

Coburg Ridge Preserve Facts, May 2007

SIZE: 1,244 acres, the largest privately owned nature sanctuary in the Willamette Valley.

LOCATION: In the Coburg Hills east of Eugene, north of Springfield and north of the McKenzie River.

IMPORTANT HABITATS: Native Willamette Valley **upland prairie, oak savanna, oak woodland** and **conifer forest**, with **intermittent streams, wetlands** and **rock outcrops**. About 620 acres are prairie, oak savanna and oak woodland, the focal habitats for the preserve.

IMPORTANT SPECIES: The preserve harbors one of the four largest remaining populations of the **Fender's blue butterfly**, federally listed as endangered, and previously considered extinct until it was rediscovered in 1989. **Kincaid's lupine**, federally listed as threatened, is one of two host plants for the butterfly, both of which are found at Coburg Ridge. The butterfly is unique to the Willamette Valley. At least 24 other species identified in the *Willamette Subbasin Plan*¹ as of conservation concern are expected to benefit from the preserve, including the **western gray squirrel, sharptail snake, southern alligator lizard, horned lark, western meadowlark, acorn woodpecker**, and **Taylor's checkerspot butterfly**.

KEY THREATS: **Invasive species**, including Scot's broom and Himalayan blackberry. **Lack of fire** in fire-adapted ecosystems. **Conifer overabundance** in oak habitats.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES: The Nature Conservancy will develop a comprehensive management plan for the property with emphasis on protecting and restoring native prairie and oak habitats and expanding habitats for the Fender's blue butterfly. Key management strategies will include: **biological inventory** of native species and habitat types, **invasive species control** and removal, **prescribed burning, native plant restoration**, and **conifer removal** from oak and prairie habitats.

ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF COBURG RIDGE: Historically, the Willamette Valley was characterized by extensive prairie, oak savanna and woodland habitats supporting a diversity of plants and animals including many species found nowhere else on Earth. Agricultural and urban development in the valley has resulted in substantial losses of native habitat. **Less than 2 percent of native upland prairie** and **less than 8 percent of oak savannas and woodlands** remain. Hundreds of native plant and wildlife species depend on these remnant habitats.

The Willamette Valley is home to over 68 percent of Oregon's population and hosts nine of Oregon's 10 largest cities. Population is projected to top 4,000,000 by 2050, nearly doubling today's figure. Habitat losses due to residential and business development are likely to increase.

Coburg Ridge is identified in every major regional conservation assessment as harboring some of the best remaining native prairie and oak habitats in the Willamette Valley. In addition to the *Willamette*

over ...

¹ Published by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, 2004

Subbasin Plan, the site is recognized as an important conservation opportunity in ODFW's *Oregon Conservation Strategy*, the Forest Legacy Program Needs Assessment, the Oregon Biodiversity Project, The Nature Conservancy's Ecoregional Conservation Assessment, the Oregon Joint Venture Plan for the Willamette, and in local natural area and open space plans. It is also designated critical habitat for the Fender's blue butterfly by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

HOW COBURG RIDGE PRESERVE WAS CREATED: Since the mid-1990s, The Nature Conservancy and the Jaquas have been working together to restore native habitats on their land to benefit the Fender's blue butterfly and other prairie species. In May 2007, the Conservancy purchased a permanent conservation easement from John and Robin Jaqua on 1,244 acres to create the Coburg Ridge Preserve. The agreement gives the Conservancy responsibility to manage the property as a conservation area, while the Jaquas retain underlying ownership.

Major funding to acquire the easement, \$4.9 million, was provided by the Bonneville Power Administration's Fish and Wildlife Mitigation Program. An additional \$400,000 was provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from funds dedicated to the protection of habitat on private land to recover listed species. The Jaquas discounted the purchase price \$1 million from its appraised value of \$6.3 million. They also are generously giving more than \$3.8 million to establish an endowment to support the restoration and protection of Coburg Ridge and other nearby prairie and oak habitats.

In 2001, an adjacent 32 acres of prairie and woodland on Coburg Ridge was protected through donation of a conservation easement to the Conservancy by Willamette Industries. Current owner Weyerhaeuser and the Conservancy are working cooperatively to manage habitats on this property.

PARTNERS: John and Robin Jaqua, Bonneville Power Administration, Northwest Power and Conservation Council, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Department of State Lands, The Nature Conservancy.

ACCESS TO THE PRESERVE: The preserve is private property, and access is limited to staff and contractors working with The Nature Conservancy on research and restoration projects and to participants in educational tours arranged by the Conservancy. For more information about access, contact Jason Nuckols, 541 343-1010.

ABOUT CONSERVATION EASEMENTS: Market-based incentives such as conservation easements are critical tools for meeting public needs for clean water, open space, intact farm and forest lands, and healthy fish and wildlife habitats. A conservation easement is a legally binding agreement that allows a landowner to voluntarily give or sell specific rights in a given piece of property for conservation purposes while retaining ownership of the property and other rights.

In Oregon, enabling legislation passed in 1967 created Oregon's Scenic and Conservation Easement Program and allowed public agencies to hold conservation easements; this was amended in 1975 to allow nonprofit corporations to hold conservation easements.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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