



Photo Credit: Aaron Huey, The Nature Conservancy

Avoided Conversion of Native Grassland

The Zumwalt Prairie Carbon Cooperative in Wallowa County, Oregon is a 22,000-acre initiative made possible through partnership with The Climate Trust and The Nature Conservancy to advance conservation of North America's largest intact bunchgrass prairie. The project avoids emissions from the release of soil carbon by preventing conversion to cropland in a region where farming for wheat and barley is common. Through implementation of a sustainable grazing management plan, the ranching operation raises livestock with rotational grazing that improves rangeland health and supports rancher livelihoods. Carbon revenues were instrumental for incentivizing the placement of perpetual conservation easements on three privately owned ranches and enabling permanent protection of organic carbon stored in the region's characteristically deep soils. In addition to the carbon benefit, the in-tact prairie is important for a host of wildlife and plant species that continue to face habitat loss and fragmentation. Neighboring TNCs Zumwalt Prairie Preserve, the carbon project area provides habitat connectivity for a variety of avian and ungulate species that depend on these large acreages for migratory pathways.

The Zumwalt Prairie Carbon Cooperative is registered under the Climate Action Reserve Grassland Protocol and has been verified by registry-approved 3rd party auditors. Annual monitoring and periodic rangeland health assessments ensure the project activity prevents overgrazing and supports a healthy rangeland environment.

Ecosystem Co-Benefits

Maintains critical habitat for grassland bird species including the Columbian Sharp Tailed Grouse

Promotes soil stability and reduced erosion by maintaining native bunchgrasses such as Idaho Fescue

Grazing land use prevents fertilizer and sediment runoff from entering local waterways

Part of the prairie recognized as a National Natural Landmark by the US Department of Interior