



Portland General Electric



# NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

April 24, 2004

Contact: Threemile Canyon Farms.....Len Bergstein .....503-241-8383  
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.....Phil Carroll .....503-807-6196  
 The Nature Conservancy .....Stephen Anderson.....503-230-1221  
 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife .....Russ Morgan .....541-676-5230  
 Portland General Electric .....Mark Fryburg .....503-464-8444

(PORTLAND, OR) -- Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton today announced an innovative voluntary conservation agreement to protect four at-risk species native on 93,000 acres of private land in northeast Oregon, only the second time such an agreement has covered multiple species.

The agreement, known as a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances, covers the Threemile Canyon Farms, located along the south shore of the Columbia River just west of Boardman, Ore. It allows for the continued operation and development of the farm while protecting and managing sensitive habitat of four key species: the Washington ground squirrel, the loggerhead shrike, the ferruginous hawk and the sage sparrow.

Portland General Electric, The Nature Conservancy and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife are also partners in the agreement with the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"The partnership that produced this landmark agreement epitomizes the approach we need to take to conserve species that are in decline so that we can avoid having to list them as threatened or endangered down the road," Norton said at an event at the Oregon Zoo in Portland. "By working with landowners, local communities, conservation groups, state wildlife agencies and other stakeholders, we can come up with innovative solutions that encourage conservation of imperiled species while economic activities continue on private lands."

Under a CCAA, private landowners agree to take actions on their property to conserve species that are on the candidate list or already proposed for protection under the Endangered Species Act. In return, the landowners receive assurances that their conservation measures will not lead to further restrictions on the use of the land if the species are later listed under the Act. The agreements are similar to Safe Harbor agreements, which apply to species that already are listed under the Act.

The CCAA announced today is one of only seven such agreements in the country and only the second that provides protection for more than one species.

Under the agreement, Threemile Canyon Farms is permanently setting aside from development 22,600 acres of sagebrush steppe habitat to be managed by The Nature Conservancy. The company also is taking significant steps to make sure its farming practices are sensitive to species' concerns.

“This agreement shows that private business owners can join with state and federal public agencies and — with the good stewards of The Nature Conservancy at our sides to help us through — accomplish what none of us could do alone,” said Martin Myers, general manager of Threemile Canyon Farms. “This is an example of how sound business practices and sound environmental practices can go hand in hand,” he said.

Portland General Electric is setting aside 880 of the 3,520 acres at its Boardman Power Plant as part of the conservation area. The PGE land is entirely surrounded by Threemile Canyon Farms.

The Washington ground squirrel already is listed as endangered under Oregon law and is a candidate for federal listing. The ferruginous hawk, loggerhead shrike and sage sparrow are listed as sensitive under Oregon law and face declining populations.

The agreement initiates 25 years of conservation benefits. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will assist with surveys, make recommendations and manage hunting on the covered area. The Nature Conservancy will receive \$130,000 per year from Threemile Canyon Farms to manage the sagebrush habitat.

Farming will continue on the remaining property following specified operational modifications and conservation measures. For example, Threemile Canyon Farms has agreed to provide 250-foot buffers around all of the conservation areas; provide funds for preserving, managing, monitoring and surveying the areas; restrict grazing, hunting or other ground-disturbing activities, and develop detailed conservation and adaptive management plans to address the changing habitat conditions within the areas.

Catherine Macdonald, director of conservation programs for The Nature Conservancy, praised the agreement. “This is a strong commitment from Threemile Canyon Farms and PGE to protect a critical piece of Oregon’s natural heritage. That’s good news for Oregonians. We’re looking forward to working with all our partners to conserve this special place for future generations.”

State wildlife officials also praised the partnership. “As this agreement is implemented, we look forward to working cooperatively with Threemile Canyon Farms and PGE in their efforts to manage species and habitats,” said Russ Morgan, Heppner District wildlife biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

-----

*Threemile Canyon Farms is part of an Oregon-based joint venture farming enterprise owned by the R.D. Offutt Company-Northwest and Bos Family Oregon Farms. It is best known for raising potatoes and a growing variety of organic crops. Its dairy operation supplies milk to the Tillamook Creamery’s Columbia River processing facility and other customers. Threemile Canyon Farms’ emphasis on sustainable and environmentally sensitive farm practices led to its selection in 2003 as a “Founder of a New Northwest” by Sustainable Northwest, a prestigious organization that promotes sustainable and socially responsible business practices.*

*The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 63 Fish and Wildlife Management offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.*

*The Nature Conservancy is a leading international, nonprofit organization that preserves plants, animals and natural communities representing the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. To date, the Conservancy and its nearly one million members have helped protect more than 15 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 102 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. In Oregon, the Conservancy owns or manages 48 nature preserves and has helped protect over 483,000 acres.*

-END-