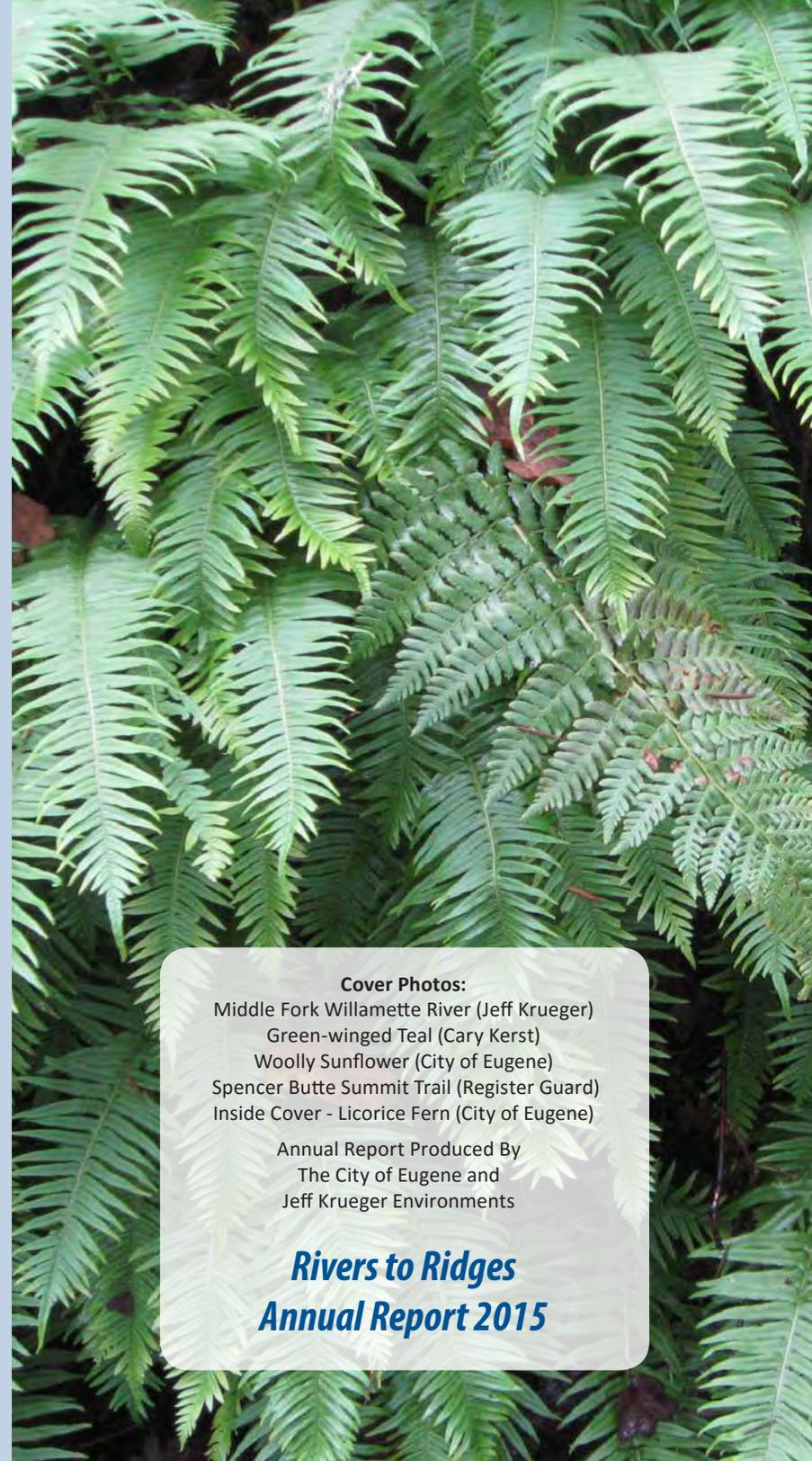




Rivers to Ridges Annual Report 2015



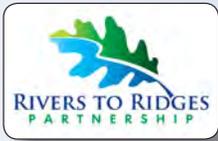
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Cover Photos:
Middle Fork Willamette River (Jeff Krueger)
Green-winged Teal (Cary Kerst)
Woolly Sunflower (City of Eugene)
Spencer Butte Summit Trail (Register Guard)
Inside Cover - Licorice Fern (City of Eugene)

Annual Report Produced By
The City of Eugene and
Jeff Krueger Environments

***Rivers to Ridges
Annual Report 2015***



R2R Partnership Organizations

- City of Eugene
 - Coast Fork Watershed Council
 - Friends of Buford Park & Mount Pisgah
 - Lane County Public Works Department
 - Long Tom Watershed Council
 - McKenzie River Trust
- Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council
 - Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife
- Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
 - The Nature Conservancy
 - Trust for Public Land
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - U.S. Bureau of Land Management
 - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Willamalane Park and Recreation District
- Willamette Resources and Educational Network

Welcome Trust for Public Land!

With the unanimous vote of the R2R Executive Team, Trust for Public Land (TPL) was formally added to the Rivers to Ridges Partnership in November 2015. TPL has been active in our area in the past several years including partnering with Willamalane on their land protection efforts in the Thurston Hills and most recently conducting needs analysis to support the City of Eugene's Park and Recreation System Plan. As an entity that exists to conserve land for people, both in urban areas and natural areas, TPL will bring valuable resources and expertise to the partnership.

1

Rivers to Ridges Partnership Background and Overview

1.1 The Rivers to Ridges Partnership

The Rivers to Ridges Partnership is a voluntary association of sixteen organizations working collaboratively to advance the protection, restoration, management, and public use of open space resources in the southern Willamette Valley. The name Rivers to Ridges (R2R) emanates from a regional open space vision document which was endorsed by many organizations and unanimously by local elected officials from the Eugene-Springfield area in 2003.

1.1.1 Vision Statement

The vision for the Rivers to Ridges Partnership, as defined in the R2R Statement of Partnership is:

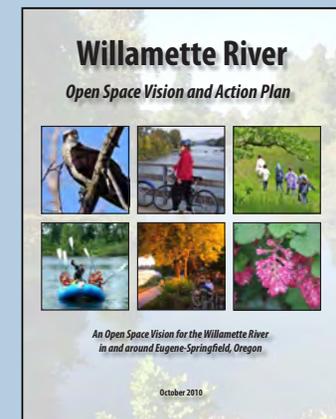
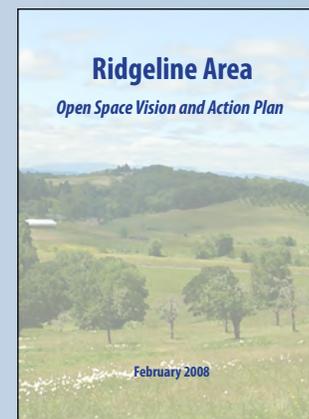
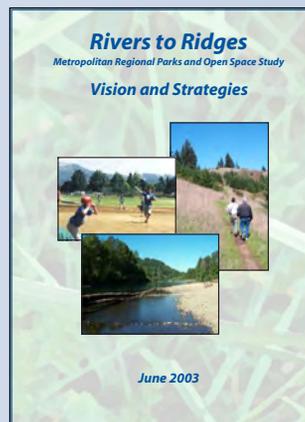
To improve the quality of life of residents in the upper Willamette Valley by working together to protect and enhance the region's land and water resources and their ecosystem functions and values, and to provide environmental education and compatible outdoor recreation opportunities as outlined in the Rivers to Ridges Metropolitan Regional Parks and Open Space Study - Vision and Strategies document (2003).

The 2003 vision was further refined with by R2R partners in subsequent years and includes the Ridgeline Vision and Action Plan (2008) and the Willamette River Vision and Action Plan (2010).

1.1.2 Rivers to Ridges Statement of Partnership

The Rivers to Ridges partnership was formalized in 2010 through a Statement of Partnership (SOP), which has since been signed by all partner organizations including Trust for Public Land after joining in November 2015. The SOP outlines the administrative structure of the partnership and emphasizes the commitment to work collaboratively toward implementation of the vision. The R2R Partnership mission as stated in the SOP is listed below:

The R2R Partnership mission is to advance implementation of the vision outlined in the Rivers to Ridges Metropolitan Regional Parks and Open Space Study – Vision and Strategies document.



2015 by the Numbers

324

Acres treated through controlled ecological burns

70,000

Number of native trees and shrubs planted at the Pudding Ponds Complex

706

Additional acres of land protected by R2R Partners

1.2 Rivers to Ridges Annual Report

This is the third Annual Report produced by the partnership. The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of administrative structure of the R2R partnership and to document key decisions and activities for the year. The report tracks annual accomplishments in the areas of land preservation; habitat restoration and management; recreation, education, and events; and planning. Additionally, the annual report provides the partners with an opportunity to highlight their own achievements from the year that have supported the implementation of the shared R2R vision.



[Click to Open Previous Annual Reports](#)



1.3 Rivers to Ridges Web Site

The R2R Partnership maintains a web site at www.rivers2ridges.org where vision documents, maps, annual reports, and information about R2R Partnership organizations can be accessed.

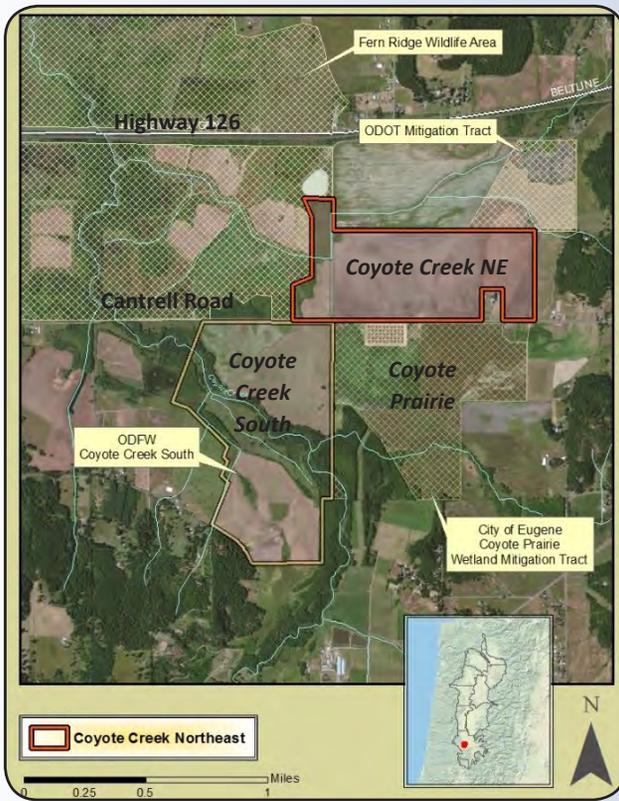


Photo credit: Rea Elliot

Elk at Coyote Prairie

2

Land Protection



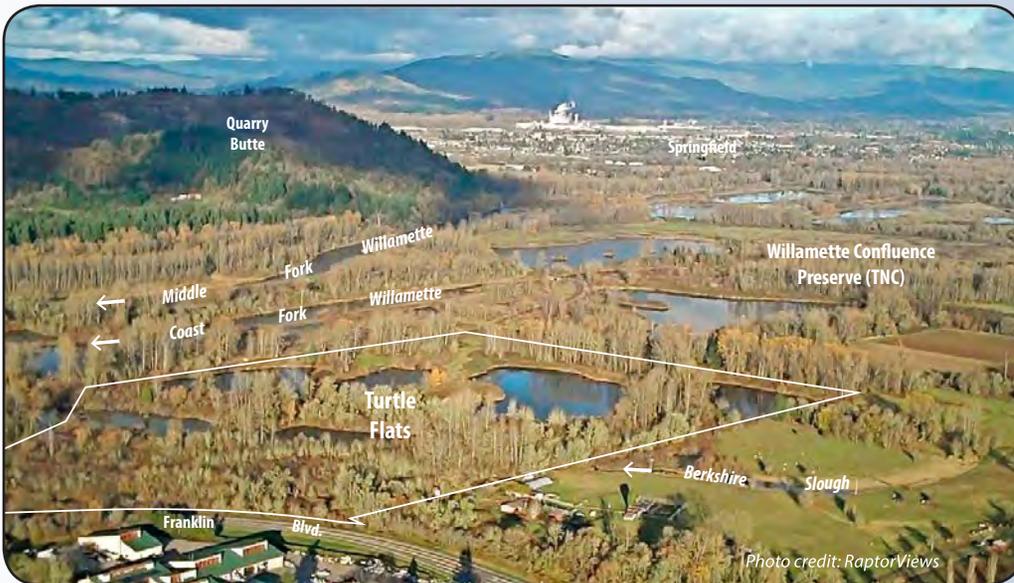
Coyote Creek Northeast Location Map

2.1 Land Protection in 2015

In 2015, Willamalane Park and Recreation District, City of Eugene, McKenzie River Trust, and Friends of Buford Park & Mount Pisgah completed a total of seven fee title or conservation easement acquisitions, adding 605 acres to the protected land base of the Rivers to Ridges partners. This brings the total partner land base within the R2R planning area to an estimated 23,326 acres. The 2015 acquisitions and easements are listed below and shown on the Rivers to Ridges map on page 6:

2.1.1 Coyote Creek Northeast

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) finalized acquisition of the 225-acre Coyote Creek Northeast site on September 8, 2015. The property is adjacent to three additional properties in conservation ownership totaling over 5,000-acres including the Fern Ridge Wildlife Area, the Coyote Creek South property recently acquired and managed by ODFW, and the City of Eugene’s Coyote Prairie natural area. Currently in agricultural production for annual ryegrass, the site will be restored to wetland prairie in the coming years, providing habitat for a variety of wildlife including declining grassland birds, amphibians, reptiles, raptors, and waterfowl. Restoration will also provide opportunities for reintroduction of endangered Willamette Valley plant species associated with wet prairie such as Bradshaw’s lomatium and Willamette daisy. The largest roadside population of Bradshaw’s lomatium in Lane County is located on both sides of Ken Nielson Road, immediately abutting the property. Funding for the acquisition was provided by Bonneville Power Administration through the ODFW Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program. A management plan for the site is under development.



Turtle Flats

2.1.2 Turtle Flats

In September 2015, Friends of Buford Park & Mt. Pisgah (Friends) completed its purchase of the 62-acre “Turtle Flats” property from Lane County. This important natural area, located at the confluence of the Coast and Middle Forks of the Willamette River, links the 1,305-acre TNC Willamette Confluence Preserve and the 107-acre OPRD Glassbar Island Willamette Greenway property. The purchase cleared a hurdle for a major floodplain restoration project planned to begin in 2016 on nearly 200 acres at the confluence and covering the three ownerships: Turtle Flats, Glassbar Island, and a portion of the Willamette Confluence Preserve. Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) provided a grant funding in accord with a recommendation from ODFW, to the Friends to buy the land from Lane County. Friends granted a conservation easement to BPA that protects Turtle Flats’ floodplain habitats in perpetuity. At closing, Lane County transferred funds from the sale to the Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) to help finance future restoration of the property. After restoration, Friends will plan and seek funding for low-intensity recreation compatible with habitat conservation.





Photo credit: Willamalane

Moe Mountain

2.1.3 Moe Mountain

This 11-acre site was acquired by Willamalane in 2015 and offers opportunities for a natural area park on the regionally significant Vitus Butte located in east Springfield. Willamalane will initiate habitat restoration work in the coming year in addition to exploring trail options and developing long-term management objectives. This site will provide upland open space and transportation connections to the nearby Weyerhaeuser McKenzie Oxbow site.

2.1.4 Weyerhaeuser McKenzie Oxbow

In 2015, Willamalane established a long-term lease agreement with the City of Springfield for this 55-acre property located along a reach of the McKenzie River. This dynamic site possesses high quality wetlands and riparian habitats and offers outstanding habitat for fish species including salmon, trout, and Oregon chub. Willamalane will initiate restoration projects in the upcoming years in addition to developing a parking lot to provide safe, ADA access to the McKenzie River in close proximity of the Springfield urban area.



Photo credit: Willamalane

McKenzie Oxbow

2.1.5 Andrew Reasoner Wildlife Preserve

The 294-acre Andrew Reasoner Wildlife Preserve is now protected. Funding for the project came from the Bonneville Power Administration and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program, and the members of the McKenzie River Trust. The landowners, the Carnines, donated a portion of the value of the easement to make sure the land would be protected. Doug and Linda Carnine will continue to own the land and manage it for its wildlife habitat, native plants, and for the public, who can access the property on walking trails. The Carnines are working with LTWC to further restore and enhance the mixed species woodland, savanna, and upland prairie property.

The Carnines named the preserve after Andrew Reasoner, MRT's first ever Conservation Director. Andy's friend, Darin Stringer, has worked with the Carnine family for over a decade to support restoration of their land. Andy lived next door to the property and often hiked there. As a neighbor, he was really interested in seeing the property conserved. Andy passed away in 2007 after battling cancer. When Darin suggested that the Carines dedicate the preserve to Andy, it seemed a fitting tribute. That is even more true now, as the conservation easement will forever protect the land that Andy loved.

2.1.6 Erin Noble Headwaters Park

After over a decade of development proposals and significant community support for preservation, a deal was finally reached in early 2015 to permanently protect this 26-acre property in the Amazon headwaters. The mostly forested property includes two branches of Amazon Creek and significant areas of wetland. This acquisition will preserve this lush habitat and will accommodate a future network of trails. Funding for the acquisition came from the 2006 City of Eugene parks

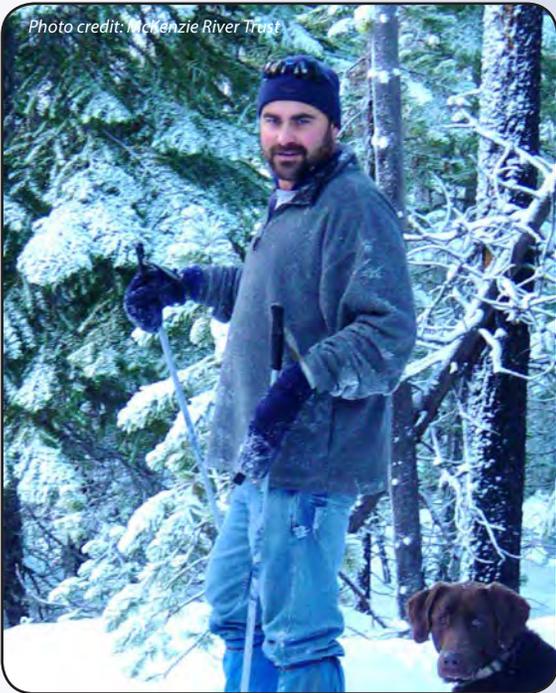


Photo credit: McKenzie River Trust

The 294-acre wildlife preserve was named in honor of Andy Reasoner, MRT's first Conservation Director.



Photo credit: Jeff Krueger

*West Branch of Amazon Creek
in Erin Noble Headwaters Park*

bond measure, Lane County Audubon Society, and the *Be Noble Foundation* who will hold a conservation easement over a portion of the site in memory of the Erin Noble who died in a private plane crash in 2012.

2.1.7 Coryell Ridge

On December 31, 2015, the [City of Eugene](#) Parks and Open Space Division acquired three parcels totaling approximately 99 acres adjacent to Moon Mountain Park and close to Bloomberg Park. These parcels contain high quality habitat, outstanding vista points, and provide an exciting opportunity for a future trail connection from Eugene’s Ridgeline Trail network to the Willamette River via an I-5 underpass. Future plans involving multiple R2R partners could further connect this area to properties owned by [Friends of Buford Park](#), [Oregon Parks and Recreation Department](#), [Willamalane](#), and [The Nature Conservancy](#). The City is calling this new acquisition, Coryell Ridge. Lewis Coryell was an early settler (1848) with a land claim in the area. A historical marker from 1917 identifies the area between Moon Mountain and

the Willamette River as Coryell Pass, a stop on the southern branch of the Oregon Trail known as the Applegate Trail.



Photo credit: Jeff Krueger

View from Coryell Ridge with Quarry Butte, Mount Pisgah, and the Willamette Confluence in the distance

Rivers to Ridges Partner Lands

| <u>R2R Partner Ownership and Easements</u> | <u>Acres</u> |
|--|---------------|
| Bureau of Land Management (WEW)* | 1,305 |
| Bureau of Land Management Easement | 22 |
| U.S. Army Corps of Engineers | 3,870 |
| City of Eugene | 4,384 |
| Friends of Buford Park & Mount Pisgah | 63 |
| Lane County | 3,969 |
| McKenzie River Trust | 1,569 |
| McKenzie River Trust Easements | 1,093 |
| Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife | 607 |
| Oregon Parks and Recreation Dept. | 1,943 |
| The Nature Conservancy | 3,028 |
| Willamalane Park and Recreation Dist.** | 1,574 |
| Total: | 23,427 |

* BLM owns and manages an additional 27,409 acres of land within the Rivers to Ridges planning area, mainly O&C land within the Coburg and Thurston Hills.

** The Willamalane total includes approximately 289 acres of developed park land.



2.2 Summary of Overall Partnership Acreages in the Rivers to Ridges Planning Area

Rivers to Ridges partners currently own or hold conservation easements on an estimated 23,427 acres of land within the R2R planning area (see table) including an additional 706 acres added in 2015.

Since the Rivers to Ridges vision was endorsed in 2003, the R2R partners have combined to preserve approximately 5,700 acres of land, increasing the protected land base by nearly thirty percent in just over a decade. The majority of this newly acquired land is in an undeveloped condition and has been acquired to preserve and restore high value native habitats, protect natural resource functions, and preserve the visual quality of the area. Compatible recreational and educational uses are planned on many of these lands in the future.

2015

Rivers to Ridges

Metropolitan Regional Parks and Open Space Study Vision Map*

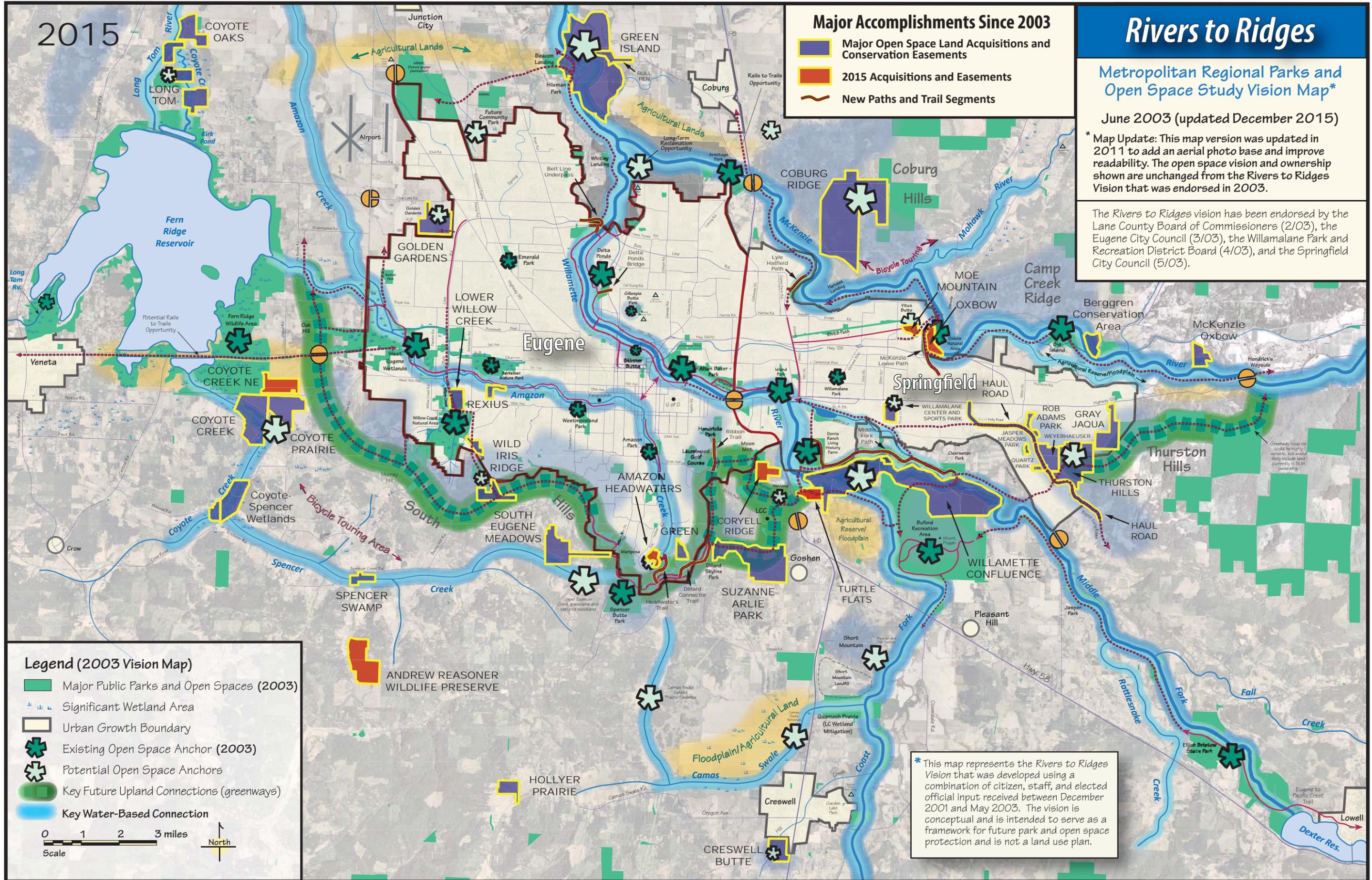
June 2003 (updated December 2015)

* Map Update: This map version was updated in 2011 to add an aerial photo base and improve readability. The open space vision and ownership shown are unchanged from the Rivers to Ridges Vision that was endorsed in 2003.

The Rivers to Ridges vision has been endorsed by the Lane County Board of Commissioners (2/03), the Eugene City Council (3/03), the Willamalane Park and Recreation District Board (4/03), and the Springfield City Council (5/03).

Major Accomplishments Since 2003

- Major Open Space Land Acquisitions and Conservation Easements
- 2015 Acquisitions and Easements
- New Paths and Trail Segments



Legend (2003 Vision Map)

- Major Public Parks and Open Spaces (2003)
 - Significant Wetland Area
 - Urban Growth Boundary
 - Existing Open Space Anchor (2003)
 - Potential Open Space Anchors
 - Key Future Upland Connections (greenways)
 - Key Water-Based Connection
- 0 1 2 3 miles
Scale
- North

* This map represents the Rivers to Ridges Vision that was developed using a combination of citizen, staff, and elected official input received between December 2001 and May 2003. The vision is conceptual and is intended to serve as a framework for future park and open space protection and is not a land use plan.

3

Habitat Restoration and Management



Photo credit: TNC

Spring Box Savanna Burn

3.1 Controlled Ecological Burns

3.1.1 Partnership Ecological Burns

The R2R Partnership completed nine controlled ecological burns totaling 324 acres in 2015 on U.S. Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Lane County land. This is well above the ten-year average and is similar to the acreages burned annually over the past five years.

Yearly Acreage Burned by Rivers to Ridges Partners (acres)

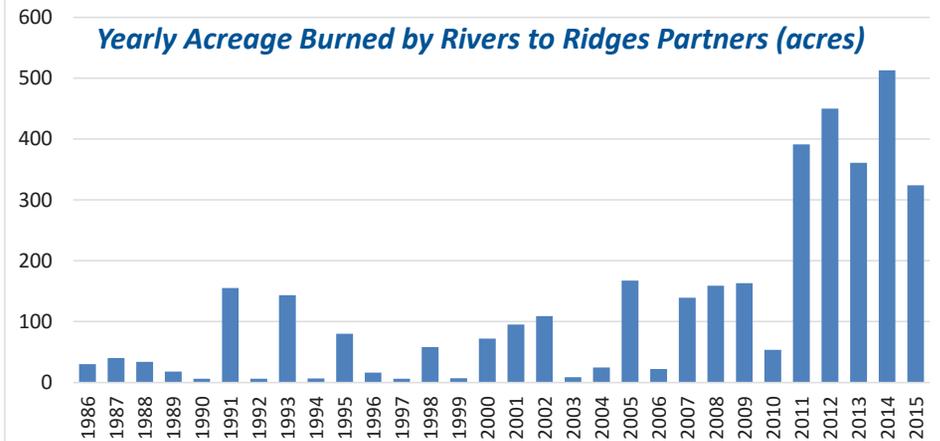


Photo credit: TNC

Pre-Burn Briefing at Mount Pisgah

3.1.1 The Nature Conservancy Wildland Fire Module

The Nature Conservancy's Southern Rockies Wildland Fire Module returned for a second year to assist with controlled ecological burning operations throughout the Willamette Valley. The six-person module spent 21 days in Oregon and assisting with burning, participating in and leading 2 days of fire operations within the R2R Partnership, and 12 days elsewhere in the Willamette Valley and on the coast near Nestucca Bay.

3.1.2 Spring Box Savanna Ecological Burn

R2R partners implemented a controlled ecological burn in October 2015 across two ownerships: The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Willamette Confluence Preserve and Howard Buford Recreation Area (aka Buford Park or Mt. Pisgah), managed by Lane County Parks and Friends of Buford Park & Mt. Pisgah. TNC, Oregon Department of Forestry, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Forest Service provided firefighters and equipment.

The 50-acre burn was part of comprehensive project to restore rare prairie and oak savanna habitats, including invasive control and sowing a diversity of native grasses and wildflowers. Hikers and equestrians can view the restored area from Trail 3, accessed via Buford Park's North Trailhead. More information on the burn can be found at: www.bufordpark.org.



Photo credit: City of Eugene

Great camas bed at Heritage Nursery

3.2 Native Plant Materials

3.2.1 West Eugene Wetland Plant Materials Partnership

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management, City of Eugene, and The Nature Conservancy’s plant materials partnership continues to produce locally-sourced native seed and plants for restoration and enhancement efforts within the West Eugene Wetlands and associated upland prairies. In addition to more common native annuals and perennials, the program is now providing seed of several slow-growing prairie species, such as common camas and narrow-leaf mule’s ear. These species take five or more years to reach reproductive size and thus require a long-term production commitment. In 2015, the partnership provided seed and plants of at least 80 native plant species for use in local restoration and enhancement projects. Although almost all of the seed is produced by Willamette Valley growers, the partnership continues to rely on hand collection from wild sites for a few, locally common wetland species and to add genetic diversity to cultivated species. Seasonal botanists working for the partnership hand collected seed of 21 native species in 2015 and submitted seed from several of these collections to the national Seeds of Success program, which partially funds the native plant materials program through the BLM. Students from local academic institutions donated volunteer time for native seed collection and learned about our local plants and wetlands. Altogether, almost 1,600 pounds of local native seed was produced and procured for the plant materials program in 2015. The program successfully provided seed for about 290 acres of restoration projects in 42 customized seed mixes for emergent, vernal pool, wet prairie, and upland prairie communities. In addition, the program provided 48 seed mixes for an ongoing research project addressing recovery of Fender’s blue butterfly and prairie restoration. This plant materials partnership helps leverage between \$80,000 and \$120,000 of federal funds annually through grants, sharing of equipment, and staff time.



Photo credit: Friends

Volunteers sorting plants at the Friends Nursery

3.2.2 Friends of Buford Park & Mount Pisgah Native Plant Nursery

The Friends of Buford Park & Mount Pisgah (Friends) manages a native plant materials program with a two-acre nursery facility at its core. The nursery, located in Lane County’s Buford Park, propagates plant materials for habitat projects in the greater Mount Pisgah area. The nursery also provides seed and plants to other restoration entities for habitat projects elsewhere in the Willamette Valley.

Staff and supervised volunteers collect cuttings, divisions, and seeds from diverse native plant populations found at Mount Pisgah, and then propagate them in the nursery. In 2015, the nursery produced plant materials from 130 native species, including grasses, wildflowers, shrubs, and trees.

While its primary purpose is to provide genetically local plant materials, the nursery also helps cultivate a culture of community stewardship through volunteer service. Volunteers contributed over 6,000 hours during 2015 to produce more than 300 pounds of live seed and over 5,000 live plants. Friends also trained 17 interns from Lane Community College, University of Oregon, and the broader community throughout 2015.

The Friends, in partnership with Pacific Northwest Natives, also produced larger crops of selected native grasses and forbs associated with prairie, savanna, woodland, and forest habitat. In 2015, this partnership venture produced nearly 1,350 pounds of seed, and another 5,000 pounds is available from recent production. Species include blue wild rye, California fescue, California oat grass, Columbia brome, and prairie June grass. Friends also collaborate as a member of the inter-agency Willamette Valley Native Plant Materials Partnership.

3.2.3 Willow Creek Nursery

The Nature Conservancy’s Willow Creek Nursery produces small quantities of Bradshaw’s lomatium, Willamette daisy, and Kincaid’s lupine seed for use in local restoration projects, mostly at Willow Creek. In 2016, Kincaid’s lupine production will be expanded as the productivity of the original 2008 planting of lupine has declined.

3.3 Habitat Restoration and Management

Listed below is a sampling of major habitat restoration and management projects implemented by R2R partners in 2015.

3.3.1 Lost Creek Fish Passage and Instream Restoration

The [Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council](#) continued its efforts to improve fish passage in the Lost Creek sub-basin during summer 2015. Under the direction of the watershed council, Trask Design and Construction replaced a perched, undersized culvert with a 20-foot wide bridge on Eagle Creek, a tributary to Lost Creek. The replaced 70-inch culvert was perched nearly 5 feet above the streambed and was a significant fish passage barrier at all life stages and water levels. The newly constructed bridge will open up two miles of upstream habitat to native and migratory fish. The [U.S. Bureau of Land Management](#) (BLM) has been instrumental in this project moving forward, both as a landowner and as a project partner, contributing significant staff resources and funding to the overall effort. Prior to removing the culvert, the BLM placed 103 trees (206 logs) along nearly a mile of stream, just downstream of the fish passage project. These structures will capture and sort sediment, prevent significant degradation (headcutting) upstream, as well as create necessary stream complexity for instream fish habitat.

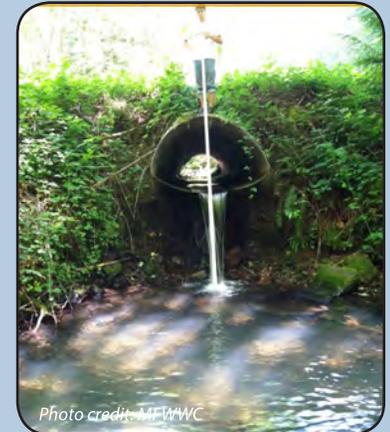


Photo credit: MFWWC

Perched culvert (pre-project)



Photo credit: MFWWC

Newly completed bridge on Eagle Creek

3.3.2 Lower Long Tom and Amazon Basins Ludwigia Treatment Project

In 2015, with funding support from the Oregon State Weed Board and [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#) (Corps), the [Long Tom Watershed Council](#) (LTWC) treated more than 15 acres of source populations of invasive, aquatic Ludwigia (*Ludwigia hexapetala*) in Amazon Creek tributaries and ponds, and scattered infestations along 14 miles of the lower Long Tom River, which enters the Willamette River just south of Monroe. The LTWC worked in partnership with the [City of Eugene](#), Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Transportation, the Corps, Oregon State Weed Board, Upper Willamette Cooperative Weed Management Area, and multiple private landowners. In 2016, the LTWC will continue and expand treatment on small populations on additional private and public lands within the Long Tom Watershed.



Ludwigia

Photo credit: LTWC

Ludwigia infestation on Amazon Creek prior to treatment

Treating Ludwigia on the Long Tom River



Photo credit: LTWC



Photo credit: LTWC

Stormwater filtration swale at Gibson Steel

3.3.3 Gibson Steel Stormwater Filtration Project

In 2014 and 2015, the [Long Tom Watershed Council](#) implemented a stormwater filtration project on the Gibson Steel Fabricating property which is located in very close proximity to the west Eugene wetlands and Amazon Creek. The project started with the installation of a substantial (14 foot x 200 foot) rain garden which received runoff from over an acre and a half of impervious surface. After a year and a half, the rain garden has been embraced by the initially skeptical owners and employees as an important aspect of the landscape, and an additional large (20 foot x 250 foot) mulch area that was regularly treated with pesticides is being turned into a fully planted landscape managed with a focus on soil health and wildlife value. Also being considered are stormwater planters to treat the water coming off the many roofs onsite. Hummingbirds, frogs, and ducks (who chose to hatch their young onsite) have been seen in the rain garden along with many species of pollinators.

3.3.4 Oak Habitat Enhancement

In 2012, [The Nature Conservancy](#) received an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board grant to restore oak habitat across approximately 500 acres of oak savanna, oak woodland, and oak dominated forest. This work took place at four separate Willamette Valley Preserves, three of which lie in the R2R region: Coburg Ridge, Willamette Confluence, and Willow Creek. At these sites, the work focused on the removal of encroaching Douglas-fir trees, the release of large legacy oaks from competition, and the thinning of oak habitat to reduce hardwood competition. Overall, this project removed 1,034,000 board feet of timber and almost 5,000 tons of biomass from these oak habitats. These forest products generated approximately \$600,000 in revenue that was rolled back into funding the project's associated logging and restoration work. In addition to the tree removal work, this project also reduced invasive species cover with targeted weed treatments and reseeded these oak habitats with native grasses and forbs.

3.3.5 Pudding Ponds Complex Post-Restoration Riparian Planting

Following restoration construction of the Pudding Ponds Complex at [The Nature Conservancy's](#) Willamette Confluence Preserve in summer of 2014, the revegetation phase began. In fall 2014, all areas within the project footprint were seeded with a suite of native species. 70,000 native trees and shrubs were planted in January and February 2015, followed by planting of 82,000 sedges and rushes in emergent zones as winter flows receded. To ensure survival, 2,000 cubic yards of topsoil from mining overburden piles were spread throughout the planting area during construction, and all plants were mulched with a total of 4,000 cubic yards of wood chips generated from upland restoration on-site.

Pudding Ponds Complex Plantings



Photo credit: TNC



Photo credit: TNC



Photo credit: Jeff Krueger

Cleared area around oak at Suzanne Arlie Park

3.3.6 Wildfire Risk Reduction and Habitat Restoration

The City of Eugene worked with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management through a Community Assistance Grant to begin removal of invasive blackberry and other non-native trees and shrubs at two sites in the Ridgeline Park System—Suzanne Arlie Park and Wild Iris Ridge. This project serves multiple purposes. It reduces wildfire risk through the removal of fuel (dense shrubby plants) and improves the ability of fire-fighting crews to respond to wildfire. These actions also help City of Eugene Parks and Open Space Division make progress towards restoring natural ecosystems at these sites and opening the sites up for future amenities such as trails. Through this funding, parks staff worked closely with staff from the Eugene-Springfield Fire Department to develop outreach materials describing wildfire risks and encouraging folks in high risk areas to develop a fire action plan.



Photo credit: Jeff Krueger

Bobcat removing non-native trees at Suzanne Arlie Park

3.3.7 Coyote Prairie Restoration Project

The City of Eugene completed construction on the last phase of the wetland mitigation bank at Coyote Prairie. This project adds 81 acres of primarily wet prairie and vernal pool habitat to the Coyote Prairie North Mitigation Bank (for a total of 165 acres). As a part of this project, the City of Eugene constructed four experimental nesting pads (0.55 acre) for streaked horned lark, a federally listed species. Staff completed and the regulatory agencies approved a Long Term Management Plan for this site. The location of this site amongst other parcels of land in conservation ownership exemplifies the strength of and progress towards the Rivers to Ridges Partnership vision.



Photo credit: City of Eugene

Aerial view of Coyote Prairie showing the final phase of restoration prior to planting (looking north)



Photo credit: Jeff Krueger

Newly graded swale at Coyote Prairie

Photo credit: City of Eugene



Trail construction on Spencer Butte

4

Recreation, Education, and Events

4.1 Recreational Improvements

4.1.1 Spencer Butte Trail

In the summer of 2015, the [City of Eugene](#) completed the long-awaited trail reconstruction project on the heavily used Spencer Butte Summit Trail. The project features over 1,400 linear feet of trail through the rocky outcrop. It was designed to blend into the natural aesthetic of the butte and protect the sensitive habitat found on the open summit area. The renovation creates a safer and more sustainable route to the top of the 2,065-foot butte. The new trail includes a stable trail bed composed of gravel and rock with a few short sections of constructed rock stairs with a total of about 100 steps made from natural basalt. The trail maintains a relatively steep, challenging grade with a few widened areas that take advantage of spectacular views. The abandoned trail route and braids are currently being revegetated with native grasses and forbs.

The project, which was partially funded through an Oregon Parks and Recreation Department Recreational Trail Program grant, was been selected to receive the 2015 Project of the Year award from the Oregon Chapter of the American Public Works Association.



Photo credit: Register Guard

Spencer Butte Trail near the summit

4.1.2 Disc Golf Course Established at Stewart Pond

Throughout 2015, the [U.S. Bureau of Land Management](#) (BLM) worked closely with the Eugene Disc Golf Club (EDGC) and other R2R partners to establish an 18-hole disc golf course at Stewart Pond in west Eugene. In addition to providing public access to a popular recreational amenity, the project integrates a legitimate activity into an area that has long been plagued by illegal camping. The disc golf project follows a multi-year effort by R2R partners to remove debris left by campers and to improve overall habitat on the site. In order to minimize impacts to wet soils found at Stewart Pond, there will be seasonal closures to a number of holes/baskets. The course layout was carefully designed to avoid impacting sensitive habitat. Forty-six volunteers from the EDGC put in a total of 602 hours between May and December 2015 and has scheduled several annual events. Volunteer work included blackberry removal, garbage pickup, construction of rock steps, installation of 18 baskets and 19 concrete tee pads, and minor trimming of trees and shrubs. Funding for the project was provided by EDGC, the University of Oregon Disc Golf Club, and the BLM. The project is supported by the newly completed BLM Resource Management Plan for the West Eugene Wetlands (see Section 5.3).

Photo credit: Matt Benotsch



Eighteenth hole at the Stewart Pond disc golf course

Photo credit: McKenzie River Trust

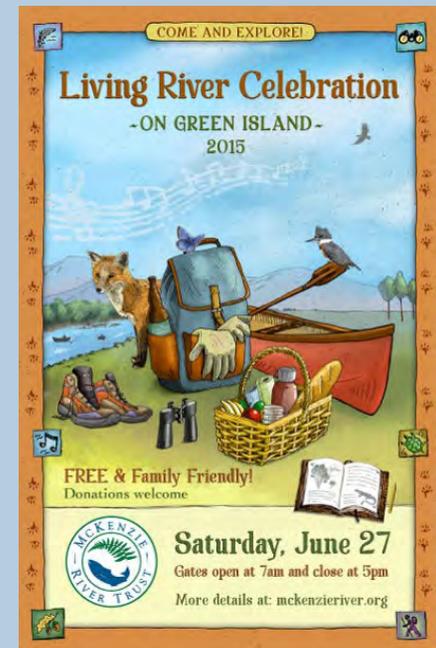


Living Rivers Celebration at Green Island

4.2 Celebrations and Events

4.2.1 Living Rivers Celebration

The McKenzie River Trust's Living River Celebration returned to Green Island again in 2015 for the third consecutive year. Temperatures climbed to nearly 100 degrees, but that did not keep people away. The free, family-friendly event attracted over 900 visitors for birdsong and live music, fresh drinking water, and cold beverages. Participants explored 1,100 acres of rolling floodplain through activities such as tree climbing, guided tours, birding, picnicking, self-guided walks, canoeing, and visits to more than a dozen hands-on educational booths hosted by Rivers to Ridges partners. McKenzie River Trust staff highlighted the Coburg Aggregate Reclamation Project through several guided tours of the restored gravel pits throughout the day. Fans of this annual event will want to mark their calendars for next year's event, scheduled for Saturday, June 25, 2016 on Green Island.



4.3 Education

4.3.1 Leaders in Environmental Action for the Future

The Nature Conservancy's Leaders in Environmental Action of the Future (LEAF) program provides paid summer internships for high school students and helps educators from environmental high school programs share best practices and scientific resources. The TNC Eugene office hosted a LEAF crew from Tacoma this summer during the month of July. The four students and their leader participated in stewardship activities at several TNC preserves and also spent four days with R2R partner agencies, working and learning. When not working, the crew explored Oregon with camping trips to the coast and the mountains, rafting on the Willamette River, and visits to college campuses. The mission of the LEAF program is to engage urban youth in conservation activities now so that they will become stewards for our planet tomorrow. Since 1995, LEAF has expanded from one to 28 participating states, and over 1,000 interns have participated. TNC has plans to host a LEAF team in Eugene again in 2016.

Photo credit: The Nature Conservancy



Leaders in Environmental Action

4.3.2 Watershed Rangers

The Watershed Rangers youth education program delivered a place-based watershed science education program, strengthening students' connection to the natural world within the Middle Fork Willamette River watershed. Watershed Rangers provided both physical access and meaningful engagement for participants through a comprehensive partnership with land managers, scientists, and professional educators, while meeting teachers' expectations to fulfill both CORE and Next Generation Science standards for each participating grade level. Students gained a sense of environmental ethic and civic pride while participating in community service learning projects incorporating restoration through cultivation of native species, habitat improvement, and invasive plant removal. These projects also benefitted agency project partners by contributing volunteer labor and in-kind resources, such as use of equipment and plants.

Rivers to Ridges partners participating in the delivery of Watershed Rangers included Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, U.S. Bureau of Land Management,



Photo credit: MFWWC

*Watershed Rangers in the field at
Elijah Bristow State Park*



Photo credit: WREN

*Douglas Gardens Elementary School students participate
in WREN's Scat, Tracks, and Bones Program*



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Friends of Buford Park & Mt. Pisgah. In 2015, the Watershed Rangers program reached 405 students, taught 46 classroom lessons, and led 44 field trips (60% included a learning component).

4.3.3 Vickery Park Habitat Assessment

A team of eight students from the University of Oregon Environmental Leadership Program completed a Baseline Habitat Assessment of Lane County's Vickery Park located along the north side of the McKenzie River off Camp Creek Road. The 91-acre park includes riparian forest, prairie, oak woodland, and coniferous forest habitat types. The students mapped significant ecological features, including the locations of Oregon White oaks throughout the park, as well as three priority invasive species.

4.3.4 Willamette Resources and Educational Network Education Program

Willamette Resources and Education Network (WREN) was formed in 1999 by the West Eugene Wetlands Partnership to fulfill the Partnership's environmental education goals. WREN's mission is to practice and promote land stewardship through education, science, and partnerships. WREN's classroom and field trip programs are unique in the area, because they meet both national and state common core and next generation science education standards, aligned with STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education goals while encouraging people of all ages to experience and value the natural world. WREN has served more than 57,000 people since its inception through field trips and classroom presentations for k-12 students in Lane County, Wetland Wanders, Family Exploration Days, local festivals, and many other community events. During 2015, approximately 1,500 students and 300 adults participated in WREN's formal education programs along with thousands more who interacted with WREN at other events.

4.3.5 Coast Fork Science Pub

The Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council (CFWWC) hosts Science Pub events monthly at the Axe & Fiddle in Cottage Grove, Oregon. This event sees an average of 70 local residents per event. The various topics of the events each month are tied to current restoration activities of the CFWWC. This fun and popular event is a great way to get information to the community and build understanding of natural resources and how they are managed. Topics and presenters in 2015 included:

- *Mushrooms, Fungus, and Forests* by Chris Melotti and Molly Widmer, Cascade Mycological Society
- *Water, Willamette, and People in 2100* by Samuel Chan, OSU - Associate Professor and Watershed Health Specialist
- *Pollinators and Plants in a Native Dance* by Bruce Newhouse - Naturalist
- *Beavers: Education, Relocation, & Restoration* by Jeff McEnroe, BLM - Biologist
- *Purple Martins: Aerial Insectivores at Risk* by Garret Dorsey, USACE - Wildlife Biologist
- *Willamette River Confluence Project* by Jason Nucklos, TNC - Willamette & Restoration Program Manager
- *Milkweeds and Monarchs: Creating Habitats with Native Plants* by Tom Landis, USFS - (Retired) Nursery Specialist
- *The Invasion of the American Bullfrog: Impacts on Oregon's Freshwater Systems* by Tiffany Sacra Garcia, OSU
- *Soil Nutrition: How it Relates to Your Food and Health* by Marjory House, Agronomist
- *Northwest Spiders: Creepy & Crawly or Fascinating Creatures* by Rick Ahrens, Naturalist
- *Chinook in the Coast Fork Willamette: Past, Present, and Future* by Jeff Ziller, ODFW - District Fish Biologist
- *UPRIVER: A Film for the Willamette* by Jeremy Monroe, Freshwater Illustrated



Photo credit: Lane County Parks

ELP Students at Vickery Park

5

Planning and Publications

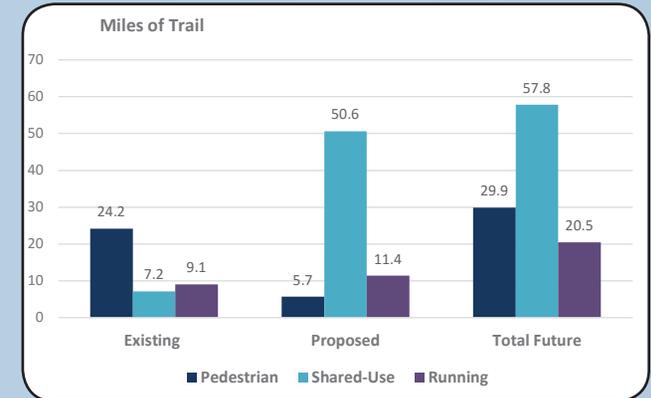


Photo credit: Register Guard

The Eugene Trails Plan proposes to more than double the city's trail system over the next twenty years.

5.1 Eugene Trails Plan

The [City of Eugene](#), working in conjunction with Jeff Krueger, completed its first ever system wide recreational trail plan. The Eugene Trail Plan addresses soft-surface trails including pedestrian trails, shared-use trails, and running trails. The 20-year Plan includes an evaluation of the existing system, proposes nearly seventy miles of new trails, and contains guiding principles to direct future trail construction, priorities, and maintenance practices. The planning process included three public workshops and a city-wide public survey and the proposed new trails have been prioritized. The Plan puts an emphasis on connectivity, accommodating a variety of user groups through shared-use trails or trail corridors, and creation of multiple loop options of varying lengths.



5.2 Springfield Mill Race Path Planning



Photo credit: Willamalane

Construction of the three-mile path along the Springfield Mill Race (above) is scheduled to begin in 2016

In 2015, [Willamalane](#) established the final alignment and design for the planned Mill Race Path, which will follow the Springfield Mill Race Channel from downtown Springfield to Clearwater Park where it will connect with the existing Middle Fork Path. When completed in fall 2016, the Mill Race path, in combination with the Middle Fork Path, will create an 8-mile loop for recreational use. With brief sections of on-street bicycle lanes, the path will also connect to an extensive existing riverfront path system linking Springfield and Eugene. Willamalane is developing related habitat enhancement plans for the Mill Race corridor and is working with [Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife](#) to identify and implement in-stream/in channel restoration projects to improve the habitat functions of the Mill Race.

City of Eugene's Existing and Proposed Trails by Length and Classification

5.3 West Eugene Wetlands Resource Management Plan

In April 2015, the [U.S. Bureau of Land Management](#) (BLM), Eugene District published the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the West Eugene Wetlands. The RMP is a comprehensive management plan for the long-term protection and management of the 1,340 acres of BLM-administered lands in the West Eugene Wetlands. The RMP includes management actions to contribute to recovery of threatened and endangered species, consistent with the recommendations in the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) Recovery Plan for the Prairie Species of Western Oregon and Southwestern Washington. The RMP also provides for educational, cultural, and recreational enhancement opportunities, including the construction of a disc golf course within the Stewart Pond area (see section 4.1.2). The BLM and West Eugene Wetland partners celebrated this achievement and recognized formal cooperators: [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#), [City of Eugene](#), Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and others that have helped throughout the process.

2015 FOG Field Trips and Events:

- Field tour of Rattlesnake Butte led by Lawrence Schwabe and Lindsay Belonga of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde.
- Float trip on the Middle Fork Willamette River with stops at Jasper Park and the Willamette Confluence project area to view off-channel aquatic and floodplain habitat restoration. Speakers included Scott Youngblood, Chris Orsinger, Jeff Krueger, and Jason Nuckols, with boats and river guides provided by the City of Eugene.
- Field tour of the Coyote Creek South site led by Ann Kreager of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Presentation by Sally Villages-Moore and Panchita Paulette of the Bureau of Land Management on the West Eugene Wetlands Resource Management Plan (see Section 5.3).
- Field tour of Coyote Prairie led by Paul Gordon and Diane Steeck of the City of Eugene to look at the recently completed restoration project (see Section 3.3.7).
- 2015 Habitat Management and Restoration in the Southern Willamette Valley meeting. This third annual forum hosted by the partnership and organized by Ed Alverson included brief presentations by habitat managers from the southern Willamette Valley with an opportunity to share lessons learned. This year's event was attended by nearly 100 participants from across the Willamette Valley.

6

Administrative Structure

6.1 Summary of Activities

Beginning in 2010, the Rivers to Ridges Partnership took over the administrative function that had been in place under the West Eugene Wetlands (WEW) Partnership since 1992. The WEW partnership had originally formed to oversee the implementation of the West Eugene Wetlands Plan, but over time had expanded its focus to include a much broader geographic area representing a range of additional habitat types. The formation of the R2R partnership, with the addition of several new partners, was an acknowledgement of this expanded reach. It is important to note that the R2R partnership has no outside funding sources for the administration of the partnership and it currently relies on voluntary annual partner dues, plus a significant amount staff time that is contributed by partners. The partnership relies on rotating facilitators to head up the various committees. The basic administrative structure used by the R2R partnership, is described below.

6.1.1 Rivers to Ridges Executive Team (R2R XT)

The function of the Rivers to Ridges Executive Team (R2R XT) is to guide management of the regional open space system in a cooperative manner. The team includes at least one executive representative from each members of the R2R Partnership and typically meets once annually. The 2015 meeting was held on November 13 at the Eugene Public Library and facilitated by Marsha Miller from Lane County Public Works. The meeting included an overview of land acquisitions, partner accomplishments from 2015, highlights of upcoming activities planned for 2016, and a discussion of ideas for creating an outreach strategy for the partnership. Also at this meeting, the XT also voted unanimously to approve the Trust for Public Land's application for membership into the R2R Partnership, bringing the total number of partner organizations up to 16.

6.1.2 Rivers to Ridges Implementation Team (IT!)

The Rivers to Ridges Implementation Team (IT!) includes manager level representatives from each of the partner organizations. The IT! provides broad oversight for the implementation of the objectives of the R2R vision. The IT! met approximately six times in 2015 and meetings continue to be marked by good attendance from the R2R partners and productive discussions. The IT! completed or made progress on several goals set in 2015 including completion of an annual report, achieving robust participation in FOG, convening 3-year visioning project forecast planning, sharing information about available contractors and equipment for restoration projects, and enhancing and focusing marketing and awareness of R2R including the feasibility of Ecosystem service valuation of all R2R partners.

6.1.3 Rivers to Ridges Field Operations Group (FOG)

The Field Operations Group (FOG) is a multi-jurisdictional team that meets several times annually to coordinate on-the-ground activities and share technical information and experience. The mission of FOG, as defined by the IT!, is to "Effectively coordinate information sharing and provide professional development opportunities through educational presentations and project field tours." Much of the coordination role of FOG has been delegated to subcommittees with general meetings dedicated to guest lectures, trainings, or site visits. Katie MacKendrick from the Long Tom Watershed Council scheduled and coordinated the 2015 FOG meetings (see list to the left). Additionally, subcommittees meet as needed to help coordinate specific aspects of FOG including SPROUTS (Seeds, Plugs, Rhizomes, or Underground Tubers) and Prescribed Fire.



Photo credit: Jeff Krueger

FOG tour at Rattlesnake Butte led by Lawrence Schwabe and Lindsay Belonga