

Predators, Prey, and Landscape Scale Changes Driving Populations

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
December 11, 2025





Changing Predator Management



Oregon's Carnivores

Classifications

Big Game

Furbearer

Unprotected

Predatory



Major Shifts & Actions



Pre 1970's

Unregulated



1970-1990

**Environmental
Movement and
beginning of state
management**



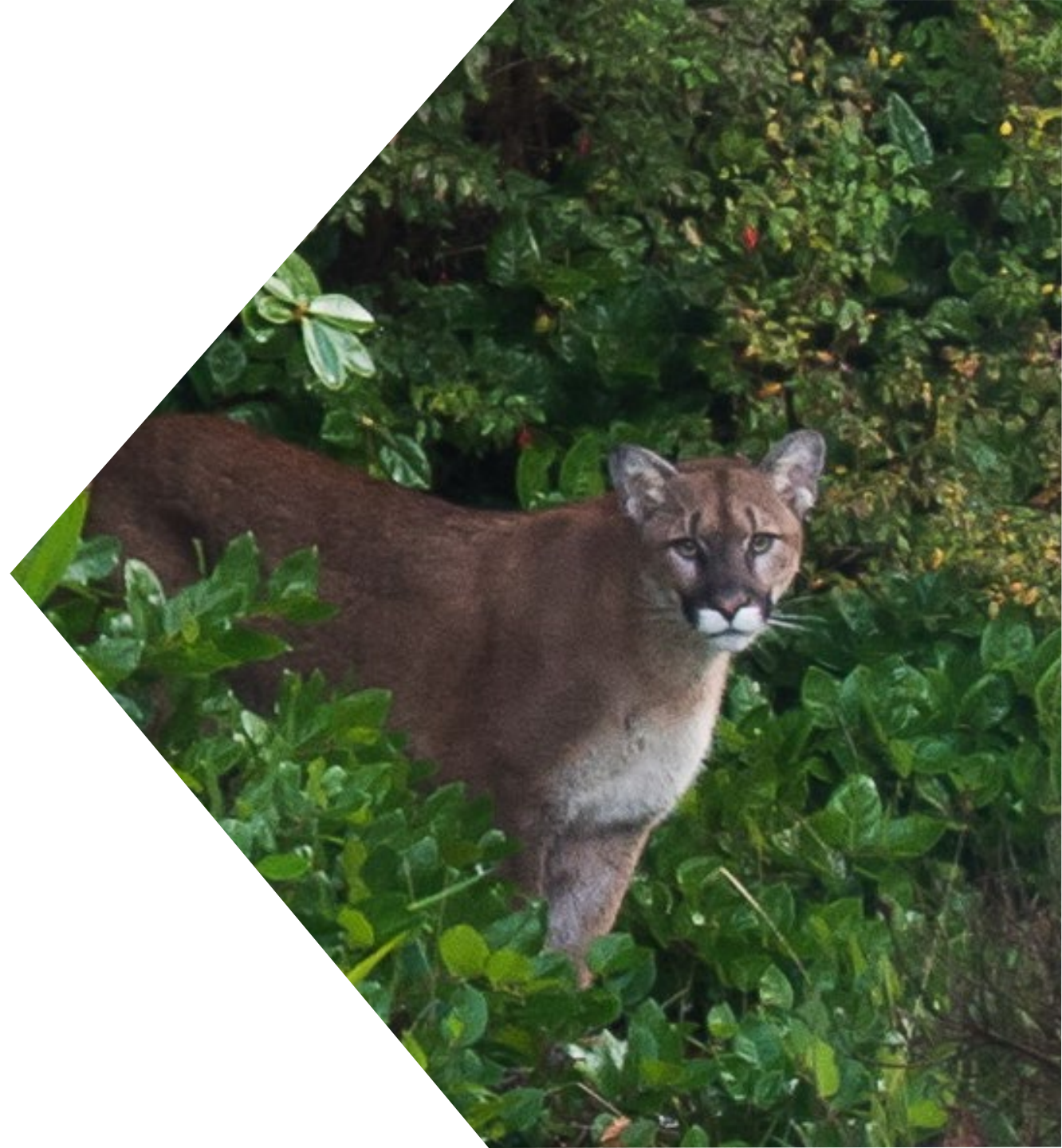
1990-Present

**Ongoing state
management modified
by ballot measures**

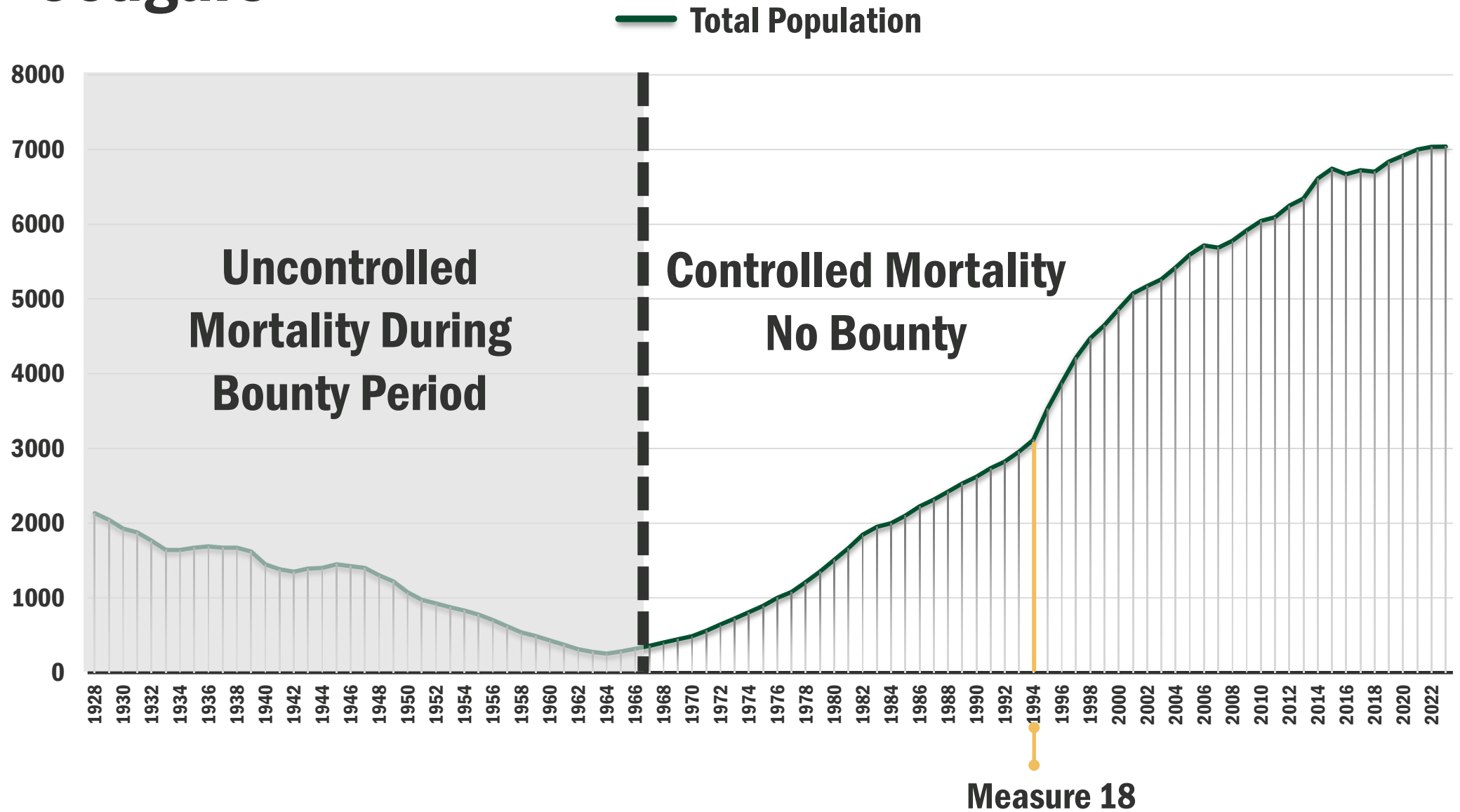
**Populations
have generally
increased since
the 1970's**



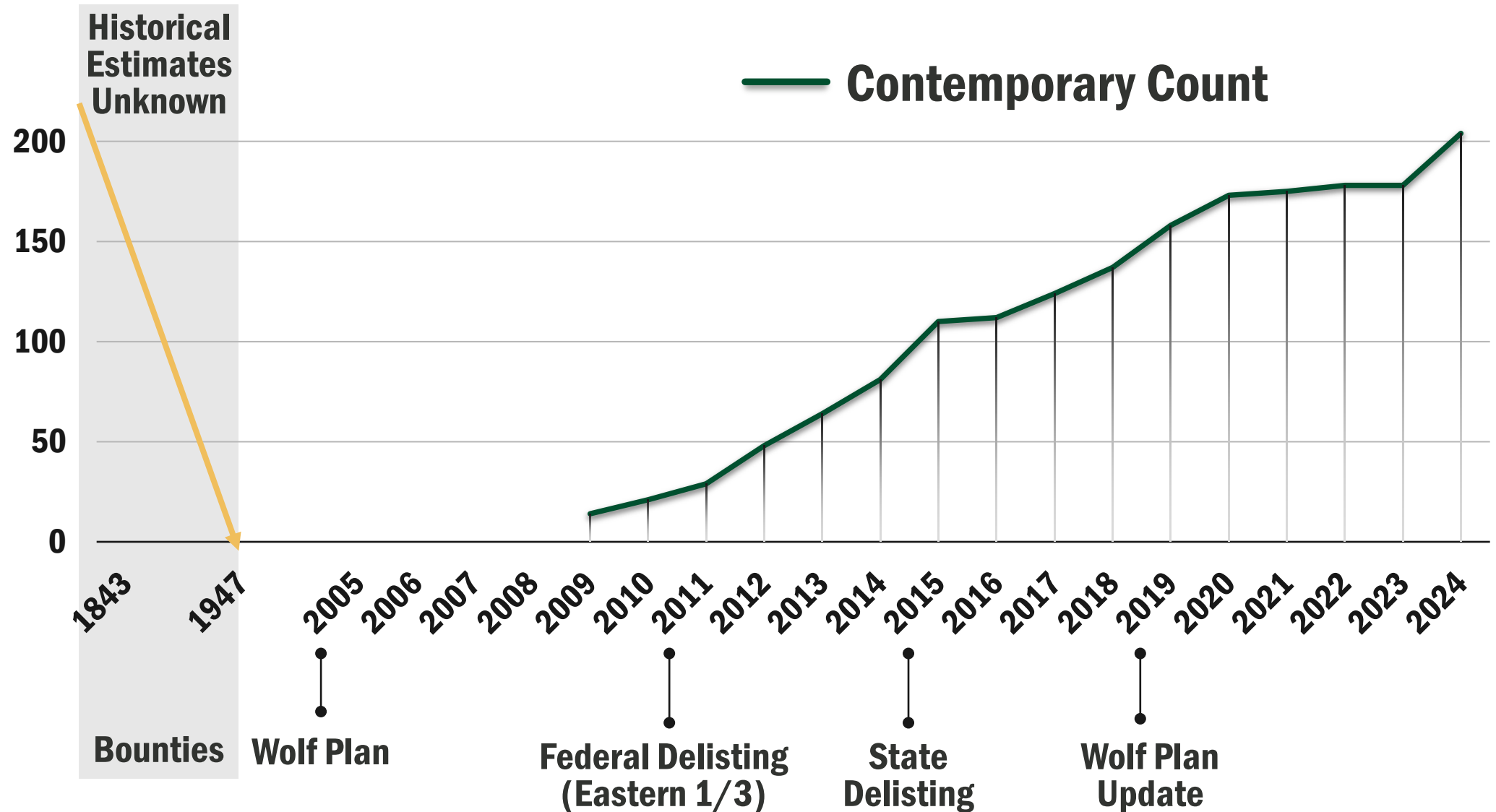
**Oregon Department
of Fish and Wildlife**



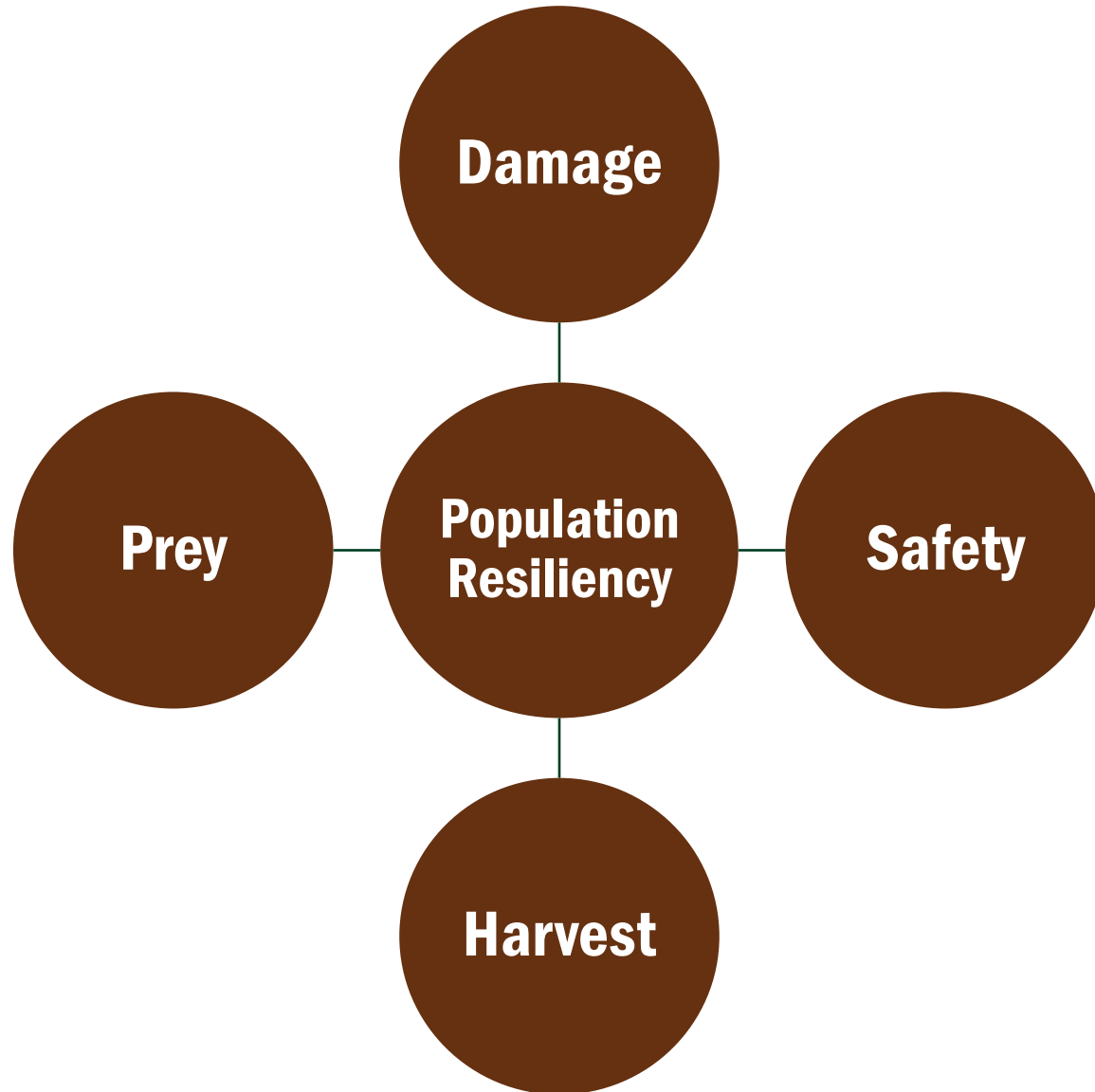
Cougars



Gray Wolves



Management Framework



**The changes in policy
management since
the 1970's have
resulted in predator
populations
that are generally
resilient in Oregon.**










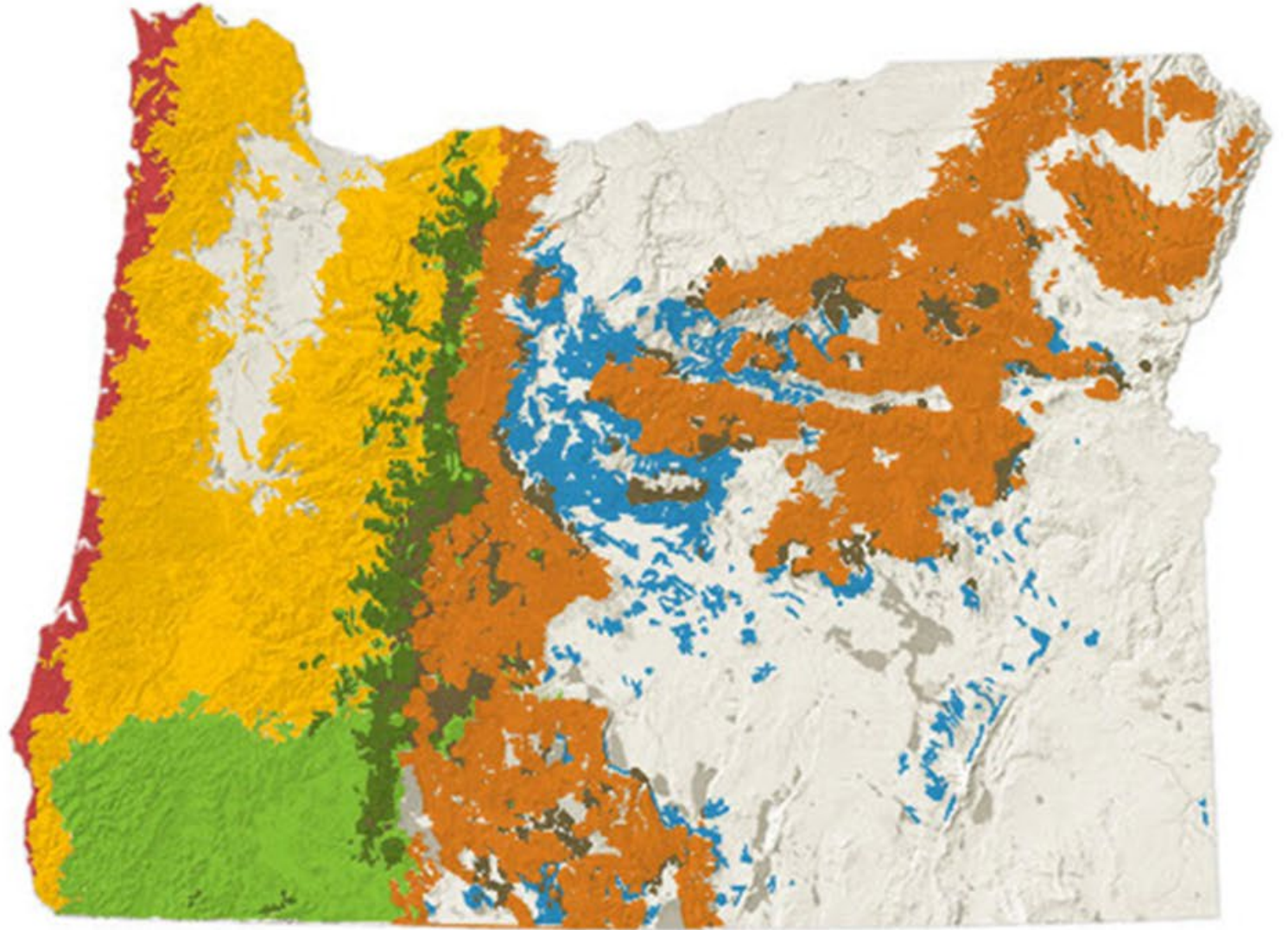


Changing Forest Management



Nearly half of Oregon is forestland






	SPRUCE-HEMLOCK
	DOUGLAS-FIR
	MIXED CONIFER
	SUBALPINE
	JUNIPER WOODLANDS
	LODGEPOLE PINE
	PONDEROSA PINE



Source: Oregon Forest Resources Institute

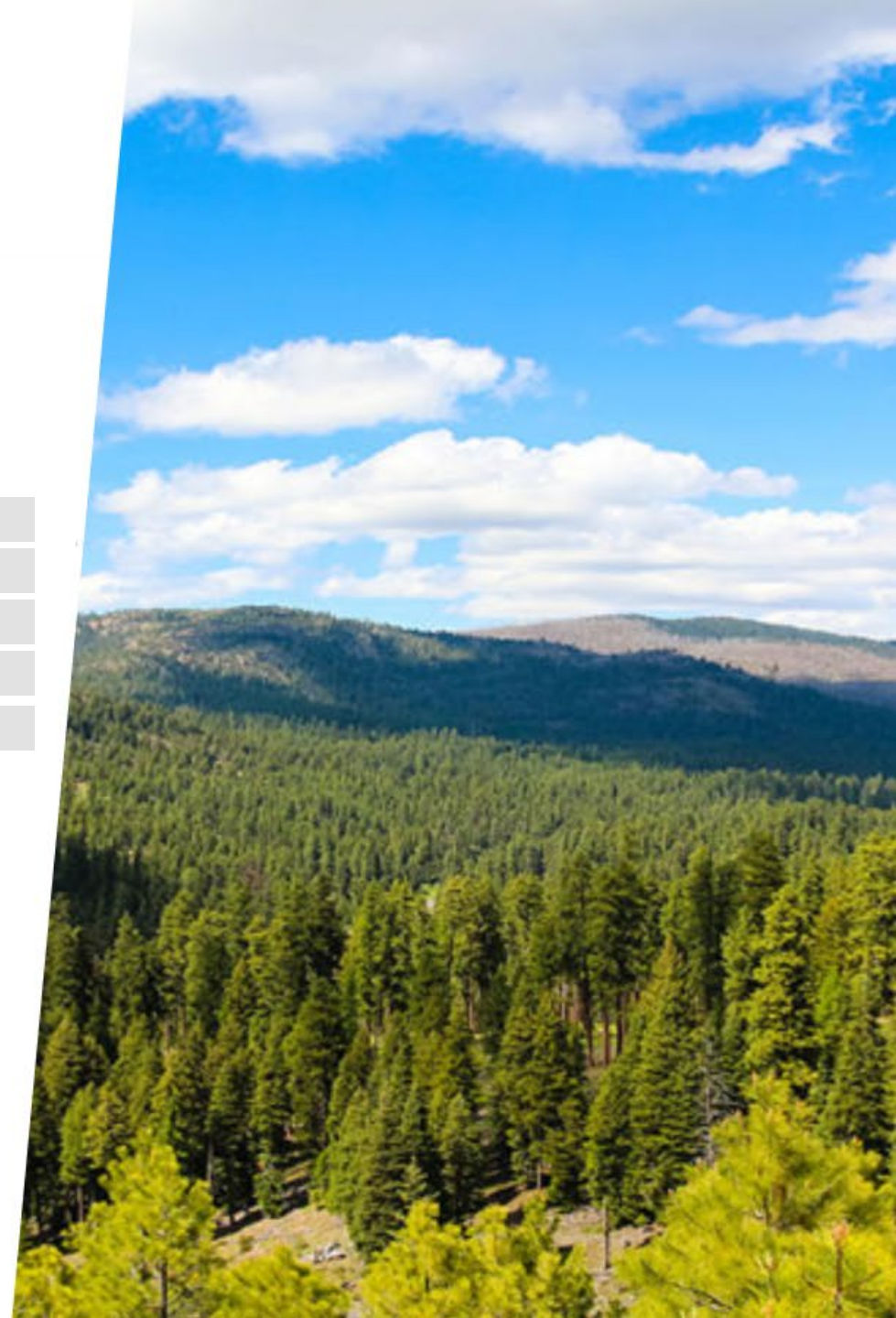
Who owns Oregon's Forests?



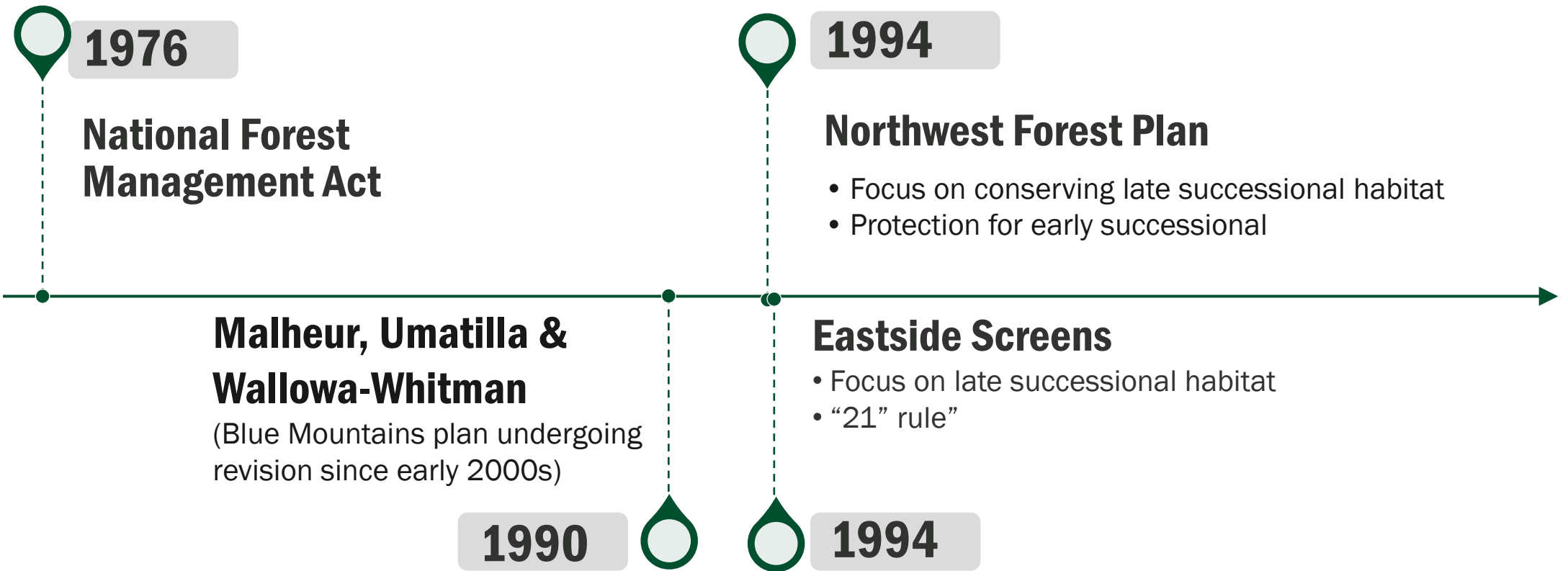
	60% FEDERAL FORESTLAND
	35% PRIVATE FORESTLAND
	3% STATE FORESTLAND
	1.5% TRIBAL FORESTLAND
	.5% OTHER PUBLIC



Source: Oregon Forest Resources Institute



Federal forests management changes



Forests managed for less harvest, fire suppression, & increased recreation

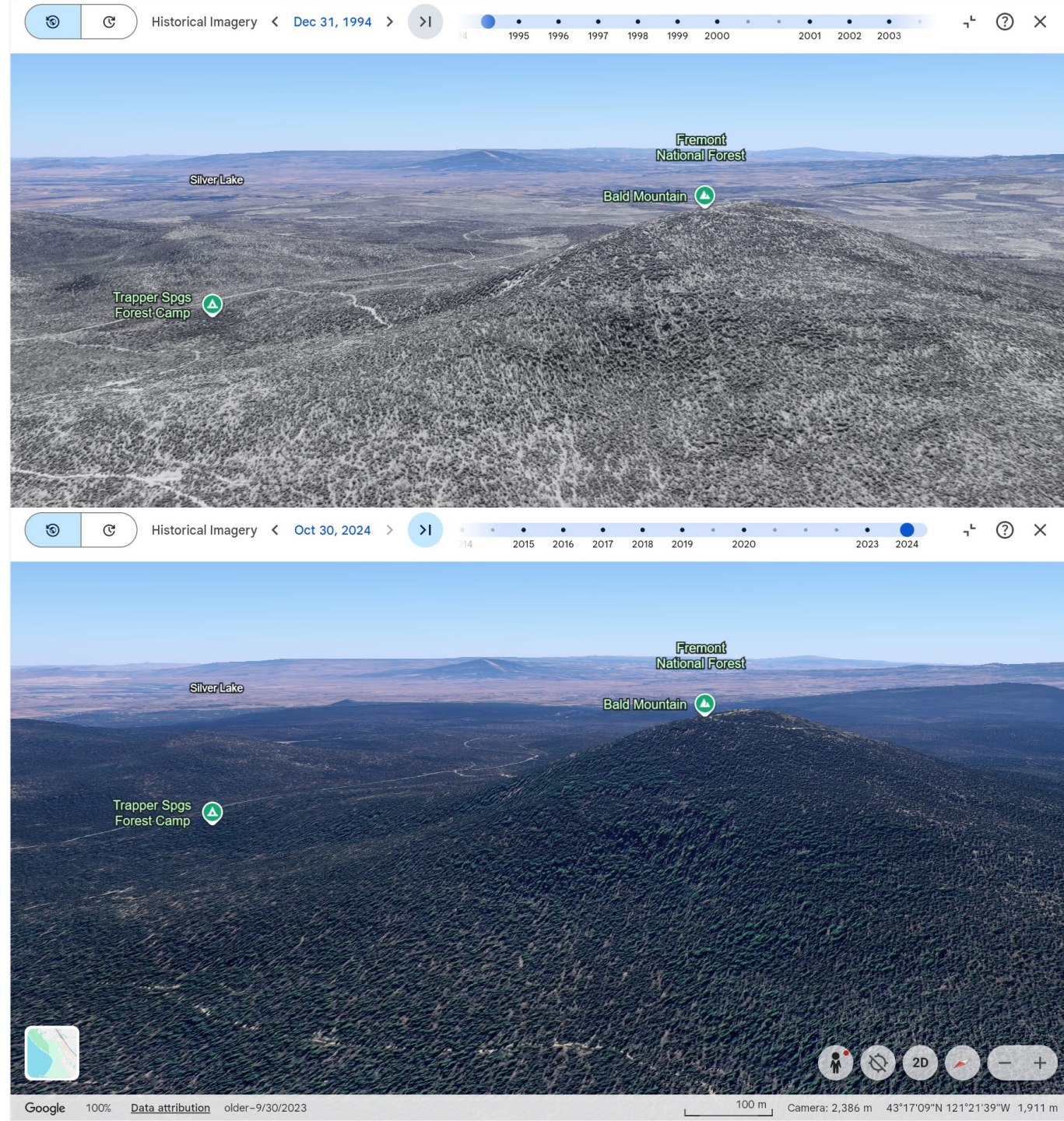


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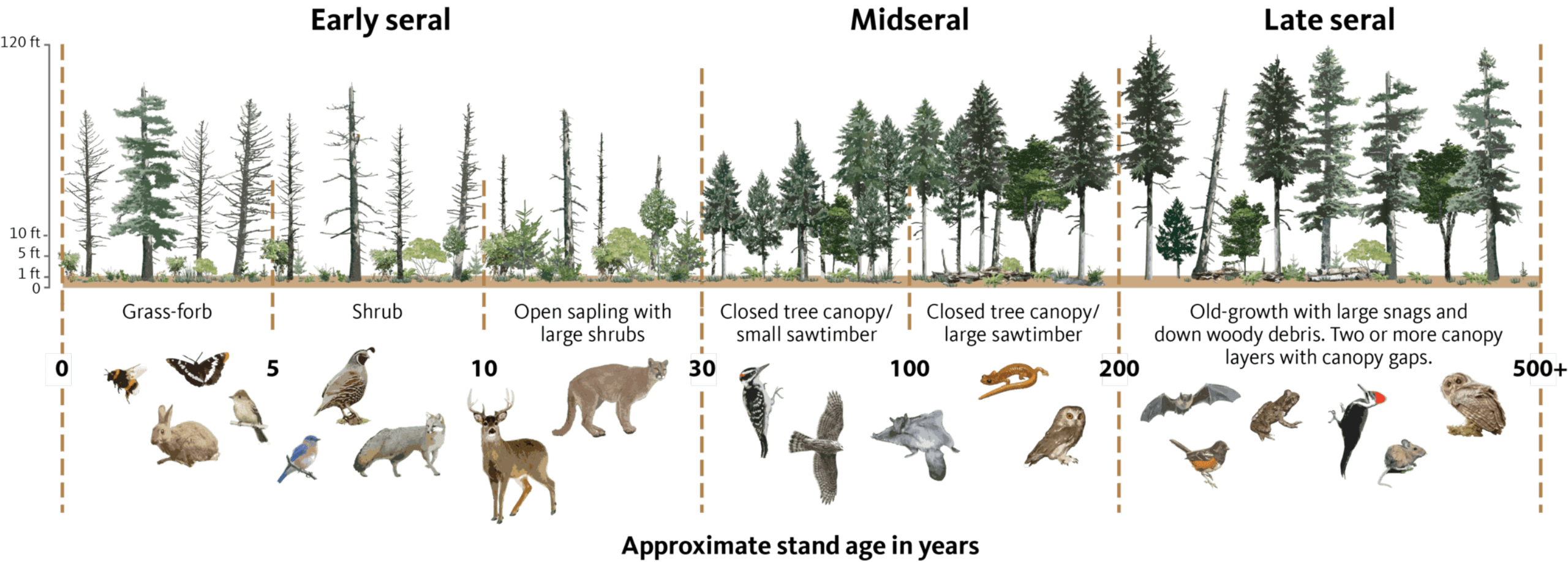


Example: increase in stand density

Bald Mountain (Fremont-Winema)



Habitat opportunity for ungulates depends on forest structure





2 - 5 years



6 – 9 years



16 – 20 years

Example of forest maturation in the 20 years post-clearcutting

e.g. Klamath Mountains

Restoration Opportunities

Open canopy



Thinned vs Unthinned



Forest Management: A Long-Term Experiment

Key Changes:

- Shrinking early seral habitat
- Closure of mid-seral canopy
- Ongoing fire suppression

Impact on Wildlife:

- Less forage (abundance and productivity) in summer and winter/transitional ranges



Consider with climate change and increased recreational pressure on federal public lands



Upper Middle Fork Willamette River

A Changing Climate



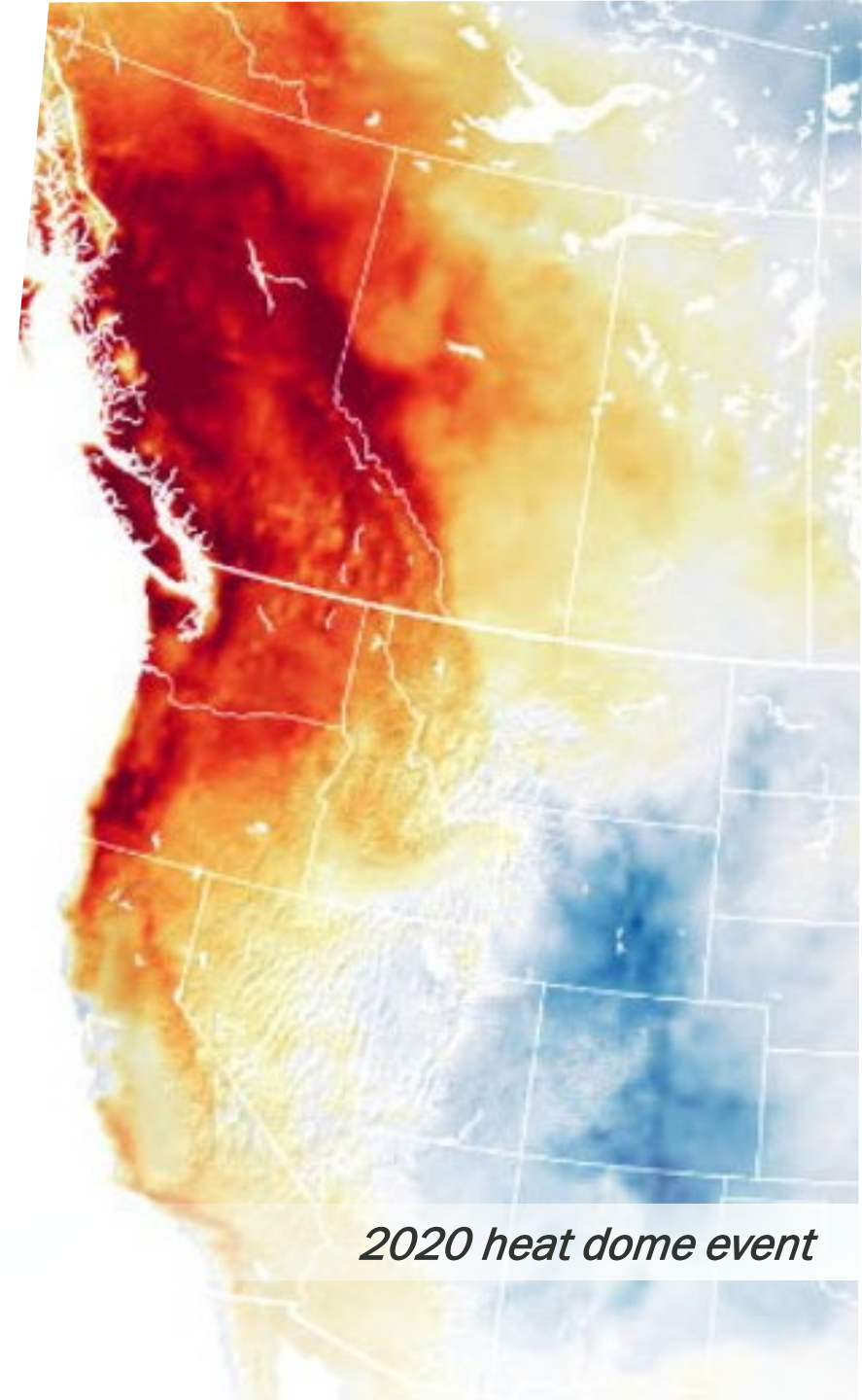
Trends

Rising Air Temperature

Changing Precipitation patterns

More extreme weather events

**The annual average temperature in Bend
has increased by 4.1° since 1970**



2020 heat dome event

These changes are impacting ungulate habitat



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**Plants greenup sooner, flower
earlier, and dry out earlier**

**Lost two weeks of spring
forage availability since 1990**

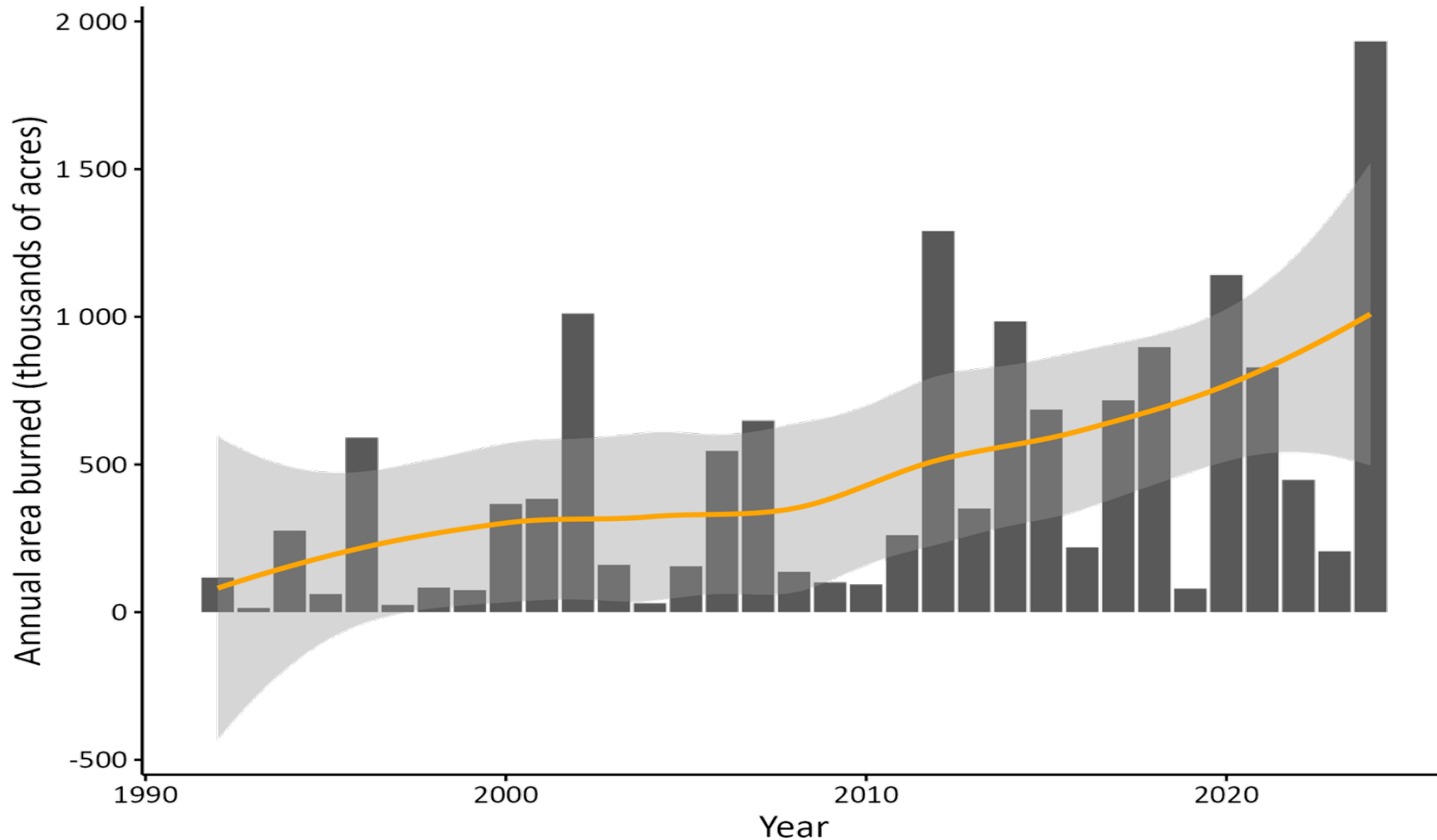


Senescent grass

Plant communities are changing because of fire impacts



156% increase in acres burned per decade since 1990's



HISTORICAL FIRE PATTERN: lower intensity, lower acreage

**Creates a mosaic of plant types
with high value for ungulates**





CONTEMPORARY:
high intensity, high acreage



**Post fire habitat has little/no
value to ungulates for decades**

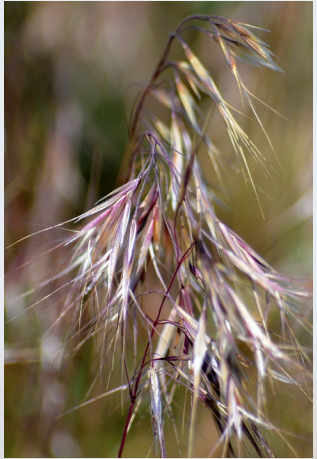
Fires create opportunity for invasive grasses



4.1M

4.1 M acres of sagebrush habitat (23%) has been heavily impacted by invasive grasses as of 2022

Invasive grasses have a negative impact on ungulate forage.



Cheatgrass



Medusahead



Ventenata



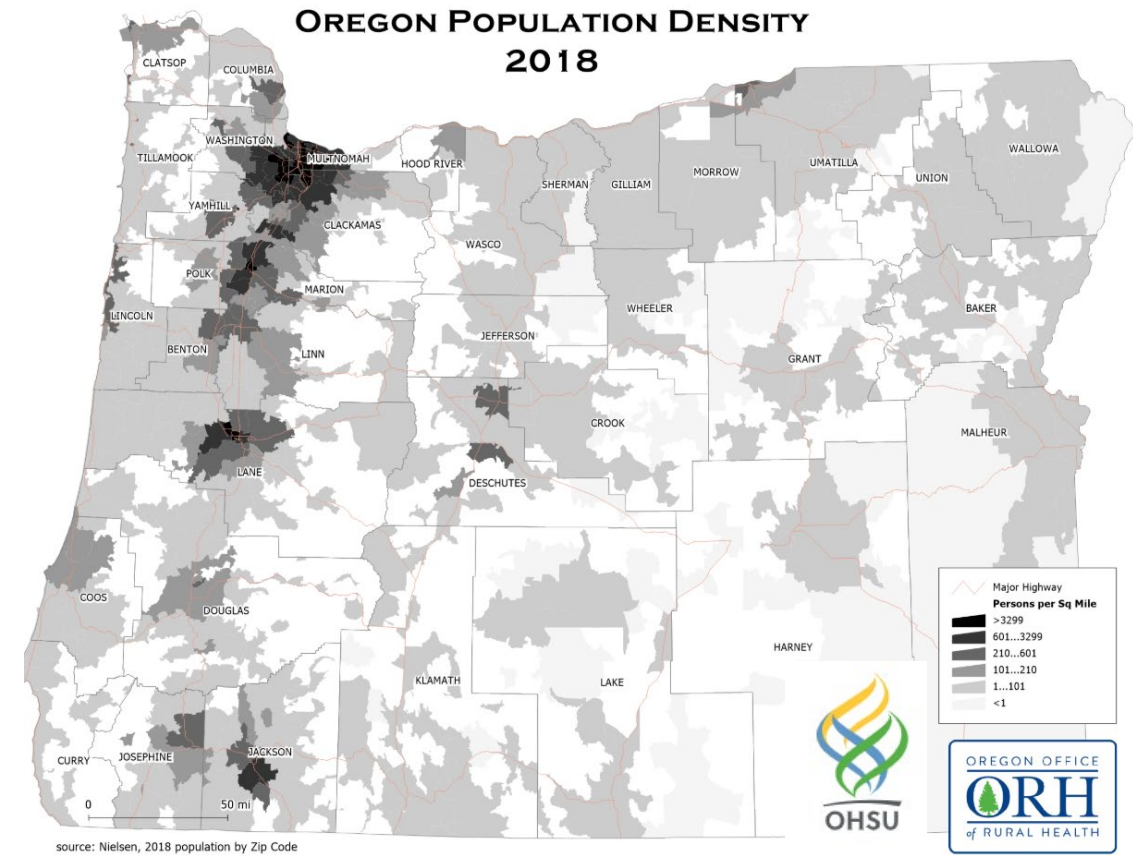
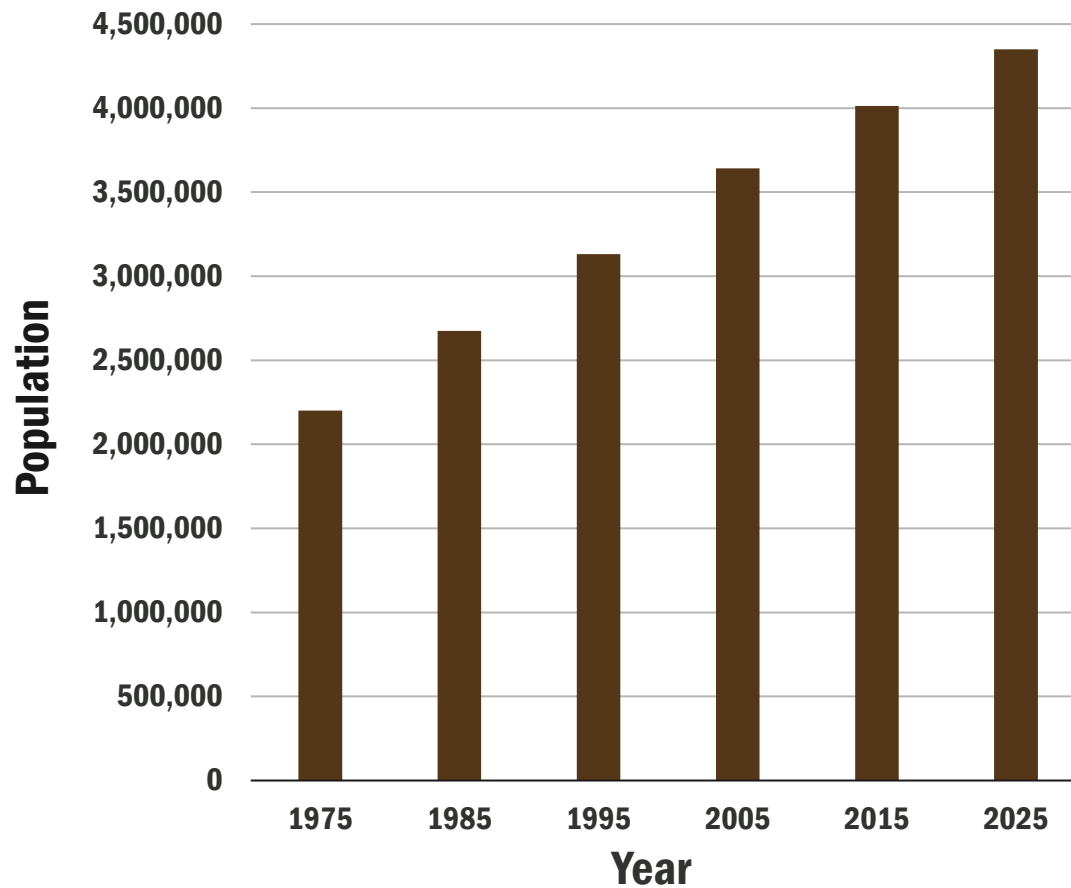


Changing Recreation Pressure

Increased Disturbance From
More Visitors to Public Lands



Oregon's Human Population Doubled in 50 Years



Oregonians Love to be Outdoors

Over 200,000,000
Activity Days in 2017

19.4M

Off Road
Vehicle
Driving

40.8M

Bird
Watching

16.9M

Gathering
Forest
Products

58.3M

Camping at
Developed
Sites

44.0M

Hiking
(non-local
trails)

10.2M

Backpacking

11.3M

Hunting

Source: *Outdoor Recreation in Oregon: Responding to Demographic and Societal Change*

Massive investment in roads and trails to accommodate access since the 1970s



Willamette National Forest

- Largest of our 11 National Forests
- 6,550 miles of USFS maintained roads
- Stretched end to end reach from Salem to New York City and back



Even Wilderness Gets Crowded

Central Cascades Wilderness Permit System

- Three Sisters Wilderness
 - 46,999 visitors in 2011
 - 132,118 visitors in 2016
- Implemented permit system 2021



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**Year-round human activity
on public lands leaves
wildlife with far fewer
places to rest, feed,
and roam undisturbed
than in the past.**

