

Oregon Vesper Sparrow Action Plan

2026 Working Draft

This action plan was developed by the Oregon Vesper Sparrow Working Group and is updated each year at the group's annual meeting. The purpose of this action plan is to identify the most important conservation actions that can be conducted over the next 3-5 years to support Oregon Vesper Sparrow (OVSP) recovery. Since this list of actions focuses on the near-term, it is not a complete list of all the specific tasks that are necessary to achieve OVSP recovery. Additional tasks will be identified as new information becomes available, and complete tasks will be dropped from the list. Tasks beneath the highlighted rows are specific conservation actions that the working group has identified to support those recovery actions and are updated annually.

Line #	Task	Rank	Implementing Party	Status	Notes/Comments
1	Recovery Action 1 Determine Population Status, Trend, and Current Distribution				
2	Recovery Action 1.1 Monitor the rangewide population, tracking trends and distribution.				
3	1. Develop a multi-level survey protocol approach for unoccupied and occupied sites with potentially suitable habitat in the breeding range.	High	All	Monitoring ongoing; protocol development TBD	
4	a. Identify suitable habitat to survey.				
5	b. Ensure appropriate partners across breeding distribution adopt site-based protocols with properly training personnel.				
6	c. Assess best warehouse for region-wide population date (e.g., Avian Knowledge Network).				
7	2. Identify important nonbreeding sites.	Critical	Avifauna NW, KBO	Ongoing with KBO GPS tracking efforts	
8	a. Monitor distribution across nonbreeding sites.				
9	Recovery Action 2 Conserve and Enhance Populations				
10	Recovery Action 2.1 Implement conservation programs that enhance vital rates on occupied sites (i.e., improve population growth rate).				
11	1. Conduct habitat restoration to increase and improve OVSP habitat on occupied sites.	High		Ongoing	
12	a. Implement habitat restoration activities on breeding ground using all available tools (e.g., herbicide, fire); focus on invasives that change the structure of the habitat.				
13	b. Monitor the effectiveness of OVSP habitat created by prairie enhancement.				
14	c. Align OVSP habitat enhancement with other land management practices (e.g., grazing, fire, mowing).				
15	d. Implement habitat restoration activities on nonbreeding grounds using all available tools.				
16	2. Create site-specific management plans that identify and address or minimize threats (e.g., compatible land uses, predator impacts, etc.).	Medium		Ongoing; simultenaous with restoration activities	
17	3. Identify priority lands and work with appropriate partners to ensure OVSP are a priority for funding programs (e.g., easements) and landowners assistance (e.g., partner biologists).	Medium-high		Ongoing	
18	Recovery Action 2.2 Identify conservation programs that enhance habitat suitability of unoccupied sites.				
19	1. Refine habitat suitability criteria for breeding and nonbreeding sites.	High		Ongoing; base criteria already exist	
20	2. Identify priority lands and work with appropriate partners to ensure OVSP are a priority for funding programs (e.g., easements) and landowners assistance (e.g., partner biologists).	Medium-high		Ongoing	
21	3. Prioritize habitat restoration to increase and improve OVSP habitat on unocupied sites near occupied sites where suitable habitat is limited.	Medium		Ongoing	
22	Recovery Action 2.3 Identify and conserve current and potentially suitable sites.				
23	1. Identify and acquire suitable sites.	Medium		Ongoing (in South Sound)	
24	a. Determine criteria for prioritization and apply to list of identified suitable sites.				
25	b. Where feasible, acquire potential sites into NWR system for management.				
26	2. Ensure long-term management plans and associated funding (including acquisitions, endowments, etc.) are secured.	Medium		Ongoing	
27	3. Enhance existing habitat and increase the amount of available habitat where appropriate and monitor effectiveness.	Medium		Ongoing	
28	4. Create a management plan that identifies and addresses or minimizes threats (e.g., incompatible land uses, predator impacts, dredged material placement, etc.).	Medium		Ongoing	
29	a. Encourage partners to include management for OVSP in land protection plans when opportunities are available (e.g., conservation easements, America's Great Outdoors Initiative, SWAPs, legislative initiatives, HCPs, CBAs).				

30	5. Facilitate OVSP-beneficial habitat management specifically on working lands (e.g., pasturelands, Christmas tree farms).	Medium			
31	a. Encourage federal and state agencies to promote incentive programs to benefit OVSP on working lands.			Ongoing	
32	b. Refine and implement management prescriptions to create breeding habitat and winter habitat in the agricultural matrix.				
33	Recovery Action 3 Identify Limiting Factors and Develop Solutions				
34	Recovery Action 3.1 Conduct research on threats to population viability.				
35	1. Understand vital rates and factors (e.g., land management, habitat) that affect OVSP across regions and land	Critical		Ongoing	
36	a. Understand source/sink dynamics.				
37	b. Determine the effects of management actions.				
38	c. Evaluate the effects of habitat enhancement and restoration actions.				
39	d. Investigate the effects of predators.				
40	e. Investigate the effects of various herbicides and pesticides used in agricultural landscapes.				
41	2. Identify important features that affect habitat suitability and quality across regions and land uses.	High			
42	a. Determine the effects of field operations (activities and timing), habitat parameters, and seasonality on habitat use on working lands (e.g., Christmas tree farms, pasturelands).				
43	b. Understand habitat quality in relation to food availability, including wintering habitat quality.				
44	c. Understand adult and juvenile habitat use.				
45	3. Understand and evaluate threats to nonbreeding sites.	High			
46	4. Determine additional critical research areas to advance recovery.	High		Many activities are high priority but currently inactive	
47	a. Understand migratory connectivity and nonbreeding movements.				
48	i. Evaluate new technologies to track OVSP during nonbreeding season (e.g., MOTUS, cell tracking).				
49	ii. Collect and integrate color band resight information rangewide, utilizing community science efforts where effective.				
50	iii. Identify important stopover sites.				
51	b. Track current climate change science to inform the role of climate change to OVSP conservation decision making (e.g., northward expansion of prairie habitat).				
52	c. Investigate egg hatch rates.				
53	d. Investigate genetic variation within/among regional OVSP populations related to bottlenecks.				
54	e. Assess techniques for identifying priority nonbreeding sites (e.g., GPS, MOTUS, nonbreeding season surveys, eBird, genetics).				
55	Recovery Action 3.2 Develop tools to protect and enhance populations, create new populations, and expand the distribution of OVSP.				
56	1. Evaluate the appropriateness and feasibility of population augmentation, relocation, or reintroduction (e.g., investigate OVSP colonization, captive rearing, hacking, cross fostering, genetic rescue, translocation, etc.).	Low		Inactive	
57	a. Implement strategies to move or dissuade OVSP from high-risk areas.				
58	2. Evaluate the role of conspecific attraction in establishing conditions that are needed to attract a breeding population to a new site.	Low		Ongoing	
59	a. Further research the effect of song playback, decoys, or other social cues on OVSP colonization of new sites.				
60	Recovery Action 3.3 Develop tools to enhance habitat and OVSP survival and reproduction.				
61	1. Evaluate and map high priority sites (e.g., potentially suitable agricultural lands near occupied sites, within priority conservation areas, etc.) to direct incentives and outreach to the areas most likely to provide successful OVSP habitat sites.	Low		Inactive	
62	2. Develop a list of practices to protect OVSP during the breeding season on agricultural lands.	Low		Inactive	
63	3. Evaluate novel habitat creation options such as leasing habitat for OVSP, selective field fallowing, or conservation burning.	Low		Inactive	
64	a. Refine and implement management prescriptions to create breeding habitat and develop winter habitat prescription in the agricultural matrix and understand the effects on OVSP vital rates.				
65	4. Develop incentive programs for agricultural producers to create and maintain appropriate OVSP habitat on working lands.	Low		Inactive	
66	a. Investigate the value and feasibility of restoration techniques (e.g., grazing, conservation burning) for OVSP and its potential as an incentive to private landowners.				

67	Recovery Action 3.4 Develop a Conservation Benefit Agreement (CBA) to promote OVSP habitat creation on private agricultural lands.				
68	1. Determine methods to increase interest by agricultural landowners to participate in a CBA on private farm lands.	Low		Inactive	
69	Recovery Action 3.5 Develop a mitigation strategy for offsetting the effects of non-federal development in occupied OVSP habitats.				
70	1. Develop mitigation strategies and standardized criteria, starting with airfield activities. Incorporate new USFWS mitigation policies and OVSP recovery objectives.	Low		Inactive	
71	Recovery Action 3.6 Develop strategies to integrate OVSP conservation into landscapes managed for the recovery of other rare prairie and grassland species in the range of OVSP.				
72	1. Encourage OVSP compatible elements in prairie and grassland habitat restoration and mitigation projects.	Low			
73	Recovery Action 3.7 Develop other strategies necessary to address factors affecting OVSP and their habitat.				
74	1.				
75	Recovery Action 4 Promote Outreach and Cooperation with Interested Parties, Rights Holders, and Partner Agencies				
76	Recovery Action 4.1 Facilitate coordination and information sharing.				
77	1. Maintain rangewide working group and coordination.	High		Ongoing; annual	
78	a. Apply best practices to building tribal engagement strategies within all components of the Action Plan.				
79	2. Open and maintain working groups/informational sharing forums about OVSP and industry-specific issues (e.g., Christmas tree farms, ranching/pasturelands).	Medium		Inactive	
80	3. Continue coordination between habitat managers for OVSP and other grassland species (e.g., workshops).	Medium		Inactive	
81	4. Maintain communication with relevant working groups and partnerships (e.g., Partners in Flight, PNW Oak Alliance, CPOP).	Medium		Ongoing	
82	Recovery Action 4.2 Develop outreach and education materials.				
83	1. Conduct outreach to permitting entities (e.g., counties/cities) regarding potential for OVSP impacts from development and other permitted activities.	Medium			
84	2. Determine top information needs and develop materials on habitat management and restoration for land managers, including habitat targets.	Medium			
85	a. Develop and disseminate habitat prescriptions specifically for agricultural producers (e.g., abridge technical notes for lay audience).				
86	b. Conduct outreach to local producers, conservation districts, university agricultural extensions, etc.				
87	3. Continue outreach to additional partners by promoting rangewide recovery and habitat management (e.g., WA/OR/CA state lands and parks, land trusts, mitigation banks, SWCDs, Pacific Birds, North Pacific LLC, LCREP) and partnering with larger entities to expand support for OVSP conservation.	Medium			