

Twenty Years of Accomplishments and the 2023 Rivers to Ridges Vision Refresh



Regional Parks and Open Space Vision



June 2023



Acknowledgements

Rivers to Ridges Refresh Sub-Group

The Refresh effort was guided by a sub-group of the Rivers to Ridges (R2R) Implementation Team with rotating members during the three-year Refresh planning process. Sub-group members have included:

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- Fraser MacDonald (Willamalane Park and Recreation District)
- Dan Miller (National Park Service RTCA)
- Shelly Miller (City of Eugene)
- Reilly Newman (Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council)
- Sydney Nilan (Upper Willamette Stewardship Network)

Planning Coordination and Project Management

Project management and planning assistance provided by Jeff Krueger, working on behalf of the Rivers to Ridges Partnership with guidance from the Executive Team, Implementation Team, and Refresh Sub-group.

Special Thanks

The vision Refresh process would not have been possible without dedicated funding provided by Willamalane Park and Recreation District, City of Eugene Parks and Open Space, Lane County Parks, and McKenzie River Trust along with significant staff time from all 19 partner organizations. Additionally, the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation (RTCA) Program provided valuable technical assistance, analysis, and insight during this process.

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Lands Acknowledgement

The Rivers to Ridges Partnership acknowledges the lands on which we work and live are homelands of the Kalapuyan people whose descendants may be members of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs. Indigenous people have stewarded this land for thousands of years before the land was taken from them. The Rivers to Ridges Partnership supports on-going indigenous stewardship of these lands and becoming better allies with all peoples of the Willamette Valley.



Photo: McKenzie River Trust

Cover Photos:
Middle Fork Willamette River (J. Krueger)
Hiker on Mount Pisgah (J. Krueger)
Blue-eyed Darnier (C. Kerst)
Spencer Butte Summit Trail (City of Eugene)

The Rivers to Ridges Vision and Partnership



The Rivers to Ridges Partnership

The [Rivers to Ridges Partnership](#) is a voluntary association of nineteen 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) comes from a 2003 regional open space vision [document](#) which was endorsed by many organizations and unanimously by local elected officials from the Eugene-Springfield area..

Partnership Organizations



Key Stakeholders

These stakeholders contributed valuable input and insight during the vision Refresh process.



Statement of Partnership

The vision for the Rivers to Ridges Partnership, as defined in the 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 Vision (2003 and the 2023 update).

Partnership Formation

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 and to share resources and expertise. The Partnership also regularly collaborates with many other organizations and stakeholders in the southern Willamette Valley, and there is a simple application process available for those organizations wishing to formally join the Partnership. As identified during the Refresh process, the Partnership hopes to continue to expand in the coming years to bring in additional perspectives and expertise and to become a better representation of our broader community.

The Partnership currently operates with a limited budget of less than \$10,000 per year derived from voluntary membership dues, which primarily go toward tracking of accomplishments, annual reporting, and web services. Rotating volunteers from Partnership organizations coordinate various committees and sub-committees.

Additional information about the Rivers to Ridges Partnership including the 2003 vision document and Partnership annual reports is available at www.rivers2ridges.org.

Vision Development and the Vision “Refresh” Process

The first version of the Rivers to Ridges vision was developed beginning in 2001 and was based on extensive input from citizens, elected officials, and staff from local public and non-profit organizations. Elected officials directed that the vision be implemented based on non-regulatory measures, voluntary participation by landowners, and reliance on a broad coordinated partnership, and this approach has served the Partnership well. The vision was ultimately reviewed and endorsed unanimously by the Lane County Board of Commissioners (February 2003), Eugene City Council (March 2003), Willamalane Park and Recreation District Board (April 2003), and Springfield City Council (May 2003) along with numerous other local groups and organizations.

Through the combined efforts of the Partner organizations, a great deal of progress has been made toward implementing R2R vision since 2003 and the partnership has turned its attention toward developing an updated (refreshed) vision to guide regional priorities for the next 20 years. At its December 2019 annual meeting, the R2R Executive Team launched the three-phase vision “Refresh” process:

- **Phase-1** was conducted in 2020 and focused on working with partner organizations to define partner priorities within the broader upper Willamette watershed context.
- **Phase-2** was conducted in 2021 and focused on developing an outreach strategy and evaluating the Partnership function through a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens.
- **Phase-3** was conducted in 2022/2023 and included a community outreach process and vision refinement. The vision Refresh process used the endorsed 2003 vision as a starting point and refined the vision document and maps based on community and partner input and priorities (see Section 3).



Photo: J. Krueger

The Ridges Refresh work-session for Partners and Key Stakeholders was held in December 2022 with a focus of envisioning what was possible for the region over the next twenty years.

Twenty Years of Partnership Accomplishments by the Numbers

Partnership Accomplishments By The Numbers

The R2R Partnership has been tracking accomplishments and activities of partner organizations within the R2R planning area (see map on the next page) annually since 2003. Additional tracking categories added in 2019. This data is collected directly from partner organizations year and is approximate. Tracking accomplishments allows the partnership to gain an understanding of general trends over time and to quantify shared impact.

Accomplishments Tracking Category	2003-2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total Since 2003
Acres of Land Protected	6,213	2,024	752	10	175	9,174
Stream Miles Opened to Fish Passage	59	0	0	3	0	62
Miles of Trail Built (soft surfaced)	30	1	3.3	5.5	1.5	41.3
Miles of Path Built (hard surfaced)	15.6	1.4	0	0	0	17.0
Acres of Habitat Restored	6,736	452	567	1,047	1,731	10,533
Number of Plants Planted	2,000,000	499,280	170,310	99,110	61,234	2,829,934
Pounds of Seed Planted	Not Available	1,685	1,031	3,348	3,594	Not Available
Prescribed Fire (acres burned)	4,937	0	0	62	553	5,552
Volunteer Hours	Not Available	42,271	18,898	20,969	31,149	Not Available
Education and Outreach Events (people served)	Not Available	24,984	11,969	9,012	14,463	Not Available



Photo: The Nature Conservancy

Tree planting at the Willamette Confluence preserve



Photo: WREN

WREN field study in west Eugene



Photo: The Nature Conservancy

Ecological burn at the Willow Creek Preserve

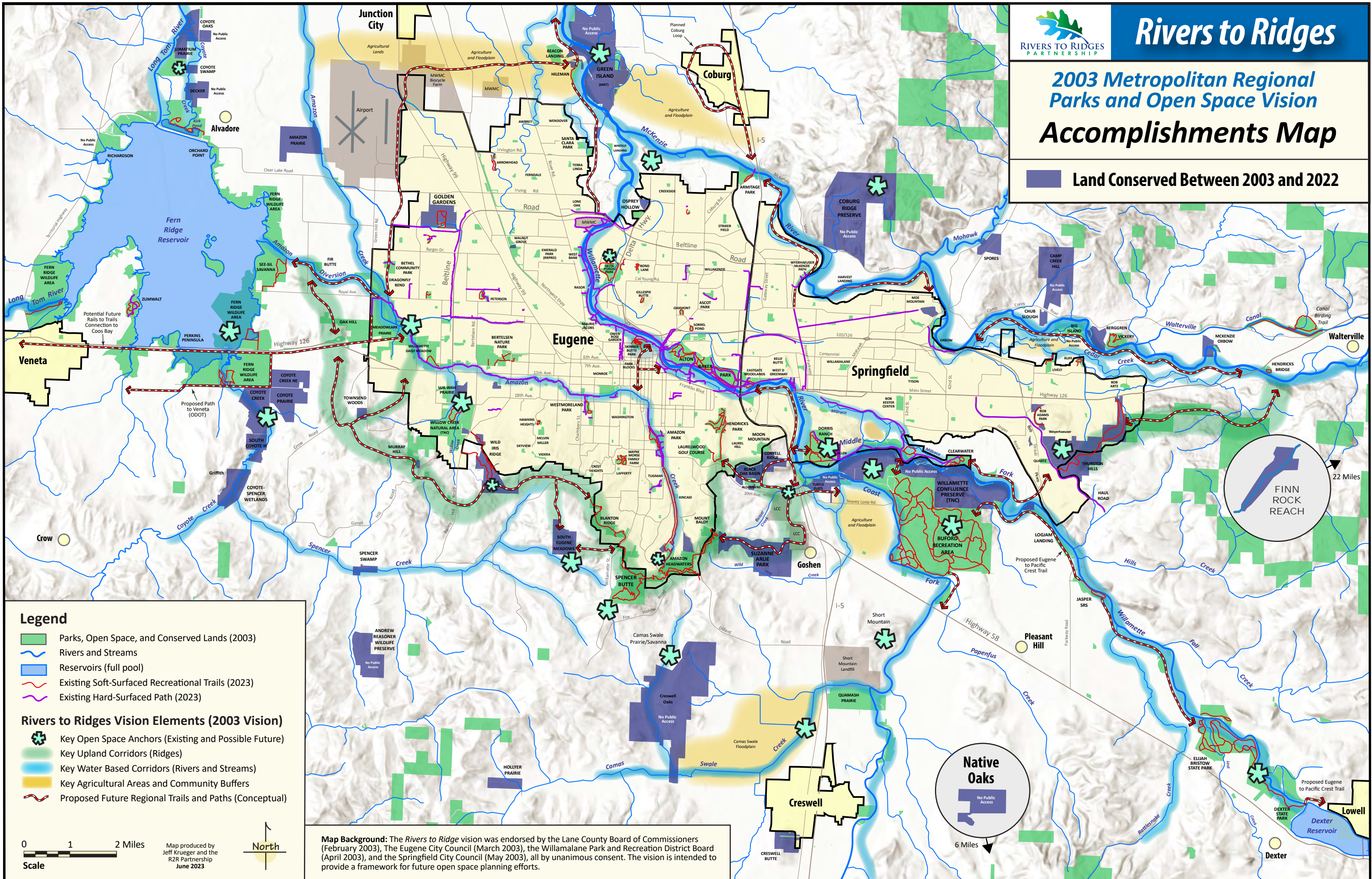


Rivers to Ridges

2003 Metropolitan Regional Parks and Open Space Vision

Accomplishments Map

Land Conserved Between 2003 and 2022



Legend

- Parks, Open Space, and Conserved Lands (2003)
- Rivers and Streams
- Reservoirs (full pool)
- Existing Soft-Surfaced Recreational Trails (2023)
- Existing Hard-Surfaced Path (2023)

Rivers to Ridges Vision Elements (2003 Vision)

- Key Open Space Anchors (Existing and Possible Future)
- Key Upland Corridors (Ridges)
- Key Water Based Corridors (Rivers and Streams)
- Key Agricultural Areas and Community Buffers
- Proposed Future Regional Trails and Paths (Conceptual)

0 1 2 Miles
Scale

Map produced by
Jeff Krueger and the
R2R Partnership
June 2023



Map Background: The *Rivers to Ridge* vision was endorsed by the Lane County Board of Commissioners (February 2003), The Eugene City Council (March 2003), the Willamalane Park and Recreation District Board (April 2003), and the Springfield City Council (May 2003), all by unanimous consent. The vision is intended to provide a framework for future open space planning efforts.

FINN
ROCK
REACH

Native
Oaks

Rivers to Ridges Vision, Guiding Principles, and Recommended Strategies (2023 Refresh)

Core Value Statement

The Core Value Statement below was developed by the Rivers to Ridges (R2R) Partnership and is intended to serve as an umbrella that applies to vision implementation and Partnership operations. This affirms the value of a partnership approach and desire to create a parks and open space network that provides benefit to all members of the community.

Core Value Statement

The Rivers to Ridges Partnership believes that a broad and inclusive coalition of partners and community members is essential for conserving and caring for our region's parks, open spaces, and natural systems and that all members of the community should benefit from and have safe and convenient access to open space.

Guiding Principles

The Rivers to Ridges parks and open space vision is organized around three overarching guiding principles that are intended to provide high-level direction for the refinement and implementation of the R2R vision and to provide a comprehensive framework for future open space related planning efforts in our region. They include:

1. Sustaining a Healthy Environment



Photo: City of Eugene

Moon Mountain Park

2. Connecting People to Nature



Photo: Black Cultural Festival

Black Cultural Festival participants learn paddle skills

3. Stewarding the Urban-Rural Interface



Photo: J. Krueger

Agricultural lands and riparian forest along the Coast Fork Willamette River with Spencer Butte in the distance

Under each of the three guiding principles is a list of recommended strategies and actions that support continued implementation of the Rivers to Ridges vision. These recommendations are sorted by geographic and programmatic focus and are based on input from community members, Rivers to Ridges Partnership staff, and key stakeholders. The priority strategies were sorted by their area of focus (geographic focus or programmatic focus) and were based on input from community members, Rivers to Ridges Partnership staff, and key stakeholders.



Photo: E. Alverson (Mount Pisgah)

Guiding Principle 1: Sustaining a Healthy Environment

A network of interconnected parks, natural areas, and open spaces found in the southern Willamette Valley sustains a functioning native ecosystem and protects human health and wellbeing. This ecological network will:

- Conserve sensitive and regionally important habitat types including wetlands, flowing water/riparian, oak woodland, oak savanna, prairie, and late successional mixed conifer forest;
- Sustain viable and resilient ecosystems that support stable populations of native plants and wildlife in the face of climate change, population growth, and increased human impact; and
- Provide a range of ecosystem services such as clean water, fresh air, flood storage, pollinator support, and soil conservation.

Priority Strategies and Actions for Sustaining a Healthy Environment:

Geographic Focused (see vision maps):

- Rivers and Floodplains:** Continue to implement restoration efforts and restore channel complexity along the floodplains of the McKenzie, Mainstem Willamette, Middle Fork Willamette, Coast Fork Willamette, and Long Tom river systems, building on past successes (Delta Ponds, Green Island, Willamette Confluence Preserve). Work with mid-valley partners to re-establish a dynamic river zone (meander belt) on the Mainstem Willamette northward from Green Island and on major tributaries of the Willamette River where opportunities exist (Coast Fork, McKenzie, Middle Fork, lower Long Tom). Continue to support the Sustainable Rivers Initiative, sponsored by the Corps of Engineers and The Nature Conservancy to manage flood control dams to support critical ecological functions and riparian health.
- Oak Woodland and Grasslands:** Conserve and manage oak woodland and prairie habitats on private and public lands focusing on priority areas recommended by the Willamette Valley Oak and Prairie Cooperative, Oregon Conservation Strategy, and others.
- Wetlands:** Protect, enhance, and restore large interconnected systems of wetlands, expanding on efforts in the West Eugene Wetlands, Fern Ridge Wildlife Area, Coyote Creek, lower Long Tom, and Quamash Prairie. Promote new restoration initiatives in high-potential areas such as the Camas Swale floodplain.
- Connectivity:** Continue to work to improve overall connectivity among conserved properties through the creation of habitat corridors along natural features such as rivers and streams (blueways) and ridgelines (greenways). These habitat corridors will also accommodate regional trail and path connections where feasible.



Photo: J. Krueger

Lower Coyote Creek

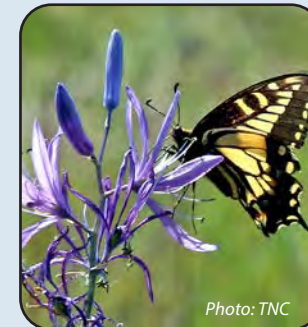


Photo: TNC

Anise Swallowtail



Photo: C. Kerst

White-breasted Nuthatch

Programmatic Focused:

- e) Ecological and Cultural Burning: Expand ecological and cultural burn capacity in the region to better manage fire-dependent habitats such as oak woodland, savanna, and prairie in partnership with the Tribes, Willamette Valley Fire Collaboration Program, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Oregon Department of Forestry, Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative, and others with expertise and cultural connections. In addition to habitat benefits, increased use of ecological fire will help reduce fuel load and wildfire threat at the wildland-urban interface. Ecological burning can provide opportunities for indigenous communities to reconnect with the land and cultural practices. Growing and maintaining public and elected official understanding of the importance of ecological burning will be essential to sustain these ongoing efforts.
- f) Invasive Species Control: Use a prioritized approach to weed management, including Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) in coordination with regional partners such as Oregon State Weed Board, Upper Willamette Cooperative Weed Board, ODFW, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Western Invasives Network, Willamette Aquatic Invasives Network, and the Native Plant Society of Oregon (Emerald Chapter). Develop and use a shared regional weed database for tracking and mapping emerging threats and share resources and expertise for coordinated weed control efforts.
- g) Increased Knowledge and Understanding: Compile, develop, and distribute the best available research, guidance, and spatial data among partners to support improvement of conservation and stewardship activities. Partner with the Tribes to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into local management practices. The R2R Partnership provides an excellent forum for sharing and collaboration.
- h) Clean and Safe Open Space: Provide adequate resources to maintain park facilities at a high level and to regularly remove trash and debris from natural areas and waterways. Work with local partners to foster a cultural stewardship ethos and address root causes of litter buildup in our natural areas such as illegal dumping and unauthorized camping.



Photo: P. Gordon

Ecological burn at Coyote Prairie

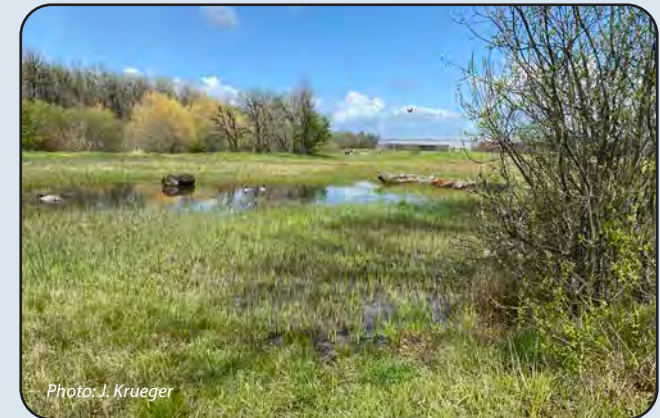


Photo: J. Krueger

Wetland in Amazon Park



Photo: City of Eugene (P. Gordon)

View from above Moon Mountain Park toward the Willamette confluence, Mount Pisgah, and Springfield Butte



Photo: Willamette Riverkeeper

Students from the Lane Migrant Education Program at a Willamette River cleanup in Alton Baker Park



Photo: Living River Event (McKenzie River Trust)

Guiding Principle 2: Connecting People to Nature

A network of interconnected parks, natural areas, and open spaces found in the southern Willamette Valley sustains safe, convenient, and equitable access to nature and outdoor recreational opportunities, ensuring access for the entire community, including those who have been underserved or experience cultural, socio-economic, or physical barriers to access in the past. Equitable access will:

- Promote physical and mental well-being of all community members;
- Strengthen social and cultural connections through shared outdoor experiences;
- Support sustainable and equitable recreation and transportation options including shared use paths, trails, bikeways, green street corridors, and walkable neighborhoods;
- Provide educational and recreational opportunities for all members of the community to promote appreciation and understanding of our region's ecology, unique sense of place, and cultural heritage;
- Provide opportunities for community members to become environmental stewards of their community in maintaining the system through hands on activities; and
- Benefit our local economy through new business recruitment (e.g., promoting quality of life), increased sustainable tourism (e.g., bicycling, agritourism, culinary), and improved health outcomes.

Priority Strategies and Actions for Connecting People to Nature:

Geographic Focused (see vision maps):

- Access to Open Space from Urban Areas:** Provide connectivity between urbanized areas and the region's trails and parks through the creation of neighborhood greenway corridors, walkable streets (see Green Streets below), and new paths and recreational trails (see maps).
- Green Street Corridors and Green Infrastructure:** Integrate green infrastructure into highly urbanized neighborhoods, new development, and priority geographies that were highlighted in the equity mapping exercise (see Appendix D). Green infrastructure includes: stormwater retrofits (rain gardens and bioswales), enhanced urban forest, pollinator gardens, enhanced open waterways, pedestrian-scale wayfinding signage and maps, river access points, and safe bicycle and walking routes. Strategically designate green street corridors to better serve areas with limited access to park and open space amenities (see Vision Map for some potential locations). Green streets would be designed to include concentrations of green infrastructure and provide safe and pleasant pedestrian and bike corridors to create park-like connections to nearby open space areas, trailheads, and schools.



Photo: J. Krueger (Alder Street in Eugene)

Designated green streets would compliment the park and open space system by creating park-like corridors for safe and pleasant bicycle and pedestrian movement through urban areas and would contain concentrations of green infrastructure and street trees.

c) Regional Connections: Provide walking and bicycling connections between the Eugene-Springfield metro area and rural communities in the southern Willamette Valley, nearby regional parks and trails, and other conserved lands. Priority connections would include:

- Eugene/Springfield to Creswell/Cottage Grove;
- Middle Fork Trail (Eugene/Springfield to Pacific Crest Trail);
- Biker/hiker connection from the Row River trail to Oakridge;
- Eugene/Springfield to Creswell (connection to planned Creswell Loop);
- Eugene to Veneta and the Fern Ridge loop;
- Coburg Loop with metro area connection;
- McKenzie River Trail and/or Canal Trail from Springfield to Leaburg/McKenzie Fish Hatchery (Lane County Park); and
- A potential future rails to trails (or rails and trails) project from Eugene to Coos Bay.

Establishment of all proposed regional connections would be subject to landowner participation and ecological considerations. At this time, all routes shown on the maps are conceptual.

d) Recreational and Habitat Corridors: Develop and implement strategies for collaboratively improving recreational access and visual quality along river corridors traversed by major highways in the region. A key benefit of this strategy will be to reduce the need for residents to travel long distances to experience the outdoors. Emphasis will be on opportunities to enhance access to public lands within 45 minutes of the Eugene-Springfield metro area. Projects along these corridors may include restored habitat and improved river access for water play, swimming, and fishing. Corridors would be improved to enhance the safety and infrastructure needed to support recreational bicycling (see [Lane County Bicycle Master Plan](#)) and also provide trailheads to access to nearby upland areas for recreation, nature interpretation, and environmental education. Corridors of interest include:

- Middle Fork Willamette River (Highway 58);
- Siuslaw River (Highway 126 and Siuslaw River Road); and
- Long Tom River (Highway 36 and side roads).
- Lower McKenzie River (Highway 126);
- Willamette River mainstem (Highway 99, River Road, Coburg Road);
- Coast Fork Willamette River and Row River (Hwy. 99, River Road, Row River Road, and side roads).

e) Water Trails and Safe Water Access: Continue to make improvements along the existing designated Willamette River Water Trail and explore feasibility of providing similar designations and improvements along other boatable rivers including: the McKenzie, Coast Fork Willamette, Middle Fork Willamette, lower Long Tom, and the lower Amazon/Coyote Creek/Fern Ridge marsh area. Consider improving the former Millrace dam structure in the Willamette River to serve

as a paddle hub with enhanced access, safe boater/floater bypass, and a whitewater skills park. Identify and designate safe water access points and water play areas. Work with the Oregon Marine Board on implementing safety improvements to all navigable area rivers.

f) Views and Viewpoints: Provide additional destination viewpoints in the urban region to offer the community more options and to reduce crowding at existing viewpoint destinations such as Mount Pisgah and Spencer Butte. Explore sustainable public access opportunities at high points such as: Coryell Ridge, Thurston Hills, Vickery Park, Creswell Butte, Split Rock Hill (Suzanne Arlie Park), and the slopes of Springfield Butte.



Photo: Eugene, Cascades, & Coast

The Row River Trail along Dorena Lake



Photo: J. Krueger

Spencer Butte is one of several popular publicly accessible viewpoints in the region that is experiencing crowding.



Photo: J. Krueger

Paddlers on the Middle Fork Willamette River

Programmatic Focused:

- g) Equitable Access and Environmental Justice: Engage and involve underrepresented populations and perspectives that includes meaningful participation by an inclusive coalition of interests diverse in race, ethnicity, economic status, gender identity, and ability. Offer options of guided natural area tours and hikes, transportation to parks and trailheads, and hiking gear (shoes, backpacks, water bottles) to encourage broad participation among underserved groups. Focus programmatic activities in urban-constrained lands and underserved areas identified in the equity mapping process (see Appendix D).
- h) Accessibility: Increase the number of accessible trails, paths, boat launches, and related facilities in the region and provide detailed information on conditions (e.g., grade, distance, surfacing, barriers, and transportation options) so that users can make informed decisions based on their own abilities and interests.
- i) Indigenous History and Tribal Participation: Expand interpretation of indigenous history and influences in our region, seek Tribal partnership opportunities on land management, expand indigenous place naming efforts, and provide Tribal access to R2R Partnership lands for cultural uses.
- j) Community Stewardship Ethics and Investment: Promote community awareness of the cultural, economic, and ecological importance of natural landscapes, parks, and open spaces. Offer public tours to showcase conservation properties and restoration projects. Provide hands-on volunteer opportunities to foster a stewardship ethos and civic pride, build support for open space improvements, and support funding efforts.
- k) Educational Resources: Leverage R2R partner lands as outdoor classrooms and labs. Interpret the unique natural and cultural history of our region. Provide adequate facilities for all-season educational use by non-profit organizations (e.g., WREN) and area schools.
- l) Map Resources: Develop a collective regionwide map resource that shows trailheads, trails, paths, safe water access points, and information on publicly accessible open spaces in the southern Willamette Valley. This could be a combination of web-based and hard copy formatted materials, cell phone-friendly digital maps, and QR codes at trailheads with links to multilingual maps and information. Potentially expand on existing digital map resources (e.g., [OuterSpatial](#) used at Howard Buford Recreation Area). Regional resources could be coordinated through the R2R Partnership.



Photo: American Trails
A person with disabilities desires the same experiences and opportunities to explore nature that are enjoyed by others.



Photo: City of Eugene
Kalapuya Talking Stones in the Whilamut Natural Area



Photo: McKenzie River Trust
ODFW biologist at Living River Celebration at Green Island



Photo: Hillsborough County
QR code link for supplemental and multilingual information



Photo: J. Krueger
Skinner Butte Park map along the South Bank Path



Photo: J. Krueger

Parks, paths, and trails benefit community health.



Photo: Mount Pisgah Arboretum

White Oak Pavilion at HBRA during the Wildflower Festival



Photo: Willamette Riverkeeper

Willamette River cleanup event

- m) Transportation Options: Work with area recreation providers (e.g., Lane Transit District, South Lane Wheels) to provide alternative transportation options (buses and shuttles) to popular parks and trailheads in an effort to help decrease parking lot crowding, reduce pollution, and provide equitable access opportunities. Consider a “park and open space shuttle service” (private-public partnership), especially during heavy use periods such as summertime, holidays, and weekends. This could also be used by floaters/boaters to eliminate the need for a car shuttle (e.g., [Bend Deschutes River shuttle](#)).
- n) Community Health and Wellness: Promote the importance of parks and open space to community health and wellness and encourage partnerships between public health organizations and public open space and recreation providers. Consider expanding on the “Pisgah Prescription” project piloted by PeaceHealth and Mount Pisgah Arboretum.
- o) Adequate Facilities and Amenities: Strategically enhance availability and accessibility of park amenities such as accessible restrooms, drinking fountains, informational kiosks, free parking, and pavilions for gatherings and community events (as identified as priorities in the Refresh community outreach effort). New facilities should be carefully sited to limit impacts on the natural landscape.
- p) Specialized Facilities: Provide adequate spaces for specialized recreational users including birders, trail runners, equestrians, wild crafters, dog owners, paddlers, and mountain bikers. Develop parks to accommodate family gatherings, team sports, play spaces, and sports courts as specified in local plans.
- q) Provide Clean and Safe Open Space: Provide adequate resources and utilize volunteer groups or adoption groups to maintain park facilities at a high level including regularly removing trash and debris from parks, natural areas, waterways, and trailheads. Work with local partners to address root causes of litter buildup in our natural areas such as illegal dumping and unauthorized camping.
- r) Disperse Use: Provide increased recreational access and facilities in underutilized parks and open spaces in the region and promote lesser-known trail options to take pressure off more heavily used areas such as Howard Buford Recreation Area, Spencer Butte, and the Ridgeline Park system. Suzanne Arlie Park, Vickery Park, and Thurston Hills are examples of existing parks where visitor facilities could be expanded.



Adding trails and facilities to undeveloped parks such as Suzanne Arlie Park will help disperse use across the region.

Photo: Agricultural Lands near Mount Pisgah (RaptorViews)



Guiding Principle 3: Stewarding the Urban-Rural Interface

Caring for the lands and waters at the urban-rural interface will:

- Protect and improve the region's scenic quality;
- Reduce fuel loads and promote fire-adapted and drought resilient landscapes in the wildland-urban interface;
- Protect surface and groundwater resources and conserve and restore functioning floodplains;
- Support economically viable and ecologically sustainable working lands (farms, ranches, and forests);
- Increase appreciation for the upstream and downstream connections and impacts across land uses;
- Encourage land management practices that support a healthy environment; and
- Create defined and attractive gateways into and out of our southern Willamette Valley cities and rural communities.

Priority Strategies and Actions for Stewarding the Urban-Rural Interface

Geographic Focused (see vision maps):

- Preservation of Sustainable Agriculture: Work to ensure long-term preservation of high-value farmland on the fringe of southern Willamette Valley cities and rural communities to support local food production, promote a connection between the community and local farmers, and preserve scenic quality.
- Oak and Prairie Habitats: Preserve and maintain oak and prairie habitats in the wildland-urban interface to showcase this once common regional landscape and to help reduce wildfire risk through habitat management practices that include thinning, invasive species control, and ecological burns.
- Drinking Water Protection: Collaborate with municipal drinking water providers, watershed councils, and other local partners to manage land uses that negatively impact water quality, particularly within defined groundwater protection zones and for areas around municipal water intakes and wells. Concentrate stormwater protection measures (e.g., stormwater planters, rain gardens, pesticide reduction) and best management practices in these areas.



Photo: J. Krueger

View from Mount Pisgah with the Coast Fork Willamette River and agricultural lands below and Coryell Ridge, Moon Mountain, and Springfield Butte in the distance.

d) Community Gateways: Define major points of entry into the communities of the southern Willamette Valley that would provide a scenic gateway, serve as access points to the region's open space system, offer visitor information, and provide a clear urban-rural transition. Potential community gateway locations include:

- Airport Road: Visitors arriving to the Eugene/Springfield area by airplane get their first impressions of the area while travelling on Airport Road into the metro area. The City of Eugene owns property along Airport Road with a number of large ancient oaks, and this site could be restored to oak savanna and provided with interpretive materials, to introduce visitors to the ecology of the southern Willamette Valley.
- Eastbound Highway 126, west Eugene: Travelling eastbound on Highway 126 into west Eugene, people will see oaks habitat and numerous fields or prairies of camas in bloom in the spring. One or more Community Gateway locations could introduce travelers to camas and other native wet prairie flora and fauna. Several possible locations might include parking/trailheads for future segments of the Ridgeline Trail, visitor information, and interpretive displays for the West Eugene Wetlands.
- Northbound Interstate 5 at Coryell Pass: The stretch of I-5 northbound from Highway 58 to the Glenwood exit provides a dramatic entrance to the Eugene Springfield area from the south. The highway is squeezed between Coryell Ridge and the Willamette River at the confluence of the Coast Fork and Middle Fork Willamette Rivers. Oaks, Ponderosa Pine, and seasonal camas blooms frame the view for the arriving visitor.
- Westbound Highway 126, Springfield: Travellers entering Springfield from the east will pass by the existing Thurston Hills Natural Area trailhead, where interpretive materials could highlight the myriad outdoor recreational opportunities ahead of them within the Rivers to Ridges system.
- Southbound Interstate 5, McKenzie River Crossing: The Coburg Hills are in proximity to where Interstate 5 crosses the McKenzie River. Views of parks and farmland provide a prelude to north entrance to the urban area.
- Southbound Highway 99, northwest Eugene: Highway 99 passes through broad expanses of farmland at the north entrance to Eugene. Remnant populations of native prairie plants line the east side of Highway 99 between Junction City and Eugene. This gateway provides an opportunity to interpret the past history and future promise of a community that incorporates nature into the urban setting and could accommodate a future trailhead and parking for a proposed agricultural belt trail in the area.

Programmatic Focused:

e) Working Lands Training and Assistance: Work to connect local farmers, ranchers, and foresters with support programs such as the [Upper Willamette Stewardship Network](#)'s Working Lands Program, [OSU Small Farms and Extension Service](#), community colleges, and organizations that provide hands-on training such as [Rogue Farm Corps](#) and [Huerto de la Familia](#).



The Thurston Hills Natural Area trailhead in east Springfield serves as a community gateway for travelers entering Springfield.



Numerous programs are available to support new farmers and ranchers and offer hands-on training and assistance.

Programmatic Focused (continued):

- f) Healthy Sustainable Forests: Support sustainable forest practices that incorporate habitat values, water quality protection, climate resiliency, and reduced wildfire threat while also contributing to the local economy. Partner with the Upper Willamette Stewardship Network's Working Lands Program, OSU [Forestry & Natural Resources Extension](#), Oregon Department of Forestry, and others to offer technical assistance, advocacy, and tours to sustainably managed forest demonstration sites in our region. Advocate for the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) [Healthy Forests Reserve Program](#) to provide technical and financial assistance to help area landowners in managing their lands sustainably and to boost habitat function.
- g) Fuels Reduction and Wildfire: Access fuels reduction programs and funding, leveraging with habitat enhancement projects on public and privately managed oak woodland and prairie sites to reduce overgrown woody vegetation and invasive species.
- h) Supporting Local Farms: Work to preserve the agricultural character of the southern Willamette Valley by supporting viable working farms that contribute to local economic vitality and offer a source of healthy locally-grown produce to nearby markets. This could include providing business viability training to existing and future farmers, advance opportunities for direct-to-consumer sales such as farmers markets, community supported agriculture, and farm-to-table events. Develop opportunities for aspiring farmers to access affordable land, through incubator farm lease programs, mentorship programs, or creative land-sharing arrangements.
- i) Agricultural Preservation and Collaboration: Work with landowners to promote viable working farms, limit agricultural conversion, and implement habitat management best management practices specific to oak, prairie, and riparian habitat on and around agricultural lands.



Farmers of Willow & Oak Farm and Barn Swallow Blossoms, located at the MRT-owned Berggren Watershed Conservation Area

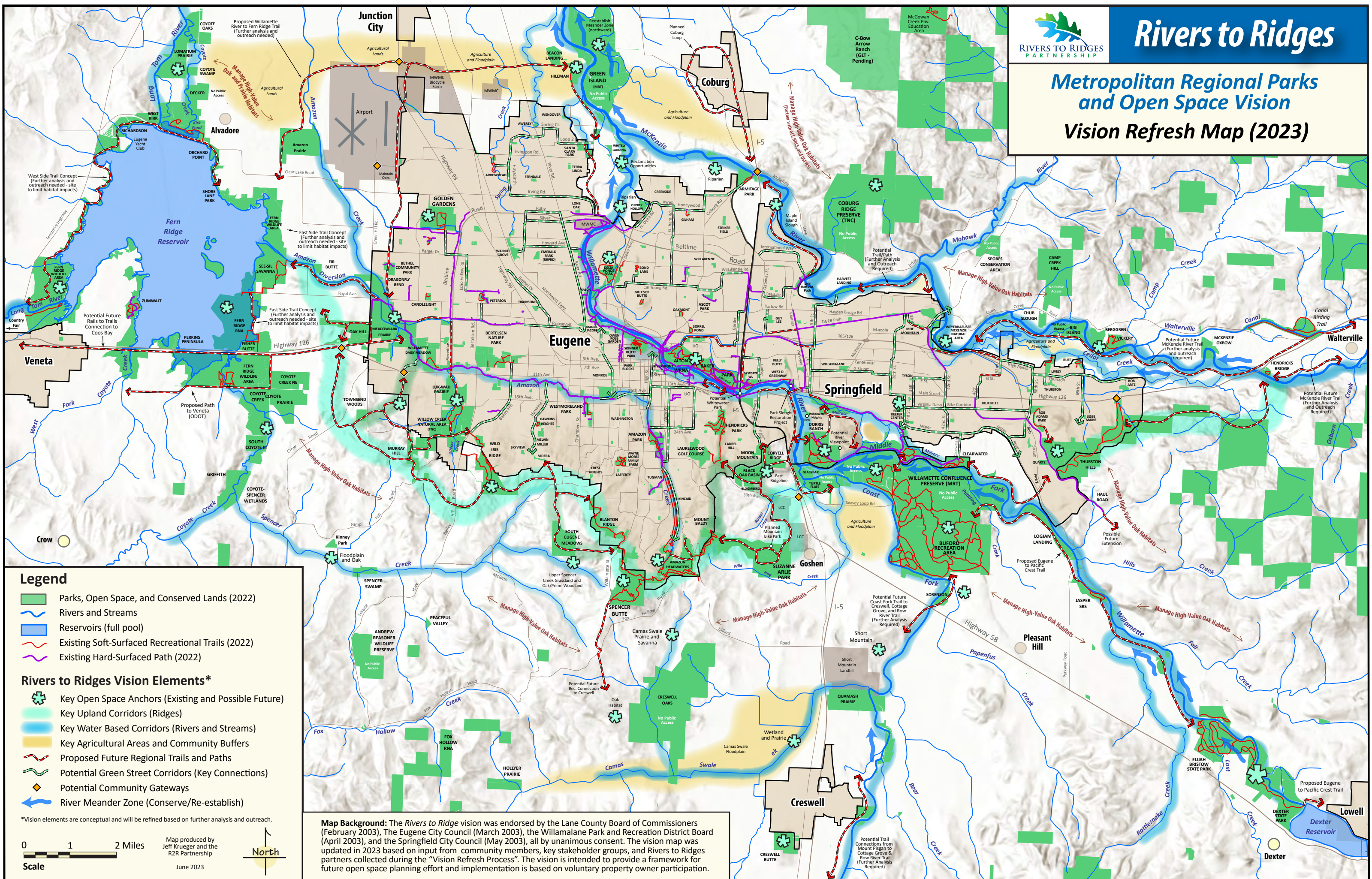
- j) Demonstration Farms and Forests: Continue to develop demonstration sites such as [Berggren Watershed Conservation Area](#) (MRT), [Dorris Ranch](#) (Willamalane), [Andy Reasoner Wildlife Preserve](#) (MRT) to showcase compatibility of habitat management and sustainable agriculture/forestry including demonstrating alternative practices for grass seed farms, vineyards, orchards (e.g., integration of nectar producing plants and oaks), and selective timber harvest. Demonstration farms could showcase sustainable farming methods and techniques to lower pesticide use.
- k) Work Opportunities: Elevate natural area management and restoration jobs as a key economic opportunity for rural areas to boost both local economies and the environment.



Selective thinning at the Andy Reasoner Wildlife Preserve to benefit the pine and oak woodland habitat found there



Agricultural production in the west Pisgah area



Legend

- Parks, Open Space, and Conserved Lands (2022)
- Rivers and Streams
- Reservoirs (full pool)
- Existing Soft-Surfaced Recreational Trails (2022)
- Existing Hard-Surfaced Path (2022)

Rivers to Ridges Vision Elements*

- ★ Key Open Space Anchors (Existing and Possible Future)
- Key Upland Corridors (Ridges)
- Key Water Based Corridors (Rivers and Streams)
- Key Agricultural Areas and Community Buffers
- Proposed Future Regional Trails and Paths
- Potential Green Street Corridors (Key Connections)
- ◆ Potential Community Gateways
- River Meander Zone (Conserve/Re-establish)

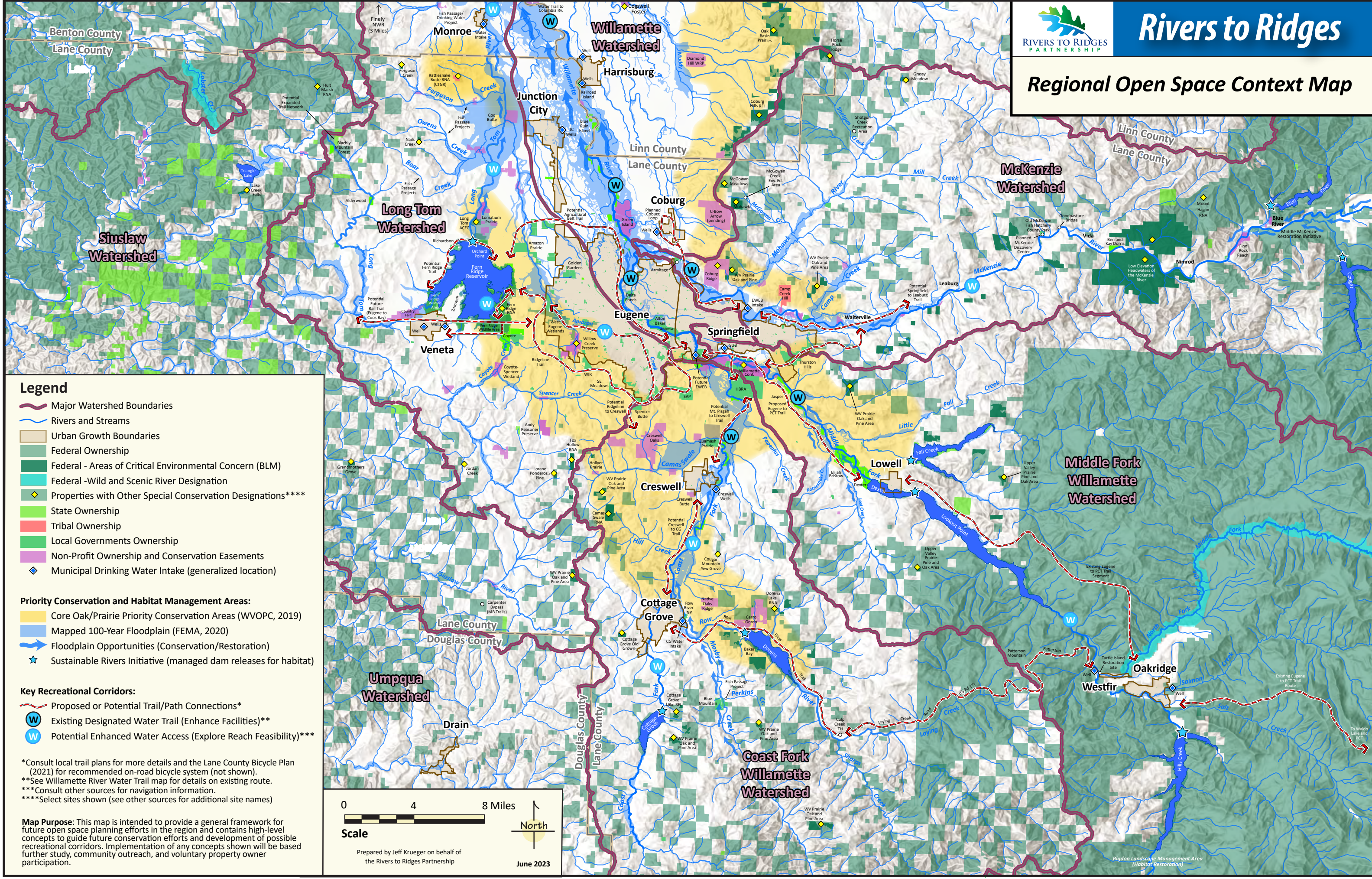
*Vision elements are conceptual and will be refined based on further analysis and outreach.

0 1 2 Miles
Scale

Map produced by
Jeff Krueger and the
R2R Partnership
June 2023



Map Background: The *Rivers to Ridge* vision was endorsed by the Lane County Board of Commissioners (February 2003), The Eugene City Council (March 2003), the Willamalane Park and Recreation District Board (April 2003), and the Springfield City Council (May 2003), all by unanimous consent. The vision map was updated in 2023 based on input from community members, key stakeholder groups, and Rivers to Ridges partners collected during the "Vision Refresh Process". The vision is intended to provide a framework for future open space planning effort and implementation is based on voluntary property owner participation.



Legend

- Major Watershed Boundaries
- Rivers and Streams
- Urban Growth Boundaries
- Federal Ownership
- Federal - Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (BLM)
- Federal -Wild and Scenic River Designation
- Properties with Other Special Conservation Designations****
- State Ownership
- Tribal Ownership
- Local Governments Ownership
- Non-Profit Ownership and Conservation Easements
- Municipal Drinking Water Intake (generalized location)

Priority Conservation and Habitat Management Areas:

- Core Oak/Prairie Priority Conservation Areas (WVOPC, 2019)
- Mapped 100-Year Floodplain (FEMA, 2020)
- Floodplain Opportunities (Conservation/Restoration)
- Sustainable Rivers Initiative (managed dam releases for habitat)

Key Recreational Corridors:

- Proposed or Potential Trail/Path Connections*
- Existing Designated Water Trail (Enhance Facilities)**
- Potential Enhanced Water Access (Explore Reach Feasibility)***

*Consult local trail plans for more details and the Lane County Bicycle Plan (2021) for recommended on-road bicycle system (not shown).
**See Willamette River Water Trail map for details on existing route.
***Consult other sources for navigation information.
****Select sites shown (see other sources for additional site names)

Map Purpose: This map is intended to provide a general framework for future open space planning efforts in the region and contains high-level concepts to guide future conservation efforts and development of possible recreational corridors. Implementation of any concepts shown will be based further study, community outreach, and voluntary property owner participation.

Partnership Structure and Recommendations for the Future

Summary of the Rivers to Ridges Partnership Administrative Structure

Beginning in 2010, the Rivers to Ridges Partnership took over the administrative function 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 currently totaling less than \$10,000 that is combined with a significant amount of staff time contributed by partners. The basic administrative structure used by the R2R Partnership, is described below.

Rivers to Ridges Executive Team (XT)

The function of the Rivers to Ridges Executive Team (R2R XT) is to guide high-level collaboration of Partnership organizations. The team includes at least one executive representative from each members of the R2R Partnership and typically meets once a year. The XT votes on accepting new members and sets Partnership priorities for the coming years such as the Refresh process.

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 priorities of the R2R vision and provided direction and oversight during the vision Refresh process. Additionally, several subcommittees meet as needed to help coordinate specific aspects of the Partnership. These include:

- Prescribed Fire: Coordinates the annual controlled ecological burn program.
- Acquisition: Coordinates upcoming acquisition efforts and priorities.
- Oak Folk: Coordinates technical aspects of oak and prairie restoration.
- SPROUTs (Seeds, Plugs, Rhizomes, or Underground Tubers): Coordinates native plant materials program.
- Refresh: Provided oversight and guidance for the on-going vision refresh process (will sunset in 2023)

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.



Photo: J. Krueger

A Field Operations Group field trip to the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde-owned Rattlesnake Butte to discuss stewardship techniques.

Recommendations for Future Partnership Structure and Operations

The Refresh process included review and evaluation of the current R2R Partnership purpose, structure, and function by R2R Partner staff. The general conclusion was that the current streamlined structure and operation of the Partnership has generally worked well, and the group emphasized the value of having a platform for exchange of information, sharing of expertise, and coordination of on-the-ground activities. Partners identified possibilities for increased effectiveness and progress through better, more-focused coordination and incremental expansion of the partnership. From this Refresh process review, a set of recommendations related to future Partnership makeup and operations was proposed and are listed below for consideration by the R2R Implementation Team and Executive Team in the coming years. Recommendations for future Partnership operations include:

1. **Strategic Expansion of the Partnership:** Continue to look for opportunities to expand the Partnership to better represent the diversity of our community, formalize involvement by key stakeholders (e.g., Tribes, Upper Willamette SWCD, Oregon Department of Forestry, Eugene Parks Foundation) and add important expertise and perspectives currently not represented (e.g., public health, tourism, agriculture, forestry, BI-POC perspectives).
2. **Membership Application and Participation Process:** Maintain a low barrier for joining the partnership with a streamlined application process and continue the practice of voluntary partnership dues (not a condition of membership) to encourage groups with minimal resources to participate.
3. **Collaboration with the Tribes:** Increase collaboration with local Tribes, incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge in land management, better interpret and integrate indigenous history into our parks and open spaces, and make formal invitations to the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians on joining the Partnership.
4. **Partnership Coordination:** Consider creating a part-time Partnership Coordinator position. The duties of the position are as follows: facilitate meetings, committees, and sub-groups; track partnership accomplishments; conduct broader community outreach; manage R2R membership dues; upkeep the web platform; and coordinate the annual reporting.
5. **Outreach and Highlighting Partner Activities:** Continue to provide an avenue for Partners to share major accomplishments and consider a new approach of annual reporting that uses a more dynamic web-based “story map” format that would allow Partners to upload highlights.
6. **Sub-Group Structure:** Evaluate, refine, and possibly expand the Implementation Team’s sub-group structure to better address key topics with more depth. Sub-groups could be standing or formed for a short-term to address specific topics such as Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) and Serving Underserved Communities; Trails and Paths; Clean and Safe Parks; Working Lands; Map Resources; Water Access and Recreation; and Education and Interpretation. Sub-groups would report back to the Implementation Team and Executive Team as appropriate.
7. **JEDI Training Opportunities:** Offer JEDI training opportunities for R2R Partnership staff and key stakeholders on a rolling basis.
8. **Tracking Accomplishments:** Continue to track and quantify R2R Partner accomplishments toward implementing the vision such as land conservation, volunteer hours, educational and other community engagement activities, and major on-the-ground habitat management (e.g., ecological burns, trails, plantings). Consider streamlining this process by collecting data in 5-year increments.
9. **Partnership and Community Events:** Participate in community events such as festivals, parades, and events to celebrate Partnership accomplishments, share resources (e.g., trail maps), and generate support for continued stewardship and expansion of the region’s parks and open space system.

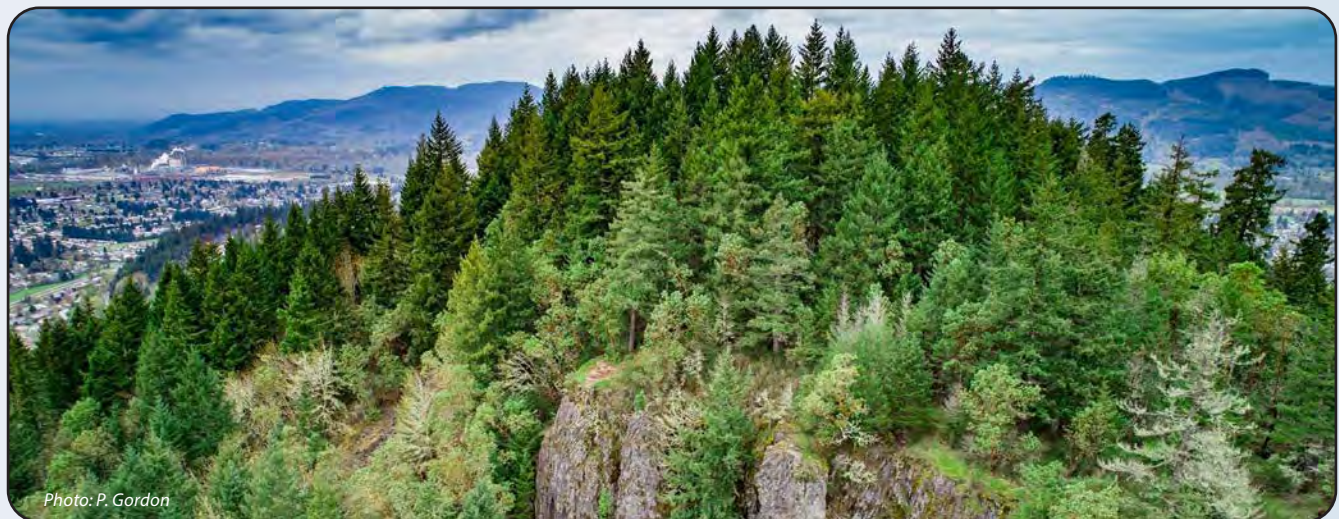


Photo: P. Gordon

Thurston Hills viewed from the south with Springfield and the Coburg Hills in the background

Appendices

Go to www.rivers2ridges.org to view appendices

Appendix A: Rivers to Ridges Refresh Partner Outreach Questionnaire Responses

Appendix B: Rivers to Ridges Assessment of Progress (2003 - 2020)

Appendix C: Rivers to Ridges 2020 Refresh Work-Session Summary

Appendix D: Rivers to Ridges Refresh - Equity Mapping

Appendix E: 2022 Rivers to Ridges Partnership Work-Session Summary Report

Appendix F: Community Outreach Summary Report

Appendix G: Rivers to Ridges Community Outreach Presentation

Appendix H: 2023 Rivers to Ridges Joint XT/IT Meeting Notes