

# Wapato Lake National Wildlife Refuge

## Cooperative Agriculture Program

Washington and Yamhill County, Oregon



## ATTENTION FARMERS

### Refuge Seeks Agricultural Producers for Cooperative Agriculture Program

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is seeking an agricultural producer or producers (Cooperators) for Cooperative Agriculture Agreements at Wapato Lake National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) in Gaston, Oregon. The producer(s) will farm land on the Refuge for a period of one to five years as a Cooperator with the Service.

Applicants must fill out applicable portions of FWS Form 3-1383-C and Bid Sheet application questions in attachment 1. The applicants must address in their Bid Sheet how the applicant will meet the criteria outlined in the announcement.

#### Background

Wapato Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR, Refuge), located in Gaston, Oregon, was first established in 2007 as a Unit of the Tualatin River NWR under the intents stated in the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (Administration Act), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Improvement Act), to restore the historic lakebed and surrounding lands for the purpose of improving habitat conditions for a number of native species, including migratory birds. In 2013, this Unit was re-designated as Wapato Lake National Wildlife Refuge. With a total acquisition boundary of 4,370 acres, the Service currently owns and manages 950 acres.

The goals of the cooperative farming program are twofold; to provide a short-term (1-5-year) interim management tool that allows the refuge to minimize the establishment of non-native invasive weed cover (e.g. Canada thistle, tansy ragwort, Armenian blackberry, rattail fescue, velvet grass, etc...) prior to restoring native plant communities on the properties included in the Cooperative Agricultural Program, while also providing quality forage for migratory waterfowl, namely Canada and cackling geese from November - April. The types of crops that will be considered under the cooperative farming program include corn, spring and winter wheat, oats,

barley, clover, annual ryegrass, perennial ryegrass, and tall fescue. The Cooperator's plan must include providing green browse over the entire six month wintering period for geese, where minimal human or farming disturbance is allowed through the wintering period. The Refuge's share of wintertime goose browse is 100% and the Cooperator's share is 100% of the seed crop and straw. If the Cooperator's plan also includes a spring planted/summer harvested crop (e.g. corn, oats), the Cooperator's share is 100% of the crop acreage. Cooperators

Approximately 130 acres will be farmed under this cooperative agreement or agreements. There are 5 farm fields that average 27 acres and vary in size between 11 and 48 acres (see map below). There are no water rights available for irrigation on the cooperatively farmed fields. All farming equipment must be provided by the Cooperator. The Cooperator is responsible for testing Refuge croplands annually to determine soil condition and fertilizer needs to ensure proper growth and health of desired plant species. In addition, invasive plant species are controlled using appropriate Integrated Pest Management techniques including mechanical/physical, chemical, biological, and cultural means. The Refuge will be working with partners to restore areas adjacent to creeks and streams and hence some fields will see a reduction on available acres in a few years, see table below for specifics.

<b>Farming Units</b>	<b>Phase 1 acres 2025 to Fall 2026</b>	<b>Phase 2 acres Fall 2026 to 2029</b>
<b>Field 1</b>	27	23
<b>Field 2</b>	48	37
<b>Field 3</b>	17	15
<b>Field 4</b>	11	11
<b>Field 5</b>	27	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>113</b>

The Cooperative Agriculture Program for the Refuge is guided by the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and the Cooperative Farming Special Conditions, which states all of the rules and regulations that all cooperative farmers must abide by. The Cooperative Agriculture Program has been deemed an appropriate, compatible use and has undergone an Environmental Assessment for the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Complex), which includes Wapato Lake NWR. These plans provide guidance to employ farming as a habitat management tool on the Refuge, which may be used to meet resource management objectives on units of the National Wildlife Refuge System, consistent with the Service's Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health policy. The Refuge is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service within the Department of the Interior. The effects of the farming program are explored in depth in the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP; USFWS 2013).

## **The Proposed Cooperative Agriculture Agreement**

The selected Cooperator(s) will enter into a Cooperative Agricultural Agreement (CAA) with the Refuge, which will include a Plan of Operations that defines the process by which the farming program will be administered and further delineates the requirements and restrictions of the Cooperator. The Cooperator will develop a 1 to 5-year crop plan with the Refuge Manager for each assigned field. This plan will be renewed annually via a signed addendum that may incorporate modest changes.

### **General Operating Requirements:**

- Crop plans may be altered through consensus by both the Refuge Manager and Cooperators annually during the agreement.
- Each year by April 1 the Service and the Cooperator will determine if the agreement will be renewed. The agreement can be renewed for up to 5 years.
- The farmer shall provide all necessary work, materials, and equipment to produce the stated crops. All monetary costs for electricity, fuel, seed, fertilizer, pesticides, and other farming expenses will be incurred by the Cooperator.
- Cooperators may be required to replant failed crops at their own expense.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policy prohibits the use of GMOs and neonicotinoids. All pesticides must be pre-approved under a pesticide use permit (PUP) for the refuge. A list of currently approved pesticides will be made available. No restricted use chemicals will be permitted for use on the Refuge. The Cooperator is required to provide the Refuge Manager a pesticide and fertilizer use report by December 31 of each year documenting any herbicide applications made on the refuge.
- All liability relating to farming and crop management to include all persons working for the Cooperator, whether related, hired, or as a partner is strictly that of the Cooperator as listed on the CAA.
- The Cooperator must have or acquire liability insurance that covers the equipment used on Service lands. A copy of the liability insurance must be provided to the Refuge Manager (or designee).
- All equipment for farming, including tractors, trucks, ATVs, and UTVs, must be clean and free of invasive species plant material including seeds before entering any Refuge or Service easement. The Refuge Manager (or designee) reserves the right to inspect and deny the use of any equipment/vehicle/horse etc. that appears to contain invasive species plant material or seeds. Equipment must meet all safety regulations and must be in good working condition.
- Farming privileges may not be sold, transferred, or sublet, except by transfer to heirs in the event of the death of the Cooperator.

- Non-use of farm lands, in whole or in part, shall be cause for cancellation of a Cooperator's privileges at the discretion of the Refuge Manager unless non-use has previously been approved.
- A 5-year plan for crop rotation and annual work plans will be developed by the Refuge Manager and the Cooperator prior to the period of operations.

### **Cooperator Selection**

The producer(s) will be selected through an open and competitive process where applications will be scored and ranked by Refuge Complex staff using the following criteria:

- Experience in cultivation of grains and green forage, especially personal experience on NWRS lands or comparable conservation land, including knowledge of soil composition, chemistry, moisture, fertility, water needs, and pest problems. (*None = 0, cultivation of grains and green forage = 1, cultivation of grains and green forage, on NWRS lands or comparable conservation land = 2*)
- Demonstrated ability to successfully cultivate crops under restrictions listed above (e.g. non-GMO crops, non-neonicotinoid pesticides, restricted timing of harvest, and limitations on pesticides). (*None = 0, have cultivated under restrictions = 1*)
- Ownership or access to the proper equipment, materials, labor, or other resources to participate in the Cooperative Agriculture Agreement (equipment and personnel).
- Proximity of personnel to monitor crops and respond to crop failures or crop health issues.
- Positive references regarding past performance, experience, and abilities related to crop cultivation.

### **Parcels Available**

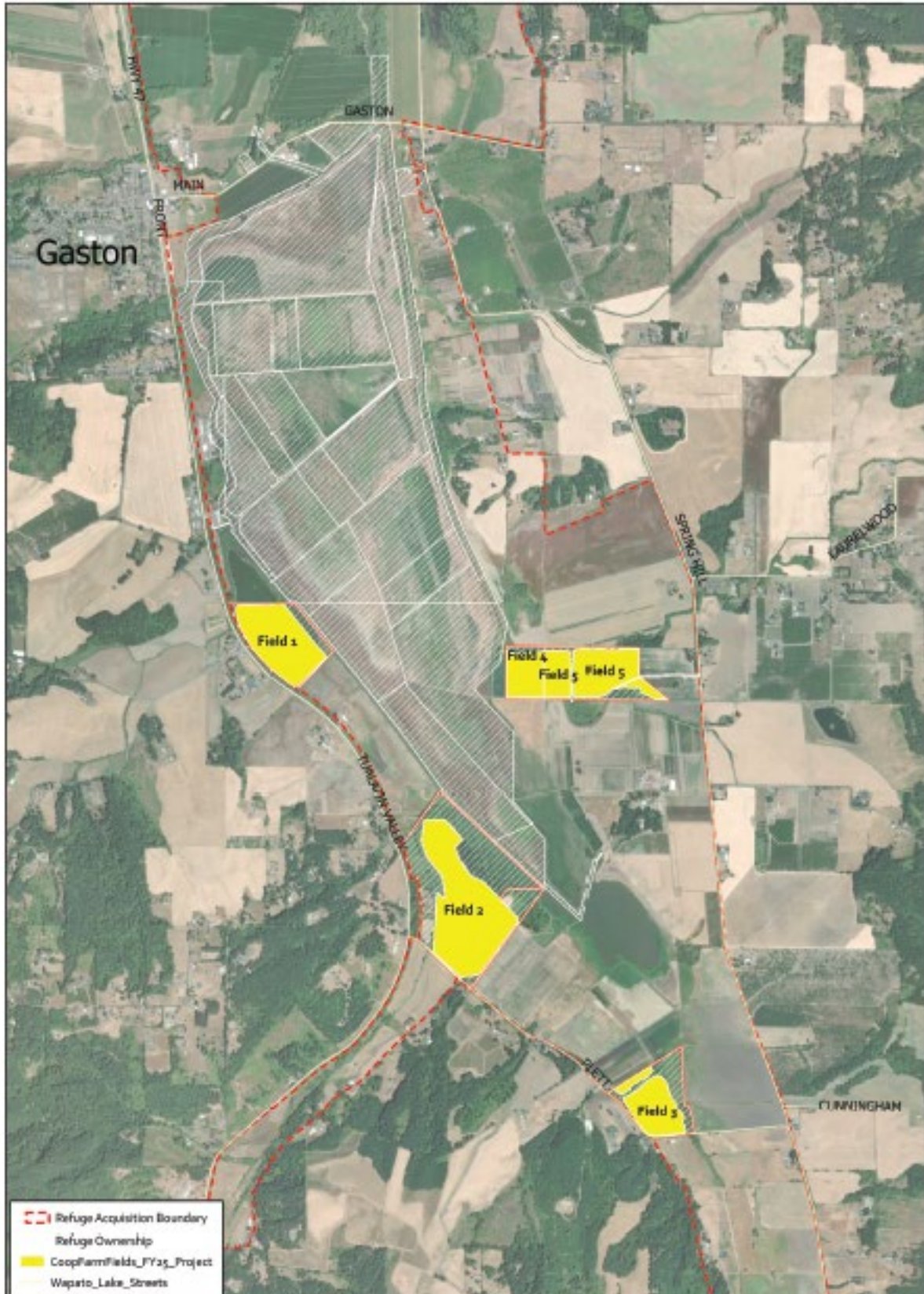
Approximately 130 acres will be farmed under this cooperative agreement(s). There are 5 farm fields that average 27 acres and vary in size between 11 and 48 acres. More details on the fields included in each parcel are available. See map below.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Wapato Lake National Wildlife Refuge**  
Washington and Yamhill Counties, Oregon

Cooperative Agricultural Program



Produced by the Biological Resources Program  
Tualatin River NWR - Sherwood, OR

Land Status 03/2021

Map Date: 12/30/2024

0 0.5 1 Miles



## **Applications**

To apply, complete FWS Form 3-1383-C (Attached or Download at: <https://www.fws.gov/service/special-use-permits-national-wildlife-refuges>) and Bid Sheet document (Attached). Hard copies can be requested by calling Eva Kristofik, Assistant Refuge Manager, at 503-575-8431 or emailing her at [eva\\_kristofik@fws.gov](mailto:eva_kristofik@fws.gov). Hard copies can also be picked up at Complex Headquarters located at Tualatin River NWR at 19255 SW Pacific Hwy., Sherwood, OR 97140. Mail completed applications to Tualatin River NWR, Attn: Eva Kristofik, 19255 SW Pacific Hwy., Sherwood, OR 97140 or email them to [eva\\_kristofik@fws.gov](mailto:eva_kristofik@fws.gov).

The Cooperator or Cooperators will be selected through an open and competitive process where applications will be scored and ranked by a panel of Refuge Complex staff. The Refuge will consider applications that propose to farm all 5 fields or individual fields.

Proposals will only be accepted between February 27 and March 30, 2025. Proposal envelopes must be received by March 30, 2025 at 4:00 pm. All proposals will be opened on March 31, 2025. The individual(s) with the highest ranked proposal will be notified within 2 weeks of their selection.