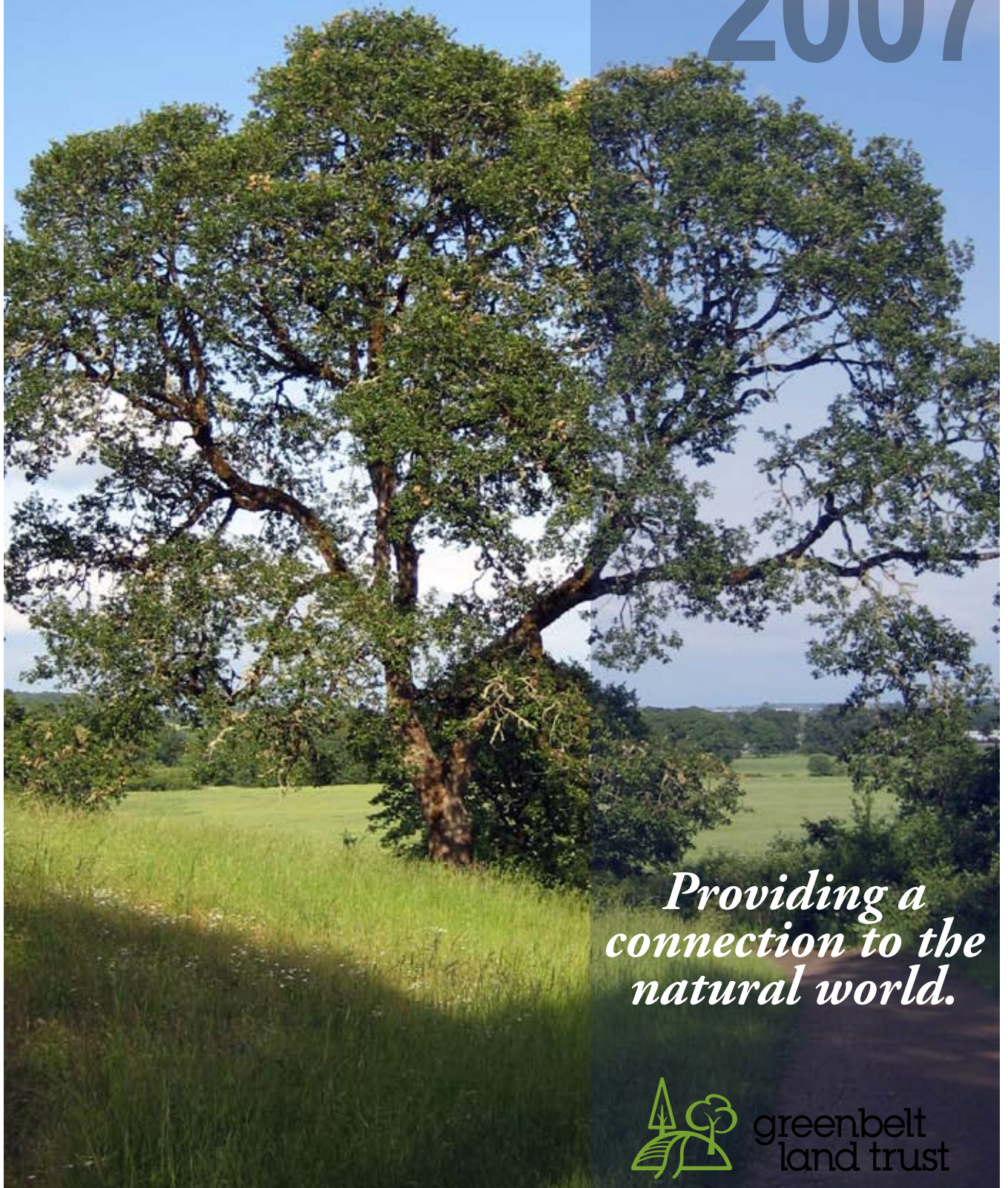


greenbelt land trust

Conservation Plan

2007



*Providing a
connection to the
natural world.*



greenbelt
land trust

**Greenbelt Land Trust
Corvallis, Oregon**

2007 Conservation Plan

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The mission of the Greenbelt Land Trust is to conserve and protect in perpetuity native habitats, working lands and lands of natural beauty, which provide a connection to the natural world for the residents of the Mid-Willamette Valley.

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Acknowledgements

Instead of using our financial resources to hire a consultant to work with us to update our 1998 Open Space Plan, the Greenbelt Land Trust Board of Directors made the decision to develop this Conservation Plan with the assistance of our members and others in the field of conservation. In addition to the various written resources that we consulted, this plan could never have been completed without the help of many different individuals. Each Board member and the Executive Director contributed to research and writing of one or more sections. Betty Griffiths and Cynthia Solie compiled and edited them. Betty Griffiths completed writing and editing the final document that was approved by the Board of Directors October 16, 2007. Additional contributions by others are listed below.

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Introduction

How can I invite the heart of mountains and streams into myself? How can I carry the forest into the city? I know from my own life this is a matter of survival, not aesthetics.

Kim Stafford, *Entering the Grove*, 1990

The Greenbelt Land Trust (GLT) believes that conservation of natural areas and open space lands is a critical component of creating and maintaining vibrant, healthy, vigorous communities while protecting valued ecosystems and productive farm and forest lands. The conservation of natural areas provides:

- Opportunities for recreation, educational pursuits, and spiritual renewal
- Habitat for native plant and animal species and travel corridors for wildlife
- Protection of critical components of our dynamic ecosystem, to sustain the highest air and water quality
- Protection of farm and forest lands
- Reduction of public costs by directing development away from inappropriate areas such as wetlands, riparian areas, floodplains, and steep slopes
- Preservation of our communities as attractive, desirable places to live
- Natural boundaries that define, protect, and maintain the individual integrity and character of our communities

For nearly two decades the GLT has worked to protect the natural, green backdrop that embraces the cities of Corvallis and Philomath. Because this “greenbelt” system connects to a broader network of ecologically significant lands, the work of the Greenbelt Land Trust has broadened over the past five years. Today we envision a network of natural areas in the mid-Willamette Valley that is a “green infrastructure” serving a variety of ecological, economic, and social purposes.

The GLT recognizes that well-planned communities are composed of an adequate and diverse supply of land for housing, employment, and commercial, human and public services, integrated within a network of natural areas. We support state and local efforts to accommodate the majority of residential, commercial and industrial development within Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB). However, we believe that certain properties both within the UGB and in the rural areas should be retained as natural areas because they contain



Hikers at Fitton Green Natural Area

important habitats, working farms or forest land, scenic views, riparian and/or wetland areas and wildlife and drainage corridors. In addition to conservation of lands adjacent to urban areas our work encompasses protection of lands throughout the mid-Willamette Valley that contain rare, endangered, or threatened species or habitats, as well as farm and forest lands.

The Greenbelt Land Trust works to protect and preserve individual pieces of land, but we also envision that communities in the mid-Willamette Valley will benefit from a system of natural areas dispersed throughout the area but connected to each other and to the local communities. These natural areas reach into the cities and weave a connection between the natural world and urban activity.

Some of these natural areas will be accessible to the public and whenever feasible will be connected by a series of trails that are accessible from different locations. Connecting these properties will provide an opportunity for hikers, equestrians, and mountain bikers to have access to a trail network that encircles and connects our communities. Easily accessible open spaces provide a living laboratory for children and adults to observe and gain an understanding of the natural world. Access to these wilder areas helps us to relax, to take a break in our busy lives, and appreciate where we live and the valuable ecosystem services these lands provide.

The population of the Willamette Valley is expected to double in the next 50 years with much of this growth occurring in the mid-Willamette Valley. In addition, significant changes have occurred in



GLT's 221-acre Evergreen property

our land use system. For the past thirty years Oregon's land use system has balanced development with the protection of farm and forest lands and significant natural habitats. Recent legislation and voter passed initiatives have been enacted that prioritize development rights on private property. For example Ballot Measure 37, passed by the voters in 2004, requires governments to provide financial compensation or provide waivers to owners who feel their land values have been reduced by zoning and other land use rules that have been enacted since they purchased their land. Measure 49, which passed November 4, 2007, makes significant changes in Measure 37. The results of this measure on claims already filed and land use in general are unknown. The

growth that is predicted to occur will put enormous pressure on the natural areas and habitats of the Willamette Valley. There is a sense of urgency to protect the most vulnerable and significant lands in the next five to ten years—before land use changes occur or the lands are developed or are priced out of our reach.

Since open space lands cross-jurisdictional boundaries, the GLT works with a variety of partners including landowners, resource conservation organizations, and state and local agencies to achieve our conservation goals. We use all the tools at our disposal – proactively identifying critical properties,

acquiring easements, purchasing properties, and assisting other entities to acquire easements or purchase property for conservation purposes.

The 2007 Greenbelt Land Trust Conservation Plan will guide our organization over the next five to ten years. This plan documents the accomplishments of the last nine years; includes conservation priorities not yet completed from our 1998 Open Space Plan, areas where we are currently doing work, identification of the habitat types where we will focus our work in the mid-Willamette Valley, and identification of specific areas for conservation in and around Benton County. This plan only identifies the potential opportunities in our area and does not prioritize the projects. Therefore as opportunities arise, the GLT will utilize the tools we have developed to assist in prioritizing and evaluating specific projects.

We welcome your comments on this plan, as it is a living document that will be adapted to the changing needs of our communities and the natural environment. Through the dedication of our members and partner organizations, we look forward to carrying on the dream of our founders to protect productive forests, farm lands, hills, valleys, prairies, wildlife habitats, wetlands, and watercourses.



GLT members enjoying the outdoors

Commitment to Conservation

Nature doth thus kindly heal every wound.

Henry David Thoreau, *1845 Journal*

The GLT was established in 1989 by a group of citizens who believed that a greenbelt adjacent to the City of Corvallis would both preserve an inspiring natural setting and protect the vitality of the city by encouraging orderly urban growth. Our membership has grown to over 700 people who support our mission to conserve important natural areas for the benefit of the public. The scope of our work has also expanded to include habitat protection throughout Benton County, as well as lands in the mid-Willamette Valley. In addition to our growth in membership, we have developed a number of innovative partnerships with landowners, citizens, local government agencies, and not-for-profit entities to carry out our conservation goals.

Our recognized mission as a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization is to conserve important natural areas for the benefit of the public. The concept of public benefit does not always include public access but requires us to evaluate the benefits provided to the community through protection of specific lands. We work to conserve lands that provide one or more of the following attributes: significant natural habitats, productive forest and farm land, open space and scenic views, trails and lands of historic and cultural significance.

The GLT presented its first *Open Space Report* in January of 1990. This document listed the highest priority sites for open space conservation. Of the top ten sites, five have been acquired either by the



Bald Hill Natural Area

Greenbelt, the City of Corvallis, or Benton County. These include the Bald Hill Natural Area addition, Kendall Farms, Jackson-Frazier Wetlands, Chip Ross Park addition and lands adjacent to the Highway 34 bypass and Owens Farm. Only one of the ten, Dimple Hill, is still considered to be high priority for acquisition. Two other original sites, Fishers Island Gravel Pit and a parcel of land adjacent to the Marys River, have been dropped from current consideration. One site, Neabeach Hill, unfortunately, has been lost to development.

In March 1998 the GLT Board of Directors adopted a new Open Space Report. This plan, the *Greenbelt Land Trust 1998 Open Space Plan*, reviewed open space acquisitions since 1990 and outlined the GLT priorities for the next five years. Since 1998, the GLT has been very successful in accomplishing the goals set out in this plan.

Benton County and the cities of Corvallis and Philomath both have a history of community financial support for the acquisition of natural areas. In 1979 Corvallis passed a bond measure for the acquisition of Chip Ross Park. Donations of land in 1985 added to the acreage of the park. Philomath residents

contributed to a private fundraising effort in 1991 by Philomath 2000 to acquire the 28-acre Marys River Park in south Philomath. During the 1990's, the acquisition of Bald Hill Natural Area, Kendall Farms, Marys River Natural Area Park and Fitton Green Natural Area all serve as testimony to the ongoing public support for open space.

In 2000, the Greenbelt partnered with the City of Corvallis to pass a \$7.9 million bond measure to acquire over 450 acres including Owens Farm (113 acres), an expansion of Chip Ross Park (48 acres), Whitham Hill (35 acres), Herbert Farms (220 acres), and the Caldwell property (33 acres). These properties were selected after a five year study by the Corvallis Open Space Advisory Commission and represent a diversity of habitats including wetlands, oak woodlands, prairie and riparian areas. Also in 2000 the GLT assisted Benton County in the acquisition of Beazell Memorial Forest, a 586.10 acre working forest gifted to the County by Fred Beazell in memory of his wife Delores. In addition, we raised \$1.0 million in private funds for acquisition of Owens Farm and increased our work in the areas of habitat restoration and regional land conservation and restoration. This was made possible by the financial support of our members, grants from federal and state agencies and the hard work of our board and staff.



Owens Farm

The success of the Greenbelt in the Corvallis and Philomath area reflects citizen values and support for conservation. Through public opinion surveys, forums, and policy debates, the residents of Benton County, Corvallis and Philomath have consistently articulated how important open spaces are to their daily life. Consequently, Benton County and the cities of Corvallis and Philomath have a history of acquiring natural areas and parkland for the use of residents and visitors. This history is reflected in the variety of natural areas and parkland throughout these communities.

Since 2003 we have expanded our work to include conservation of ecologically important habitats. Two of our most recent acquisitions include purchase of the Lupine Meadows property in Philomath and a conservation easement on the Thomas Paine Farms in Kings Valley. Both of these sites contain important upland prairie, wetland and riparian habitats. The Lupine Meadows site has both Kincaid's lupine and Fenders blue butterfly.

We have continued to expand our stewardship work with completion of a management plan for our Owens Farm property in 2006 and will complete a management plan for Lupine Meadows in 2008. We have been carrying out restoration work on these properties which involves removal of non-native species and improved habitat for oak woodlands, upland prairies, wet prairies and wetlands.

In addition to our acquisition and restoration work, we have continued our work with community groups and other conservation organizations on conservation planning within the Willamette Valley and construction and maintenance of trails.

By the fall of 2005, most of the work outlined in the *1998 Open Space Plan* had been accomplished and the Greenbelt began the process of identifying the next set of conservation initiatives. The process included several informal gatherings of GLT members and a one-day workshop held in April 2006. The information they provided served as the beginning point for this plan.

In addition to input from our members, the GLT reviewed a number of documents developed over the last few years for the Corvallis area, Benton County area and the mid-Willamette Valley. These include wetlands inventories, flood plain maps, existing open space and trail networks, community vision documents, natural features inventories, the Oregon Biodiversity Project 1998 Report, The Nature Conservancy Puget Trough Ecoregional Plan, and the Willamette Valley River Basin Atlas. A list of references used for this plan is included as Attachment 1.

Greenbelt further clarified its role in conservation through the update of its Strategic Plan and formulation of its Business Plan in the spring and summer of 2007. This process involved stakeholder interviews and an analysis of the trends in land use and conservation in the mid-Willamette Valley, which is found in Attachment 2.



Native Oregon Strawberry

In 2006 and 2007 Benton County received two grants totaling approximately \$1 million from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for a Habitat Conservation Plan for upland and wet prairie species. The county contracted with The Institute for Applied Ecology to perform this work. Many partners, including the Greenbelt, will be needed to complete this work.

In addition to partnerships with the cities and Benton County, the Greenbelt has also worked closely with other conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Marys River Watershed Council, other land trusts, and soil and water conservation districts, as well as state agencies such as the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to identify and pursue conservation opportunities.

When asked to define quality of life, residents indicate that the most important things are: clean air and water; enough water to support communities, fish and wildlife and economic activities; significant amounts of open space, nearby farm and forest

lands, natural areas, fish and wildlife habitat and public parks and the unique character and livability of communities.

The conservation work of the Greenbelt in the mid-Willamette Valley will help to achieve all of these goals by working with multiple partners, using a variety of tools and strategies.

The Greenbelt's Approach to Conservation

The story of who we are begins with the land.
Everything begins with the place.
Revere its magic; protect its quality.

Tom McCall
Governor of Oregon
1966-1974

The Greenbelt Land Trust has historically worked to conserve lands within Benton County, with a focus on lands within and adjacent to the cities of Corvallis and Philomath. Our work has been very successful and the skills we have gained at land conservation and restoration, as well as community outreach and support for natural areas, will serve us well as we expand our focus to a larger area of the mid-Willamette Valley.

I. Greenbelt Land Trust Objectives

The GLT has chosen to take a regional as well as a habitat type approach in our conservation work. This approach allows us to be more strategic in our conservation planning and acquisition efforts. Although specific properties, such as Dimple Hill, are mentioned as areas for conservation, most of this plan describes general areas and habitat types rather than specific properties. Our efforts will focus on the following objectives:

- Protection of selected lands of significance to the communities of Corvallis and Philomath with scenic and/or recreational value
- Conservation and restoration of key ecosystem components, such as floodplain connections and wetland and riparian areas
- Conservation and restoration of at risk and rare habitats and species, such as upland prairies
- Conservation and restoration of lands adjacent to public lands. Examples are conservation projects adjacent to the three wildlife refuges in the mid-Willamette Valley; Finley, Ankeny, and Baskett Slough
- Conservation and restoration of high priority lands along the middle reach of the Willamette River between Harrisburg and Buena Vista and north to the Yamhill River
- In partnership with landowners, designing conservation projects that restore and maintain important habitats within working landscapes of farms and forests
- Partnering with a variety of other organizations and agencies to maximize the impact of our conservation work and building a conservation ethic within the communities where we work

II. Conservation Tools and Strategies

The Greenbelt secures land only from willing landowners. The eventual layout of trail connectors and natural areas will depend upon the cooperation of landowners and local governments as well as the financial resources available to secure these lands. To accomplish its mission, the GLT uses a variety of “conservation tools” that can be tailored to match the needs of individual landowners and projects. These tools are described below.

- A. Full Fee Purchase:** Full fee purchase is used when outright ownership is necessary or desired to protect the open space values of the land. Full fee ownership also gives us the option of having public access to the site. This tool provides the highest degree of long-term protection for open space. It is also the most expensive, and therefore, will be used selectively.
- B. Bargain Sale:** As population increases and land prices continue to rise in the mid-Willamette Valley, acquisition has become more expensive. To reduce these costs landowners may sell their land to the Greenbelt for less than fair market value and donate the remaining value to the GLT. This strategy reduces the amount of money we must raise to pay for the property and also may provide a tax advantages to the seller.
- C. Donation:** Community-minded landowners can donate undeveloped land for habitat protection or as community open space. In considering donations of land, the GLT considers benefit to the community, our selection criteria, and the long-term management opportunities and costs. This approach is one of the most cost-effective methods for conserving land. Also, donation of land may have tax benefits for the donor.
- D. Conservation Easements:** A conservation easement is a legal agreement between the Greenbelt Land Trust and the property owner to restrict the type and amount of development and uses on their property. Development restrictions are tailored to the particular property and conservation interests of the landowner and the GLT. The landowner forgoes certain “rights,” typically the right to subdivide or develop the site in certain ways. These rights are then conveyed to the GLT through the conservation easement. The easement is recorded with the deed and is binding in perpetuity on all future owners of the property. The GLT is responsible for working with current or future owners to ensure that these development restrictions are enforced.

Conservation easements are often used to conserve productive farm and forest lands. Easements protect the land from being subdivided or developed in a manner that affects productivity. The land stays in private ownership and day-to-day management remains with the landowner. For land management issues that may affect the conservation value of the property, such as timber harvest or construction of buildings and roads, the landowner works in cooperation with the GLT to devise methods for performing these alterations that do not diminish the conservation intent or the productive value of the land.

Cooperative landowners can often manage their land in a way that protects habitat while at the same time continuing economic use of the property. The GLT has used conservation easements to protect agricultural lands, riparian areas, wetlands, oak woodlands and other unique habitats.

The GLT envisions that conservation easements will be an important tool to conserve open space lands particularly in the Marys River Watershed and along the Willamette as well as on farm and forestlands in the mid-Willamette Valley.

Easements do not have to contain a provision for public access. Access can be a part of the easement where there is a willing landowner and public access would not harm either the habitat values or the agricultural resources.

Federal law allows property owners who donate conservation easements to receive tax deductions for the value of the property rights donated as part of the easement.

In addition, there are a number of Federal and State programs for assisting in funding purchase of conservation easements. The GLT will work with landowners and their attorneys and accountants to determine the method of easement acquisition that is preferred by the landowner and can be funded by the GLT.

E. Trail Easements: The GLT will work with willing landowners as well as public and private agencies to obtain trail easements on lands that connect parks, open spaces and natural areas in the mid-Willamette Valley. Obtaining an easement is often the most cost-effective way to provide access for recreation on open space lands.

F. Planning Partnerships: Habitats and precious open space lands do not necessarily follow property or jurisdictional boundaries. Therefore, it is critical to involve all landowners, public and private, in developing a plan for how open space lands can be conserved. An example is the 1998

West Corvallis/North Philomath planning effort that seeks to protect the forested hillside in and around Bald Hill Natural Area, Dimple Hill, and the OSU agricultural lands. The Greenbelt Land Trust participated in the development of this plan and has worked with landowners, citizens, and government officials to develop a plan, which establishes open spaces and trails and also accommodates the growing population of Corvallis and Philomath.

The GLT has also been active in joint planning with local agencies to increase the amount and type of natural areas available in our communities. Examples of these partnerships include:

- Signed an agreement with the US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) to conduct oak woodland and wet prairie habitat restoration on 95 acres at Owens Farm.

Worked with the City of Corvallis to pass a \$7.9 million bond measure for land acquisition for natural areas and open space for the Marys River Natural Area Park.



Trail building at Fitton Green Natural Area

- Currently working with Benton County on their Habitat Conservation Plan, partnered with the city of Corvallis and The Nature Conservancy for restoration and management of oak woodland habitat at Bald Hill.
- Partnered with Benton County for the development of a forest management and trail plan for the 586-acre Beazell Memorial Forest in Kings Valley.

The GLT Board of Directors believes that partnerships such as these are critical. We will continue to nurture our existing partnerships and to establish new partnerships that will help us accomplish our conservation goals.

III. Criteria for Selection of Projects

The Greenbelt Land Trust seeks to protect and preserve open space and natural areas that provide benefits to the community and/or protect endangered or threatened fish, wildlife or plant species and communities. The GLT takes its stewardship role seriously.



Cat's ear - native nectar species for Endangered Fenders blue butterfly

Since we protect lands in perpetuity, we must carefully evaluate each project to ascertain that it conforms to our selection criteria and can be managed within our resources. The GLT has adopted specific criteria to evaluate and identify lands that have the highest priority for conservation. The GLT staff and board members will evaluate each project in accordance with our conservation objectives and stewardship abilities. These guidelines will be used to help determine Greenbelt Land Trust conservation project priorities. This system will not replace deliberation by the Board over potential projects, nor will it mandate action or inaction. The intent is to provide guidance, not to make rules. When a landowner, staff or another agency proposes a project for conservation, the Greenbelt Board, through our Lands Committee, will make a site visit to the property in question and evaluate the project using the factors described below. These selection criteria are divided into three categories: the physical characteristics of the site; the congruence

of the site or project with our geographic focus as outlined in our three-tier decision guide; and the site's acquisition or conservation potential.

A. Physical Characteristics of the Site

1. View Qualities

- Prominent feature of the skyline
- Land possessing outstanding scenic qualities visible from public roads, rivers used by the public for recreation, or from park areas designated for public use
- Hilltops or other high areas, which offer panoramic views

2. Habitat Protection

- Habitats of species at risk or land containing endangered, threatened or rare species
- Natural communities that are characteristic of our region (e.g. oak savannas, native grasslands, conifer forests, riparian areas, and wetlands)
- Ecosystems of educational and/or scientific value
- Aquatic ecosystems that enhance and protect the quality and quantity of ground and surface water
- Perennial and intermittent streams and their riparian areas

3. Agricultural and Forest Resource Lands

- Forest lands
- Lands of significant agricultural importance and value

4. Lands of Historical, Cultural and Educational Importance

- Lands containing significant cultural features including: historic buildings, sites of historic value or resources of significant archaeological value
- Lands adjacent to sites of historical or archaeological value necessary for their protection
- Important community resources with a history of use by residents for recreation

5. Corridors

- Trails and bikeways not adjacent to roads
- Lands which serve as a connector between existing or proposed trails, parks, viewsheds or other open space preserves
- Wildlife corridors that allow for movement of animals, birds, insects and plant dispersal between larger areas necessary for their continued viability
- Waterways that provide for aquatic life and, if appropriate, human recreational uses.
- Railway rights of way
- River corridors

6. Ecosystem Services Lands

- Lands providing essential ecosystem services such as flood control, pollination, purification of air and water, decomposition and recycling of wastes, generation and renewal of fertile soils
- Aquatic ecosystems, including streams, wetlands, flood plains, ponds, and riparian corridors, that enhance and protect the quality and quantity of ground and surface water

7. Landscape Buffers and Gateways

- “Gateways” that enhance the entrance points into our communities

- Lands that help maintain a visual buffer between urban areas already developed or with the potential to be developed
- Lands that serve as a buffer between urban development and uses of resource lands

8. Accessibility

- The ease of access to the site by the general public by road, bike, or foot trail
- Ease of access by children, the elderly or those with limited mobility
- Proximity to existing open space and existing residential areas
- Suitability for low impact recreation use, such as walking or high impact recreation use, such as sports fields

B. Three-Tiered Geographic Focus

In addition to consideration of the eight physical characteristics listed above, the Greenbelt will evaluate a property or project using a three-tier decision guide.

- **Tier One: Greenbelt Home:** This is the historic core of GLT activity, centered on the Corvallis-Philomath communities and the Urban Growth Boundaries in Benton County. Utilization of the full menu of conservation tools and strategies is appropriate within the Greenbelt Home. Most of the high priority projects in this tier were identified in our 1998 Open Space Plan and are identified in this Conservation Plan. These lands include viewsheds, signature landscapes, working farms and forests, community buffers, significant park and trail areas as well as lands of ecological significance. Projects in this tier include land acquisition for ecological, recreational and scenic purposes and trail acquisition projects that connect parks and natural areas.
- **Tier Two: Greenbelt Web:** Generally, this area includes all of Benton County, western Linn County, eastern Lincoln County, southern Polk County and western Marion County. Projects will focus on acquisition and trail projects that have social, cultural, economic and ecological linkages that connect our community to the surrounding landscape. Rivers, roads, habitats, trails, and human and animal migration patterns create a web of interdependencies and ecological connections that tie the Greenbelt Home to neighboring communities. Opportunities to pursue the mission within the Greenbelt Web are pursued wherever they complement or enhance projects in the Greenbelt Home. Utilization of the full menu of conservation tools and strategies is appropriate within the Greenbelt Web. These lands include viewsheds, signature landscapes, working farms and forests, community buffers, significant park and trail areas and lands of ecological significance.
- **Tier Three: Greenbelt Outreach:** This area generally encompasses Eastern Linn County, Polk and parts of Yamhill and Marion Counties. Often, opportunities arise to partner with other organizations in the region whose goals align with those of the GLT, but whose activities are geographically not within the Greenbelt Home or Web. GLT participation in these outreach activities must be supported by the local community with funds generated

specifically for these projects, and must not interfere with pursuit of the mission in the Greenbelt Home and Web. These lands must contain significant natural, agricultural, recreational, educational, scenic or cultural resources or be connected to other protected lands of significance.

C. Acquisition Potential

The term “acquisition” refers to our ability to acquire whole or partial interest in identified lands. If the lands under consideration are ranked as medium or high priority for conservation based on the physical attributes of the property and the appropriateness for GLT involvement given our three-tiered guidelines, the Greenbelt then evaluates the urgency of protecting the lands and decides upon the appropriate conservation tool or strategy. At this stage, the following factors are considered: acquisition, conservation easement, or oversight with another entity and long term stewardship costs. During this process, we must keep in mind our goal of providing a public good as opposed to creating benefits for only a select group of citizens or a specific neighborhood.

- 1. Importance of public ownership.** We consider whether public ownership is necessary to conserve the habit values and other characteristics of the property or provide public access. Conservation easements may serve the same purpose but at a lower cost.
- 2. Willingness of owners to relinquish whole or partial interest in property** may affect whether we purchase full fee title or enter into a conservation easement on a property.
- 3. Urgency** is dictated by impending sale of property or actions by landowners, agencies or developers that may change the conservation characteristics of the property.
- 4. Ease of ownership** is determined by the lack of legal impairments and the availability of clear title.
- 5. Cost of acquisition** is the initial cost to conserve land. We must evaluate whether acquisition of a high cost property would diminish our ability to protect other significant properties.
- 6. Cost of long-term stewardship and restoration (if necessary)** covers monitoring of conserved values, rehabilitation, and maintenance of the property.
- 7. Viability of long-term ownership** examines how adjacent land uses or land use designations may alter the long-term open space or conservation value of the site.

Conservation Priorities

The Willamette Basin is an integral part of the “Oregon Mystique.” It is a very special part of our heritage. As such, it deserves every ounce of effort we can put forth to ensure that we transmit it as a fitting legacy for the generations to come.

John Kitzhaber, May 5, 1998
Governor of Oregon
1995-2003

I. The Willamette Watershed – Our Ecological Context

The Willamette Valley occupies a 120-mile-long plain up to 40 miles in width that drains north to the Columbia River. The basin covers about 12,000 square miles (about one-eighth of Oregon) and has approximately 16,000 miles of streams. Major tributaries to the Willamette River drain both the Cascade and the Coast Range Mountains. The largest rivers originate in the Cascades, including the Clackamas, Molalla, Santiam, Calapooia, McKenzie, and the Middle Fork of the Willamette. The headwaters of the Coast Fork of the Willamette River originate on the Calapooia Divide, which separates the Willamette basin from the Umpqua basin to the south. Tributaries originating in the Coast Range include a number of smaller rivers and streams, such as the Long Tom, Marys, Luckiamute, Yamhill, and Tualatin Rivers.

The Willamette River watershed encompasses all or portions of Washington, Clackamas, Marion, Yamhill, Polk, Benton, Linn, and Lane counties. The area is bounded on the west by the Coast Range, the Cascade Mountains to the east, and the Calapooia Divide to the south. The Greenbelt Land Trust will focus its work within the mid-Willamette region that includes Benton, Linn,



Willamette Bluff property in Polk County

Marion, Polk, and part of Yamhill and Lincoln Counties. The Three Rivers Land Conservancy works in Washington and Clackamas Counties while the McKenzie River Trust works in Lane County and a portion of south Benton County within the watershed of the Long Tom River. Therefore, the work of the Greenbelt will fill a vital gap in mid-Willamette Valley conservation efforts. Other conservation groups including national groups like The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited and Trust for The Public Land as well as local groups like Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Watershed Councils carry out various conservation activities within their particular geographic areas.

The Willamette Valley has been extensively studied and a number of plans and documents have laid out conservation focus areas, including high priority habitat types and species for protection.

The Greenbelt will utilize the results of these studies along with additional information from local ecologists to identify and prioritize those areas and types of lands where we will work.

Studies that we researched in the development of this plan have identified a number of high priority habitats and species that should drive conservation efforts in the valley. The varied landscape conditions within the basin create a mosaic of diverse ecosystems, or areas where distinct climate and geology determine the collection of native habitats and species. The Valley can be divided into three broad zones. The **Willamette River** and tributaries contain deep, fertile, silty clay soils and support riparian forests and bottomland hardwood forests. These gallery forest areas are surrounded by **Prairie Terrace** systems that cover the wide valley floor. This area supports Oregon white oak, Oregon ash, and Douglas fir. Historically, wet and dry prairie vegetation as well as savannas (grasslands with scattered trees) covered this area. The **Valley Foothills** at the edges of the valley floor support Oregon white oak and madrone on drier sites, with Douglas fir and some western red cedar in areas with more moisture.



Oregon white oak

The advent of European-American settlement in the 1840's marked the beginning of dramatic changes in the landscape of the Willamette Valley. Before the mid-19th century, fires set by Native Americans helped maintain a mosaic of grasslands and oak savannas. Bottomland hardwood forests, conifer forests, wetlands and wet prairies dominated the landscape. Construction of dams and impoundments, changes in fire regimens, drainage of wetlands, commercial forestry, cultivation of crops, livestock grazing, introduction of exotic plants, and urbanization have reshaped the entire valley ecosystem. Only small fragments of historic native habitat remain in a landscape dominated by agriculture and urban development. Our conservation efforts will focus on protecting and connecting these fragments and restoring lands to increase native habitats and species.

The Willamette Valley is now home to more than 70 percent of Oregon's residents and accounts for roughly half of Oregon's agricultural sales. Already supporting a population of more than two million, the basin population is expected to grow by 1.7 million people by 2050. Much of the population is centered in the Portland metropolitan area. Outside the Portland metropolitan area, growth is concentrated around Salem, Corvallis, Albany and Eugene. The challenge that drives our work is how to accommodate this population increase without losing the natural heritage and quality of life that draws many of these residents to the region.

II. Overview of Greenbelt Conservation Initiatives: 2007 - 2016

Over the next five to ten years, the Greenbelt Land Trust will continue to work on two types of projects - conservation of properties of ecological significance in the mid-Willamette Valley and the protection of properties of community-wide value, particularly scenic properties in and near Corvallis and Philomath. While other activities such as trail development and education will be pursued, they are secondary to our primary mission of protecting ecologically valuable lands in perpetuity.

To a large extent, pursuit of these initiatives will be opportunity driven and require the identification of interested landowners and other partners, the securing of funding for purchase and stewardship and the development of a project action plan. In most cases we have not identified specific properties but rather an area of land that is important to be conserved for its ecological or community value or as a connector between open spaces or for protection of a specific habitat. For the most part, identification of specific parcels for acquisition occurs only when we have obtained the consent of the landowner. We have attempted to portray an overall strategy for land conservation in this region. The ultimate configuration of any natural area network or

trail connectors will depend on the willingness of landowners to sell their property or grant easements, and on the financial resources available to the GLT.

The list below is a brief summary of all the GLT conservation initiatives which is followed by a more detailed description of each habitat type or specific site. These conservation initiatives include projects not yet completed from our 1998 plan, areas where the Greenbelt is currently active, as well as proposed projects obtained through the plan update process. Five of these conservation initiatives (marked with**) encompass lands within the GLT Tier One base and include lands from our 1998 plan that have not yet been conserved or fully conserved. Some other

areas include projects such as Muddy Creek corridor and the Luckiamute Watershed where the GLT is currently working with landowners and funding agencies on conservation projects. These conservation initiatives are not listed in any priority order.



*Little Willamette Conservation Easement
in Linn County*

SUMMARY OF CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

Special Habitats in Mid-Willamette Valley

- Upland Prairies
- Wet Prairies
- Oak Woodlands & Savannahs
- Significant Wetlands
- Riparian Habitats & Bottomland Forests

Property near current protected open space areas

- Additions to Chip Ross Park **
- Additions to Fitton Green,
- Addition to Bald Hill Natural Area (Mulkey Creek)
- View Ridge corridor (between Fitton Green & McDonald Forest)
- Land near Beazell Memorial Forest
- Area near Fort Hoskins

Lands of Community Significance

- Dimple Hill **
- Selected Corvallis and Benton County Natural Features Inventory Properties
- Lands surrounding the City of Philomath
- Corvallis-Philomath Buffer - agriculture and view buffer **
- Newton Creek Wetlands
- Wetland between West Hills and Dunawi Creek
- Hwy 34 corridor between Corvallis and Interstate 5

Oregon State University Lands

- McDonald-Dunn Forest
- Agricultural Lands (including lands around OSU horse barn and sheep barns)

Jackson and Frazier Watershed and North Corvallis

- Jackson-Frazier Wetlands
- Forested hillsides around Crescent Valley
- North Corvallis

Marys River Watershed

- Marys River Corridor from Wren to the Confluence with the Willamette River **
- Rock Creek and its tributaries (in the Corvallis Watershed)
- Woods Creek

Muddy Creek Corridor within Marys River Watershed

- Finley Wildlife Refuge to confluence with Marys River

Farmlands in NE Corvallis **

Willamette River Corridor from Harrisburg to Albany

- Oxbow cutoffs in Benton and Linn County
- Flood plains and wetlands between Harrisburg and Albany
- Dry Creek
- Booneville Channel
- Owl Creek (east of Corvallis)

Willamette River Corridor from Albany to Mission Bottom

- Luckiamute, Santiam, Willamette Confluences
- Oxbow cutoffs in Linn County
- Buena Vista Area (includes old boat landing)
- Flood plains and wetlands

Calapooia River Corridor

- Lake Creek

Adair and Soap Creek, EE Wilson Wildlife Refuge

- Sulfur Springs Area
- Coffin Butte area: oak woodlands; wetlands
- Adair Rifle Range - wetlands
- Soap Creek drainage south of Highway 99 to confluence with Luckiamute River

Luckiamute Watershed

- Kings Valley - Upland Prairie and Oak Savannah and Wetlands
- Riparian areas along main stem and tributaries
- Upper Luckiamute

Additions to Other Conserved Areas

- Highlands and wetlands near Baskett Slough
- Additions to Finley Wildlife Refuge
- Additions to Ankeny Refuge

North Albany Area

West Salem Hills (oak woodlands)

III. Conservation Objectives

The special habitats throughout the mid-Willamette Valley that will be a focus of the GLT conservation efforts are discussed in Section A below while descriptions of conservation initiatives in specific areas are discussed in Section B.

A. Special Habitats in Mid-Willamette Valley

Currently, there are a number of critical issues and opportunities regarding conservation in the Mid-Willamette Valley. The 2001 report of the Willamette Restoration Initiative, “A Place for Nature: The Willamette Basin Habitat Conservation Priorities” identifies six endangered habitats of the Willamette Basin. The GLT will focus our land protection and stewardship efforts on these habitat types throughout the mid-Willamette Valley. In each of these habitats we will continue working with local ecologists and other organizations to identify and map these areas and identify priority sites for protection. We will protect these sites identified as high priority or most at risk using conservation easements or outright purchase and restoration utilizing the assistance of ecologists, landowners, volunteers and contractors. In addition we will work with landowners, the counties and other not for profits and local governments to educate landowners about efforts they can make to support and enhance these habitats.

1. Upland Prairies

Upland prairies occur on dry sites with well-drained soils. These are frequently located along the rim or margins of valleys. Fires are the key disturbance that maintains these habitats.

Upland prairies are typically dominated by perennial grasses and annual or perennial forbs. Key native and perennial grasses in upland prairie include Roemer’s fescue (*Festuca roemeri*), California oat grass (*Danthonia californica*), junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha*), blue wild rye (*Elymus glaucus*), and Lemmon’s needle grass (*Achnatherum lemmonii*). Native forbs that are commonly intermixed with the grasses include Oregon sunshine (*Eriophyllum lanatum*), slender cinquefoil (*Potentilla gracilis*), dwarf checkermallow (*Sidalcea virgata*), and Tolmie startulip (*Calochortus tolmiei*).

When settlers came to the Willamette Valley in the 19th century, they found upland prairies filled with bunch grasses, oat grass, wild blue rye, wild strawberries and a profusion of wildflowers such as sunflowers, columbine, Willamette daisy, Kincaid’s lupine and camas. Some of these species are now threatened and endangered. This habitat is also home to the peregrine falcon, eastern bluebird, nighthawk, western meadowlark and Finder’s blue butterfly.



Albino Kincaid’s lupine

After Euro-American settlement in the 1830's, regular burning of prairies ceased and most of the Valley was gradually developed for agricultural or urban uses. Woody species and non-native weeds invaded remaining natural areas. As a result, native upland prairies, along with wetland prairies, now cover much less than 1% of their former area making them among the rarest of North American ecosystems. The decline in upland prairies and their increased fragmentation has led to the decline of many native prairie plants and animals. Even so, remnants of these highly diverse, complex, and poorly understood ecosystems provide necessary habitat for many rare species.

Remaining native upland prairies vary in size and quality. A separate survey of prairie remnants using information from experts and the literature identified only five sites that contain relatively large areas of high or very high quality prairie, and 42 lesser sites. Two of these large, high-quality sites are now protected: Coburg Ridge, and Kingston Meadows. Other high quality sites and lesser sites are still in need of protection. One of the best places to view an upland prairie is at Bald Hill Natural Area, just west of downtown Corvallis.

The Greenbelt Land Trust recently completed purchase of an important upland prairie site in Benton County, Lupine Meadows, and we are working with scientists and landowners to identify and protect other sites in the mid-Willamette Valley including lands adjoining the Marys River and extending to Highway 20 and the Muddy Creek area. The sites are scattered throughout the valley and conservation efforts will focus on conserving important habitats to string together a network of sites that will support adequate diversity of vegetation to supply habitat for the Fenders blue butterfly and other invertebrate species.

2. Wet Prairies

Wet prairies are an important grassland habitat that nurture many rare plants and mosses and are especially important for amphibians such as the Pacific tree frog. Today nearly 99% are gone, drained for agriculture and other development or overgrown with invasive species.



Common camas

Upland and wet prairies are two of the rare habitat types found in the Willamette Valley. Upland prairies developed on sites with well-drained soils and no prolonged standing water. In contrast, wetland prairies are found on soils with clay layers that prevent the drainage of winter rains, causing flooding between fall and spring. The two types of prairies support different plants and animals, differ in their structure and productivity, and need different types of management.

Wet prairies usually occur on poorly drained soils or well drained but shallow soils above bedrock. These prairies are usually flooded during part of the year, and are dominated by herbaceous plants. Wet prairies are maintained by seasonal flooding and summer fires. Common native grass species found in wet prairies include tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*), and meadow barley

(*Hordeum brachyantherum*). Also common is one-sided sedge (*Carex unilateralis*). Native forbs found in wet prairies include common camas (*Camassia quamash*), Oregon sunshine (*Eriophyllum lanatum*), elegant downingia (*Downingia elegans*), and coyote-thistle (*Eryngium petiolatum*).

Many of the wet prairies in the valley have been degraded by disturbance due to agriculture and an alteration of the hydrologic regime that decreases or eliminates the seasonal inundation necessary to maintain the prairie habitat. There are still a number of wet prairie areas remaining in the mid Willamette Valley adjacent to creeks and rivers. An example of a wet prairie conservation area is the Muddy Creek area south of Corvallis.

The Greenbelt has used data collected by local ecologists and fish and wildlife agency personnel to identify high priority sites for upland and wet prairie habitats within the mid-Willamette Valley. Efforts at native prairie conservation will focus on protecting high-quality sites that now are unprotected and using ecological restoration to improve the quality of currently protected sites.

3. Oak Woodlands & Savannas

The Willamette Valley's savannas are characterized by an understory dominated by grass with widely spaced Oregon white oak trees. Before European settlement, it is estimated that oak savannas covered over 1.5 million acres of the Willamette Valley. Today only about 200,000 acres of oaks remain with about 98% in private ownership. Because of fire suppression, the trees now grow more densely and the open grassy areas have been reduced. Most of the remaining oak woodlands and savannas rise on bluffs and hillsides along the Willamette River and its tributaries and provide some of the most important wildlife habitat in the area.

This habitat is an important home for over 200 bird species, including the imperiled western bluebird, grasshopper sparrow and Oregon vesper sparrow, as well as many mammals, amphibians and reptiles.

The North Corvallis area (Adair, Dunn and McDonald State Forests, E. E. Wilson Game Management Area, Jackson Frazier wetlands) includes habitat for a number of these at risk plants and animals; and excellent examples of oak woodlands, conifer forests, and bottomland wetlands.



Oregon white oak

4. Wetlands

Historically wetlands have been maligned as bogs, marshes and swamps and unhealthy places of no practical use. Settlers in the valley drained wetlands to grow crops and accommodate livestock grazing, and for residential and commercial development. However, we now know that wetlands serve as important reservoirs and water filters. They absorb and store water, help control stream flow, and are very important for natural flood control. Also, they are



Wetlands at Evergreen Property

the most productive and species-rich habitats in the state providing vital habitat for imperiled species like coho salmon, spotted frogs, and eastern pond turtles. They provide habitat for migrating birds such as the sandhill crane, tundra swan, dusky Canada geese, bald eagles, and many species of ducks and shorebirds.

Jackson-Frazier Wetland is one of the few places in the center of the Willamette Valley to see a diverse natural wetland. Over 300 flower plant species are found here, including the endangered Bradshaw's lomatium, a yellow flowered member of the parsley family found only in the Willamette Valley, and threatened Nelson's checkermallow. Another good example of wetland conservation can be found at Tye Wine Cellars south of Corvallis. It is estimated

that anywhere from 50-90% of the Willamette Valley's wetlands are gone and many are still being converted to other uses. As wetlands in the Valley are being converted into other land uses, conservation efforts for wetlands are becoming increasingly important.

5. Riparian Habitats and Bottomland Forests

Before the Willamette Valley was settled and developed, dense forests lined the Willamette River and its tributaries ranging from one to seven miles wide. Now the average riparian corridor along the Willamette River is only a few hundred feet. In these riparian areas were Douglas fir, western hemlock, Pacific yew, black cottonwood, red alder, big leaf and vine maple, western red cedar, Oregon ash, willow and pine. Among these trees were ferns violets, trillium, orchids and bleeding heart along with pileated woodpeckers, and frogs. Some of the birds found in these areas include red-eyed vireo, yellow warbler, yellow breasted chat, willow flycatcher and rufous hummingbirds.

Today over 80% of these riparian, floodplain, bottomland and gallery forests are gone, converted to agriculture and commercial and residential development. In addition, upstream dams have impacted these areas. One of the best examples of this type of habitat is at the Luckiamute Landing State Park at the confluence of the Luckiamute and Willamette River. Conservation efforts for these diverse riparian, floodplain, gallery and bottomland forests can protect contiguous habitats.

B. Description of Conservation Initiatives in Specific Areas

Organizing this section of the plan by watershed allows us to analyze how conservation within a given area contributes to the entire area and in the case of lands of community significance how they might contribute to a local “sense of place.” This approach also allows us to focus our conservation efforts, thus increasing our efficiency and effectiveness. We discuss each initiative briefly and then outline any specific objectives and general recommendations for the identified lands.

Further work is required on a number of the project areas listed to identify the resources and potential partners. Specific conservation priorities will not be established until this further analysis is completed. However, if a specific opportunity presents itself on one of these areas, the Board will consider these on a case-by-case basis. Acting on these opportunities will depend on the ecological and conservation value of the property and how the project matches with the Criteria for Selection of Projects, in Section III of this Conservation Plan.

1. Properties Near Current Protected Open Space Areas

a. Chip Ross Park

Chip Ross Park is a public park established in 1979 and occupies the first ridge north of Corvallis. It offers outstanding views of Corvallis and a network of trails and connections to McDonald Forest and the Timberhill residential area. The open meadows on the south slope of the hill transitions to oak forest at the crest and continues down the north slope to Jackson Creek. It is bordered by private lands on the north, east and south, and is adjacent to McDonald Forest on the west.

Conservation Objectives:

- Protect the area around Chip Ross Park for public use
- Enhance the open space character of the park through addition of properties to the south of the existing park.

Recommended Actions:

- Monitor land ownership
- Work with the City of Corvallis and landowners to add property to this park

b. Fitton Green

Fitton Green is a 308-acre natural area that was established through land acquisition by both Benton County and the GLT. It sits on a ridge just north of and overlooking Philomath. At the time that it was acquired, portions had been logged. In addition to its value as a natural area, Fitton Green is connected to Bald Hill Natural Area through a regional trail system. In addition to connecting these two publicly owned natural areas, this trail system connects to Cardwell Hill Road and eventually Marys Peak.

The landowner of Bald Hill Farms an adjacent property has donated a trail easement to

Benton County to extend a trail from Bald Hill Natural Area to the ridge just east of Fitton Green. The County recently completed a new trail on this property that crosses Mulkey Creek and extends up the hillside to the ridge. It may eventually be extended across the adjoining ridge to Fitton Green. In the interim a trail has been constructed partially on private property on Wynochee Road to connect these two natural areas.

Conservation Objectives:

- Conserve the ridge that extends from Fitton Green to Bald Hill Natural Area for conservation of the natural area and to protect the corridor for a future trail.

Recommended Actions:

- Explore acquisition of additional lands adjacent to this established natural area.
- Work with Benton County to secure a trail easement and/or open space protection for the ridge that extends eastward from Fitton Green Natural Area toward Bald Hill Natural Area

c. Bald Hill Natural Area (Mulkey Creek)

The centerpiece of greenbelt planning in West Corvallis is Bald Hill Natural Area, a city park acquired through a combination of City of Corvallis and GLT efforts. It stands midway between Marys River and McDonald Forest. It is forested on its northern and eastern slopes with grasslands to the south and west. There is an extensive trail system now established within the park, with excellent potential to become part of a larger regional trail system. The grassland and prairies as well as oak woodlands are being impacted by growth of conifers.

Thompson Hill and Double Hill connects Bald Hill Natural Area to Philomath Boulevard. These hills are partially forested in Oregon white oak. A residential subdivision, Grand Oaks, was recently built on Double Hill and most of the oak stand was removed during development. A multi-use trail may be planned for installation along the upper portion of Double Hill within the stand of oaks.

Thompson Hill is located just outside of the City of Philomath and City of Corvallis Urban Growth Boundaries and is zoned to allow 2-5 acre residential parcels. This area could also provide additional oak woodlands and trail connections to Bald Hill.

Oak Creek and Mulkey Creek

Oak Creek is a major creek system that drains part of McDonald Forest and flows past Bald Hill Natural Area to join with Mulkey Creek. Gravel and paved roads parallel it to 53rd Street. After joining with Mulkey Creek it flows through Oregon State University agricultural lands, eventually joining the Marys River near Brooklane Drive. Mulkey Creek traverses both Bald Hill Natural Area and the surrounding private lands. It emerges from the hills west of Corvallis and joins Oak Creek west of 53rd Street.

Conservation Objectives:

- Connect Bald Hill and Fitton Green
- Thompson Hill has value both as an open space buffer between Corvallis and Philomath and as a possible trail connector route if the landowner is willing to grant a trail easement.
- Protect wetlands and riparian areas along Mulkey and Oak Creek and the upper watershed.
- Conserve upland prairie habitat at Bald Hill Farms

Recommended Actions:

- Monitor land ownership and development and evaluate conservation opportunities
- Work with landowners to determine the best method to conserve the oak woodlands and open space character of the Thompson Hill.
- Work with the landowners, Benton County and others to secure additional trail easements in this area.
- Some of the lands immediately to the north of Bald Hill Natural Area should be conserved to protect the wetlands associated with the Mulkey Creek drainage.
- Work with land owners and others to conserve the upland prairie, oak woodlands and riparian lands at Bald Hill Farms.

d. View Ridge Corridor

This ridge connects the north side of Fitton Green Natural Area with McCullough Peak, the highest elevation in McDonald Forest. It begins at Cardwell Hill Road, and follows the ridge in a north and easterly direction to the junction of Skillings Road, and a trail to McCullough summit from the west. The ridge provides an inspiring view of Kings Valley, the Coast Range to the west, Dimple Hill, Oak Creek canyon and Corvallis on the east. The landscape includes second growth Douglas fir and hardwood forests and meadows. Most of the land along the ridge is forested and is owned by private timber companies.

Conservation Objectives:

- Connect Fitton Green to McDonald Forest

Recommended Actions:

- Work with private landowners to secure a trail easement along the ridge



View of Marys Peak and Kings Valley from Fitton Green Natural Area

e. Land Near Beazell Memorial Forest

There are some privately owned lands west of Beazell Memorial Forest that include remnant oak forest and meadows. Taylor’ Checkerspot, an endangered butterfly, has been found on Beazell and so there may be habitat next to Beazell for this endangered species.

Conservation Objectives:

- Addition to Beazell Memorial Forest

Recommended Actions:

- Contact landowner to determine interest in conservation of property
- Work with Benton County on funding options for purchase and management

f. Area Near Fort Hoskins

The majority of the area immediately around Fort Hoskins consists of industrial forestlands along with at least one Century Farm.

Conservation Objectives:

- Possible protection of Century Farm

Recommended Actions:

- Further study is needed to determine if there are any conservation values or public values in further land acquisition in this area.
- Follow assessment of this land in Benton County’s Habitat Conservation Plan

2. Lands of Community Significance

a. Dimple Hill

This is the highest and most distinctive landmark in the skyline northwest of Corvallis. It commands a spectacular view of Corvallis on upland prairie that supports native



View of Corvallis from Dimple Hill

plant species. Dimple Hill marks the boundary between West and North Corvallis open space areas, and offers outstanding views of Corvallis and access to McDonald Forest. It contains the most visible example of open hillside meadow in the Corvallis area. The community has long regarded this hill as a critical component of a greenbelt for Corvallis. It is popular for both hiking and picnicking. The upper most portion of the hill is within McDonald Forest while the south sloping meadow and forested hillside are in private ownership. The area is privately owned and connects to Oregon State University (OSU) lands. Populations of Fender’s blue butterfly and Kincaid’s lupine are found on the upper portion owned by OSU.

Conservation Objectives:

- Protect upland prairie habitat
- Retain the “open space” character of the hill as viewed from Corvallis and Philomath

Recommended Actions:

- Work with OSU and the private landowners to ensure long-term protection for the upper meadow area

b. Selected Corvallis and Benton County Natural Features Inventory Properties

In the last few years both Corvallis and Benton County completed work on natural features inventories. The Corvallis Natural Features project consisted of inventories of streams, wetlands, riparian areas, flood plains, areas prone to landslides and wildfires, steep slopes, wildlife habitat, tree groves, scenic views, and archeological resources within the Urban Growth Boundary. This completed inventory was used by the city as it conducted a process that balanced providing sufficient lands for housing and economic development while protecting natural resources. This process called Environmental, Social, Economic and Energy (ESEE) Analysis was required by state law. The city developed a combination of incentives, educational materials and regulations to protect the significant natural features and reduce the risks associated with natural hazards. This effort resulted in changes to the Land Development Code that was adopted by the City Council in December 2006. This plan includes a community wide-prioritization of lands containing natural features and hazards and identifying which can be fully developed, highly protected or partially protected. These specific levels of protection were placed on the following categories of natural features: riparian corridors, including fish and wildlife habitat; locally significant wetlands; and significant vegetation, including wildlife habitat and tree groves.

Benton County adopted similar levels of protection for areas in the county that are in the Corvallis Urban Growth Boundary and subject to eventual annexation into the City of Corvallis. For significant vegetation they adopted regulations only for the highest rated oak savannah and upland prairie areas. They did not pass specific regulations but rather included incentives for tree groves and wildlife habitat while for flood plains and wetlands they adopted the same map and regulations as the city. The city developed an extensive set of detailed GIS maps by basin which show each natural resource and the level of protection provided under the 2006 revised Land Development Code. The city also adopted three sub-maps referred to as the Riparian Corridors and Wetlands Map, the Significant Vegetation Map, and the Natural Hazards Map as a part of their amended Land Development Code District Map.

Some of the areas that are included in the Natural Features Inventories that have been identified as worthy of protection are:

1) **The Booneville Slough (Dry Creek)**

This slough is part of the Willamette River System and is connected to the river east of Hwy. 99. The Natural Features Inventory documents the value of maintaining large riparian buffers along this area as it is located within the Willamette River floodplain. Although farmland use predominates in this area, several residences have been built up to the edge of the channel.

The South Corvallis Refinement Plan has proposed a multi-use (walking and biking) trail that would connect Dry Creek to Willamette Park and ultimately to downtown Corvallis. Dry Creek is a seasonal creek that crosses Hwy. 99 just south of Airport Road and drains into the Booneville Slough. The location of the bridge crossing over the creek provides a natural gateway to Corvallis.

2) **Mill Race**

The Mill Race historically was a waterway between the Marys and Willamette Rivers built to supply power for a flour mill in the late 19th Century. It leaves the Marys River south of Avery Park and follows the north boundary of the Marysville Golf course. It crosses under the railroad tracks and then flows past undeveloped industrially zoned property toward Highway 99 where two buildings on either side of the race crowd the bank. It flows under SW 3rd Street and then turns north toward the Evanite Fiber Corporation site. At that point, it goes into an underground culvert to the Willamette River.

The South Corvallis Refinement Plan proposes the use of the Mill Race as a potential greenway. The Mill Race does not flow freely now because it is blocked west of the railroad crossing. Further, there are no trails along it. A path along the Mill Race and easements from adjacent property owners at Highway 99 would increase its usefulness as a recreational or access corridor. However, the buildings at Highway 99 will necessitate a diversion of the trail, which would end at the Evanite boundary. Trail users would face a potential safety hazard in crossing Highway 99 to reach the Willamette River.

3) **Seavy Meadows including Sequoia Slough**

The Seavy Meadows/Willamette Dale Farms land located off Conifer Boulevard is a locally significant wetland in Northeast Corvallis. This 32 acre property was once slated for residential development but obtained by the City about 20 years ago through a combination of bond default and land purchase. The Comprehensive Plan Designation is now Open Space Conservation and the property is used frequently by the neighbors and employees of nearby businesses for walking and for dogs to run.

The City is currently working with Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services to develop approximately four acres of the site for about 35 units of affordable housing. As a part of this project, they have received a permit from the Department of State Lands to develop on 1.7 acres of the wetlands provided they mitigate this loss of wetlands. However, a mitigation plan has not been developed. This project is expected to be

complete within the next three years. After the housing is developed, the city has indicated that they will place a conservation easement on the remainder of the property to ensure that the wetlands and other natural features will be protected. However, the City has not made any decisions about the long term management of this wetland area.

4) **Marys River**

The portion of the Marys River that flows through south Corvallis contains riparian, wetland and upland forest habitats worthy of protection. The Marys River Watershed is discussed in another section of this plan.

Jackson and Frazier Watershed, North Corvallis and oak woodlands and savannahs are also discussed in other section of this plan.

Conservation Objectives:

- Work with landowners, the City of Corvallis, local agencies and residents to conserve these areas and minimize encroachment from development
- Evaluate the ability to establish a Millrace “gateway” through conservation easements or land acquisition from willing landowners

Recommended Actions:

- Work with the City of Corvallis to secure conservation/trail easements and establish a multi-use trail along the east bank of the Booneville Channel. This trail will connect with existing trails through Willamette Park
- Conserve lands along Dry Creek to serve as a southern “gateway” to Corvallis
- Conserve and enhance the wetlands and riparian and upland forests along the Marys River corridor. Establish a multi-use trail that connects Avery and Marys River Natural Area Park and follows the path of the river
- Work with the City of Corvallis and others on protection and trail strategies for the Mill Race. Assist in development of a trail connector along the Millrace from the Marys River across Highway 99 to Crystal Lake Drive. It has value for access and recreation because it is one of the few existing east/west corridors across South Corvallis
- Monitor and participate in implementation of the South Corvallis Refinement Plan
- Work with the City of Corvallis on development of conservation easement for Seavy Meadows/Willamette Dale Farms wetlands
- Work with the City of Corvallis, Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services and Northeast Corvallis Neighborhood Association to develop a conservation and management strategy for the Seavy Meadows/Willamette Dale Farms wetlands
- Investigate possible conservation of lands along Sequoia Slough

c. Lands Surrounding the City of Philomath

“Visioning a Future Philomath,” the City of Philomath document, outlines the development course the City hopes to pursue towards the year 2020. This document states “part of Philomath’s allure is its rural setting with its clean air and water, green spaces, parks, streams and waterways.” Citizens wish to conserve and enhance these qualities. Citizens also expressed their desire to work with the GLT to identify and acquire potential open space lands and to promote the community value of open space. Some of the lands of community significance include:

- 1) Wren Hill functions as the western gateway to Philomath depicting a scenic, rural entrance to the City.
- 2) Evergreen Hill provides a forested backdrop for the southern portion of the City. Productive farmlands located south of the city provide an overflow area for floodwaters and enhance the agricultural setting of Philomath.
- 3) Park sites north of Highway 20 are desired for acquisition by the City of Philomath to serve residents in this area.
- 4) Newton Creek Watershed contains many important wetlands and upland prairie areas within the Philomath UGB.



*Conservation Easement within
Newton Creek Watershed*

- 5) Oak Savannah on 66th Street is within the Corvallis-Philomath oaks priority conservation area. Just outside of Corvallis, 66th Street runs roughly north/south; the south end connects to Highway 20/34 east of Philomath. The area of interest is bounded on the south by Highway 20/34 and on the north by Reservoir Road/West Hills Road. The west boundary is Tennis West Road and the east boundary is 53rd Street. Winding Way bisects the area before it connects into West Hills Road. Winding Way crosses Duawni Creek about midway. Most of this road is a private road. The area has been subdivided and there are several houses. The largest area of trees is woodlands on both sides of Winding Way Road that are privately owned. The trees are nice, large-oak canopy with some invasive smaller trees.

Conservation Objectives

- Conservation of lands located upland and within the floodplain of the Marys River can protect riparian and upland forest habitats and wetlands
- Further Study: Areas that warrant further study include Wren Hill, Evergreen Hill, lands within the floodplain of the Marys River and farm lands south and north of the Marys River

- Trail Connectors: Potential connectors from the Corvallis and Philomath to Bald Hill and Fitton Green Natural Area should also be designated
- Conduct assessment of oak woodlands off 66th Street to determine conservation value and identify potential areas for protection

Recommended Actions:

- Work with the landowners, residents and city staff to identify sites and develop a list of priorities for conservation and natural area protection in and around the City of Philomath
- Work with willing landowners, to accomplish open space conservation in this area. While some lands may be appropriate for acquisition, many of the farm and forest lands can be protected through the use of conservation easements
- Work with residents and the City of Philomath to identify potential park sites north of Highway 20
- Continue conservation acquisition on targeted lands within Newton Creek Wetlands
- Contact land owners of identified oak woodlands and other habitats to determine interest in acquisition by GLT or in conservation easements
- Coordinate efforts with the Benton County Habitat Conservation Plan

d. Corvallis-Philomath Buffer – agriculture and view buffer

This area serves both as a gateway into the communities of Corvallis and Philomath and also acts as an open space buffer between the two communities, allowing each to retain its own unique identity. The Comprehensive Plans for Corvallis and Philomath refer to the establishment of an open space buffer between the two cities. Current land use includes agriculture, residential areas, forested hills, and industry.

The West Corvallis/North Philomath area is bounded on the south by the Marys River and on the north by McDonald Forest and Dimple Hill. Several streams flow through this area: Newton Creek in Philomath, and Oak, Dunawi and Mulkey Creeks to the northwest of Corvallis. It includes not only the traditional Corvallis/Philomath buffer lands adjacent to Philomath Boulevard but also private land between the two communities.

Agricultural Buffer Lands: The fields between the Marys River and Highway 20 collectively act as an open space buffer between Philomath and Corvallis. The flat, open vistas visible across these fields to the Marys River help preserve a sense of distinction between these two communities. These lands are generally level, interspersed with stands of oak and intermittent streams. Most of these lands are currently outside of the Urban Growth Boundaries of Corvallis and Philomath. However due to their proximity to these two cities, they have the potential to be converted over time to more intense uses. This area was not considered as part of the West Corvallis/North Philomath plan. Hillside

lands located north of Highway 20 between Corvallis and Philomath contain a mix of wetlands, riparian areas, and oak woodlands. There are also a number of commercial businesses located in this area.

Conservation Objectives:

- Conserve and maintain an open space buffer between the two communities.
- Protect visually significant hillsides, agricultural lands and wetlands.
- Protect existing corridors between open space natural areas.
- Create a system of trails to serve adjoining communities and connect them to a regional trail system.
- Protect wetlands in the Newton Creek basin.

Recommended Actions:

- Work with the residents of this area, Benton County, and the cities of Corvallis and Philomath to produce a more definitive plan on how to conserve these lands as an open space buffer between the two communities.
- Work with landowners of farm lands south of Philomath to develop a strategy for conserving the agricultural lands in this area.
- Help create a system of trails to serve adjoining communities and connect them to a regional trail system.
- Monitor implementation of West Corvallis North Philomath Plan
- Monitor Measure 37 claims in this area.

e. Newton Creek Wetland

There are almost 300 acres of wetlands in the Newton Creek drainage just north of Philomath Highway. This area currently contains a mixture of land uses including abandoned log ponds, tree farms, an old mill site and log storage area, residential and undeveloped lands. The City of Philomath zoned most of this area industrial in the 1980's. However, due to the presence of wetlands and a decline in timber industry operations the majority of the property is not currently used as industrial land. In their document "Envisioning a Future Philomath", the citizens have indicated their desire to develop a comprehensive mitigation plan for these lands. This area provides a unique opportunity to conserve an important natural area adjacent to Philomath. The wetlands also provide unique recreational and educational opportunities for residents and visitors. The GLT recently purchased a 58 acre property, Lupine Meadows, which contains important wetland, wet prairie and upland prairie habitats. We are interested in acquisition of other lands or conservation easements on rare and endangered habits in this watershed.

Conservation Objectives:

- Conserve and restore native wetland, riparian and wet and upland prairies in this watershed.

Recommended Actions:

- Work with the landowners, the city of Philomath, the Marys Peak Watershed Council and other interested parties in protecting the Newton Creek Wetlands.

f. Wetland between West Hills and Dunawi Creek

This area within the Corvallis UGB is between Reservoir Road and West Hills Road with part of it along Dunawi Creek. When Reservoir Road is relocated, the creek and the associated riparian corridor may be relocated through the wetlands. It is considered a locally significant wetland with protection for 100 feet from the top of the bank for the riparian corridor.

g. Highway 34 corridor between Corvallis and Highway 5

Albany lies to the north, the interstate borders the east. The west side is the Willamette River. To the South is open agricultural land. Much of this land is situated within the drainage of the Calapooia River, which along with the agricultural land is the major natural feature. The Calapooia River flows from above the town of Halsey to the Willamette in Albany. Lake Creek also flows parallel and east of the Calapooia. There are ponds and remnants of ox-bow lakes whose existence depends on rainfall to some extent. Riparian forests are narrow but follow the course of the Calapooia for most of its course.

The area is over 80% zoned for exclusive farm use and lies within a floodplain and outside the urban growth boundaries for both Albany and Corvallis. In addition to agriculture there is the municipality of Tangent, and a growing number of businesses located along both sides of Hwy 34 especially just outside of Corvallis. Tangent relies on a lagoon (managed by private contractor) for liquid waste processing; solid waste is handled by septic tanks. Residential water is obtained through individual wells.

The expense of establishing subdivisions here may make this land suboptimal for development. The continued enlargement of Albany growing to the south is the most likely impact on this open space. Tangent has also been slowly growing over the past 10 years. Businesses may continue to develop where zoning allows, mostly along the north side of the highway and within a few hundred yards of it.

Conservation Objectives:

- Maintain as much of the area as possible as exclusive farm lands especially high quality lands and farm lands on the south side of the highway.

- Retain lands in agricultural or rural residential uses to maintain open space division between Corvallis and I-5.

Recommended Actions:

- Further study on possibilities of conservation easements that will maintain farm use.
- Maintain contact with City of Tangent, Farm Bureau and Calapooia Watershed Council on conservation opportunities.

3. Oregon State University Lands

a. McDonald-Dunn Forests

These are State Forest Lands managed by the OSU College of Forestry and encompass a total of 11,250 acres. These lands are managed under a comprehensive management plan for a number of objectives including teaching, research, extension education, forest restoration, and revenue production for the college. Recently the forest management plan has been significantly revised. (www.cof.orst.edu/cf/). An emphasis on oak woodland restoration is part of that revision, as is an increased emphasis on revenue generation. In short, the entire property is managed to be a forest in perpetuity. These are working and research forests. Only a very small portion of the acreage is “set-aside” from active management of one kind or another. There are a number of small old growth stands, some oak woodland, and other unique cover types that are in reserve.

There are no plans for building on these lands, or for selling them. Were the college to decide to dispose of these lands, they would be taken up by another state agency. Much of the leading research in the country on management for endangered species habitat, water quality, aesthetics, and reforestation has been conducted on these forestlands. Because these lands are a huge part of what makes the College of Forestry the premier forestry school in the country, it is highly unlikely that the college would ever wish to dispose of them. For all practical purposes the assumption is that these lands will stay under the management of the College of Forestry as long as the college exists and the state is solvent.

McDonald Forest is a 7,250-acre research forest owned by the State and operated by Oregon State University that is within a 5-15 minute drive for city residents. This area serves as the largest open space property in North and West Corvallis. It already has extensive road and trail systems for recreation. *McCullouch Peak* is the highest point within McDonald Forest. It is close to the western boundary of McDonald Forest, and one access route goes through a private forest holding. It has a commanding view of McDonald Forest, Corvallis and Philomath. McDonald Forest makes a major contribution to the general viewshed of the area and it provides recreation and habitat on a large scale. Existing trails and roads offer opportunities for cycling, horseback riding and hiking. In its present state, it provides a valuable asset for OSU and for the community.

Conservation Objectives:

- Work with OSU to protect these lands for education, research and recreation

Recommended Actions:

- Work in coordination with OSU to develop a system of trail connectors from adjoining lands to McDonald Forest
- Monitor implementation of Oregon State University, McDonald-Dunn Forest Plan
- Seek Greenbelt members to participate in the regular community input sessions, and volunteer, for example in oak restoration and trail work

b. Agriculture Lands

The Oregon State University College of Agriculture manages an extensive area to the west of Corvallis. These include lands by the covered bridge, the horse barns, and at the Soap Creek Ranch (Beef Barn). Habitats of concern in these areas include wetlands and oak woodlands. Oak Creek is a major creek system that drains parts of McDonald Forest and flows past Bald Hill Natural Area to join with Mulkey Creek. It then flows through Oregon State University agricultural lands, eventually joining the Marys River near Brooklane Drive.

Oak Hill is a prominent hill, covered with white oak located behind the OSU horse barns on 53rd Street. It provides an important viewshed for Corvallis resident as well as visitors traveling on 53rd Street. Some development on private lands has already occurred to the north and on the southern slopes of the hill. More development can be anticipated unless some protection is provided.

Butterfly Meadow is in the Cardwell Hill area northwest of Corvallis. An open meadow on the south-facing hillside site, above 1,400 ft. elevation, the area contains an extraordinary collection of native plants and insects. Oregon State University and a private party own this land.

Conservation Objectives:

- Protect agricultural, educational, recreational and view qualities of these lands under OSU and private ownership
- Work with others to improve the Oak Creek drainage

Recommended Actions:

- Work with Oregon State University to determine how permanent open space protection can be provided for Oak Hill and agricultural lands
- Evaluate Oak Hill as a logical place for a trail leading from the OSU Horse Barns to McDonald Forest, with connections to Bald Hill and Fitton Green Natural Area

- Work with OSU and the private landowner to secure permanent habitat protection for Butterfly Meadow and its important plant and insect populations

4. Jackson and Frazier Watershed and North Corvallis

a. Jackson-Frazier Wetland

This is a unique area that lies east of Highway 99. The wetland is fed by Jackson and Frazier Creeks and is subject to flooding during the winter months. The State of Oregon recognizes the 147-acre Jackson-Frazier Wetland as an *outstanding* natural area that has been described as “one of the best of what is left”. This property was acquired by Benton County in 1992 and was zoned as open space with a wetland overlay. The wetland supports both rare and federally listed plant species and wildlife habitat. With volunteer help, Benton County Natural Area and Parks Department has built a boardwalk through the wetland to allow for year-round visitor use. The department has also completed a detailed plan for the wetland recommending specific protection in the watershed area.

The flow from these streams is critical for the continued health of the wetland and as habitat for wildlife in the region. In addition, stream corridors provide travel routes for wildlife and potentially for human access to this important habitat.



Owens Farm

Information from the City of Corvallis Natural Features inventory completed in 2006 includes a wetlands inventory for the Jackson/Frazier wetland complex. This inventory data along with the Benton County 2005 Jackson-Frazier Wetland Management Plan will guide our conservation efforts within the drainage basin.

Owens Farm - In 2002, the GLT purchased 95 acres of the Owens Farm property. This site contains wet prairie, wetlands, riparian, oak woodland and upland prairie habitats. The GLT is restoring all of these habitat types at the site. We are working in cooperation with the City of Corvallis to restore portions of the 133 acres purchased by the City adjacent to the GLT land. In addition wetlands, wet prairies, and riparian areas north of Owens Farm have been identified as potential additions to the Owens Farm complex to provide added protection for the wetlands.

Forested hillsides around Crescent Valley - Crescent Valley Ridge extends from Highland Drive, east of Chip Ross Park west to Dimple Hill in McDonald Forest. An extensive trail system already exists in the area, which includes Dan’s Trail from Chip Ross Park to Dimple Hill, serving as the beginning of a regional trail network. There may be some upland prairies in this area, but further analysis is required. Views

of this ridge could be further enhanced through the conservation of open space on the knolls north of Chip Ross Park and the meadows on the south slope. Also, there are important oak woodland resources in this area.

Conservation Objectives:

- In cooperation with landowners, local government and other non-profits, work to protect the entire watershed of Jackson-Frazier Wetlands
- Work with private and public landowners to conserve additional oak woodlands adjacent to Owens Farm
- Work with the other public and private entities to protect additional wetlands and upland prairie sites within the Jackson and Frazier watersheds

Recommended Actions:

- Continue work to conserve the Jackson and Frazier Creeks including the stream complex that feeds the tributary streams and wetland. The long-term goal is to permanently protect the riparian areas and flow of all of the streams feeding into the wetlands. This could be accomplished through development of an easement program with property owners
- Monitor Measure 37 claims on land north and east of Jackson Frazier Wetlands
- Establish a trail system that connects the Jackson-Frazier wetlands to Chip Ross Park and McDonald Forest. Recreational use must be compatible with the natural drainage and habitat and water quality requirements for the corridor
- Monitor development plans and conservation actions for the watershed area and comment to the city and county and appropriate agencies
- Work with Benton Soil and Water Conservation District, Benton County, landowners and residents to develop a watershed action plan for the basin

b. North Corvallis

North Corvallis extends north from Walnut Boulevard to Vineyard Mountain. The eastern boundary extends to the Owens Farm and Jackson Frazier Wetland properties. Walnut Boulevard, Dimple Hill, and McDonald Forest make up the western boundary.

North Corvallis has a rural heritage firmly linked to its natural setting. This natural setting contributes to the desirability of the area both for long time residents and newcomers to the community. A large portion of the area is within the City of Corvallis Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and some of the important open space areas are within this boundary and thus could be lost to development.

Over the past five years large parcel subdivisions (less than two acres) have predominated in this region. This pattern of development fragments the habitat for plant and animal species and can also create increases in sediment runoff. Development of North Corvallis

will have long-term impacts on the Jackson-Frazier creek watershed and the water quality of these two creeks.

North Corvallis includes the watersheds of Jackson, Frazier & Dixon Creeks. Residential and commercial development is concentrated in the Timberhill area transitioning to open fields and timbered hillsides further north. The Crescent Valley area retains a rural feel due to the presence of agricultural activities in the form of fruit trees, hayfields, stables, and small-scale livestock production. This area currently contains scattered residential development on 2-20 acre parcels and is not served by city sewer or water. When these services are extended, it is likely the area between Walnut Blvd. and Crescent Valley High School will be developed at more urban densities.



Jackson Creek

Jackson-Frazier Wetlands, Owens Farm, McDonald Forest, Chip Ross Park, Brandis Park, and the newly donated six acre Forest Dell park site just off Highland Drive comprise the existing park and open space resources in this region. It is a very popular area for mountain bikers, equestrians and hikers.

The goal of open space protection in North Corvallis is to conserve the most important natural areas and establish connectors between them. Since a large portion of this area is within the Corvallis Urban Growth Boundary some of the currently undeveloped sites will be utilized for housing and

other community needs. Some lands within the UGB have value as open space and trail connectors. The GLT needs to work with residents and the local governments to identify those sites within and adjacent to the UGB that have important natural area characteristics or provide connectors between existing and proposed open space lands.

Conservation Objectives:

- Integrate and connect natural areas and parks within the orderly development of North Corvallis and protect the Jackson and Frazier drainage areas and their associated riparian and wetland habitats

Recommended Actions:

- Review studies regarding potential upland prairie sites in North Corvallis area
- Conserve significant forested hillsides surrounding Crescent Valley
- Work with the Benton Soil & Water Conservation District to assist landowners in establishing plans for reducing sediment and chemical runoff into Jackson and Frazier Creeks
- Plan for and enhance connectors between natural areas including McDonald Forest
- Establish connectors between the Jackson-Frazier Wetlands, Owens Farm and Chip Ross Park

5. Marys River Watershed

a. **Marys River corridor from Wren to the confluence with the Willamette River**

The Marys River follows a meandering course over a wide area, approximately 310 square miles, southwest and west of Corvallis. Marys River Natural Area Park owned by the City of Corvallis is located south of the Marysville Golf Course and Avery Park. There may be some potential to connect Avery Park to Marys River Natural Area Park through establishment of a trail between these two sites. The Marys River and its associated floodplain provide a natural delineation between developed areas to the north and farmlands to the south.

The Marys River is an important river corridor for both Philomath and Corvallis. It provides a source of domestic water for the City of Philomath and its tributary, Rock Creek, in the Corvallis Watershed provides 30% of the water for Corvallis. The Marys also provides important habitat for a number of plant and animal species.

The GLT recognizes that the Marys River has a number of important habitat types along its reach from the coast range to its confluence with the Willamette River. The portion of the Marys River that flows through south Corvallis contains riparian, wetland and upland forest habitats worthy of protection.

Conservation Objectives:

- Collect data on the habitat classifications within the Marys River corridor to provide a better understanding of the existing riparian areas, wetlands, upland forests, and native prairies systems
- Protect the Marys River corridor through voluntary conservation easements and other mechanisms to ensure preservation of vegetation and wildlife

Recommended Actions:

- Work with the Marys River Watershed Council, landowners and local agencies to determine lands along the river corridor that should have priority for conservation
- Work with landowners who are willing to place all or part of their property under conservation easements to minimize encroachment from development and to protect natural plant communities, and agricultural and ecological values of their property
- Where appropriate acquire and hold properties to protect important habitat types

b. **Rock Creek and Its Tributaries (Marys River Watershed and Corvallis Forest)**

The bulk of the 10,000 acre Rock Creek Watershed lies in the Siuslaw National Forest administered by the US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. In 2005 the Forest Service completed a Supplement to the Marys River Watershed Preliminary Analysis. This report details the major resource programs and management direction for their

lands and includes analysis of the fish and wildlife as well as an analysis of the major Rock Creek tributaries on the Siuslaw National Forest. The Forest Service has designated more than 99% of its lands within the watershed as reserves to be managed for wildlife habitat for riparian and old growth related species. Approximately 30% of the water used by the City of Corvallis comes from this watershed.

The 2,352 acres of land owned by the City of Corvallis, is about 12 miles SW of Corvallis. There are several small private parcels adjacent to land owned by the City of Corvallis. Rock Creek is one of the sub-watersheds of Marys River Watershed, which is in turn one of the many large rural watersheds in the Willamette River Basin. The main stem of Rock Creek is a moderate gradient stream in the lower elevations with five principal tributaries including the North, Middle, and South Forks of Rock Creek, Griffith and Silsons Creeks. Rock Creek flows into Greasy Creek which then flows in to Marys River.

The last timber harvest on City-owned land occurred in 1986. In December 2006, the City Council adopted the “Corvallis Forest Stewardship Plan”. This plan states: “The City-owned portion of the Rock Creek Municipal Watershed is a professionally managed, healthy ecosystem with diverse forest and productive habitat for all species native to the watershed”. Stewardship policies in this plan cover these resources: wildlife habitat, forest health and structure, water quality, fish habitat and stream structure, public access and involvement, native vegetation and invasive species, and planning and monitoring. The plan also states: “Water quality for domestic use is the first priority for all management practices within the watershed on Forest Service property and the city land”.

Conservation Objectives:

- Maintain Rock Creek Watershed for the value of high quality water for the City of Corvallis and for habitat protection for fish and wildlife

Recommended Actions:

- Monitor implementation of Corvallis Forest Stewardship Plan
- Work with the City, Mary’s River Watershed Council and the Forest Service on appropriate conservation efforts
- Assist with public access and educational efforts on the watershed where appropriate

c. Woods Creek

Woods Creek originates in the Siuslaw National Forest on the NE side of Marys Peak west of Philomath. It follows along Woods Creek Road until it intersects with Highway 20 and then follows the Highway until it flows into the Marys River just west of Philomath. Management areas along Woods Creek consist of many small home sites, but the majority of the watershed acreage is owned by several large local timber companies. In the lower area about 2-3 miles from the intersection with Highway 20 there are 1-5 acre residential developments along the river and as you move away from

the river forested land. For the first two miles quite a few of the homes are right on the creek where they have intensive landscaping and there is a high level of invasive species such as English ivy and Japanese knotweed. More than two miles up from the Highway 20 intersection, the riparian areas are in good shape and the properties are 20-40 acres with some small timber holdings. From four miles up to the National Forest, the land is owned by one timber company and is in timber production. The north side of Woods Creek Road is dry with some scattered Oregon white oak while the south side of the creek is timbered with some large Western red cedar. The Woods Creek Watershed (9.9 square miles) is a high priority restoration area for the Marys Peak Watershed Council and is ranked by them as having some of the best habitat for cutthroat trout in the Marys River Watershed. They have worked with ODF&W and private landowners to replace culverts for fish passage and to help landowners remove invasive species. They have also carried out some fish counts and have found more fish in the tributaries of the creek than in Woods Creek itself. Woods Creek is classified as a potentially good habitat for rearing and migration for winter steelhead.

Conservation Objectives:

- Identify high priority areas for protection either along the creek or where there is habitat of concern

Recommended Actions:

- Work with Marys Peak Watershed Council on conservation and restoration efforts

6. Muddy Creek Corridor within Marys River Watershed

The Muddy Creek area lies west of Highway 99W near Alpine and Monroe. It flows north until the creek's confluence with the Marys River, southwest of Corvallis. The area includes William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge, and Beaver and Bull Run Creeks as well as some smaller creeks. The riparian zone of Muddy Creek and the lower reaches of the Marys River contain diverse native riparian plant communities. According to a 1996 report from the Nature Conservancy, the Muddy Creek area contains the best Oregon ash-Oregon oak forest remaining in the valley. There are also important wet prairies and wetlands bordering Muddy Creek.

Finley National Wildlife Refuge (5,235 acres) located near the southern end of the watershed, provides critical habitat for wintering Canada geese and thousands of migratory waterfowl, as well as Oregon chub, western pond turtles, and red-legged frogs. Extensive wetland restoration on the refuge has converted croplands into productive wetland habitat. A



Bradshaw's lomatium

high quality native prairie maintained by an active burning program supports Bradshaw's lomatium, Willamette daisy and Nelson's checkermallow (*Sidalcea nelsoniana*) The refuge also supports extensive oak habitats that provide good opportunities to demonstrate restoration and management options that can be used on other similar lands. The GLT has been working with landowners to secure conservation easements on the rare habitat types associated with Muddy Creek.

Conservation Objectives:

- Muddy Creek has been identified as a priority watershed for acquisition and restoration in a number of statewide conservation plans
- Habitat acquisition and restoration along Muddy Creek would create an important wildlife corridor from the Refuge's McFadden Marsh to the Marys River. The Creek has never been channelized and has a good oak and ash riparian forest as well as wet prairies. Over 1,000 acres of restoration on private land has already taken place in this area, much of it through the Wetlands Reserve Program and North American Wetlands Conservation Act
- The conservation investments already made in Muddy Creek's floodplain areas and the presence of significant oak and grassland habitats make this a good place to pursue broader landscape efforts that address these upland habitat types as well

Recommended Actions:

- In cooperation with landowners and state and federal conservation organizations, continue current work to secure easements for a habitat conservation corridor along Muddy Creek
- Protect and restore a continuous riparian corridor along Muddy Creek through conservation easements and acquisitions from willing landowners
- Work with willing sellers around Finley NWR to secure high priority additions to the refuge
- Work with Benton Soil and Water Conservation District, USFW Partners Program and Benton County Watershed Council to provide technical assistance to willing landowners to restore riparian and wetland habitats

7. Farmlands in NE Corvallis

Some of the best agricultural soils in Benton County are found along the Willamette River in Northeast Corvallis. These lands produce a variety of crops including vegetables, herbs, berries and rye grass. A number of U-Pick or roadside vegetable and fruit stands populate the area.

This area is outside of the Urban Growth Boundary for Corvallis and a majority of the land is classified as Exclusive Farm Use. Protection of lands in this area will be primarily through the use of conservation easements on working farmlands. These easements will

be acquired from willing landowners who wish to protect the long-term agricultural productivity of their lands.

Conservation Objectives:

- Protect high quality farmlands to provide a source of locally grown food for our communities

Recommended Actions:

- Work with farmers, landowners, the Ten Rivers Food Web, residents and the City of Corvallis to develop an open space/farmland protection strategy for the important agricultural areas of Northeast Corvallis and other areas with high quality soils.
- Monitor Measure 37 claims and any proposed development plans for this area

8. Willamette River Corridor

Beginning in the Calapooia Range of the Cascade Mountains, the Willamette River drains a basin lying between the Cascades and the Coast Range, approximately 180 miles long and 100 miles wide. During the period from 1850 to 1995, the total area of river channels and islands decreased from 41,000 acres to less than 23,000 acres and the total length of all channels decreased from 355 miles to 264 miles. Many of the islands and side channels were eliminated as the main channel of the river was improved for navigation. However, some sections of the river from Eugene to Albany are extensively braided and contain numerous side channels and islands. These side channels, alcoves and islands create diverse habitats with different depths, velocities and sediments and also serve as critical refuges during large winter flows.

By 1990 about 2 million people lived in the Willamette River Basin, representing 68% of the total population of Oregon. By 2050 an additional 1.7 million

people are expected to live in the Willamette River Basin. The key challenge will be to accommodate this increased population while sustaining or improving the conditions of the basin that provide a healthy living environment for both humans and wildlife.

Our conservation efforts will be focused on a portion of the basin lying between the City of Harrisburg near the Long Tom River and the Mission Bottom area downstream of



Willamette Bluffs property overlooking the Willamette River

Salem described as the upper and middle reaches of the Willamette River as well as on the tributaries of the Marys, Calapooia, Santiam and Luckiamute Rivers. Much of our work will focus at the confluence areas and within floodplains. The lower reach is focused around the Portland metro area and is within the service area of the Three Rivers Land Conservancy while the area south of the Long Tom River is a focus of the McKenzie Land Trust.

The work of the Greenbelt Land Trust along the Willamette River will focus on the conservation of high priority habitat areas, reconnection of alcoves and back channel areas to the main river, and restoration and enhancement of riparian areas, wetlands and uplands.

a. Upper Reach—Harrisburg to Albany

The upper reach of the Willamette River is an excellent example of how human activities have simplified a once diverse river system, changing it from a complex river system in 1850 to a rather simple straightened channel today. Mapping by surveyors in the 1850's showed a network of braided channels and meanders within this stretch of the river. However, by 1895 one third of these channels and associated islands had disappeared. By 1932 the mainstem of the Willamette River had been straightened, losing sinuosity and the habitat diversity associated with variation in river velocities. The total area of channels and islands is less than one fifth the comparable areas in 1850. Loss of channels and islands has greatly reduced the potential productivity of the river and the diversity of habitats that originally characterized this section of the river. Today, the Willamette River between Harrisburg and Corvallis is largely a single channel with a few remnants of the previously braided network. The riparian areas no longer offer the diverse array of depths and velocities that previously characterized this stretch of the river that supported aquatic organisms and other wildlife. Restoration will need to focus on re-establishing this broad floodplain with interconnected channels and alcoves. Conservation efforts in this area will focus on oxbow cutoffs in Benton and Linn Counties, flood plains and wetlands between Harrisburg and Albany and Owl Creek just east of Corvallis as well as Dry Creek and the Booneville Channel.

b. Middle Reach—Albany to Mission Bottoms

This stretch of the river contains a series of confined side channels within a context of a broad floodplain. Within this reach the major reason for loss of habitat is due to the conversion of bottomland forests to agriculture. Historically, forests occupied 40-80% of the floodplain area in this reach. Therefore this section of the river has the greatest potential for restoration of these bottomland forests and channel complexity.

This area just north of Albany is centered on the confluence of the Luckiamute, Santiam and Willamette Rivers. Areas along the Willamette River include Buena Vista, American Bottoms and Black Dog Slough, and to the east, Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge. The target area also extends west to Airlie and Maple Grove to include the lower portions of

the Luckiamute and Little Luckiamute drainages, and on the south, Soap Creek and the State's E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area. This diverse area encompasses a variety of important valley habitats, including wetlands, floodplain forests, and oak savanna and woodlands.

Upper portions of the Luckiamute and Soap Creek watershed include extensive oak woodland and savanna habitats. This is a good area to target these habitats because of the potential for linkages with other sites in the emerging network of conservation lands.

The confluence of the Santiam and Luckiamute Rivers represents an important habitat type of the Willamette River. Tributary junctions are dynamic areas in a river network. The combined energy of the flows of the tributaries and the mainstem create an abrupt increase in the power of the river. The variety of channel types and sizes also creates diverse habitats for aquatic organisms and riparian wildlife. The confluence of these rivers represents an exciting opportunity for restoring floodplain forests and maintaining floodplain function.

This confluence area has high waterfowl and tundra swan use. It also provides habitat for western pond turtles, heron colonies, fish, and numerous land birds. Historically the area was a series of sloughs, wet prairie, seasonal wetlands and riparian forest. Now, the lowlands are drained and farmed for corn and grass, with eroding banks along the river and creeks. This area has been identified as a high priority site for further conservation actions in a number of state plans including the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), OSP and the Oregon Habitat Joint Venture.

Throughout this area there is potential for protecting and restoring wetlands and riparian habitat. The seasonally flooded lowlands provide winter habitat for Canada geese, swans and shorebirds. Hundreds of tundra swans and a small group of trumpeter swans regularly feed in this area. Preserving and restoring a mosaic of wet prairie, seasonal wetlands, riparian and forest habitats would greatly increase the habitat along this important section of the flyway, and provide valuable habitat for shorebirds, land birds, amphibians, and turtles. A number of conservation partners have been actively pursuing projects in this area for almost a decade and some key pieces of the conservation strategy are in place. One such property is Luckiamute Landing State Park at the confluence of the Santiam, Luckiamute and Willamette Rivers which offers excellent potential for reconnection of side channels and restoration of bottomland forests. Oregon State Parks (OSP) is managing and restoring this property in cooperation with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). This 900 acre property can serve as an anchor for future acquisition and restoration efforts along this reach of the Willamette.

Conservation Objectives:

- Conserve and enhance existing natural corridors and create new corridors that accommodate wildlife movements. Focus efforts on acquisition and restoration projects that will complement existing conservation efforts along the mainstem of the Willamette River
- Maintain or restore riparian habitat and ecological function; ensure sufficient habitat

complexity for wildlife

- Restore or maintain oak and prairie habitats and forested wetlands along rivers coming into the Willamette

Recommended Actions:

- Identify landowners who are interested in pursuing conservation easements or full fee acquisition along the mainstem of the Willamette
- Work with landowners to find funding for restoration of bottomland forests, wetlands and floodplain areas along the mainstem
- Work to develop partnerships with landowners, government agencies, and other not for profits to conserve and restore lands along the mainstem
- Continue to seek land conservation and restoration opportunities near the confluence of the Willamette River, Santiam River and Luckiamute River
- Protect and restore habitats in the floodplain of the Luckiamute River below the confluence of the Little Luckiamute around Mitchell and at the confluence of the Santiam River and Black Dog Slough
- Work with public and private landowners to protect and restore oak and prairie habitats and forested wetlands in upper portions of the Luckiamute and Soap Creek watersheds

9. Calapooia River Corridor

The headwaters of the Calapooia River are in Tidbits Mountain at over 5,000 feet in elevation. The Calapooia River and its tributaries (including Spoon Creek, Sodom Ditch, and Lake Creek, (which flows into the Calapooia just west of Tangent) comprise 231,800 acres in area and include 72 miles of river. It flows into the Willamette River northwest of Albany after it crosses Highway 34. The flow range of the river varies widely, ranging from below 50 cubic feet per second (cfs) during the summer months to more than 2,000 cfs during high flood events in the winter.

Besides the Santiam River, the Calapooia is the largest stream in Linn County flowing into the Willamette. Most of the land in the area of the river is privately held and is farmed. Challenges to the Calapooia watershed include water quality, high summer water temperatures, and fish passage. The watershed is home to two federally listed fish species—Winter Steelhead and Spring Chinook.

While there has been significant loss of habitat within the Calapooia watershed, many natural features that historically promoted high fish and wildlife productivity are still intact. In addition to timber harvesting in the upper watershed, the watershed has been drained and used extensively for grass seed farming.

According to the *Pacific Coast Joint Venture Implementation Plan* for the Willamette

Valley, “the Calapooia River corridor still contains some of the best riparian forests remaining in the valley. The best riparian zones are found just east of Interstate 5, near Tangent. Backwater sloughs and native stands of Sitka and Pacific willow are also found throughout the basin. Courtney Creek contains mudflats that are the largest vernal pool communities remaining in the Valley. Many shorebirds also use the saturated soils, ponds, and low vegetation cover for winter habitat.”

Overall, the Calapooia River watershed is in good shape. Many natural features that historically promoted high fish and wildlife productivity are still intact. Many of the processes that have been altered by humans over the years are reversible. Its current environmental health can be best described as a string of pearls (high quality habitat) with a few of the links between adjacent pearls missing.

Efforts to control stream flow and fish habitat will have several positive, measurable results. Improvements to the movement and passage of fish in streams and over dams, as well as deepening holding ponds to maintain temperatures, will increase salmonid productivity and access to spawning habitat in all upstream tributaries and the main channel. Replacement of multiple culverts to increase capacity have attributed to less flooding on landowners’ property and private roads. These, in turn, encourage a high level of public participation and support.

Conservation Objectives:

- Work with the Calapooia Watershed Council in their efforts to improve conditions for fish and wildlife, increase native vegetation and reduce proliferation of weeds along the Calapooia River
- Work the Calapooia Watershed Council and landowners to identify existing and potential pond turtle habitat and other fish and wildlife for protection and restoration

Recommended Actions:

- Secure conservation easements on ecologically important properties
- Provide consultation to landowners in achieving their water quality and habitat improvement goals

10. Adair and Soap Creek, EE Wilson Wildlife Refuge

Some of the properties that have conservation potential in this area include the following:

- a. Oak woodlands on the hillside on the west side of highway 99W between Tampico Road and Coffin Butte Road.
- b. Oak Woodlands on the ridge west of highway 99W (Coffin Butte) north of the landfill. The east end of the ridge is owned by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and they may purchase additional lands in this area.
- c. Soap Creek from 99W to its confluence with the Luckiamute River just north of the

Benton/Polk County Line. The stream appears to have some cover, cool water and contains Cutthroat Trout and Steelhead. It also serves as a corridor for wildlife from the Willamette River to the McDonald/Dunn Forest area.

- d. Upper portions of the Luckiamute and Soap Creek watershed include extensive oak woodland and savanna habitats.
- e. Some areas in Southern Polk County west of Highway 99W border stretches of the Luckiamute River. These areas contain are ash and oak woodland.
- f. Winter Waterfowl Lake near Sarah Helmich State Park. This rainy season lake hosts swans, geese and several species of ducks.

Conservation Objectives:

- Protect habitats of concern: oak woodlands, oak savanna, fish and wildlife habitat, upland prairie, and wetlands

Recommended Actions:

- Study area and develop detailed conservation plan, but be prepared to respond to inquiries from landowner or partner agencies for conservation opportunities on areas with specific habitat types
- Contact the landowners and conduct a site visit on lands of interested owners to discuss conservation options

11. Luckiamute Watershed

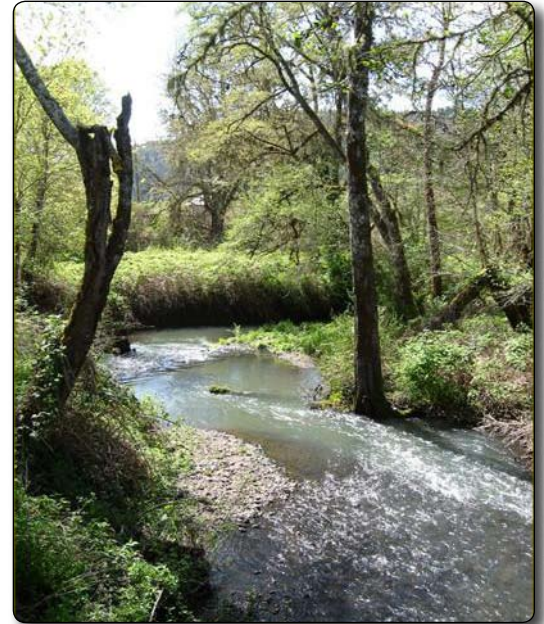
The Luckiamute watershed encompasses a 201,738 acre area in Polk and Benton counties. It is bounded on the west by the ridge tops of the Coast Range and by the Willamette River on the west. The Pacific Northwest Ecosystem Research Consortium (PNERC) pre-settlement vegetation layer indicated that prior to the 1850's a coniferous forests dominated the western, higher elevations of the watershed. Upland and wetland shrubby areas covered much of the eastern, low areas of the watershed. Much of the remaining areas were dominated by herbaceous plant communities, wet prairies and natural grasslands. Mixed and deciduous forests covered a smaller area (7%) of the watershed. Current coniferous forests cover approximately the same extent of the watershed as was historically present. The largest change in land cover has been in the shrub cover classes such as shrubby wetlands, riparian areas and field-forest transition zones. Most of the native grasslands have been replaced by cropped fields and pastures.

In addition to changes in the composition and distribution of plant communities in the watershed, the quality and quantity of water available in streams for use by fish and wildlife has been dramatically altered. These changes in water quality are especially critical in the Luckiamute and its tributaries due to the presence here of a number of important fish species.

Most of the land (85-90%) in the watershed is privately owned and thus conservation efforts must focus on cooperative projects with willing landowners. Along with the

mainstem of the Luckiamute River there are a number of important tributaries such as Soap Creek, Maxfield Creek and Price Creek included in our conservation efforts.

These conservation efforts will focus on protecting, enhancing and restoring native plant communities and riparian corridors throughout the watershed. Conservation and restoration of these areas will improve water quality, protect native species and enhance and restore rare habitats and plant and wildlife populations. Priority habitats include upland prairie, oak savannahs, oak woodlands, riparian areas, grasslands, and wetlands and wet prairies. Species of concern include acorn woodpecker, Western gray squirrel, Kincaid's lupine, Fender's blue butterfly, Western bluebird, Western meadowlark, horned lark, and vesper sparrow. We will also conserve lands adjacent to the Luckiamute River and its tributaries to benefit native fish species including spring Chinook salmon, winter steelhead trout, cutthroat trout, Oregon chubb and Pacific lamprey.



*Price Creek, tributary of
Luckiamute River*

Some of the conserved lands in the Luckiamute watershed in Benton County may also play an important role in protecting habitats and species identified in the Benton County Prairie Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The GLT is working with landowners near Kings Valley who have some of the habitats and species identified in the HCP. We will work with these landowners, local ecologists and Benton County to develop conservation projects that best meet the needs of the landowners and identified species.

Additional work is being done by the GLT and local ecologists to identify the location of important habitats and species within the Luckiamute watershed. This information will be used to guide our future conservation priorities. At the present time we are focusing our conservation projects in the Kings Valley region and have recently completed a 145 acre conservation easement at the confluence of the Luckiamute River and Price Creek.

Conservation Objectives:

- Continue to focus on conservation projects along the mainstem of the Luckiamute River and its tributaries
- Conserve native habitats and species within the Luckiamute watershed

Recommended Actions:

- Conserve and enhance native habitats and species in cooperation with public agencies and private landowners

- Cooperate with other not for profits, public agencies, and private landowners to develop more detailed information on occurrence of native habitats and species
- Work in cooperation with Benton County on preparation and implementation of the Prairie Species Habitat Conservation Plan to include identified properties in the watershed

12. Additions to Other Conserved Areas

a. Highlands and Wetlands near Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge

Baskett Slough is about two miles north of Rickreall off of Highway 22. The 2,492 acre refuge was created to provide vital wintering habitat for dusky Canada geese. The refuge's farmed fields, rolling oak-covered hills, grass fields and shallow wetlands are home to many wildlife species, including bald eagles, 30 species of mammals, eight species of amphibians, and ten species of reptiles. The largest remaining population of Fender's blue butterfly is found on this refuge.

b. William L. Finley Wildlife Refuge

This refuge is located ten miles south of Corvallis off of 99W. It was created to provide vital wintering habitat for dusky Canada geese that winter almost exclusively in the Willamette Valley. Fields of wildlife food crops are interspersed with Oregon white oak savannah, meandering creeks with bottomland Oregon ash forest, old growth big-leaf maple, and native prairie. Endangered and threatened species such as peregrine falcons, bald eagles, Oregon chub, and Bradshaw's desert parsley are found on the refuge.

Also the Fiechter House is part of the refuge. It was completed in 1857 and is thought to be the oldest house in Benton County.

c. Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge

Ankeny Refuge is 12 miles south of Salem off Interstate 5 on Ankeny Hill Road. It was created to provide vital wintering habitat for Dusky Canada geese who nest on Alaska's Copper River Delta and winter almost exclusively in the Willamette Valley. It contains about 2,800 acres of flat to gently rolling land near the confluence of the Willamette and Santiam rivers south of Salem and contains extensive shallow-water seasonal wetlands. The refuge's fertile farmed fields, hedgerows, forests, and wetlands provide a variety of critical wildlife habitats. Restoration on the E.E. Wilson Wildlife area and Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge have recreated some important habitats, and projects on private lands have established the foundation for a network of conservation lands in the Luckiamute drainage. Recent acquisitions by the Western Rivers Conservancy and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department have expanded the large block of protected floodplain habitats around Luckiamute Landing, and the parks department is working to

restore and enhance riparian forests on its properties. Acquisition of 1,400 acres adjacent to Ankeny Refuge would provide additional wintering habitat for wintering dusky and other subspecies of Canada geese and many other species. Just east of the refuge, a private landowner began work in 2003 to restore a large block of oak savanna and woodland and riparian habitats.

Conservation Objectives:

- Seek opportunities to conserve important habitats near the refuges.

Recommended Actions:

- Work with private landowners, state and USFW and other federal agencies to identify and protect areas of significance around the wildlife refuges
- Work with federal and state agencies on restoration projects as appropriate.
- Continue efforts to establish a conservation corridor from Finley Refuge to the Willamette River
- Work with state and federal agencies and private landowners on any planned expansion of these areas.

13. North Albany Area

The North Albany area is located in Benton County and is generally bounded by the Willamette River to the north, east and south and by Scenic Drive to the west. The area includes the incorporated portion of the City of Albany commonly referred to as North Albany. The area within the City limits is a patchwork of low-density residential development. The adjacent areas in the county are typical of random rural residential construction.

The lands adjacent to the Willamette River and which encompass approximately one-half of the total North Albany land area are located in the 100-year floodplain. The City of Albany has a relatively current local wetlands and riparian corridor inventory. The City's natural vegetation and wildlife habitat inventory is, however, over 35 years old. This inventory is part of the City's Comprehensive Plan; however, the Comprehensive Plan does not include many provisions for the protection of these areas. Over this 35-year time frame land divisions and residential development have continually encroached into these areas. While portions of these areas may still provide links to wetland and riparian corridors and into wooded areas in the county, all are generally partially developed and consist of small lots or parcels.

Conservation Objectives:

- Preservation and restoration of the Upland Prairie in the Springhill area of Benton County, including the contiguous significant vegetation and wildlife habitat that has been identified along the northeast City limits line. These are lands adjacent and transitional to the riparian corridors and flood plain along the Willamette River

Recommended Actions:

- Work with willing property owners in the Springhill area and the northeast corner of the City to provide long-term protection and restoration of the significant vegetation and habitat areas located there
- Monitor and identify lands for potential acquisition prior to any proposed expansion of the City's Urban Growth Boundary
- Monitor Measure 37 claims in this area

14. Salem Hills/Oak Woodland and Savanna

The Salem Hills, while not a formal geographical designation, lay about 5-10 miles south and west of Salem on both east and west sides of the Willamette River and Interstate 5. This area includes several patches of Oregon white oak woodland and savanna located on both private and public lands. The Eola Hills located 5-10 miles northwest of Salem, north of Highway 22 and west of Highway 99W, may also be considered part of the Salem Hills. The Eola Hills comprise mixed Oregon white oak, Douglas-fir, upland woodlands and forest.

The Salem Hills have been identified as a conservation priority or opportunity in several planning documents. The Oregon Biodiversity Project (1998) identified the area around the confluence of the Santiam, Luckiamute and Willamette rivers as an opportunity area for the conservation of bottomland hardwood forest. In 2004, The Nature Conservancy designated the Salem Hills, Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge and Eola Hills as priority conservation areas based on the vulnerability and conservation value of the habitat-associated species. Then in 2006 the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife identified the Salem Hills-Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge as an opportunity area in the Oregon Conservation Strategy due to the presence of oak savanna and oak woodlands, which the Department considers "key habitats." Also, the Pacific Northwest Ecosystem Research Consortium marked prairie and oak savanna sites south of Salem on both sides of the Willamette River as potential habitat management opportunities. The attention that has been paid to the Salem Hills in these conservation plans indicates an opportunity to protect habitats that are well recognized for their vulnerability and ecological importance.

The close proximity of the Salem Hills to Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge and the Eola Hills to Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge provides opportunities to partner with private and public land managers. The close proximity of the Salem Hills near the growing city of Salem underscores the need to protect the habitats from the increasing pressures of population growth, residential development and land use change. These hills are also gaining importance as vineyard land for the fast growing Oregon wine industry.

Conservation Objectives:

- Conservation of bottomland hardwood forest, oak savanna and oak woodlands and other critical habitats

Recommended Actions:

- Work with landowners, agencies, other land trusts, and watershed councils on the protection of habitats such as oak woodlands and savannas through conservation easements and acquisitions from willing landowners
- Work with Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Watershed Councils to provide technical assistance to willing landowners to restore oak woodland and savanna habitat in the area

IV. Trails

A good deal of the 1998 Open Space Strategy addressed acquisition of easements and property for trail connections, as well as planning and development of trails in conjunction with local governments. A large percentage of this work has been accomplished and other groups including Corvallis to the Sea Trail advocates, the cities of Corvallis and Philomath and Benton County are continuing to work on those projects that have not yet been accomplished. Based on feedback from the April 2006 workshop, input from the Board of Directors along with the fact that other entities have a primary focus on trail location and construction, the Greenbelt’s trail program will shift slightly. The focus of the GLT’s trail program will be to work on development of public access and trails on property owned by the GLT. In addition, the GLT will continue to work with other entities on specific projects through identifying routes, acquiring easements, and participating in trail construction and repair for a network of trails that connect parks, open spaces and natural areas in the mid-Willamette Valley. This network will enhance the public’s connection with nature, thereby increasing support for the Greenbelt’s overall mission. Participating and leading trail building and maintenance projects provides an excellent opportunity for the GLT to actively interact with and engage its members as well as providing opportunities for community outreach and publicity.



Trail workday at Fitton Green Natural Area

A. Potential Projects

- 1. Properties Owned by the Greenbelt** The GLT owns two properties—(Owens Farm and Lupine Meadow)—that with careful planning could support public access. Because GLT has already completed a management plan for Owens Farm, trail planning and construction will begin first on this property. For Lupine Meadows, public access and the possibility of including a connector trail across the property will be thoroughly analyzed during management planning scheduled for 2008 before a determination can be made that a trail would be appropriate at this location.

2. Trail Connectors There are several opportunities for trail connectors and corridors between existing and proposed natural areas. The GLT will work with other groups to pursue these opportunities. The exact alignment of the trail routes and timing of the completion will be dependent upon securing of trail easements from willing landowners and volunteer efforts necessary to construct trails.

Marys River/Bald Hill Connector. The fields between the Marys River and Philomath can serve as an open space buffer and also provide an important link in a regional trail connecting the Marys River to West Corvallis and North Philomath. These lands are generally level, interspersed with stands of oak and seasonal streams. A trail might be best suited along the natural drainage ways and stands of remaining oak forest. The specific path, however, has not been determined. The GLT will work with landowners, area residents, and local agencies to determine the best method for conserving the open space quality of these lands and also location of a possible trail route.

Newton Creek Trail connectors within the Newton Creek drainage would link Fitton Green Natural Area and Bald Hill Natural Area to the Newton Creek wetlands area in north Philomath. This trail might cross Lupine Meadow. Maintaining the water quality of the creek is essential to the health of these wetlands. Habitat conservation and possible recreational and educational values associated with Newton Creek and the adjacent wetlands will be considered in the plan. The City of Philomath Comprehensive Plan indicates a desire to establish paths along the creek.

Bald Hil to Fitton Green. This much needed connector would likely extend from the Mulkey Creek trail already developed as part of the Bald Hill Natural Area trail system westerly to the Benton County's Fitton Green Natural Area. This connection would complete an east-west trail system that begins at OSU and ends in Wren.

Bald Hill to Dimple Hill connector passes through agricultural fields northeast of Bald Hill, crosses Oak Creek and then private lands to reach OSU land holdings. It then climbs Oak Hill behind the OSU horse barns. From Oak Hill, it extends north, to the west of the Skyline West development, and then climbs through McDonald Forest to Dimple Hill

Owens Farm/Jackson-Frazier Creek Watershed to Chip Ross Park includes Jackson and Frazier Creeks that begin in McDonald Forest and flow toward wetlands in the valley. The area includes tributary streams, riparian zones and stream buffer areas. The buffer



*Trail workday at
Fitton Green Natural Area*

areas help to improve water quality by catching sediments and toxic runoff before they reach the creeks. These creek corridors would connect Owens Farm/Jackson-Frazier Wetland to Chip Ross Park and McDonald Forest. A connection from Owens Farm to Good Samaritan Hospital would also be included in this connector.

The East Ridge connector rises gradually from the Jackson-Frazier Wetland and rises toward the west past Good Samaritan Hospital. It follows Crescent Valley Ridge to Chip Ross Park along Lester Avenue. This connector will provide a route for a trail, plus access to the ridge as a major natural feature. At present, it would traverse land that is lightly developed.

Martin Luther King Jr. Park to MacDonald Forest (Oak Creek entrance) this connector trail would link the trails at MLK Park to the trailhead at Oak Creek. It would traverse mostly OSU property. This connector would decrease demand on heavily used Oak Creek parking facilities and eliminate the need for north Corvallis residents to drive several miles to a trailhead that is actually quite close.

Community Park Site The City of Corvallis Parks Plan calls for establishment of a community park site (10-20 acres in size) in the vicinity of Crescent Valley in North Corvallis. The GLT will work with the City of Corvallis in reviewing possible options for location of this park and also determining how this park may provide a portion of the trail linkage between Jackson Frazier wetlands and Chip Ross Park.

The Corvallis to the Sea Trail This trail has been a recurring effort since the 1970's with a least four different core groups promoting and supporting the trail concept. The concept is a trail system with an origin point in the Corvallis area and an end point on the central Oregon Coast. The current effort includes portions of the Old Peak Road, which connect Highway 34 near Philomath to Woods Creek Road. The Forest Service and the City of Corvallis both support the current route.

Fort Hoskins to Valsetz There is also some interest in a trail connector from Fort Hoskins to Valsetz along an old trail and an abandoned railroad. However, there is no group actively working on this project.

Recommended Actions:

- Design and construct trails on GLT-owned lands where appropriate
- Assist in the establishment of a critical trail connection priorities list for the city/county trail system
- Work with landowners and other groups and agencies on obtaining trail easements in priority connection areas
- Assist with the construction and maintenance of trails on publicly-owned lands
- Participate in planning for the route of the Corvallis to the Sea Trail

V. Next Steps

The next steps in our planning process will be:

- A. Obtain and/or develop a detailed Geographic Information System (GIS) database for the mid-Willamette Valley region with the following layers:
 1. The sites currently under GLT conservation, public land and land conserved by others
 2. Identify conservation priority areas and habitats in the mid-Willamette Valley identified in this plan, along with data from the Nature Conservancy Puget Trough Ecoregional Plan, Oregon Habitat Joint Venture Willamette Valley Plan, 2006 Comprehensive State Wildlife Conservation Strategy and the Oregon Greatest Wetlands map.
 3. The sites in the region with Measure 37 claims approved or pending.
 4. Zoning and general land use plan designations for all conservation priority areas.
- B. Prioritize those lands most at risk and those that meet the GLT acquisitions criteria in Section III of this plan.
- C. Establish and maintain a database, including maps, of land protection opportunities and requests from landowners for easements, purchase and/or stewardship assistance.
- D. Seek funding for conservation efforts on priority lands identified.
- E. Based on the recommendations in this report, our land conservation priorities will be broken down into categories for immediate action (1-2 years), short term (1-3) years, and long term (1-5 years).

The timing of these actions will depend upon the willingness of landowners to sell their lands or grant easements. It will also depend upon our ability to obtain adequate funding to carry out our land conservation and stewardship priorities.

In order to accomplish our mission we will need to work cooperatively with landowners, citizens, local, state and federal agencies, and elected officials. Establishing and nurturing these partnerships is critical to the success of our conservation efforts.

Over time this document will need to be amended to reflect new priorities for conservation in our communities. We welcome comments, suggestions and proposals for new additions to our conservation initiatives. Anyone who would like to submit suggestions for revisions or additions should contact the Greenbelt office to discuss their proposal, either by telephone at 541-752-9609, or website, www.greenbeltlandtrust.org. We will analyze the request using our adopted criteria and present the information to our Lands Committee and Board of Directors for consideration.

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

Willamette Valley Conservation Trends & Issues

Currently there are a number of critical issues and opportunities regarding conservation in the Willamette Valley. Issues identified by the Institute for Natural Resources at Oregon State University include habitats, aquatic life, state land use laws, agriculture, floodplain restoration and invasive species. Also, a few conservation plans provide insight into future conservation trends in the Valley. In addition, ballot initiatives, legislation and new ideas such as an ecosystem marketplace can change conservation practices of the future.

Habitats

Conservation of habitats is crucial when it comes to preserving the Willamette Valley ecosystem. Even though development has nearly destroyed some habitat types, remnants of all types remain with many areas providing good opportunities for restoration. The following list briefly details habitat conservation priorities within the Willamette Valley.

- **Upland Forests** – mature, old-growth forests are needed to provide moisture for plants, animals and people, hold soils in place on slopes, shelter understory vegetation, and shade streams. Most forest habitats at high elevations – in the Cascade’s foothills – are managed by Federal agencies. Low elevation forests, in need of conservation attention, are often privately owned with common land uses including industrial, residential, commercial, and agriculture.
- **Upland Prairies** – this habitat is home to many threatened plant species as well as unique native animals. With extensive development for farming, grazing, commercial activities and residential land, remaining remnant habitats are a conservation priority.
- **Wetland Prairies** – an important grassland habitat, nearly 99 percent are gone or overgrown with invasive species.
- **Oak Woodlands & Savannas** – found on hillsides along the Willamette River and its tributaries, this habitat has mostly disappeared, but remaining areas are an important home for over 200 bird species.
- **Riparian Habitats** – conservation efforts for these diverse riparian, floodplain, gallery and bottomland forests can protect contiguous habitats. The Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation is working on acquiring additional floodplain lands
- **Wetlands** – important for natural flood control and the most productive and species-rich habitats in the state, wetlands also provide habitat for migrating birds and threatened species. As wetlands in the Willamette Valley are converted into other land uses, conservation efforts for wetlands are becoming increasingly important.

Aquatic Life

Aquatic life is an indicator of watershed health, and can benefit from conservation efforts in the following ways:

- Maintaining aquatic habitat characteristics such as stream levels, temperature, bed composition, and cover will help preserve the many organisms that rely on water.
- Thirty one native fish species contribute to biodiversity of the aquatic ecosystem inhabit waters of the Valley.
- Hundreds of invertebrates rely on aquatic habitats in the valley and are key indicators of stream conditions.

- Conservation efforts can protect aquatic habitats from the impacts of urbanism, forestry, agriculture, and other activities that contribute to stream degradation.

Invasive Species

Invasive species are one of the biggest threats to biodiversity. Conservation efforts to combat invasive species are especially important when it comes to habitats. Plants, animals and other organisms displace native species and deteriorate habitats, sometimes pushing native species towards extinction. Invasive species mapping projects used for monitoring throughout the Willamette Valley are increasingly important to conservation efforts. Organizations on a local level, such as local Watershed Councils, can be very effective in preventing the introduction or spread of invasive species and working for eradication. Public education is important to help residents learn to identify invasive species and the value of using native species on their land.

Agriculture

Sustainable agricultural practices will be a future demand by conservationists, and many farmers in the Willamette Valley recognize the need to change. Incentives for farmers to convert low productivity farmland to habitat include conservation easements, restoration grants and transfers of development rights. Following are some other changing agricultural practices to be explored:

- reducing pesticide application
- riparian buffers
- composting
- winter cover crops
- crop rotation
- implementing sustainable control methods for pests
- the local food movement

Oregon Land Use Laws

State land use laws aim to protect valuable farmland and forest lands while also considering the needs of urban citizens, but Oregon's current planning program does not always successfully protect natural resources from poor planning, in particular scenic areas and wildlife habitats. Documents, such as zoning and land development codes, controlling land use in the Willamette Valley are an area for attention by conservationists. Promoting legislation and providing platforms for landowners and other stakeholders to discuss issues will be important in shaping land use laws to become conducive to conservation.

Water & Floodplains

Water in the Willamette Valley is needed for a wide variety of uses, including support of fish and wildlife habitat and recreation. While surface water is abundant in the Willamette Basin, natural stream flows are falling and demands for water are rising. Stream flows important for protecting wildlife habitats can be maintained with voluntary transfers of water rights from out-of-stream uses such as irrigation to in-stream uses.

Floodplain ecosystems within the Willamette Valley are some of the most productive and diverse. The following strategies can be used to maintain their health and can be integrated into floodplain restoration projects:

- protect natural river processes such as the movement of silt and gravel
- manage releases of reservoir waters to emulate natural seasonal flows
- concentrate on areas to restore along the Willamette that are not invested in changed land uses, have high potential for important habitat recovery and support of residents
- minimize or eliminate future development on floodplains
- decrease water consumption

Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODF&W) Conservation Strategy

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy to address the state's conservation needs that provides guidance for managing and sustaining fish, wildlife, and their habitats. This is the first overall plan that doesn't concentrate on a specific species, habitat or natural resource. The strategy synthesizes the best available data and knowledge into a vision for long-term conservation. It is intended to be used as a guide by landowners, land managers, agencies and organizations to provide non-regulatory, statewide strategies for species and habitat conservation.

The strategy touches on a few issues and areas that should be watched in the future. Following are goals the strategy plan believes will make up the future of conservation in the state and actions that should be further explored:

- Land use changes need to be managed to conserve important farmlands, forests, recreation areas and habitats. To conserve these, use voluntary tools such as conservation easements, create a system for monitoring land use changes and become involved in local planning.
- The introduction of new invasive species and the spread of current ones must be managed by increasing public awareness, creating early detection and response strategies and systems for monitoring species.
- Restore natural processes within habitats, such as flood and fire cycles.
- Provide areas for the natural movement of animals by reducing habitat barriers and conserving connective habitats.
- Conserve water quality and quantity to support wildlife habitats and human community needs. Keys here are to restore wetland areas and monitor watershed conditions.
- Address institutional barriers to voluntary conservation by landowners.

The strategy also recommends some actions for improving current incentive programs. These include:

- align programs with regional and statewide conservation goals
- increase the number of habitats focused on
- provide monitoring of program outcomes
- work on coordination between agencies and stakeholders
- develop funding sources
- increase landowner involvement in the entire process and provide more technical support

Additionally, landowner assistance programs, including watershed councils, land trusts and soil and water conservation districts, have been successful in conservation and this success should be built upon in the future.

Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Willamette Subbasin Plan

This organization's subbasin plans are amendments to the fish and wildlife program developed for the Columbia River Basin. Separate plans for tributary watersheds identify priority restoration and protection strategies for fish, wildlife and habitat. The plans are intended to guide implementation of the fish and wildlife program and decisions on which proposed projects will receive funding, largely from the Bonneville Power Administration. The subbasin plans ensure that the Council undertakes actions required by laws governing natural resource management, including the Northwest Power Act, the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act.

The Willamette Subbasin Plan concludes that there is a need for more habitat and ecological complexity, with existing public lands forming a conservation anchor. The past trend for conservation efforts has been a focus on upland forests, but the plan calls for future conservation focuses to include lowlands. The plan identifies several conservation themes necessary for benefiting the sub basin in the next 10 to 15 years. These themes include:

- managing major dams, which would not only benefit fish populations, but all river wildlife
- creating methods for landowners to participate in conservation programs
- restoring lowland riparian areas
- focusing on valley and hillside habitats that are essential to unique wildlife species
- focusing on low-cost, high-return areas of the floodplain, or those with the best potential for recovery and the support of local residents
- supporting conservation needs on a local level

Specific strategies outlined by the plan when it comes to restoration of habitats include connecting favorable habitats and the removal and control of the most harmful invasive species. In order for future conservation efforts to be effective, institutional issues that have potential for changing in the next 10 to 15 years include:

- coordination among all who are working in land management in the subbasin
- promoting communication between all stakeholders
- improving and expanding voluntary incentive programs
- increasing capacity of local organizations such as watershed councils to market and implement incentive programs
- support for on-the-ground restoration
- creating a common vision
- incorporating true economic costs of activities that affect the environment

Ecosystem Marketplaces

An ecosystem marketplace can be used as a tool to protect, restore and maintain habitats as well as other things of ecological value. It is a market-based system, including trading and mitigation programs, that provide financial rewards to promote beneficial ecosystem practices and is a future trend to be explored for conservation. An ecosystem marketplace can help the conservation and restoration of habitat in the following ways:

- increase investment options by exploring sources that do not currently contribute funds to conservation activities

- allow industrial sites in the Willamette Valley to be developed on appropriate land, away from wetlands and other habitat areas
- provide additional income for rural landowners

Elements of a successful ecosystem marketplace include: a wide range of ecological benefits being addressed, a concentration on high priority lands, user-friendly tools and ease of use for public and private landowners, established rules, low administrative costs and adaptive management. Some potential players and roles in an ecosystem marketplace in Willamette Valley include:

- non-profit organizations acting as a broker purchasing and selling ecological services, offering technical assistance to landowners and monitoring project effectiveness
- an ecosystem service district implementing a district-wide conservation plan along basin boundaries that is consistent with state conservation priorities
- the creation of a free market with minimum government involvement and facilitated by the private sector
- a government controlled marketplace where agencies establish rules and act as brokers

Future steps that will be taken in the Willamette Valley to create an ecosystem marketplace by a number of organizations include:

- Appropriate legislation will be promoted to authorize assisting landowners to access an ecosystem marketplace.
- Willamette Partnership will complete projects involving water quality trading, work on finding additional funding sources, host workshops and develop a new model for a regional marketplace.
- Ecotrust will experiment with carbon offset payments.
- A policy dialog can be hosted, involving multiple organizations and addressing ecosystem marketplace issues
- Parametrix will rework a habitat evaluation tool to become more useful in quantifying ecological values.
- A map of the Willamette Basin completed by the Nature Conservancy will illustrate different land conservation priorities.
- A General Technical report on bundling ecosystem services payments will be published by Defenders of Wildlife and the Pacific Northwest Research Station.

Farm Bill

A farm policy bill was proposed by the Bush administration recently that could bring budget increases to wetlands conservation that creates a program to set aside agricultural lands. The fiscal 2008 budget proposal for the Agricultural Department would bring increased funds for the Wetlands Reserve Program and the Conservation Security Program. The popular Wetlands Reserve Program pays farms to restore agricultural land to wetlands, and the increased funding would bring enrolled records up to a cap set by the 2002 farm bill.

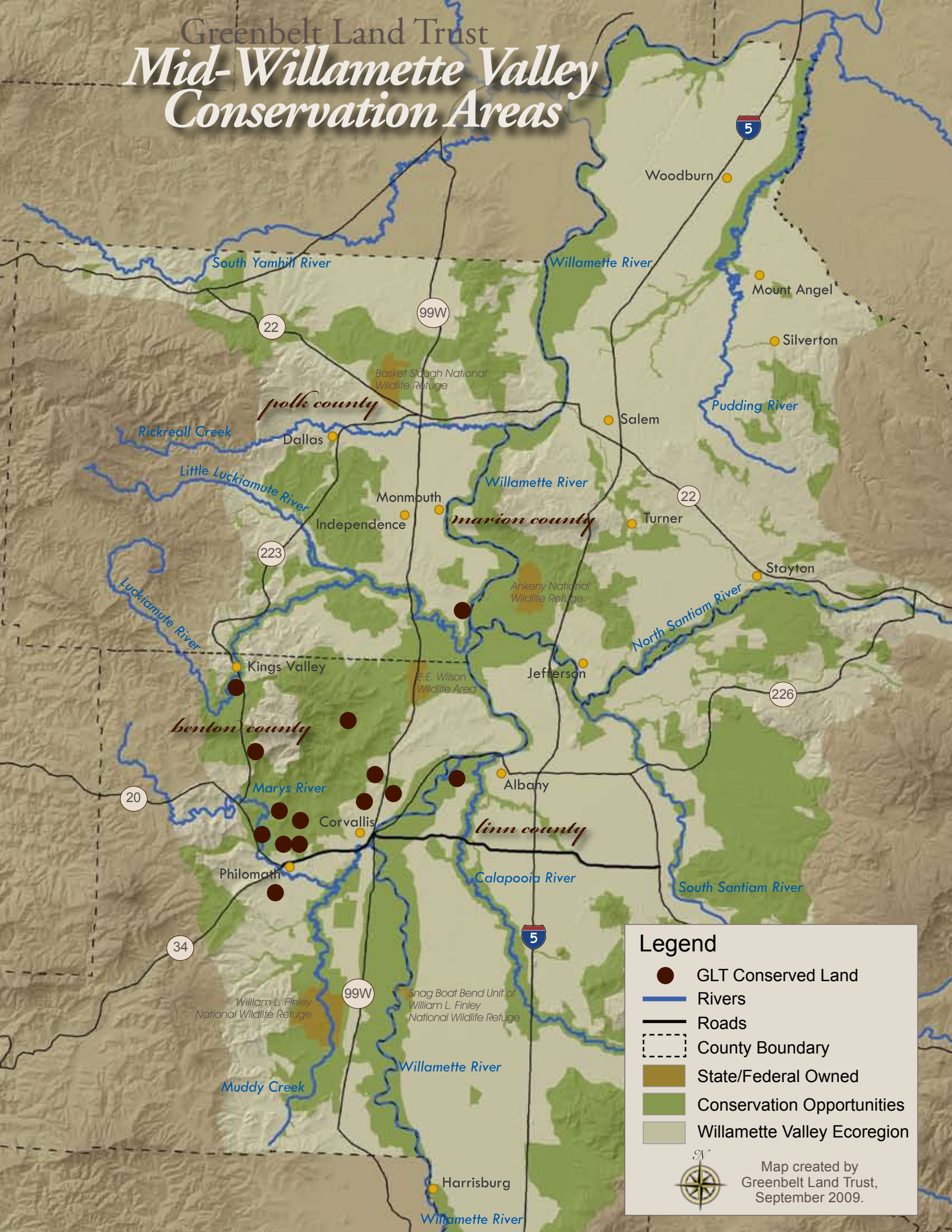
But under the proposed budget, funding would be cut for the two largest working farmland programs. The new farm bill proposes consolidating some smaller conservation programs into the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the largest of the working lands programs that pays farmers to make environmental improvements on their land, including creating wildlife habitat. The Grasslands Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program and the Klamath Basin program would all fall under the

Environmental Quality Incentives Program, which would see budget cuts. Environmental groups are concerned about losing some wildlife benefits with putting the programs together.

The Conservation Security Program, which makes payments to stop work on farmland, would see funding increases, but there is pressure to convert some land under the program into corn production with the increased demand for ethanol. Many conservation agreements under the program will expire beginning October 2007, and Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns is considering letting farmers pull land out of the program before contracts expire and eliminating general sign-up for the program. Environmental groups are concerned with tying energy production to programs such as the Conservation Security Program.

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Greenbelt Land Trust Mid-Willamette Valley Conservation Areas



Legend

- GLT Conserved Land
- Rivers
- Roads
- County Boundary
- State/Federal Owned
- Conservation Opportunities
- Willamette Valley Ecoregion

Map created by
Greenbelt Land Trust,
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