

HATFIELD FELLOW PROJECT BRIEF

Promote Partnerships (Department of State Lands)

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Project Dates: August 2024 – March 2025

PROJECT GOAL

Developing communications and integrative solutions between DSL and other state agencies for wetland restoration projects that compensate for wetland loss due to development and while addressing priorities for habitat restoration. Using state-wide goals of addressing *housing needs, climate change, and habitat connectivity*, Promote Partnerships is designed to create dialogue and incorporate inter-agency feedback to form partnerships of mutual interest and benefit. Through this project, DSL seeks to identify communities through environmental and social factors where the ecosystem services provided by wetlands are of greatest need.

TAKE-AWAYS

Projects like Promote Partnerships are essential for conceptualizing how state priorities intersect one another while working to improve urban ecological systems.

- Advancing wetlands as community assets which can accommodate urban growth, rather than restrict it.
- Identifying areas and communities vulnerable to climate change and environmental hazards that wetlands could help address.
- Positioning wetland mitigation sites closer to front-line communities to create greater community / climate resiliency and promote partnerships and engagement opportunities with those communities.

CHALLENGES

Engagement with key agency stakeholders: Integrating environmental justice benefits and burdens as a core concept proved difficult as EJ

strategies at state agencies are still being developed. DLCD staff asked the DSL project team to address “needed housing,” rather than affordable housing. This called for data that wasn’t released until January 1st, 2025. Most habitat and community data are informative at a finer geographic scale than the areas the DSL team first presented. This required the project team to work to narrow the areas of interest first, before reconvening with other agency staff.

STRATEGY

Reconsider what it means to create communities that are more climate resilient while increasing access to nature and educational opportunities.

- Conceptualize wetlands as a community asset that can in fact “streamline” the permitting process to facilitate housing production while providing vital ecosystem services rather than as a barrier to community development.
- Create inter-agency “crosswalks” of mutually beneficial strategies, identifying opportunities and barriers to funding wetland projects using combined mitigation and grant funds.
- Develop a methodology for site selection, integrating DSL “watershed priorities” within a framework of EJ and socially equitable outcomes.

RESULTS

- Developed core communications about the Partnerships Project and completed informational interviews with other agencies.

- Drafted process & data description documents, co-developing methodology & best practices.
- Drafted DSL implementation plans for two water basins in Oregon by summarizing information in water quality management plans published by DEQ.