

DRAFT!
American Heritage Rivers Initiative Working Group Meeting
Willamette River, Oregon
March 14, 2000

Background

The Willamette River is one of America's most important commercial and recreational waterways as well as a critical habitat for fish and wildlife. From its source in the federal forests in the Cascade Mountains to the confluence with the Columbia River, the river and the related resources have provided for humans for thousands of years. There is an Oregon legacy of combining economic growth and human use with improving water quality, providing river access for active waterfront communities, controlling urban sprawl and preserving lands for agricultural use. Over 200 miles long, the Willamette River and its major tributaries travel through ten counties where more than two million of the state's population live, work, and play. It is the fastest growing portion of the state.

The Port of Portland serves as a major commercial transportation connection with Asian markets. Intel, Hewlett Packard, Mitsubishi, and Weyerhaeuser have major holdings and activity along the river and the basin in general. Agriculture and tourism continue to be mainstays of the region's economy.

There are over one million acres of farmland located in the river basin, with some of the most productive lands immediately along the river. Agricultural products include dairies, orchards, grains, vegetables, vineyards, and horticultural crops.

The Willamette River and its tributaries are primary habitat for many different fish, specifically several anadromous salmon species which are protected and managed through the Endangered Species Act. The valley is an important flyway for migratory birds and is home to many other endangered and threatened species such as bald eagles, northern spotted owl and western pond turtle. A majority of the streams in the basin are designated as impaired under the Clean Water Act. The combined effect of Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act regulations is significant issue for local governments.

The State of Oregon has established the Willamette Restoration Initiative (WRI) in 1998. The Board of Directors for this significant program is made up of business and agricultural representatives, agency personnel, conservationists and other key leaders from around the basin. Their task is to bring basin communities together and to build a vision and strategy for a revitalized watershed that can sustain a healthy economy.

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River Priorities/Issues

The draft Willamette Restoration Strategy identifies several broad issues which need to be addressed. Those issues and potential federal measures or programs to address them are listed below.

- **Protection and restoration of habitats; in stream, riparian, upland and native species.**
 1. Integrate Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act regulatory requirements.
 - a. Complete draft CWA/ESA integration MOA and issue as final guidance.
 - b. Identify regional group to develop techniques for integrating and coordinating regulatory requirements.
 - c. Recognize additional workload associated with these regulations by increasing staff available to assist local governments.
 - d. Develop regulatory approaches which allow for and support programmatic ESA review of federal actions. Explore opportunities for making ESA 4(d) option available for federal government use.
- **Integration and coordination of restoration activities on a basin wide basis.**
 1. Continue funding for and planned completion schedule for Corps of Engineers (COE) Willamette Floodplain Restoration Study

Appropriation for future implementation of Floodplain study recommendations

2. Continue financial support for WRI by Pacific States.
3. Continue programmatic review of wetlands review actions

- **Federal funding for restoration and protection projects.**
 1. Continue funding for CREP, LWCF and related appropriations.
 - a. Make CREP regulatory adjustments as requested by State of Oregon (letter attached).
 2. Projects listed below
- **Building capacity at the local, watershed level.**
 1. Appropriate additional funds for
 2. Watershed Technical Assistance
 3. Province wide Information Management/ GIS Investments
- **Conducting public education and awareness activities**
 1. Honoring Our River
 2. Interpretative signs for restoration projects
 3. Willamette Watershed Project '50 Ways to Love Your River'
 4. Paddle Oregon event
 5. ESA website

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River Projects (See attached sheets)

1. Mission Mill Salmon Screen
2. MacKenzie Willamette Confluence Restoration Plan
3. Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Project
4. Wastewater/Stormwater Management Alternatives Study
5. Newberg gravel site
6. West Eugene wetlands

River Success Stories

4d meeting
GIS program

River Contacts

River Community Partners

200' buffer = 15,000 dwelling units
(-9.16e7)

Willamette River Habitat Restoration

Willamette Narrows section of the Willamette River Greenway

Project summary:

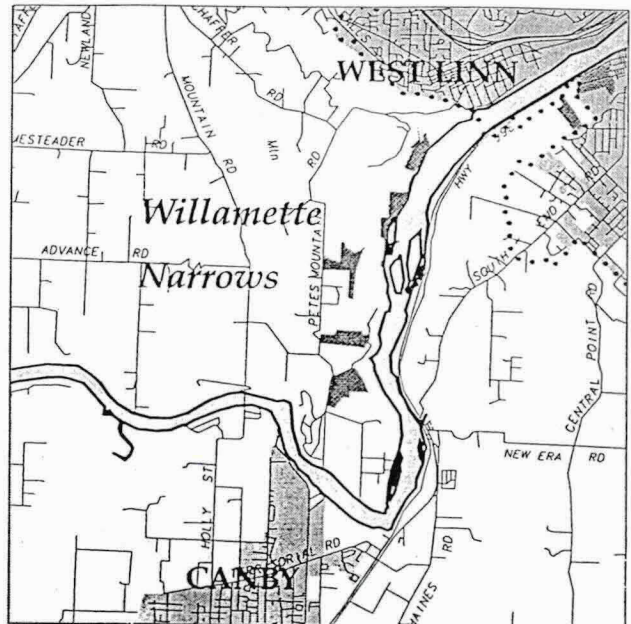
Restore public lands that have been acquired with proceeds from Metro's open spaces, parks and streams bond measure, approved by voters in the Portland metropolitan area in 1995. Focus on lands in the three-mile Willamette Narrows section of the Willamette River Greenway.

Project benefits:

Improved water quality; improved upland, riparian and stream habitat; restoration of native species, including Endangered Species Act listed salmon species.

Description of area:

The Willamette Narrows is part of the Willamette River Greenway. Located along the west bank of the river from the mouth of the Tualatin River south to the Canby Ferry Crossing, the area is highly visible from the Willamette River and West Linn. The Willamette Narrows contains numerous drainages, seeps and wetlands, including some relatively large diverse wetlands/bogs. These natural features, along with the varied topography, inter-mixed habitat types, and limited development make the Narrows unique in the urban area.



Project status:

Since passage of the open spaces, parks and streams bond measure in 1995, Metro has acquired almost 6,000 acres of land from willing sellers in the Portland metropolitan area.

Of the 6,000-acre regional total, 245 acres are located in the Willamette Narrows section of the Willamette River Greenway. Another 350 acres of land in this area are under contract or deemed essential in terms of achieving goals of the bond measure.

A minimum of 438 acres in the Willamette Narrows area are in need of restoration, including reforestation and the restoration of a healthy diverse vegetated understory. This land is threatened by erosion from past, poor logging practices and the subsequent invasion of exotic plant species. Water quality and wildlife habitat have suffered.

Project request/cost:

A total of \$250,000 (over a four-year period) is requested toward the restoration of a minimum of 438 acres in the Willamette Narrows section of the Willamette River. This money will be used to contract or employ a qualified person to supervise restoration activities over a four-year period. The project will occur on public land (in Metro ownership); Metro's matching contribution will be in land and materials.

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The Willamette River: An American Heritage River

Background

American Heritage River (AHR) program established by Executive Order 13061

AHR designation recommended by Governor Kitzhaber and other groups

One of 14 rivers designated in July 1998

Purpose: Help communities protect their river's values

Economic revitalization

Natural Resource and environmental protection

Historic and cultural preservation

Provides River Navigator

The program does not create new regulations. No interference in state or local jurisdictional matters. No private property takings. No lobbying.

River Navigator

A liaison between the basin community (cities, counties, watershed councils, districts) and the federal government.

Purpose is to help communities by;

Defining river program goals and needs - Project list

Facilitating community agency interchange

Identifying federal programs and resources to help meet community needs.

Themes

Locally based and focused

Partnership building, especially with Willamette Restoration Initiative (WRI)

Address broad range of river values

Accountability

Federally funded position

Partnership Opportunity for the Willamette

Memorandum of Agreement signed between Governor Kitzhaber and federal agencies.

Willamette Restoration Initiative (WRI) provides leadership, direction & coordination.

Oversight Committee/Community Partner a subgroup of WRI

Willamette Provincial Interagency Executive Committee (PIEC) to coordinate federal agencies in basin

Examples of federal agencies participation;

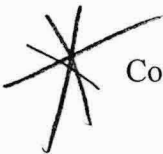
Identification of existing programs and tools

Refocusing existing programs to provide support for 'river communities'

Providing access to information

Intergovernmental cooperation and coordination

Allowing public access to the river



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FY 2000 River Navigator Work Plan

1. Write Charter for Oversight Committee (OC)
2. Develop fully operational Oversight Committee (Community Partnership).
3. Develop relationship with federal agencies and understanding of programs.
Identify what federal agencies would like to achieve through AHR.
Identify opportunities for integrating funding sources, including federal, state and private.
4. Participate in and assist the WRI process, specifically Willamette Restoration Strategy development.
5. Build tie to national AHR program.
6. Develop and begin implementation of an outreach and education plan in conjunction with WRI..
7. Meet with communities to become more familiar with identified goals and needs or to help identify the needs.
8. Meet with organizations and individuals who are interested and involved in river related issues.
9. Build community partners capacity at the local level.
10. Develop a list of potential projects, identify federal programs and resources that could help accomplish those needs and make recommendations to the Oversight Committee.
Get projects funded.

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Smith and Bybee lakes water control structure

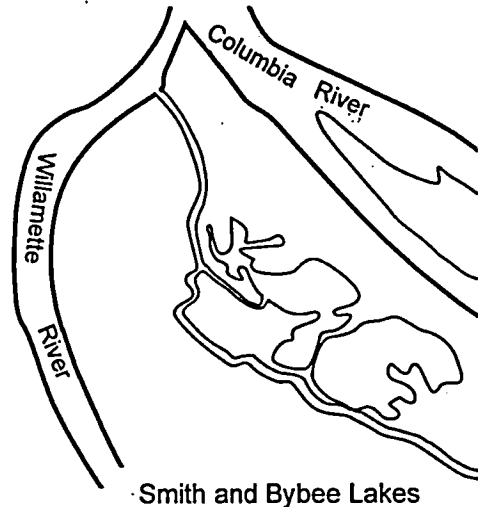
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Project summary:

This project will restore the natural hydrology of Smith and Bybee lakes to the extent possible by restoring the lakes' connection to the Willamette River. The new water control structure will also provide the ability to manipulate water levels for vegetation management.

Project benefits:

Anticipated benefits include improved water quality, provision of off-channel refugia for downstream migrating Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), restoration of mudflats for migrating shorebirds and regeneration of bottomland forest for use by neotropical migrant birds.



Description of area:

The 2,500-acre Smith and Bybee Lakes Wildlife Area is the largest remnant of an extensive wetland complex that covered the north Portland peninsula at the confluence of the Columbia and Willamette rivers. Historically, this maze of sloughs, lakes, marshes and forests provided habitat for a variety and abundance of resident and migratory fishes, birds and mammals. The lakes and ponds became isolated from the surrounding rivers and sloughs as adjacent areas were filled, dikes were constructed and the water control structure was built. Permanent impoundment has killed much of the forest around the perimeter of the lakes and accelerated eutrophication.

Project status:

Considerable biological and water quality survey work has been accomplished, and much of the funding needed to remove and replace the water control structure is in place. Additional funding is needed for the balance of the construction work as well as re-planting the forest and maintaining the young plants. A conceptual design for the water control structure has been selected and a non-profit group (Ducks Unlimited) has agreed to manage the design, engineering and construction. The City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services will provide reforestation expertise and has participated on other habitat improvement projects at Smith and Bybee lakes. Additional public outreach to the local community and fundraising remain to be done.

Project request/cost:

This request is for \$500,000. It includes \$150,000 to fully fund the replacement water control structure and \$350,000 toward establishment and maintenance of native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants around the perimeter of the lakes. As much as \$1 million may be needed for the full project. Of the \$350,000 needed for the water control structure replacement, \$195,000 has been raised. Some of the estimated \$650,000 needed to establish native plants on approximately 200 acres will be donated, but most of the funds will need to be raised. Metro will contribute project oversight and coordination, limited direct funding, seasonal staff to assist in maintaining the planted area, and management of the wildlife area.



