

factsheet

August 2007

Zena conservation easement protects habitat in Willamette Valley

The Bonneville Power Administration is proposing to fund a 1,466 acre conservation easement on the Zena Timber property in Oregon's central Willamette Valley for fish and wildlife habitat mitigation. Located in the Eola Hills about eight miles northwest of Salem (see map), this property provides refuge for sensitive native plant and animal species.

In a landscape dominated by farm fields and urban expansion, the Zena Timber property features one of the largest contiguous blocks of mixed conifer and oak forest in the central Willamette Valley. Conservation of this property would protect some of the last and largest remaining parcels of several types of habitat that are disappearing in this area, including grasslands, oak savannas, wet prairies and emergent marshland.

These landscapes provide habitat for multiple indigenous wildlife species. The headwaters for the Rickreall, Yamhill and Spring Valley watersheds are located on the Zena property. The Rickreall and Yamhill watersheds are home to coastal cutthroat trout, Pacific lamprey and the upper Willamette steelhead, a federally threatened species.

The Zena property also provides corridors for large mammals, such as elk that venture from the Coast Range into the Willamette Valley. Additionally, a number of rare, threatened and endangered plant species are found here, including Kincaid's lupine, Nelson's checker-mallow and the Willamette Valley daisy.



White Oak habitat

Easement ensures protection, sustainability

To ensure key wildlife habitat features are protected and enhanced over time, this conservation easement would restrict development and conversion of the property into other non-forestry uses. Forestry practices on the Zena property are currently certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and this sustainable model would continue.

The easement stipulates that the FSC certification — widely recognized by environmental groups as the most credible forest certification system — must be maintained. Such sustainable forestry practices are desirable because they keep the land in a natural, undeveloped state and therefore provide valuable wildlife habitat and watershed protection.



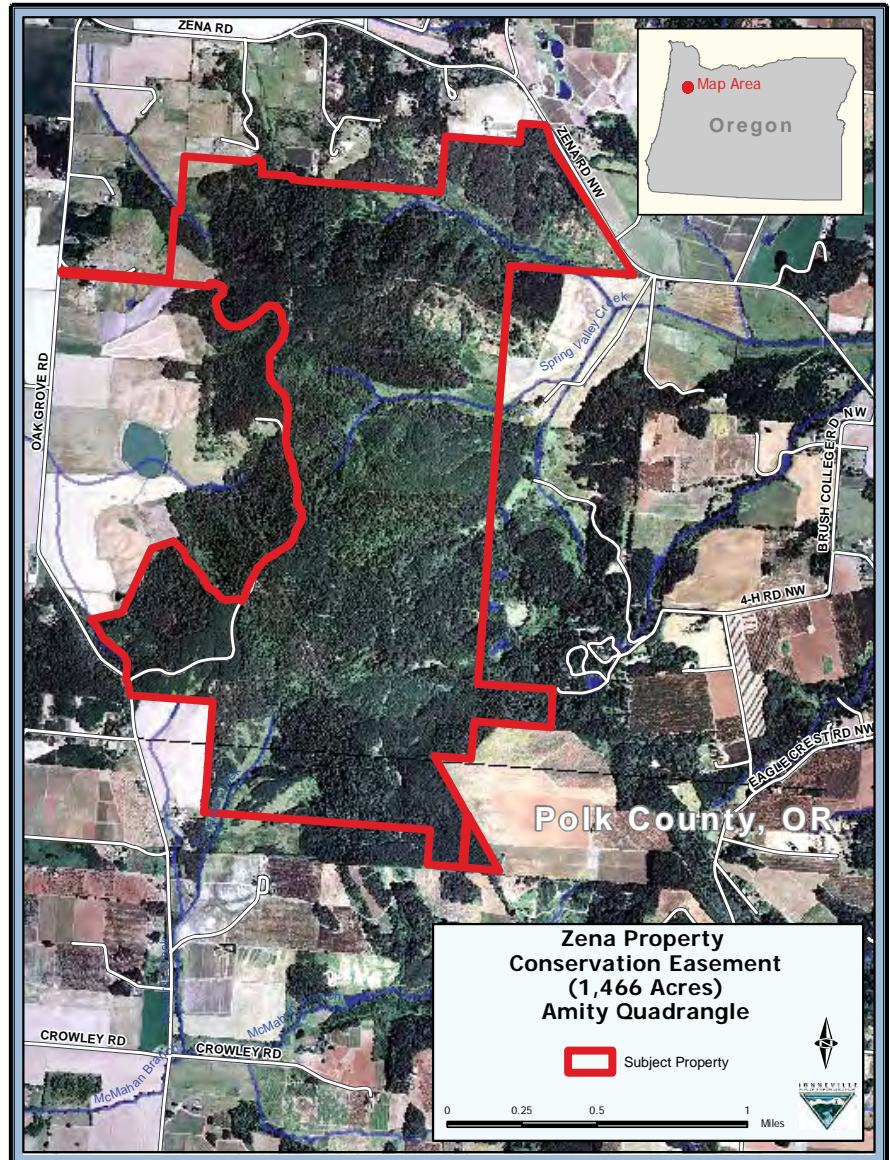
Additionally, the Zena property would provide an excellent sustainable working forest model for small woodland owners throughout the Willamette basin. In this model, a viable commercial forestry operation is sustained by growing a diverse forest that has multiple native tree species and harvesting trees at an older age than what is typically done on industry timber land. At the same time, wildlife habitat is conserved and enhanced by restoring priority habitat areas and retaining biological legacies such as snags, large live trees and down wood on the forest floor.

Acquiring this easement would provide BPA with credits for partial mitigation of wildlife habitat losses due to construction and operation of federal hydroelectric facilities on the Willamette River. As part of a growing network of conservation lands in the Willamette Valley, this easement would provide long-lasting benefits that protect wildlife and their habitats as well as water quality. To date, BPA has helped set aside 3,467 acres for wildlife mitigation in the Willamette Valley.

What happens next

When BPA finalizes the easement, which is expected in fall 2007, the land would be acquired temporarily by the Trust for Public Land (a national, nonprofit land conservation organization). To guide the protection and enhancement of resources on the property, TPL is developing a long-term management plan that would be finalized around the time of closing on the easement.

The plan addresses wildlife needs, forestry practices and watershed health as well as public access issues.



TPL would then transfer ownership of the parcel to a new owner to manage the land and comply with the long-term conservation objectives covered within the terms of the easement.

For more information

If you have any questions about this proposal or would like additional information, please contact Dorie Welch, Bonneville Power Administration, at (503) 230-5479 or dwwelch@bpa.gov. You may also contact Kristin Kovalik Newman from the Trust for Public Land at (541) 382 2092 or Kristin.Newman@tpl.org.