*July 1, 2024*

SUMMARY GUIDE

# Management Recommendations for Washington's Priority Habitats

Best Management Practices for Mitigating Impacts to Oregon White Oak Priority Habitat

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WDFW's *Best Management Practices for Mitigating Impacts to Oregon White Oak Priority Habitat* (hereafter referred to as the OWO Mitigation Guide) is a source of Best Available Science. The Oregon White Oak (OWO) Mitigation Guide provides the following four-step process to avoid and minimize impacts to OWO habitat and, if necessary, to develop a compensatory plan to mitigate land-use impacts to OWO habitat and ensure no net loss of its functions and values.

## **Step 1**: Map OWO stands using protocol in Appendix 1 of the OWO mitigation guide.

For single trees, meet with a WDFW biologist familiar with OWO habitat to identify if a single oak meets the Priority Habitats and Species definition.

## **Step 2**. Follow mitigation sequence to ensure that proposals to develop on mapped OWO habitat result in no net loss of habitat function.

*Avoid and minimize first.*
Given the difficulty and expense of replacing lost OWO habitat function, we strongly advise avoiding and minimizing impacts at the earliest stage of project planning before turning to compensatory mitigation. For more information, see avoidance and minimization in the OWO mitigation guide.

*Develop a compensatory mitigation plan* to offset unavoidable impacts:

## **Step 3**: If an OWO stand is present, conduct a Functional Assessment.

A Functional Assessment will identify the amount of habitat function provided by a stand of OWOs or an individual oak and how much mitigation is needed to offset the loss of OWO habitat function. This involves calculating the difference between the baseline function and the function after development to establish an appropriate mitigation ratio for the temporal loss of function (Table 1 below). See in the OWO mitigation guide Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 for the tools to conduct a functional assessment for an OWO woodland or an individual oak tree, respectively.

## **Step 4**: Develop a compensatory mitigation plan.

Any compensatory mitigation plan must address both the physical and temporal loss of OWO habitat. "*Temporal*" mitigation requires enhancing degraded OWO habitat, and "*physical*" mitigation requires planting new OWO trees.

### *Temporal Mitigation*

Many critical ecological OWO functions are only offered by mature trees, with trees gaining function as they age. The loss of functional mature trees can take decades to replace. This temporal loss of function further compounds the physical loss of established trees and must also be offset.

*Table 1. Mitigation ratios for temporal impacts to OWO.*

| Baseline Ecological Function | Ecological Function After Development | Mitigation Ratio |
|---|---|---|
| High | High<br>Medium<br>Low<br>Minimal | 1:1<br>4:1<br>8:1<br>10:1 |
| Medium | Medium<br>Low<br>Minimal | 1:1<br>6:1<br>8:1 |
| Low | Low<br>Minimal | 1:1<br>2:1 |
| Minimal | Minimal | 1:1 |

Targeted restoration of degraded oak habitat is required to regain lost temporal function. Use Table 1 to determine how much degraded habitat should be enhanced to mitigate the lost temporal function caused by lost OWO. See the *Designing Mitigation Plans that Offset the Temporal Loss of Function* section in the full-length mitigation guide for guidance to develop a temporal mitigation plan.

### *Physical Mitigation*

Physical mitigation involves replanting OWO to mitigate lost OWO trees. The standard mitigation for the physical loss of habitat is a 2:1 replacement ratio. On-site mitigation is preferred to off-site mitigation. See the *Designing Mitigation Plans that Offset the Physical Loss of Habitat* section in the full-length mitigation guide.

### *Technical Assistance*

A qualified professional consultant should develop any OWO mitigation plan using the guidelines described above. Local jurisdictions and landowners should consult with a WDFW biologist or another neutral qualified expert to review proposed mitigation plans or to address questions.