



Rivers to Ridges Annual Report 2017



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Cover Photos:
Lower Coyote Creek (Jeff Krueger)
Spotted Towhee (Cary Kerst)
Howard Buford Recreation Area (Ed Alverson)
Student Tour of Spencer Butte Trail (Jeff Krueger)

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

Rivers to Ridges Annual Report 2017



1

Rivers to Ridges Partnership Background and Overview

R2R Partnership Organizations

- City of Eugene
- Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council
 - Friends of Buford Park & Mount Pisgah
 - Lane County Public Works Department
 - Long Tom Watershed Council
 - McKenzie River Trust
 - McKenzie Watershed Council
- Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council
 - Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife
- Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
 - The Nature Conservancy
 - The 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 McKenzie Watershed Council!

With the unanimous vote of the R2R Executive Team, the McKenzie Watershed Council (MWC) was formally added to the Rivers to Ridges Partnership in December. Although new to the R2R Partnership, the MWC has been active in our area since 1993, working with private landowners to conserve and restore riparian and aquatic habitat, monitor and maintain water quality, and provide a monthly forum for addressing important issues.

1.1 The Rivers to Ridges Partnership

The [Rivers to Ridges Partnership](#) is a voluntary association of seventeen 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

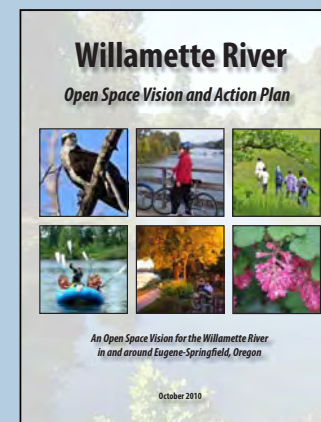
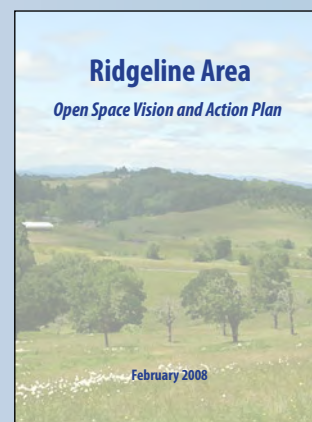
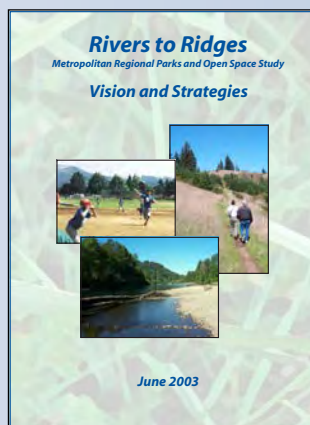
The vision for the Rivers to Ridges Partnership, as defined in the R2R Statement of Partnership is:

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).

1.1.2 Vision Refinements

The 2003 vision was further refined by R2R partners in subsequent years and includes the [Ridgeline Vision and Action Plan](#) (2008) and the [Willamette River Vision and Action Plan](#) (2010). The Rivers to Ridges partnership was formalized in 2010 through a Statement of Partnership (SOP), signed by all partner organizations. 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 is to advance implementation of the vision outlined in the Rivers to Ridges Metropolitan Regional Parks and Open Space Study – Vision and Strategies document.



2017 by the Numbers

4,235
acres

Total acres treated through controlled ecological burns on R2R Partner lands since 1986

15,000
Loads

The equivalent number of semi-truck loads of sand, gravel, and dirt moved during the Willamette Confluence Project

6,241
acres

Acres of additional land protected by R2R Partners since 2003

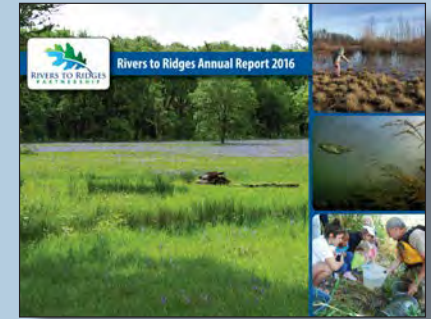
Trail camera photos of an elk herd and a mountain lion captured at the Thurston Hills Natural Area in 2017



1.2 Rivers to Ridges Annual Report

This is the fifth Annual Report produced by the partnership. The purpose of the report is to document key decisions and activities for the year and to provide an overview of administrative structure of the R2R partnership. 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 Recent Annual Reports



1.3 Rivers to Ridges Online

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: City of Eugene

Newly acquired riverfront property

2

Land Protection

2.1 Land Protection in 2017

In 2017, the [City of Eugene](#) and [Willamalane Park and Recreation District](#) conserved an additional 51 acres of land, all through fee title acquisition. This brings the total partner land base within the R2R planning area to an estimated 23,968 acres. The 2017 acquisitions and easements are listed below and shown on the Rivers to Ridges map on page 4.

2.1.1 Townsend Woods

The [City of Eugene](#) accepted a donation of 33.9 acres in the area just to the west of Greenhill Road. This location is identified in the Eugene Trails Plan as being at the intersection of two desired trail corridors. The land owner had initially contacted [McKenzie River Trust](#) and [The Nature Conservancy](#) about a donation, and due to the location and site conditions, the owner was referred to the City. This is great example of the R2R Partners working together.



Photo credit: City of Eugene

Townsend Woods

2.1.2 Willamette Riverfront Property

The [City of Eugene](#) purchased a 7-acre property with over 1,000 feet of frontage along the west bank of the Willamette River in 2017. The site, which is located just to the north of Santa Clara Park, has yet to be named. The City plans to use the site to accommodate improved public access to the river and will enhance ecological functions over time.

2.1.3 Rob Adams Annex

[Willamalane](#) completed acquisition of a 5-acre wet ash woodland in the area immediately adjacent to Rob Adams Park. The site will be restored over time to support native plant species.

2.1.4 Bloomberg Annex

The [City of Eugene](#) completed the purchase of a 4.4-acre addition to the Ridgeline Park system in the area just to the south of Bloomberg Park. The forested site will provide options for future trail connections in the area.

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 23,968 acres of land within the R2R planning area (see table) including the additional 51 acres added in 2017. Since the Rivers to Ridges vision was endorsed in 2003, the R2R partners have combined to preserve approximately 6,241 acres of land, increasing the conserved land base by nearly thirty percent in just over a decade.

R2R Partner Conserved Lands

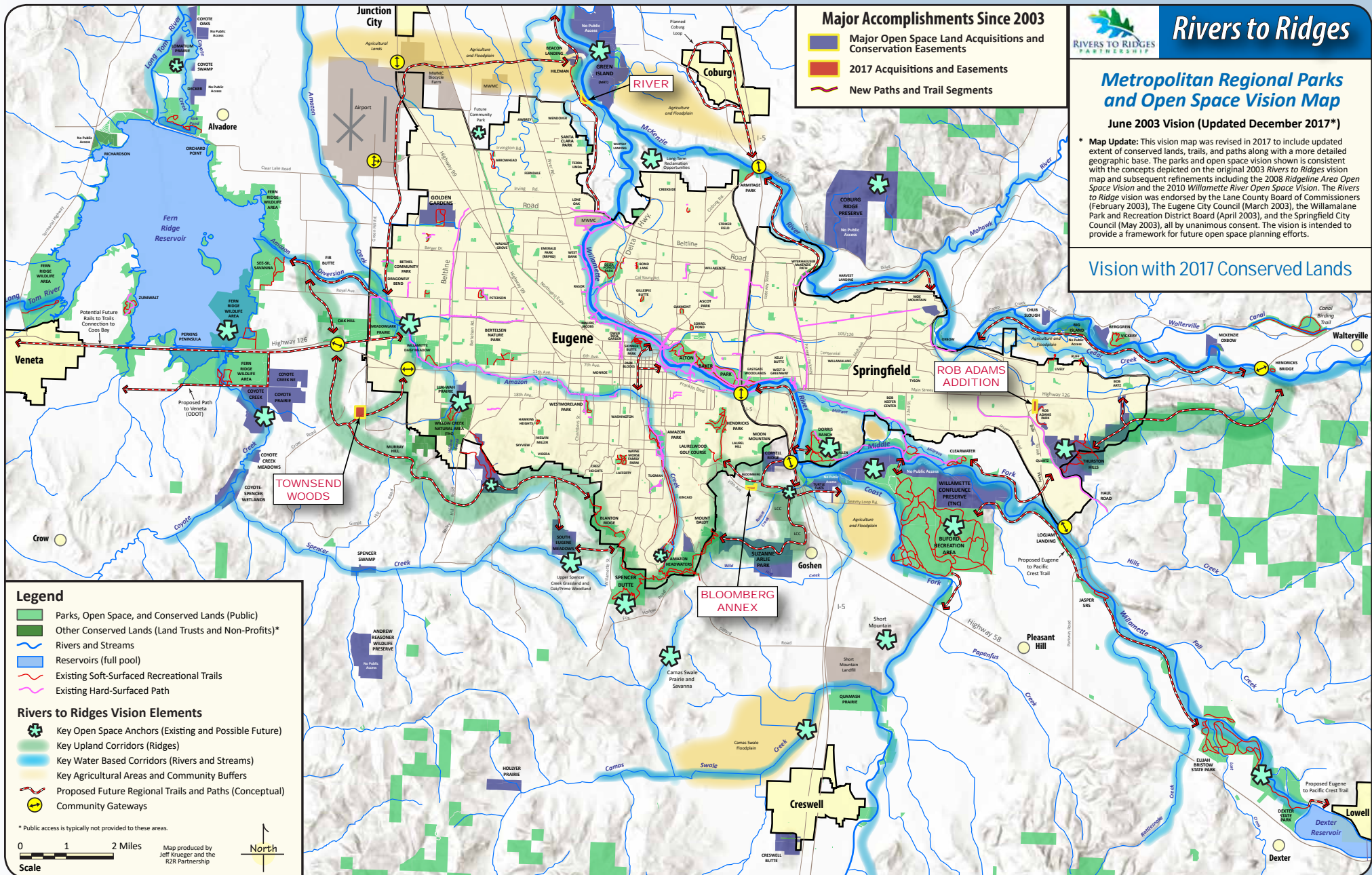
<u>R2R Partner Ownership and Easements</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Bureau of Land Management (WEW)*	1,305
Bureau of Land Management Easement	22
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	3,870
City of Eugene	4,531
Friends of Buford Park & Mount Pisgah	63
Lane County	3,969
McKenzie River Trust	1,600
McKenzie River Trust Easements	1,131
Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife	607
Oregon Parks and Recreation Department**	1,943
The Nature Conservancy	3,028
Willamalane Park and Recreation District	1,622

Total: 23,968

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

** Includes 120 acres of Oregon Department of State Land ownership.

Rivers to Ridges Vision Map with Accomplishments and 2017 Acquisitions



The map above is a compilation of the Rivers to Ridges vision map that was endorsed by local elected officials in 2003 and an overlay of major open space acquisitions that have occurred since that time. 2017 acquisitions are shown in red.



Photo credit: AJ Hudgik (ODF)

2017 Coyote Prairie burn underway



Photo credit: Paul Gordon (City of Eugene)

Drone photos provided a unique perspective of the 2017 burn at Coyote Prairie

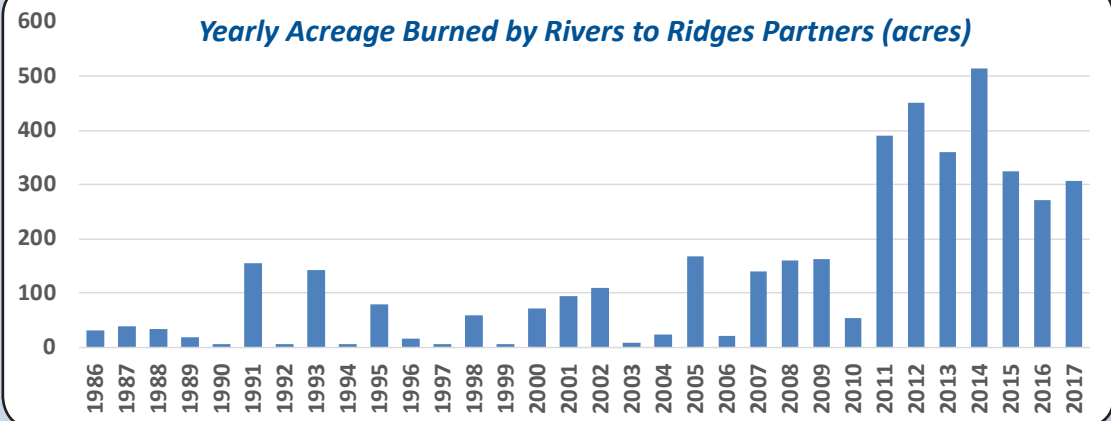
3.1 Controlled Ecological Burns

The R2R Partnership completed nine controlled ecological burns totaling 306 acres in 2017 on [U.S. Bureau of Land Management](#), [The Nature Conservancy](#), [City of Eugene](#), and [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#) (ACOE) administered lands. Over 900 acres were planned for this summer and fall, however, acreage remained below the 348 acre five-year average due to smoke impacts from wildfires across the Pacific Northwest, as well as fire danger levels remaining elevated through the month of September when burning typically occurs.

A summer burn was successfully conducted at TNC's Willamette Confluence Preserve in upland prairie and riparian areas in preparation for seeding with native species. As part of a comprehensive restoration plan, controlled burning was implemented safely with units surrounded by large areas of bare earth created through excavation of former gravel pits in the process of being reconnected to the river floodplain.

The Center for Natural Lands Management and Joint Base Lewis-McChord partnered with TNC to conduct controlled ecological burns in the Rivers to Ridges Partnership and throughout the Willamette Valley under a cooperative fire management agreement for the first time this year. Both entities conduct burns throughout the summer in Puget Sound's prairies for habitat restoration and conservation of rare and endangered species.

Drones were used to film burning at Coyote Prairie (photo left), owned and managed by the City of Eugene, providing a bird's eye view of the use of fire for habitat management. The first entry of fire in recent history at the ACOE's East Wildlife Area on the northeast shore of Dorena Lake was also conducted to maintain prairie habitat structure. Burning for maintenance of federally listed Fender's blue butterfly and its host plant Kincaid's lupine, was also completed in 2017 by the BLM and partners near Fir Butte.





*Clarikja amonia in production bed
at Heritage Seedlings*

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 providing seed of slow-growing prairie species, such as common camas and narrow-leaf mule's ear, that take five or more years to reach reproductive size and thus require a long-term production commitment. The Partnership's 0.1-acre Camas beds, for example, are now producing between 40 and 75 pounds of seed annually.

For the 2017 harvest year, the Partnership lost one of its three valued producers, the federal Corvallis Plant Materials Center (PMC). The PMC was unable to continue to propagate 22 native species for the Partnership, primarily annual and vernal pool species that are not otherwise available. In 2017, the partnership was able to continue to supply native seed of over 70 species for use in local restoration and enhancement projects, by relying on inventory for those species previously grown by PMC. The Partners are exploring options for replacing the PMC species.

Although almost all of the native seed used in the partnership 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 and interns working for the partnership hand collected seed of 27 native species in 2017 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. Altogether, about 850 pounds of local native seed was produced and procured for the plant materials program in 2017, with over 700 additional pounds used from seed inventory. The program successfully provided seed for about 265 acres of restoration projects in over 20 locations. In addition, the program again provided 72 seed mixes for an ongoing research project addressing recovery of Fender's blue butterfly and prairie restoration.

3.2.2 Friends of Buford Park & Mt. 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 use in habitat projects in the greater Mount Pisgah area. The nursery also provides surplus 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. The nursery produced plant materials from 150 native species, including grasses, wildflowers, shrubs, and trees. Much of this material is being utilized for the nearby Confluence Floodplain Restoration Project.

3.2.3 Willow Creek Nursery

The Nature Conservancy's Willow Creek Nursery continues to produce small quantities of Bradshaw's lomatium, Willamette daisy, and Kincaid's lupine seed for use in local restoration projects, mostly at the Willow Creek Preserve.



Friends Nursery Native Plant Open House



*Revegetation at Turtle Flats from
Seed Provided at the Friends Nursery*

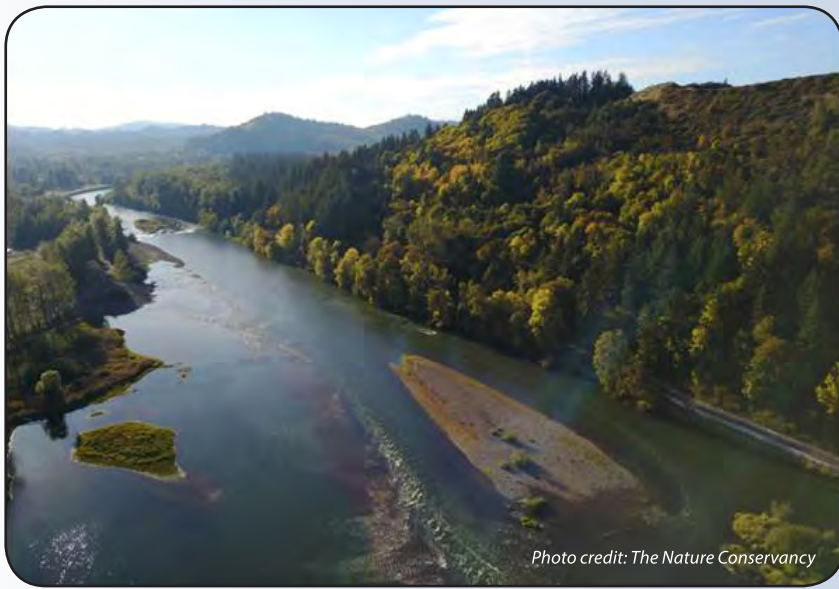


Photo credit: The Nature Conservancy

Confluence Restoration Project area looking west (down river) with the 2017 levee removal area shown on the left side of the photo.



Photo credit: Friends

Results of the 2016 planting effort at Turtle Flats

3.3 Habitat Restoration and Management

Listed below is a sampling of major habitat restoration and management projects implemented by R2R partners in 2017.

3.3.1 Economic Benefits of the Willamette Confluence Restoration Project

After seven years and moving enough sand, gravel, and dirt to fill 15,000 semi-trucks, six miles of the Willamette River have been reconnected to historic floodplain habitat. Not only is this project resulting in major habitat improvements, it's also paying dividends to the local economy.

"On the national level, it's reported that \$2.2 to \$3.4 million in total economic output and 13 to 32 jobs are created for every \$1 million invested in ecosystem restoration," said BCI Contracting Owner Dan Porter. "In Oregon, it's estimated that 24 jobs are created per \$1,000,000 invested, and 80 percent of the money spent on restoration projects stays within the county where the project is located." Through local support, private, State and federal grants, nearly \$7 million will have been invested in this project during the last decade. That equates to 168 jobs and \$5.6 million invested in Lane County. This is the largest floodplain restoration project ever to take place on the Willamette River, and the benefits it provides to people and nature are seemingly endless. This type of habitat connection on the river not only provides a boost to the local economy, it cleans drinking water, aids in flood control, creates more recreation opportunities and provides critical habitat for fish species, including the threatened Chinook salmon. "In the coming year, we'll enter the final phase of this project and plant more trees, shrubs and plants," said [The Nature Conservancy's](#) Willamette Restoration Manager Jason Nuckols. "We're looking forward to sharing lessons learned to scale this project within and beyond Oregon."

3.3.2 Willamette Confluence Planting Effort

After years of planning and inter-agency collaboration, extensive site preparation, then excavating 15 channel segments to connect 10 historic gravel ponds to the Willamette, the [Friends of Buford Park & Mount Pisgah](#) have completed a massive planting effort to restore five different habitat types on over 60 acres on three ownerships. The planting project improved diverse habitats on lands owned by the [Friends of Buford Park & Mount Pisgah](#) (Turtle Flats), [The Nature Conservancy](#) (Willamette Confluence Preserve), and the [Oregon Parks and Recreation Department](#) (Glass Bar Access). The planting effort commenced in Fall 2016 after the rains returned, and continued until April 2017.

Friends' stewardship staff led volunteers and varied contract crews, which included help from Oregon Woods, Northwest Youth Corps, and Walama Restoration. In all, crews planted over 62,000 trees and shrubs and over 31,000 "plugs" of grasses and wildflowers, and broadcast over 850 pounds of native seed. Over 113 different species to benefit a diversity of fish and wildlife species have been used.

3.3.3 Dorris Ranch Oak and Prairie Restoration and Enhancement

The [Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council](#) and [Willamalane Park and Recreation District](#) partnered to restore 15 acres of oak woodland and 33 acres of prairie habitat at Dorris Ranch in Springfield. Historically, this woodland was dominated by Oregon white oak, but over the past century, Douglas-fir, bigleaf maple, Oregon ash, and cherry have taken over. These trees were outcompeting the oaks for sunlight and other important resources and reducing key habitat for species that depend on oaks such as the acorn woodpecker and Western gray squirrel. To remedy this problem, the project focused on "releasing" the oak trees by thinning the majority of the non-desirable trees. The result is a more open woodland that will allow the Oregon white oak to thrive. Additionally, contractors have been removing invasive species from the prairie throughout 2016 and 2017. Funding for this project came from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and Willamalane.



3.3.4 Coyote Creek South Phase I

Construction and planting at the 116-acre first phase of Coyote Creek South was completed through collaborative partnership between the [Long Tom Watershed Council](#) and [Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife](#) with additional assistance provided by the [City of Eugene](#), [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#), Bonneville Power Administration, and the American Bird Conservancy. With the goal of restoring native wet prairie habitats, the site is part of the Fern Ridge Wildlife Area (FRWA) and adjacent to the City of Eugene's Coyote Prairie site. Through an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board grant, the LTWC was able to provide funds to assist with planning, pre-project monitoring, planting, and purchasing of seed from sixty species of wet prairie plants. The restoration process consisted of two years of site preparation to remove the non-native seed bank through mowing and selective herbicide treatments, followed by the creation of shallow vernal pools and a series of berms to retain water on the site. Staff from the ODFW Habitat Program utilized USFWS equipment to perform the earth work. Over the course of five weeks, ODFW constructed eighteen berms and seven vernal pools.

3.3.5 Staley Creek Floodplain Restoration Project

Staley Creek, a tributary of the Upper Middle Fork Willamette River, was historically straightened, channelized and bermed, resulting in a degraded stream disconnected from its floodplain. To remedy that, in July and August 2017, the [Middle Fork Willamette](#)

[Watershed Council](#) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Middle Fork Ranger District implemented a large-scale floodplain restoration project. Project implementation included pushing over whole trees with root wads in upland forests to create gaps and transporting them to the restoration site; removing invasive vegetation in the project area; moving nearly 50,000 cubic yards of material to remove berms and raise incised channels; and placing approximately 600 pieces of large wood across the floodplain. The final product is 46 acres of floodplain reconnected over one stream mile. This was the largest project that the MFWWC has ever taken on and it could not have happened without our partnership with the USFS, assistance from [Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), and the excellent contracting services provided by Haley Construction Company. We expect this new, dynamic landscape to dampen flood events, raise the water table and increase flood water storage. By restoring these hydrologic processes, habitat conditions will improve and, in turn, will benefit fish and wildlife. Funding for this project came from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, the USFS, and the Western Native Trout Initiative.

3.3.6 Coyote Spencer Wetland

In 2017, the [McKenzie River Trust](#) partnered with the Institute for Applied Ecology (IAE) to plant 9,180 native riparian trees, shrubs, and prairie plants on the 190-acre Coyote Spencer Wetland property. Work continues with mowing and spraying 30 acres of prairie habitat. MRT and IAE also finished a two-year plot study researching livestock grazing effects on Bradshaw's lomatium as part of an OWEB, Bradshaw's lomatium Habitat Management project. The project's goals are to study and develop grazing techniques that will benefit wetland habitats and positively impact Bradshaw's lomatium populations in the Willamette Valley.

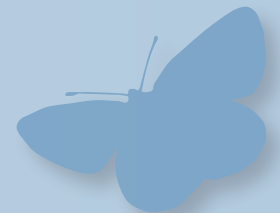
3.3.7 Quamash Prairie Restoration Work Continues

[Lane County](#) Waste Management continues to implement wetland restoration activities at Quamash Prairie near Short Mountain. Restoration began in 2003 with a 28-acre wetland enhancement that mitigated for wetland loss associated with expansion of the Short Mountain Landfill. Currently 86 acres of wetlands are being managed at the site with the help of local high schools. Since 2009, approximately 600 student visits each year have contributed to wetland habitat improvements.

Coyote Creek South Phase (looking south)



Berm removal and large wood placement underway at Staley Creek in 2017





Large wood placement on Smith Creek

3.3.8 Oak Habitat Restoration and Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project

Through funding provided through the [U.S. Bureau of Land Management's](#) Community Assistance Fund and additional funding received in partnership with the [Long Tom Watershed Council](#), the [City of Eugene](#) completed projects meeting multiple goals including habitat restoration (oak and mixed woodland) and hazardous fuels reduction.

Through these partnerships, projects were implemented on Skinner Butte, Suzanne Arlie, Wild Iris Ridge, and South Eugene Meadows in 2017.



Fuels reduction project at Skinner Butte Park

3.3.9 Smith Creek Fish Passage Enhancement Project

Two under-designed and under-sized culverts were replaced with bridges along Smith Creek, a tributary to the Coast Fork Willamette River. After completion, large wood was placed in the creek to improve and restore native fish habitat. The project was completed in September 2017 and opened 3.5 miles of fish spawning habitat. Project partners include [Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council](#), [U.S. Bureau of Land Management](#), [Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), and Weyerhaeuser Company.

3.3.10 Green Island Swale Connection Project

The [McKenzie River Trust](#) completed another floodplain enhancement project at Green Island in 2017, with the connection of a floodplain swale to a side channel of the Willamette River. The project included the removal of revetments to connect what had been an isolated man-made fishing pond into the side channel. Beyond the pond is a swale that will now, on average, be inundated 14 days of the year now that the revetment has been removed. In all, 350 feet of levee and 12,200 yards of material was removed, and 47 acres of frequently inundated swales planted into riparian forest. This project was made possible by an OWEB Special Investment Program grant award which was funded by OWEB, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), and the Meyer Memorial Trust.

3.3.11 Prairie Restoration Efforts Continue at Fern Ridge Lake

The [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#) completed the twentieth year of prairie restoration, host, and nectar plant augmentation in the Fern Ridge Lake area to improve habitat conditions for the Fender's blue butterfly. Prescribed fire on portions of 3 units with Northwest Oregon District BLM fire shop was completed in 2017, followed by seeding and transplanting with staff and Lane Metro Youth Corps. Butterfly counts are among the highest since monitoring began. The Corps also burned 50 acres of Bradshaw's lomatium and Willamette daisy habitat in the Fisher Butte unit of the Fern Ridge Natural Area. Unburned area will serve as controls in an ongoing demographic study of the largest remnant Willamette daisy population.



2017 Floodplain restoration project at Green Island

4

Recreation, Education, and Events



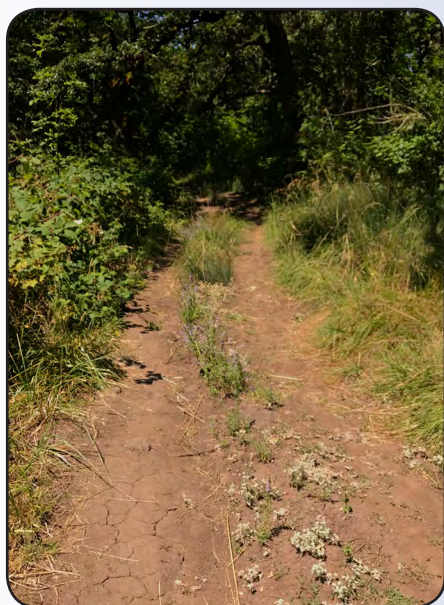
Photo credit: City of Eugene

Skinner Butte West Slope Trail

4.1 Recreational Improvements

4.1.1 Skinner Butte West Slope Trail

To improve access and safety in the area above climbing columns on the west side of Skinner Butte, the [City of Eugene](#) constructed a new quarter-mile trail. This trail includes approximately 45 wooden steps, gravel surfacing, and cable handrails. The trail will provide a single, well-defined route to the summit, replacing multiple user trails that had formed over time. Users of these unauthorized trails were unintentionally causing habitat impacts and often dislodged rocks above this popular rock-climbing area, causing safety concerns. Since its opening in December, the new trail has become a popular route to the summit.



Buford Park Trail 5 before and after the 2017 renovation project



Photo credit: Friends

4.1.2 Buford Park Trail 5 Repair Project

[Friends of Buford Park & Mount Pisgah](#) staff and Volunteers collaborated with [Lane County Public Works](#) staff to repair and existing one-mile segment of trail 5 in Buford Park. The improved trail provides year-round access and connectivity for trail users and park staff alike.

4.1.3 Thurston Hills Trail and Trailhead Parking Completed

A new [Willamalane](#) trailhead and a 50-vehicle parking lot, located along McKenzie Highway (Hwy. 126), was designed and constructed in the summer of 2017 to serve as the main trailhead for the Thurston Hills Natural Area. The trailhead serves the North Access Trail, which will eventually provide access to an extensive network of soft surface trails open to hikers and mountain bikers. In addition, approximately three miles of new trail were constructed to provide the public with access to this natural area.

4.1.4 Fern Ridge Wildlife Area Information Kiosks

Three informational kiosks complete with new interpretive signage were constructed by the "Friends of Fern Ridge Wildlife Area Tuesday Volunteer Crew" at the Cantrell, Fisher

Butte, and Royal Parking Lots with assistance from [Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife](#). Materials for the project were purchased with funds received from wildlife area parking permits.

4.1.5 Wild Iris Ridge Trail Grand Opening

On October 24th, the [City of Eugene](#) held a grand opening of the Wild Iris Ridge Shared Use trail. The 1.3-mile section provides wonderful views of the West Eugene Wetlands and much of the Ridgeline. This is now the westernmost section of the Ridgeline Trail.



Photo credit: ODFW

Volunteer crew at one of the new Fern Ridge Wildlife Area kiosks



Photo credit: Willamalane

Disciples of Dirt work party at the Thurston Hills Natural Area



Photo credit: USFWS

Eclipse watchers at Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge

4.1.6 Mountain Bike Trails at Thurston Hills Natural Area

Our local Mountain Bike Club, the Disciples of Dirt, has partnered with [Willamalane Parks and Recreation District](#) to construct a network of mountain bike trails in the Thurston Hills Natural Area. Two well-attended work parties were held in the fall of 2017 where approximately two miles of trail were constructed. Additional work is planned for 2018.

4.1.7 Interpretive Panels at Stewart Pond Disc Golf Course

Willamette Resources & Educational Network partnered with the [City of Eugene, U.S. Bureau of Land Management](#), and the Eugene Disc Golf Club as part of the creation of a disc golf course, which was completed in 2015. WREN had the specific task of helping to create interpretive panels at each hole that highlight the natural history of wetland ecosystems at Stewart Ponds. The panels were designed and completed in 2017 and are currently in the process of being installed at Stewart Ponds.

One of nineteen interpretive panels that were developed for installation at the Stewart Pond Disc Golf Course

NORTHERN FLICKER

Northern Flickers are large, brown woodpeckers with black-scaled plumage. Although it can climb up the trunks of trees and hammer on wood like other woodpeckers, the Northern Flicker prefers to find food on the ground. Flickers eat mainly ants and beetles, digging for them with their unusual, slightly curved bill. Flickers can often be seen in the edges of woodland openings or clearings.



Photo courtesy of Greg Giesy



4.2 Celebrations and Events

4.2.1 Solar Eclipse Viewed from Partner Lands Across the Valley

No annual report would be complete without mentioning the amazing natural phenomenon that tracked across the Willamette Valley on August 17, 2017. The total solar eclipse was enjoyed by close to 7,000 visitors across the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuges](#) in the Willamette Valley! We're still in awe.

4.2.2 David B. Marshall Honored by USFWS and Partners

On Saturday, September 23rd, the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) honored David B. Marshall who was instrumental in establishing the Willamette Valley Refuges. Together with the Friends of the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Salem Audubon Society and Audubon Society of Portland, the USFWS dedicated the David B. Marshall Study Site and future Outdoor Classroom at Peregrine Marsh in his honor. He was an amazing man and left an incredible conservation legacy. That same day, Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge hosted an Open House with partners and volunteers offering activities at all of the favorite pull-outs and overlooks.

David B. Marshall Study Site dedication



Photo credit: USFWS



Pisgah Heritage - People's Plum Cider release party



Guided hike at the Walk the Land Day

4.2.3 Pisgah Heritage Cider Released

Friends of Buford Park & Mount Pisgah gathered at the Native Plant Nursery to taste and toast the release of two benefit ciders developed in collaboration with WildCraft Cider-Works. The Pisgah Heritage Cider is an estate sourced English hawthorn heirloom apple cider produced from fruit harvested in the old orchards located in the North Bottomlands of Buford Park. Removal of the fruit from the landscape is a core strategy to suppress the spread of invasive species. Friends collaborate with WildCraft to utilize the otherwise wasted resource. Revenue from the sale of the fruit as well as the finished cider support management of invasive species.

4.2.4 Walk the Land Day at Green Island

McKenzie River Trust held its fourth consecutive celebration at Green Island in June where over 1,000 guests enjoyed a warm early-summer day. Visitors went on guided hikes, climbed trees, floated on kayaks, listen to music, or quietly explored nature's beauty at their leisure by foot or bike. Numerous partners had educational booths including Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council, the Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council, and the McKenzie Watershed Council, just to name a few. This free event was made possible by a multitude of sponsors and volunteers.

4.2.5 Play in the Rain Day

The tenth annual Play in the Rain Day, which is intended to provide opportunities for youth to spend time in nature, was held at the Mount Pisgah Arboretum in November. This free, fun, all-ages family event was well attended and included tree climbing, campfire cookery, nature exploration, nature crafts, hayrides, and scavenger hunts. The event is a collaboration of multiple organizations including U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the City of Eugene, Friends of Buford Park & Mount Pisgah, Nearby Nature, Northwest Youth Corps, Mount Pisgah Arboretum, Willamalane Park and Recreation District, the U.S. Forest Service, and Willamette Resources & Educational Network (WREN).



Play in the Rain Day Hayride



4.3 Education

4.3.1 Watershed Stewards

During the 2016/2017 school year, the Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council successfully launched the Watershed Stewards program in partnership with Oakridge High School. Feedback from teachers, students, and colleagues, plus extensive research into comparable outdoor science curricula, provided the MFWWC Education Coordinator with myriad ideas for the revamp process. The resulting curriculum, Watershed Stewards 2.0, takes the place-based watershed education foundation of the original curriculum, and expands the program to include units on salmon, water quality, water quantity, snow science, invasive species, and a wider range of restoration opportunities. All units have concise lesson plans



Volunteers learn how to properly plant native shrubs and trees at Elijah Bristow State Park during the Middle Fork Planting Celebration.

Rivers to Ridges Partners tour Delta Ponds with representatives from the Laja River Watershed of Guanajuato, Mexico



with hands-on classroom activities and opportunities for field studies. As part of this curriculum, Lowell High School students have been mentoring Lowell third graders during their salmon field studies. It also aims to bring students to the upper watershed this winter for a snowshoe hike to collect snowpack monitoring data, followed by service learning opportunities in restoration and monitoring in spring 2018.

4.3.2 Middle Fork Volunteer Planting Celebration

In February 2017, [Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council](#) hosted a volunteer planting celebration at Elijah Bristow State Park in partnership with [Oregon Parks and Recreation Department](#). Thirty-five volunteers helped plant several hundred native shrubs and trees to help restore Lost Creek's riparian corridor then celebrated with a potluck at the MFWWC office.

4.3.3 WREN Education Program

In 2017, [Willamette Resources and Education Network](#) (WREN) held a total of 35 field trips and 18 classroom programs that share the rich natural history of restored wetlands, their important ecosystem services, and the specific plants and animals that live here. WREN also reached youth and families through Family Exploration Days, which were held at a variety of sites in the West Eugene Wetlands. In addition, WREN reached adults life-long learners through our Wetlands Wanders, led by local experts. WREN was also a key partner in a variety of community outreach programs, including the Mushroom and Wildflower Festivals held at Mount Pisgah, the Play in the Rain Day, and tabling events in the community.

4.3.4 Laja River Watershed Twinning Exchange Program

On June 8, several Rivers to Ridges partners met with representatives from the Laja River watershed of Guanajuato, Mexico. The visit was part of a "twinning" exchange program sponsored in part by Meyer Memorial Trust, the Willamette River Initiative, and others. More information about this program can be found at <http://willametteinitiative.org/river-stories/river-people/13652>.

4.3.5 Coast Fork Science Pub

This fun and family friendly community event sponsored by the [Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council](#) takes place on the fourth Tuesday of every month at the Axe and Fiddle in Cottage Grove. Topics range from a wide variety of natural resource topics and come from a variety of points of view. This popular event is often at capacity and in 2017 began being broadcast on the CFWWC YouTube Channel.



WREN field trip



CFWWC Science Pub



Photo credit: MFWWC

Community members learn about invasive species during the Dorris Ranch Oak Science Pub and Tour



Photo credit: MFWWC

Volunteers at the Middle Fork Paddle & Pull show off one of the piles of Scotch broom they removed to protect western pond turtle habitat.

4.3.6 Dorris Ranch Oak Science Pub and Tour

To connect the community with the restoration work at Dorris Ranch, [Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council](#) and [Willamalane Parks and Recreation District](#) hosted nearly 60 people at a science pub and tour. Staff from MFWWC, Willamalane, and [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#) gave talks in the historic barn about the importance of oak habitat and details about the project. Then participants were led on a walking tour through the project area to learn about and see invasive species, oak woodland habitats, native birds, and history of the area from local experts. The event was sponsored by local businesses, including Mountain Rose Herbs, Plank Town Brewing, and 100 Mile Bakery.

4.3.7 Staley Creek Fish Salvage

During the Staley Creek Floodplain Restoration Project (see Section 3.3.5), it was necessary to divert water from the stream channel which inevitably placed fish in danger of being stranded in a dry stream bed. To limit the possible impacts, the [Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council](#) organized approximately 20 volunteers to help salvage native fishes from the stream before dewatering occurred and moved them to safety outside of the project area. This volunteer event was a great way to expose community members to restoration in action and create a community-based restoration ethic.

4.3.8 Middle Fork Paddle & Pull

To celebrate Earth Day and help out native Western Pond Turtles, [Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council](#) and [Oregon Parks and Recreation Department](#) teamed up to float a handful of volunteers down the Middle Fork Willamette River to an island in Elijah Bristow State Park where they worked to remove scotch broom.

4.3.9 MRT Community Tours and Volunteer Events

In 2017, [McKenzie River Trust](#) hosted a total of 13 community tours and volunteer events within the R2R service area. Through these events, more than 1,000 people visited conservation sites including Coyote Creek Meadows, Berggren Watershed Conservation Area, Andrew Reasoner Wildlife Preserve, Green Island, Coyote Spencer Wetlands, and Chub Slough.

A group of McKenzie River Trust volunteers



Photo credit: Tim Giraudier

Volunteers and USFS Middle Fork Ranger District staff work together to salvage fish from Staley Creek prior to the water diversion.



Photo credit: MRT

4.3.10 Row River Nature Park Western Pond Turtle Habitat

In 2017, the [Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council](#) completed installation of interpretive signs in the Row River Nature Park to increase awareness and knowledge of the Western Native Pond Turtle population that resides in the park. These signs were designed with the help of the [City of Eugene](#) and [Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife](#). Installation was completed by the City of Cottage Grove in Summer 2017.

4.3.11 Restoration at Bake Stewart Park and Dorena East Wildlife Area

With support of the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#), the Al Kennedy Alternative High School, produced and installed native plants at Dorena East Wildlife Area and Bake Stewart Park. The project now exceeds 30,000 plugs including Oregon geranium, biscuit-roots, lupine, Oregon iris, Tolmie star-tulip, and rose checkermallow. With assistance from the Northwest Oregon District BLM fire shop, the Corps burned 30 acres in East Wildlife Area. Post-burn seeding included important pollinator resources such as *Phacelia*, *Potentilla*, *Eriophyllum*, *Gilia capitata*. Golden paintbrush (*Castilleja levisecta*) was also introduced to the site.



Photo credit: CFWWC

*Newly installed interpretive signage
at the Row River Nature Park*



*Springfield
Mill Race*



Photo credit: Audrey Squires



Photo credit: USACOE

Golden paintbrush

Thurston Hills Natural Area Management Plan



Willamalane Park and Recreation District
250 S. 32nd Street
Springfield, Oregon 97478

March 20, 2017

5.1 Thurston Hills Natural Area Management Plan

Willamalane Park and Recreation District completed its Management Plan for its 665-acre Thurston Hills Natural Area Park. This Management Plan serves as the overarching guide to activities at the site for the next 20 years including habitat restoration and public access. The Plan was reviewed and approved by BPA and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and is already being implemented.



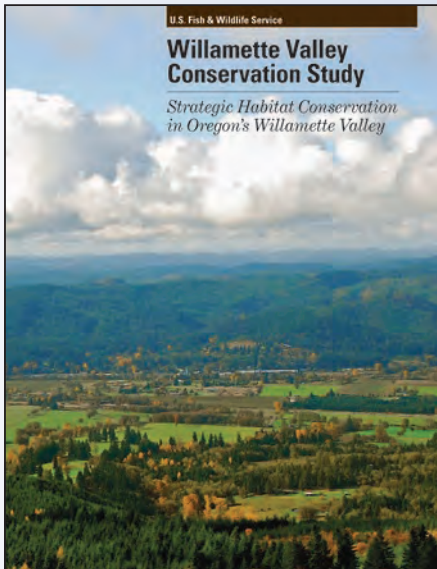
Photo credit: Willamalane

Thurston Hills Natural Area viewed from the south

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Willamette Valley Conservation Study

*Strategic Habitat Conservation
in Oregon's Willamette Valley*



5.2 Willamette Valley Conservation Study

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has spent the last several years conducting the [Willamette Valley Conservation Study](#) which was finalized in March 2017. There is a long history of partners working together to address natural resource conservation issues, through land-based and educational conservation actions across the Willamette Valley. To determine where and how these actions could be complemented, the USFWS worked closely with the [Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife](#), and other governmental and non-governmental organizations engaged in conservation efforts in the Willamette Valley to complete a study of land-based conservation needs and opportunities. For the purposes of this study, land-based conservation includes actions to identify, preserve, restore, and manage terrestrial areas primarily for their wildlife habitat values while promoting nature-based recreational and educational activities where appropriate. The study recommends that networks of grasslands, oak woodlands, and riparian habitats in specific areas of the valley—subsets of Conservation Opportunity Areas identified by the ODFW, be provided as safe and secure habitat to allow populations of sensitive native wildlife and plants space and time to recover. Establishing these habitat networks provides an opportunity to reclaim a portion of the Valley's natural heritage for current and future generations of Oregonians to experience and enjoy.



Photo credit: LTWC

*Long Tom Habitat Improvement
Plan public meeting*

5.3 Long Term on the Long Tom

The [Long Tom Watershed Council](#) continued development of the grant funded Lower Long Tom Habitat Improvement Plan in 2017. Work this year included hydrologic modelling of floodplain reconnection opportunities, site visits with land owners, alternatives development for fish passage, formulation of maintenance action best management practices, and holding public meetings. A report will be published in early 2018.

5.4 Eugene Parks are Salmon-Safe!

The [City of Eugene](#) Parks and Open Space Division has been certified salmon-safe by the Oregon nonprofit Salmon-Safe, Inc., the nation's first certification organization linking land management practices with the protection of water quality and imperiled native fish. Salmon-Safe promotes watershed conservation and preservation practices that help Pacific salmon thrive in west coast watersheds. The certification lasts for five years and includes annual verification by Salmon-Safe of progress by Eugene on certification commitments. Salmon-Safe implementation in the southern Willamette Valley is co-led by the Long Tom Watershed Council. During Eugene's park system evaluation process, Salmon-Safe recognized the value of the Rivers to Ridges partnership and the commitment of Eugene Parks and Open Space to balance multiple objectives in an environmentally sustainable manner.

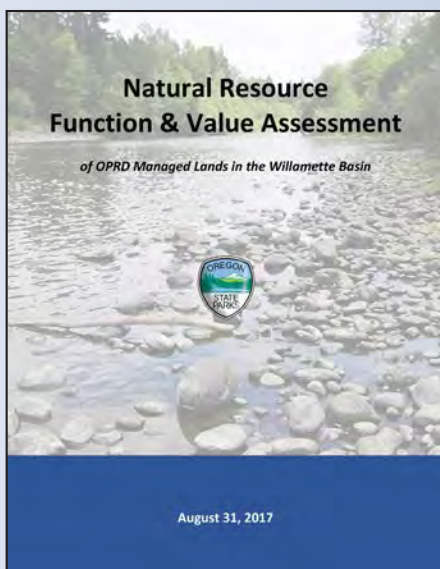
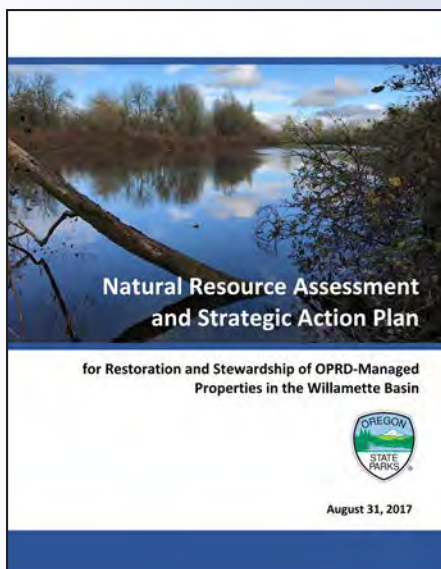
5.5 OPRD Natural Resource Assessment and Strategic Action Plan for the Willamette Basin

[Oregon Parks and Recreation Department](#) manages over 134 individual properties and over 23,700 acres in the Willamette Basin. Over the years, there has been significant interest from both partners and OPRD staff in managing and restoring habitats on OPRD properties, yet up to this planning effort, there had been no prioritization of OPRD sites in the basin to clarify where limited staff time and funding should be allocated. Over a two-year period, OPRD, with assistance from Jeff Krueger (JK Environments), develop the Natural Resource Assessment and Strategic Action Plan, with input from dozens of OPRD staff and over twenty partner organizations. Funding for this effort was provided by OPRD, OWEB, and Meyer Memorial Trust.

A key component of this planning effort, all 134 individual OPRD-managed properties in the Willamette Basin were evaluated against a set of 19 criteria and scored to measure overall natural resource function and value, in the areas of habitat, water quality and floodplain function, and public use and enjoyment of nature. The results of this assessment were used in development of strategies and priorities in this plan, and will be used by OPRD to help inform and prioritize future natural resource management decisions, including characterizing stewardship needs and restoration opportunities.

5.6 Rivers to Ridges Vision Map Updated

The original Rivers to Ridges Vision Map was developed in 2003 and a major work item for the IT! in 2017 was to create an updated version. In order to preserve the 2003 elected official endorsements, the map area and overall concepts from the vision were unchanged. However, extensive updates to the base information, extent of conserved lands, and trails were made, and the map was designed for improved readability. The revised map is now available for partner use to promote the vision, highlight accomplishments, and support funding efforts.



5.7 Trust for Public Land Support for the Eugene Parks and Recreation System Plan

In continued support of the [City of Eugene's](#) Parks and Recreation System Plan update, the [Trust for Public Land](#) conducted a study on potential revenue sources to address parks and recreation funding challenges. Highlights from the report was presented to the City Council in November and included public polling results for various funding options.

Rivers to Ridges on Facebook

The Rivers to Ridges Facebook page was created in 2016 and is currently being maintained by the Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council.



Please be sure to Like and Share!

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 currently relies on voluntary annual partner dues, plus a significant amount staff time contributed by partners. 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 member of the R2R Partnership and typically meets once annually. The 2017 meeting was held on December 4 at the Eugene Public Library and was facilitated by Chris Orsinger from [Friends of Buford Park & Mount Pisgah](#). The meeting included the addition of the McKenzie Watershed Council to the Partnership, Rivers to Ridges Team updates, IT! Outreach Plan, Accomplishment presentation from Partners, R2R Vision Map update, and a discussion of an expanded R2R vision area.

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 a half dozen times in 2017. Shelly Miller from the [City of Eugene](#) facilitated the IT! meetings in 2017.

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. Emily Ring from [Wilamalane](#) scheduled and coordinated the 2017 FOG meetings and tours.



Photo credit: MFWWC

2017 FOG Field Trips and Events:

- Coast Fork Turtle Flats Project (March 7)
- Bald Hill Farm in Corvallis (April 4)
- Buford Recreation Area (April 20)
- Cerro Gordo via Row Point (May 17)
- Snagboat Bend Tour (June 13)
- Green Island and Coburg Aggregate Reclamation Project (July 12)
- Quamash Prairie/Short Mountain (Sept. 13)
- Meadowlark East Management Unit at Buford Park (October 11)
- Staley Creek Tour (November 28)

Photo credit: Jeff Krueger

Photo credit: Jeff Krueger

FOG site visit to Staley Creek