beaver activity, plant communities etc... The SWCD will also monitor plant survival rates and percent native plant coverage throughout areas where revegetation occurred.

Project Funding

Funding

Have you applied for OWEB funding for this project?

Yes

OWEB application number: 225-1008-23978

R&E money is needed as matching funds.

Awaiting a decision from the panel.

A proposal was submitted to OWEB in the Fall 2024 solicitation window. A decision is expected on that application by 4/30/2025.

Has this proposal, or similar proposal for this project location, previously been denied by OWEB or other funding source?

No

Other Funding Source	Type	Secured	Dollar Value	Comments
Landowner - Hicks	In-Kind	Pending	18,000	Landowner has agreed to donate all logs and rootwads for the project from their property.
Landowner - Gibbons	In-Kind	Pending	7,278	Landowners collecting daily wetland data to inform designs. Landowners will control weeds and manage plantings on their property as cost share for NRCS contract.
Columbia SWCD	In-Kind	Pending	34,406	Project management and outreach development, mileage, video production etc...
Natural Resource Conservation Service	In-Kind	Secured	63,175	Labor and materials for weed control, planting, fencing, and grazing practices on Gibbons' property
Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife	In-Kind	Pending	1,500	ODFW biologists have committed to consulting throughout project and conducting snorkel surveys for monitoring purposes
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board	Cash	Pending	516,625	Funding for engineering, permits, materials, construction, and project management, and indirect costs
Columbia SWCD	Cash	Pending	39,571	Indirect costs associated with project (identified as match in OWEB budget)
		Total	680,555	

Budget

Item	Unit Number	Unit Cost	In-kind or non-cash contributions	Funding from other sources	R&E Funds	Total Costs
PROJECT MANAGEMENT						
Resource Conservationist - Project management (hr)	400	50	10,000	10,000		20,000
		SUBTOTAL	10,000	10,000		20,000
IN-HOUSE PERSONNEL						
Outreach Coordinator - outreach activities (hr)	80	40	3,200			3,200
		SUBTOTAL	3,200			3,200
CONTRACTED SERVICES						
Engineering - Final designs & construction oversight (LS)	1	59,280		59,280		59,280
Wetland Assessment (each)	1	8,000		8,000		8,000
Cultural Resource Survey and Report (each)	1	30,000		30,000		30,000
Construction Costs (LS - see attached OWEB budget)	1	318,328		318,328		318,328
Construction Contingency (LS - see attached OWEB budget)	1	73,390		73,390		73,390
Planting Materials - 8' live willow poles (each)	300	5			1,500	1,500
Planting Materials - live willow and other stakes (each)						
Planting Materials - 1 gallon trees (each)	145	8			1,160	1,160
Planting Materials - 1 gallon shrubs (each)	215	6			1,290	1,290
Planting Materials - Native seed mix (lbs)	100	30			3,000	3,000
Planting and Weed Control Labor (hr)	361	70			25,270	25,270
NRCS Contract (LS - see attached OWEB budget)	1	63,175		63,175		63,175
Landowner NRCS Cost Share Labor (LS)	1	6,318	6,318			6,318
Landowner Labor (hr)	30	32	960			960
ODFW Consultations/Habitat Surveys	25	60	1,500			1,500
Aerial Imaging - Monitoring (hr)	12	175		2,100		2,100
		SUBTOTAL	8,778	554,273	32,220	595,271
TRAVEL						
Columbia SWCD Mileage (miles)	1,800	1	1,206			1,206
		SUBTOTAL	1,206			1,206
SUPPLIES/MATERIALS						
Logs and rootwads donated by Landowner (each)	120	150	18,000			18,000
Permit Fees (lump sum)	1	5,634		5,634		5,634
		SUBTOTAL	18,000	5,634		23,634
EDUCATION/OUTREACH						
Video Production (LS)	1	20,000	20,000			20,000
		SUBTOTAL	20,000			20,000
EQUIPMENT						
		SUBTOTAL				
FISCAL ADMINISTRATION						
Indirect Costs (LS)	1	49,464	9,893	39,571		49,464
		SUBTOTAL	9,893	39,571		49,464
		BUDGET TOTAL	71,077	609,478	32,220	712,775

Internal Review Results

Review Score: 2.7 out of 5

(1 = Do Not Fund, 2 = Strengthen Proposal, 3 = Recommend with Conditions, 4 = Recommend, 5 = Strongly Recommend)

Summary of Review Team Comments

Concern with longevity and maintenance needs of the BDA structures. Agrees that there could be significant benefit to multiple fish species.

Specific Review Team Comments

IRT suggests that if OWEB funding is not secured, then R&E funds will be withdrawn.

Specific Review Team Questions

Have you also applied for a PFA grant, if so, why is that not listed as possible match funds?

Yes, I have applied for a PFA grant in addition to the OWEB and R&E grants. Because the PFA grant program does not require 25% match, I applied for the full amount through PFA (the total of the OWEB and R&E funds requested), which would mean that the R&E funding would not be needed. However, it is possible that the PFA board will decide to partially fund the project, in which case the R&E funding could still be critical to project implementation. My understanding is that OWEB will issue its decision first regarding grant awards. If, in the situation that OWEB does not fund the proejct, but full PFA funding is awarded, then any funds awarded by the R&E program could be withdrawn.

Why do you need BDA structures when beavers are already present in the area?

Beavers are present, but not necessarily permanent in the area. Small dams are sometimes erected, but do not survive in the mainstem of Conyers Creek. Good dam building material is also not present on site so beavers make do with alder branches. Our goal is to jumpstart more beaver activity and colonization by installing dams in the newly reconnected side channel where flow volumes and gradient will be lower and by stocking preferred forage and dam building species throughout the site. Some of the installed BDAS will be living dams which should make them more durable and provide extra forage for beavers. In addition the BDAs serve an important water quality function by trapping and filtering the sediment that is annually flushed out of the upstream reservoir. BDAs will work to slow and hold water in Roaring Creek, increasing floodplain engagement and preventing this side channel from becoming just another incised creekbed. As much as we hope that beavers will colonize and build in this area, there is no guarantee. Consequently, the BDAs are a hedge against the unknown and will serve to increase complexity, floodplain engagement, and in-stream habitat while the site is evolving post implementation.

The application does not show any permits or licenses for the chemical weed control. Is an applicators license needed? Will that be obtained or already possessed by a contractor?

I apologize for the oversight. Yes, an applicator license will be required. We always hire contractors who have the proper licensure in place and will ensure we do so for this project.

Please describe more as to this projects direct or indirect benefit for anglers?

It is impossible to quantify impacts to anglers from this project given that it is a habitat restoration project without an access component. However, there are two public fishing sites just downstream of the Conyers Creek confluence with the Clatskanie River where recreational

anglers will benefit from larger, healthier fish stocks coming out of this system. There is also a history of locals fishing off of road crossings along Conyers Creek. One landowner, whose family has lived just upstream of the project site for generations, recalled how he and his siblings used to walk down to the creek on Himpl Road and see it teeming with salmon every fall. ODFW maps show this area as having high intrinsic potential for both Chinook and Coho salmon. While benefits to anglers from this project are not quantifiable, we know from different monitoring studies, that increasing in-stream complexity and pool habitat is correlated with higher numbers of fish inhabiting the area and greater biological productivity overall.

Additional Files

Budget Information

OWEB budget	*Budget details*

Maps

Location Map	*Map of project location*

Photos

Aerial Map of Project Area	*Pre-project orthoimage of project area*
Photopoints	*Photos of project area*

Design Information

60% Designs	*60% restoration designs*

Management Plans and Supporting Documents

LCRWC SAP Excerpt	*Maps from LCRWC's Strategic Action Plan showing Conyers Creek as priority area for Large wood placement and Riparian Enhancement*
NOAA ESA Recovery Plan Excerpt	*Limiting Factors and Priority Actions in Tributaries*
ODFW Recovery Plan Excerpt	*Limiting factors and priority actions from the Executive Summary and table showing prioritization of Conyers Creek*
Planting Zone Map	*Map of planting activities*

Permits and Reviews

Partnerships

Gibbons' Landowner Agreement	*Cooperative agreement with landowner covering all work mentioned in the grant proposal*
Hicks' Landowner Agreement	*Cooperative Agreement with landowner covering all work mentioned in the grant proposal*
OWEB Match Form	*Indicates secured funding, OWEB funding pending*

Public Comment

Gibbons' Letter of Support	*Landowner letter of support*
Hicks' Letter of Support	*Landowner letter of support*
ODFW Letter of Support	*ODFW Letter of Support*

Administrative Documents

Signature Authorization Page	*Signature Authorization Page*

Completion Report

A completion report has not been submitted for this project.