

# **The Willamette River Legacy Program**

## ***The Governor's Blueprint for Restoring and Enjoying a Healthy Willamette River Basin***

***From the Headwaters to the Columbia,  
From the Coast Range to the Cascades***

***May 2005***

# **THE WILLAMETTE RIVER LEGACY PROGRAM**

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## **The Vision**

The Willamette River Basin is of vital environmental, economic and social importance to the state of Oregon. Ensuring that it is healthy for current and future generations is paramount to the state's future. The water must be clean and in sufficient quantities to support both human and wildlife needs. Fish and wildlife populations must be viable and enjoy the variety of habitats needed to sustain them into the future. Willamette Valley communities and citizens will thrive due to the health of the river, and derive many benefits from the recreational opportunities that the river provides.

## **Background**

On March 5, 2004 Governor Kulongoski announced that his *“top environmental priority over the next three years is to clean up the crown jewel of Oregon's river system - the Willamette River. I don't just mean parts of the river - I mean the entire river – from the headwaters east of Eugene all the way to the Columbia.”*

The Willamette River Basin (WRB) comprises almost 12,000 square miles, is home to almost 70% of Oregon's population, and generates approximately 75% of the economic activity of the state. It is the 13<sup>th</sup> largest river, based on stream flow, in the contiguous United States. Thirteen major tributaries feed into the mainstem Willamette including: Calapooia, Clackamas, Coast Fork Willamette, Long Tom, Luckiamute, McKenzie, Marys, Middle Fork Willamette, Molalla, Pudding, Santiam, Tualatin, and Yamhill rivers. The river has been designated an American Heritage River since 1998.

The WRB supports a variety of plant and wildlife species, some of which are listed as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act. At least 1400 miles of the basin's 16,000 miles of streams do not meet water quality standards. While less than 10%, many of the 1400 miles lie adjacent to our most populated areas. Because historic use of rivers by communities was as a place to carry away waste, most developed with their backs to the river.

Important habitats were lost as the Willamette Valley developed to support its growing population and economy. 97-99% of the prairie habitat has been lost, 80% of the riparian forests have been lost and over half the original wetlands have been lost. Many non-native invasive plant and animal species have taken hold in the basin, to the detriment of native species.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s a major initiative was launched to clean up the river that focused on addressing water pollution coming from industrial and municipal activities in the basin. These efforts addressed pollution from point sources (end of pipe discharges). The effort was highly successful as industrial and municipal dischargers were required to treat waste before discharging effluent into the river.

The population in the Willamette Valley is expected to grow to 4 million by 2050. This creates a significant challenge as we try to balance the needs of an increasing population and expanding economy with the need to sustain healthy watersheds to support viable fish and wildlife populations and highly desired recreational activities over the long term.

In recent years several major planning efforts have been completed that assess current conditions and concerns in the WRB and propose actions that should be taken to improve the health of the basin. These include the:

- Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds, developed by the state in 1997 and amended in 1998 to include the Willamette River Basin;
- Willamette Restoration Strategy, developed by the Willamette Restoration Initiative (WRI, now the Willamette Partnership) in 2001;
- Willamette River Basin Planning Atlas, developed by the Pacific Northwest Ecosystem Research Consortium in 2002;
- Willamette Subbasin Plan, developed by the WRI and adopted by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) in 2004, and
- Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), developed by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) in 2004 and expected to be adopted by DEQ in 2005.

In addition to these basin-scale efforts, watershed councils have completed watershed assessments and action plans for all the major tributaries to the Willamette. Soil and water conservation districts, working with local landowners and others have completed agricultural water quality area management plans (SB1010 plans) throughout the basin to address water quality concerns associated with agricultural lands in the basin.

These efforts have identified common areas of concern that need to be addressed. This includes on-going water quality problems, loss of fish and wildlife habitat (including wetlands, off channel habitat, riparian areas, and woodland forests), lack of water supply to address current and future needs to support both ecological and economic values, and loss of floodplain function.

### **Governor Kulongoski's Priorities**

Governor Kulongoski has identified three priority areas of focus for the Willamette River Legacy Program:

- *REPAIR*- cleaning up the industrial pollutants and toxins that have contaminated the river;
- *RESTORE*- returning the river to its natural state, restoring its abundant wildlife and pristine riverbanks; and
- *RECREATE*- addressing the incredible role that the Willamette River plays in Oregon's quality of life so Oregonians can enjoy the many activities the river offers, and to do so responsibly so that it will be here for future generations.

Below are the high priority actions identified for implementation under the Willamette River Legacy Program. This is not an exhaustive list of all that needs to be done to restore the health of the Willamette River Basin but is a set of actions that will put the river on the path to recovery in the near term.

## High Priority Strategic Actions

**REPAIR- Below are high priority actions needed to improve water quality to a swimmable, fishable, drinkable condition throughout the Willamette River Basin.**

**Action:** Fully implement watershed based National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting in the Willamette and reduce the permit backlog to less than 10%

**Benefit:** Consideration given to cumulative impacts on the basin, permits will comply with current standards, improved water quality

**Funding:** Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) for 05-07 includes \$419,000 General Funds (GF) and \$544,000 Other Funds (OF) to restore 4 staff in 05 and add 2.5 staff in 06; 07-09 add 1.5 staff in 07, 1.0 staff in 08, cost is \$79,000 GF, \$103,000 OF

**Key Partners:** Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

**Timeline:** By 2007 reduce the NPDES permit backlog and fully implement watershed based permitting in the Willamette River Basin. Because of the number of permits in the Willamette there will be a two year cycle for all permits issued in the Basin.

**Target:** Reduce permit backlog to less than 10% by 2007, fully implement watershed based permitting in the Willamette by 2008.

**Progress to Date:**

**Action:** Finalize and implement the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for the Willamette and its subbasins

**Benefit:** Improved water quality, compliance with Clean Water Act requirements

**Funding:** Governor's Recommended Budget includes funds for implementation (\$835,000), 319 grants available to designated management agencies (DMAs), pursue EPA targeted watershed grant for the Willamette in 2005

**Key Partners:** DEQ with DMAs including cities, state agencies, Willamette Partnership, soil and water conservation districts, local watershed councils, private industry, local landowners

**Timeline:** DEQ finalizes and issues the TMDL as an Order summer 2005 for most of the basin and submits to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for approval, implementation plans from DMAs within 12-18 months of DEQ's Order, complete phase 2 of the mercury TMDL to update the TMDL in 2010, two remaining TMDLs will be completed for the Molalla-Pudding and Yamhill watersheds in 2006.

**Target:** By 2007 80% of DMAs have TMDL implementation plans in place and implementation is under way

**Progress to Date:**

**Action:** Investigate the feasibility of point source/non-point source pollution trading system for the basin using DEQ's new Water Quality Trading Internal Management Directive (January 2005)

**Benefit:** Faster improvement in water quality associated with non-point source pollution, added growth potential for future municipal and industrial uses

**Funding:** Seek EPA targeted watershed grant to initiate program

**Key Partners:** Willamette Partnership, DEQ, industrial and municipal NPDES permit holders, watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, agriculture and timber interests

**Timeline:** Establish Willamette Water Quality Trading Work Group in 2005 to identify trade opportunities in the Willamette River Basin

**Target:** Establish Willamette Water Quality Credit Bank through a temperature trade by December 2006.

**Progress to Date:**

**Action:** Clean up the Portland Harbor Superfund site- EPA has lead role for in-water site investigation and cleanup, DEQ has lead role in identifying and controlling upland sources of contamination to the Harbor

**Benefit:** Improved water quality, removal from Superfund list, improved economic development opportunities for Portland Harbor

**Funding:** Costs of clean up unknown until Proposed Plan is developed in 2007/2008, costs assigned to potentially responsible parties; DEQ, EPA and Lower Willamette Group providing funding for current work

**Key Partners:** EPA, DEQ, Lower Willamette Group, potentially responsible parties, natural resource trustees, Willamette River Cleanup Authority

**Timeline:** Remedial Investigation Report 2006, Risk Assessment 2006/2007, Feasibility Study 2007, Proposed Plan/Record of Decision 2007/2008

**Target:** Timeline for clean up dependent on Record of Decision

**Progress to Date:**

**Action:** Clean up Black Butte Mine

**Benefit:** Eliminate mercury leaching into Cottage Grove Lake and the Upper Willamette, eliminate or reduce fish consumption advisory days

**Funding:** Up to \$8 million for cleanup involving full removal of material, EPA providing \$60,000 to DEQ to complete a removal assessment to evaluate alternative removal options and costs, \$1 million request in Federal Fiscal Year 06 budget to begin clean up

**Key Partners:** Responsible parties (current, past owners and operators), DEQ

**Timeline:** Declared an Orphan Site by DEQ in 2002, Removal Assessment to be completed 12/05, cleanup timeline dependent on recommended actions and available funding

**Target:** Clean up dependent on available funding

**Progress to Date:**

**Action:** Reduce excessive nitrate in groundwater in the Southern Willamette Valley. DEQ declared a Groundwater Management Area for this area in 2004.

**Benefit:** Improved water quality, reducing public health threats that may currently be impacting private well owners and protection of public water supplies, avoiding expensive treatment options.

**Funding:** Advisory Committee established (see list of Partners below); DEQ providing 0.5 FTE to staff and participate on workgroup.

**Key Partners:** DEQ and multiple partners, including: Oregon State University Extension; Lane Council of Governments; Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA); Water Resources Department; Department of Human Resources; Department of Land Conservation and Development; Benton, Linn and Lane Counties; the cities of Monroe, Harrisburg, Junction City and Coburg; soil and water conservation districts, watershed councils, rural residents, farmers; and private industry.

**Timeline:** Nitrate loading to the groundwater will be reduced within a timeframe established by the Groundwater Management committee.

**Target:** Rescind the Groundwater Management Area declaration when the groundwater quality is reduced to less than 7.0 milligrams of nitrate per liter.

**Progress to Date:**

**RESTORE- Below are high priority actions that will restore important watershed habitats needed to support viable fish and wildlife populations.**

**Action:** Prioritize watershed restoration actions in the Willamette River Basin

**Benefit:** Shift from competitively selected investments to strategic investments to target restoration strategies with a high likelihood of success in areas where they will provide the biggest benefit.

**Funding:** \$100,000, contract awarded

**Key Partners:** Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), watershed councils

**Timeline:** Completed December 2005

**Target:** OWEB uses prioritization in grant decision making beginning in 2006

**Progress to Date:**

**Action:** Protect existing healthy riparian vegetation and reestablish riparian vegetation, with focus on Willamette floodplain and major tributaries

**Benefit:** Shading to reduce temperature, filter runoff to improve water quality, reduce bank erosion to minimize private property loss and improve water quality, increase large wood instream to provide rearing habitat for salmonids, provide increased wildlife habitat

**Funding:** OWEB grants, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program enrollments, 319 grants, Restoration & Enhancement grants, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) utility customer salmon habitat grants, seek enhancements to the CREP program for the entire Willamette as was done in the Tualatin, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) habitat mitigation funds

**Key Partners:** Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), Department of State Lands (DSL), Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI), Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), ODA, local governments, willing landowners with support from soil and water conservation districts, local watershed councils, non-government organizations (NGOs)

**Timeline:** Restore 150 miles of riparian vegetation per year

**Target:** 750 miles of riparian vegetation restored by 2010

**Progress to Date:**

**Action:** Protect existing functioning floodplains and reconnect historic floodplains, with a focus on tributary confluence areas between Eugene and Salem

**Benefit:** Reduced stream temperature, less severe flooding downstream, improved water quality, improved habitat, increased natural storage of water

**Funding:** OWEB grants, CREP enrollments, 319 grants, R&E grants, Wetland Reserve and Wetland Reserve Enhancement Programs, TNC utility customer salmon habitat grants, BPA habitat compensation funds

**Key Partners:** OPRD, DSL, DOGAMI, willing landowners with support from soil and water conservation districts, local watershed councils, Willamette Partnership, land trusts and other NGOs

**Timeline:** Reconnect 200 acres per year

**Target:** 1000 acres reconnected by 2010

**Progress to Date:**

**Action:** Protect existing wetlands and restore historic wetlands with focus on the area between Eugene and Corvallis, and the area of Mission Bottoms

**Benefit:** Reduced stream temperature, improved habitat, increased natural storage

**Funding:** OWEB to negotiate a Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program agreement with NRCS for \$4 million (NRCS- \$3 million, OWEB- \$1 million match) to restore up to 2000 acres, TNC utility customer salmon habitat grants

**Key Partners:** Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), OWEB, OPRD, The Wetlands Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, willing landowners, Willamette Partnership, soil and water conservation districts, watershed councils

**Timeline:** Enroll/restore 400 acres per year

**Target:** 2000 acres restored by 2010

**Progress to Date:**

**Action:** Protect existing and restore additional prairie, oak savanna and oak woodlands

**Benefit:** Improved wildlife habitat for at-risk species, prevent listings under the Endangered Species Act

**Funding:** Farm and Rangeland Protection Program, Grassland Reserve Program, Forest Legacy Program

**Key Partners:** NRCS, Defenders of Wildlife, Willamette Partnership, soil and water conservation districts, watershed councils, willing landowners

**Timeline:** Enroll/restore 300 acres per year

**Target:** 1500 acres enrolled by 2010

**Progress to Date:**

**Action:** Restore streamflows in high priority water availability basins (wabs) for instream uses, with emphasis on water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, recreational uses

**Benefit:** Improved water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, recreational uses

**Funding:** BPA mitigation funds, OWEB grants

**Key Partners:** Water Resources Department, willing water right holders, Oregon Water Trust

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Target:** Transactions in 16% of high priority wabs by 2006.

**Progress to Date:**

**Action:** Increase measurement of water diversions over 5 cubic feet per second or greater than 10% of stream flow

**Benefit:** Better management of water resources in the Willamette River Basin

**Funding:** Capitalize the Water Measurement Cost Share Revolving Fund

**Key Partners:** WRD, OWEB, large water right holders

**Timeline:** Secure initial funding in 2005 for Fund

**Target:** Add measurement devices to 8 diversions per year for 5 years

**Progress to Date:**

**RECREATE- Below are actions needed to reconnect Basin communities and cities with the aesthetic and recreational assets provided by the Willamette River.**

**Action:** Establish Willamette River Water Trail

**Benefit:** Increased recreational use of the river, increased tourism investments in river communities

**Funding:** GI Joes, Columbia Sportswear commitment- \$25,000 each (\$5,000 per year for 5 years), Oregon Parks Trust continuing to seek funds for development of additional phases, long term maintenance

**Key Partners:** OPRD, Mid-Willamette River Connections, National Park Service, Willamette Riverkeeper, Willamette River Navigator

**Timeline:** Announced 9/2/04, Phase 1 Buena Vista to Wheatland Ferry- Ribbon Cutting Ceremony June 4, 2005, Phase 2 Eugene to Buena Vista and Phase 3 Wheatland Ferry to Portland by 2007

**Target:** Signed and mapped water trail from Eugene to Portland by 2007

**Progress to Date:**

**Action:** Establish Willamette Scenic Bikeway from Portland to Eugene

**Benefit:** Increase tourism for communities along the Willamette Greenway, connect citizens to the Greenway and river

**Funding:** Cycle Oregon, OPRD

**Key Partners:** OPRD, Cycle Oregon, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)

**Timeline:** Phase 1- Champoeg State Park to Armitage County Park, Eugene announced February 2005, inaugural ride Cycle Oregon: Weekend June 25-26; Phase 2 Champoeg to Portland in 2006

**Target:** Signed trail between Portland and Eugene by end of 2006

**Progress to Date:**

**Action:** Work with local governments to develop new parks in the Willamette Greenway based on recommendations from the Willamette Parklands Strategy Task Force

**Benefit:** Provide additional park and open space areas for growing population

**Funding:** Measure 66 park funds

**Key Partners:** OPRD, local governments, Oregon Solutions, land trusts

**Timeline:** Task Force Report to OPRD Commission in summer 2005

**Target:** One new park or expansion of an existing park per year for five years

**Progress to Date:**

**Action:** Develop a conservation/recovery plan for listed salmonids in the Lower Columbia and Willamette including bull trout, chum, Chinook, steelhead, and coho

**Benefit:** Support recreational and commercial fish harvest

**Funding:** Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Funds, Measure 66

**Key Partners:** Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), US Fish and Wildlife Service, working with local, state and federal entities

**Timeline:** Complete final plan by 2007

**Target:** Restore listed salmonids to sustainable and harvestable levels by 2020

**Progress to Date:**

**CUTTING ACROSS THE 3 Rs- Below are ongoing priority actions that will enhance other efforts to repair, restore and enjoy the Willamette River Basin.**

**Promoting Partnerships and Collaboration**

**Action:** Working through Oregon Solutions and other efforts, promote partnerships and collaborative efforts to identify and resolve problems at the local level

**Benefit:** Local citizens feel empowered to solve local problems with assistance from appropriate state and federal agencies

**Key Partners:** National Policy Consensus Center, Willamette Partnership, watershed councils, local governments, federal and state agencies

**Progress to Date:**

**Monitoring and Maintenance**

**Action:** Implement the Oregon Plan Monitoring Strategy in the Willamette River Basin above Willamette Falls, to measure trends in water quality, fish and wildlife habitat/populations and effectiveness of restoration actions; develop and implement a toxics monitoring program in the basin; develop and implement long term maintenance programs for restoration projects

**Benefit:** Make more strategic investments in restoration activities, projects more effective over the long-term

**Key Partners:** OWEB, DEQ, ODFW, ODF, federal agencies, watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, landowners

**Progress to Date:**

**Outreach and Education**

**Action:** Provide information to citizens about how they can help protect, restore and enjoy the Willamette River Basin, develop basin wide stewardship ethic

**Benefit:** Informed citizens make daily choices that reduce adverse impacts on the river

**Key Partners:** Watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, Willamette Riverkeeper (River Discovery), Healthy Waters Institute (Salmon Watch, etc.), Institute for Natural Resources (Willamette Explorer Website), SOLV (Team Up for Watershed Health, Service Learning), Oregon Plan agencies, local governments

**Progress to Date:**

**Technical Assistance**

**Action:** Make more efficient use of existing technical assistance by establishing a one stop shop; add new resources as needed to deliver financial incentive programs on the ground

**Benefit:** Easier for landowners to seek assistance, participate in financial incentive programs such as CREP, WRP, etc., increased landowner participation in protection and restoration incentive programs, improved watershed function

**Key Partners:** OWEB, ODA, NRCS, Farm Services Agency (FSA), soil and water conservation districts, local watershed councils

**Progress to Date:**