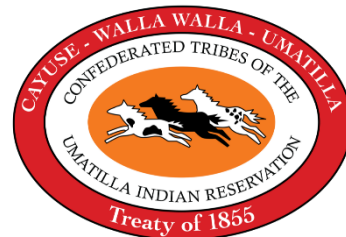


# Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation PRESS RELEASE



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## \$22M Earmarked for CTUIR-backed Wildlife Area Project

MISSION – A wildlife area project backed by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) has been awarded \$22 million in federal funding.

Funded through the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program, the Qapqápa (pronounced cop-COP-a) Wildlife Area State-Tribal Partnership Project will complete an acquisition of more than 11,400 acres with the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) to protect and restore property separating the Umatilla National Forest on the east and west side of the Blue Mountains near Starkey, Oregon.

"The project would not have been possible without the diverse group of stakeholders that recognized the great value of our shared public lands and came together in support of the Qapqápa Wildlife Area," said Anton Chiono, CTUIR Department of Natural Resources Habitat Conservation project leader. "The name means 'place of the big cottonwoods' and refers to the tribes' placename for the property. In a first ever for the State of Oregon, the tribes and ODFW will co-manage the new wildlife area for the benefit of all. This is a terrific example of what Oregonians can accomplish by working together."

The Qapqápa property also has locations historically used by the CTUIR and designated with place names in its Sahaptian languages. This includes the entrance to the property at the confluence of the Grande Ronde River and Beaver Creek, which is a traditional fishing spot known as Titlúpe Qapqápa.

In March, the CTUIR and ODFW jointly applied for the Forest Legacy Program funding. On July 31, the two entities learned that the project was one of 25 projects funded nationally.

The Qapqápa Wildlife Area State-Tribal Partnership Project calls for the state owning the property and providing operation and maintenance expenses while the management and restoration will be undertaken jointly with the CTUIR.

The co-management arrangement includes:

- A plan focusing on CTUIR's First Foods such as water, salmon, roots and berries;
- Joint fisheries restoration projects;

- Sharing staff resources for restoration and monitoring; and
- Public and tribal use of the property.

The project will also protect, restore and provide access to 5.6 miles of the Grande Ronde River, 6 miles of Beaver Creek and many miles of smaller perennial and intermittent streams.

Threatened spring Chinook salmon, summer steelhead and bull trout use the Grande Ronde River and Beaver Creek for spawning, rearing and migration. The Qapqápa property is adjacent to existing restoration projects, and the ODFW and CTUIR will continue to jointly implement aquatic restoration plans to protect and improve aquatic habitat on the property.

The property is located within the CTUIR's 6.4-million-acre aboriginal title lands, but has been in private ownership, which has prevented public access or tribal use. The project will restore access to the 11,438-acre property, improve access to over 1 million acres of public land by connecting two national forest tracts to the north and south, and open access to 94 acres of Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service land that are landlocked by the property.

With the funding officially announced, the CTUIR and ODFW are working to finalize the property's appraisal with the goal of closing on it by 2026. CTUIR staff will work with ODFW on the co-management pact in the coming months and present the project to the Oregon Fish & Wildlife Commission later this year.

*The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is comprised of the Cayuse, Walla Walla and Umatilla Tribes, and formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley, 12 Stat. 945. In 1949, the Tribes adopted a constitutional form of government to protect, preserve and enhance the reserved treaty rights guaranteed under federal law.*

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Caption: Spanning 11,438 acres, the Qapqápa Wildlife Area in Union County, Oregon, will be co-managed as a working forest by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.  
ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION