



Willamette Valley Conservation Study

A Project of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative

Connecting People with Nature

A central theme of the America's Great Outdoors initiative is a commitment to enhance the public's connection with the outdoors for purposes of recreation, improved health, and high quality time spent with families and friends. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service) has embraced this theme in its collaborative study of conservation in the Willamette Valley.



A Question of Relevance and Demand

The Willamette Valley faces an increasing audience, both in size and diversity. We must strategize to keep natural resources relevant to an urbanized, digitized population by ensuring the opportunities to connect with nature are abundant and meaningful.

Issues, Concerns and Opportunities

The Willamette Valley is Oregon's most populous region with 2.7 million people, 70% of the State's population. The Valley is one of the fastest-growing regions in the state and its population will grow significantly by 2040. Not only is the population increasing, it is aging and becoming more ethnically diverse. Continued population growth will place new pressure and demands on natural areas and natural systems that

support wildlife and wildlife related recreation. **How do we create quality experiences for individuals and families and all of their diverse interests while not overburdening existing public lands?**

Environmental stewardship is critical to a state where natural resource activities are major economic drivers of the economy. Over one-third of Oregon's jobs are in land-based and natural resource-related fields such as agriculture, forestry, fishing, recreation and tourism or jobs supported by those industries. **How do we promote environmental stewardship in a time when many youth and families are gravitating away from traditional outdoor experiences and spending more time indoors?**



Working Together – Building on Good Ideas

Connecting people means connecting the dots. As a collective group of nature-based recreation organizations and opportunities, we are strongest when we coordinate to promote the ideas that have proven successful and build new capacity where needed.

What We've Heard

During public open houses and meetings with state and local government and non-government organizations we heard general support for the Service examining our role in helping to address these conservation and nature-based recreation and education issues. We were encouraged to look at the Willamette Valley as a whole and work collaboratively with other agencies, organizations and landowners. We heard interest

related to the need for additional nature-based opportunities. We were asked to build upon existing plans like the Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan and the Oregon Conservation Strategy. Clearly, many organizations throughout the Willamette Valley are concerned with their ability to promote conservation, parks and open space in the face of declining funds.





The Goal of Connecting People With Nature

To promote a network of nature-based recreational and educational experiences that improve environmental literacy; contributes to physical and emotional health; supports high quality time with family and friends; and contributes to an environmental stewardship ethic.



Our Approach to Achieving This Goal

The Service will work with others over the next several months seeking ideas from federal, state, county, city, nonprofit and academic institutions, as well as the general public. The value of our Conservation Study approach is its landscape-scale perspective across many organizations. We will work closely with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to develop a set of recommendations for our Conservation Study in the Willamette Valley.

Our focus is on nature-based recreation and education activities that best represent the ways people connect with nature in the Willamette Valley. Traditional activities, such as fishing, camping, paddling and environmental education will be studied as well as emerging activities such as nature play, citizen science and stewardship. We will explore creating a future network of experiences and opportunities through leveraging partner's resources. We hope to promote new dialogue that will inspire action, contribute to implementing existing plans and informing future decisions.

Contact Us for More Information

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