

**GOAL 15**  
**WILLAMETTE RIVER**  
**GREENWAY**

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The residents of Benton County value the land – its beauty and life-sustaining qualities.

Agricultural and forestlands provide sustenance for residents of the Willamette Valley. These lands and the larger systems of mountains, valleys, rivers and wetlands of which they are part continue to be highly prized economically, culturally, recreationally, environmentally and aesthetically.

The residents of Benton County value the rural character that still exists in much of the County, the distinction that has been maintained between settlement areas and resource lands and open spaces, and the manageable scale of the cities, towns, and rural centers.

The residents of Benton County value clean air, water and healthy natural systems and recognize their importance in sustaining the quality of life that residents value for themselves, their children and grandchildren.

# WILLAMETTE RIVER GREENWAY

## Overview

The Willamette River Greenway was originally established by the 1967 Oregon Legislature as a grants program to State Parks for land acquisition along the Willamette River. The Greenway evolved from a state parks and recreation program in 1970 to a corridor program in 1972. Finally, in 1973 it developed into a land use program under the joint administration by State Parks & Recreation Division, Land Conservation and Development Department and local jurisdictions, such as Benton County. Since 1970, the program has shifted its focus from park acquisition to its present cooperative planning and partnering program, accommodating many uses but limiting intensification of development. During this same time, data and understanding of the nature and values of the Greenway have undergone profound advances.

In recent years the Willamette River and Greenway have become a focal point for excellence in Benton County's quality of life. This value has developed as a consequence of several factors: increased scientific knowledge about the river system, its relationship to riparian functions and the role of the floodplain; a proliferation of recreational river use; and a growing appreciation for the scenic value of a river that meanders through diverse agricultural and urbanized lands.

Citizens increasingly support maintenance and restoration of the Willamette River as a biologically rich, dynamic, natural river system. The river provides a network of interconnected channels, sloughs, alcoves, and tributaries that offer high-quality habitat for fish. Farm and forest activities, which are highly productive in the Willamette Valley, play key roles in both the local economy and in maintaining the values associated with the river. Those roles have been honored in the development of management plans for Greenway riparian areas.

The Greenway has been enhanced by the development of flourishing communities, providing residents and others with scenic vistas and access to safe swimming, boating, fishing, picnicking, camping, water trails and riverside hiking.

Over time, uses of the river and adjacent land have expanded and altered demands for the Greenway, calling for a set of progressive policies. The following policies provide the framework for the evaluation, planning, protection, management, and collaboration required to responsibly address key issues.

The Willamette Basin Planning Atlas (Hulse, et al, 2003) and Willamette Greenway Parklands Strategy (Oregon Dept. of Parks & Recreation, 2005) have served as primary references in the development of key management concepts, including:

- Recognition of the Greenway as an integrator of Willamette Valley quality of life emphasizing a healthy river, progressive cooperative planning, and balanced economic, social and ecological values;
- The need for available water to support domestic, industrial, agricultural, recreational, and fish and wildlife uses;
- Continued need for water quality cleanup;
- Alternatives to hardened shorelines in a dynamic river system;
- Increased understanding of riparian and wetland system functions and values;
- Support for fish habitat and threatened salmonid populations;
- Importance of restoration and rehabilitation of riverine and riparian systems; and
- Meeting the demands of a proliferation of river users and recreational uses.

# GOAL 15

## Statewide Planning Goal 15

To protect, conserve, enhance and maintain the natural, scenic, historical, agricultural, economic and recreational qualities of lands along the Willamette River as the Willamette River Greenway.

The qualities of the Willamette River Greenway shall be protected, conserved, enhanced and maintained consistent with the lawful uses present on December 6, 1975. Intensification of uses, changes in use or developments may be permitted after this date only when they are consistent with the Willamette Greenway Statute, this goal, the interim goals in ORS 215.515(1) and the statewide planning goals, as the case may be, and when such changes have been approved as provided in the Preliminary Greenway Plan or similar provisions in the completed plan as appropriate.

### COMPREHENSIVE PLANS OF CITIES AND COUNTIES

Each city and county in which the Willamette River Greenway is located, shall incorporate the portions of the approved DOT Greenway Plan in its comprehensive plan and implementing ordinances and other implementation measures.

1. Boundaries: Boundaries of the approved Willamette River Greenway shall be shown on every comprehensive plan.
2. Uses: Each comprehensive plan shall designate the uses to be permitted for the rural and urban areas of each jurisdiction, which uses shall be consistent with the approved DOT Greenway Plan, the Greenway Statutes and this Goal.
3. Acquisition Areas: Each comprehensive plan shall designate areas identified for possible public acquisition and the conditions under which such acquisition may occur as set forth in the approved DOT Willamette Greenway Plan and any other area which the city or county intends to acquire.

Excerpt from OAR 660-015-0000(15)

## Benton County Goal

### Willamette River Greenway

To protect, conserve, restore, enhance and maintain the ecological, natural, scenic, historical, agricultural, economic, and recreational qualities and resources along the Willamette River.

#### Policy Sections

##### 15.1 General Policies

##### 15.2 Environment

##### 15.3 Economic Resources

##### 15.4 Recreational, Historic, and Scenic Resources



Willamette River

# WILLAMETTE RIVER GREENWAY

## Policies

- 15.1.1** Benton County shall cooperate, coordinate and build collaborative partnerships with State, Linn County and other neighboring county and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private landowners to achieve the County's Greenway Goal.
- 15.1.2** Benton County shall accept the present County-adopted Greenway Boundary as defining the planning area within which special greenway considerations shall be taken into account and refer to this area as the Greenway Management Area. The County may periodically amend the Greenway Boundary consistent with the Greenway Goal, identified needs, and resource inventories of Greenway lands.
- 15.1.3** Benton County shall give priority to the protection, conservation and maintenance of the ecological, natural, scenic and historical qualities of lands in the Greenway Management Area when balancing uses regulated by other goals within the Greenway Boundary.
- 15.1.4** Benton County shall support agricultural uses and commercial forest operations that are respectful of the Greenway goal.
- 15.1.5** Benton County recognizes that Statewide Planning Goal 3 - Agricultural Lands and Goal 4 – Forest Lands are common land use classifications in the Greenway Management Area but that certain allowable land uses in these zones will be considered conditional or not allowable in the Greenway because of incompatibility.
- 15.1.6** Benton County shall permit intensification of uses, proposed changes in use, or development only when demonstrated to be consistent with the Willamette River Greenway Goal.
- 15.1.7** Benton County shall work with willing land owners when acquiring Greenway lands or interests in lands for scenic, conservation, recreation and access purposes.
- 15.1.8** Benton County shall convene a Greenway Advisory Team including technical experts and greenway landowners to assist the County in developing a Willamette River Greenway management plan.
- 15.1.9** Benton County shall restrict new and minimize replacement residential development in the Greenway Management Area and 100-year floodplains. The County shall also actively identify opportunities – for example, after flood damage occurs – to reverse past development of buildings and other structures within floodplains.

## 15.1 General Policies

### Defined Terms

- biodiversity
- conditional use
- conservation
- conservation easement
- ecological processes
- ecosystem
- floodplain
- Greenway Boundary
- Greenway Management Area
- habitat
- historic resources
- meander rehabilitation
- mixing zone
- point discharge site
- post-acknowledgement amendment (PAPA)
- riparian
- water rights
- wetland

See Appendix for definitions

### Cross-References

Additional policies related to this goal:

- Goal 2 Land Use Planning
- Goal 3 Agricultural Land
- Goal 5 Natural Resources
- Goal 6 Air, Water & Land Resource Quality
- Goal 8 Recreational Needs

# GOAL 15

## 15.2 Environment

### Policies

- 15.2.1 Benton County shall provide leadership for the protection of ecosystem services using a range of measures, including incentives.
- 15.2.2 Benton County shall develop an inventory and report addressing Greenway ecological functions and processes, resources, and needs that affect the health of the river, as the bases for developing management plans.
- 15.2.3 Benton County, in cooperation with private and public land owners, shall establish high priority areas for protection and restoration within the Greenway Management Area. High priority areas include but are not limited to confluences of major streams and side channels, alcove and island habitats, remnant riparian forests, and wetlands.
- 15.2.4 Benton County shall create partnerships with willing owners of high priority areas to achieve mutual land conservation and management goals.
- 15.2.5 Benton County shall request the Department of Environmental Quality to periodically review all point discharge sites to protect recreational users. The County shall request the DEQ to post warning notices near regulatory mixing zones that have had repeated violations.
- 15.2.6 Benton County shall focus efforts to revitalize the Greenway in those areas with less development, infrastructure, and lower population density.



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## Policies

- 15.2.7** Benton County shall work with land owners in the Greenway Management Area to use conservation practices that minimize soil loss and land loss by protecting non-hardened river banks and low gradient gravel river margins, using non-structural means.
- 15.2.8** Benton County shall discourage landowners and the Corps of Engineers from using riprap or constructing revetments for bank stabilizing except for emergency purposes or where it can be demonstrated that non-structural solutions will likely be ineffective.
- 15.2.9** Benton County shall encourage landowners to establish flood resistant vegetation, tree groves, or their equivalent in the Greenway Management Area where soils are suitable.
- 15.2.10** Benton County shall encourage protection of the Willamette River Greenway as an intact river system with dynamic riparian gravel substrates by recognizing the benefits of gravel as essential fish habitat and the importance of subsurface water flow through gravel substrates in maintaining cool summer water temperatures.

## 15.2 Environment



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## 15.3 Economic Resources

### Policies

- 15.3.1** Benton County shall cooperate with farm owners and federal and state agencies in promoting farm enterprises that enhance the quality of the Greenway.
- 15.3.2** Benton County shall give priority to the protection and conservation of farmland soils and will encourage farmers to retain and protect these valuable resources within the Willamette River Greenway.
- 15.3.3** Benton County shall encourage farmers and landowners within the Greenway Management Area to convert low-lying flood-prone agricultural land to natural areas in order to reduce floods, improve floodplain functions and wildlife habitat.
- 15.3.4** Benton County recognizes the protection given to mining under Statewide Planning Goal 5 but shall work with DOGAMI and mining operators to ensure that the ecological, agricultural, and recreational values within the Greenway Management Area are addressed and protected through the conditional use or post-acknowledgement amendment process for the purpose of minimizing conflicts



Courtesy of Green & White Rock Products

# WILLAMETTE RIVER GREENWAY

## Policies

- 15.4.1** Benton County shall request the Department of Environmental Quality to monitor and promote water quality standards for recreation within the Willamette River and its side channels.
- 15.4.2** Benton County shall take a leadership role in developing and implementing a collaborative and coordinated plan for recreational use and public access along the Willamette River Greenway. The County shall work with willing landowners to establish access to public Greenway sites and to develop trail linkages between park units and access points, using a variety of methods such as purchase, easement, and cooperative agreements.
- 15.4.3** Benton County shall foster a positive working relationship with private landowners in the Greenway Management Area to protect farmlands and other economic uses, to avoid public use impacts such as trespass, and to achieve mutual land management objectives such as protection of scenic values through incentives and cooperative programs.
- 15.4.4** Benton County shall collaborate with the Oregon State Marine Board and other public agencies to enforce no-wake zones and other regulations along existing parklands and publicly owned natural areas.
- 15.4.5** Benton County shall notify the State Historic Preservation Office and the Commission on Indian Services for review of development activities within the Willamette River Greenway to ensure preservation of historical and archaeological resources.
- 15.4.6** Benton County recognizes that the scenic qualities of the Willamette River Greenway are a treasured legacy and shall actively protect and make accessible this heritage by cooperating with appropriate public agencies and willing land owners in establishing and maintaining scenic viewpoints and interpretive facilities.

## 15.4 Recreational, Historic, and Scenic Resources



# GOAL 15

## Findings and References

### 15.1 General

**15.1.a** Goal 15 established by LCDC, clearly guides the Greenway policies. See Oregon Statewide Planning Goals and Guidelines. Goal 15: Willamette River Greenway OAR 660-015-0005, 7 pp.

Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development. 2004.

**15.1.b** The Greenway boundary, published and mapped by the Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon State Parks & Recreation Branch<sup>3</sup> in 1976, was accepted by Benton County in the original Comprehensive Plan and again is accepted as amended in the present plan. However, boundary changes may be required because of channel shifts or other special circumstances.

A proposal for the Willamette River Greenway, Benton-Linn Counties, Oregon Department of Parks & Recreation Willamette Greenway Parklands Strategy Final Report, 2005

**15.1.c** Certain land uses that are permitted outright in Goal 3 Agricultural Lands and Goal 4 Forest Lands are in conflict with the Benton County Willamette River Greenway Goal and need to be treated as not allowable or conditional uses.

**15.1.d** Many decisions for management of the Willamette River Greenway depend on technical advice and there is a need for Benton County to have a knowledgeable advisory team that includes greenway land owners.

### 15.2 Environment

**15.2.a** Benton County recognizes that the Willamette River and Greenway Management Area can provide many ecosystem services such as flood protection,

sediment trapping, water quality enhancement, thermal cooling, and fish habitat.

**15.2.b** Riparian vegetation and wetlands aid in purifying agricultural and storm water runoff, while river confluences and side channels contain the greatest biodiversity. High priority areas also allow for sediment and nutrient trapping, shade, gravel accumulation, flow reduction, and flood amelioration.

Hulse, D. et al. 2003. Willamette River Basin Planning Atlas. Trajectories of Environmental and Ecological Change, 2nd Ed.

**15.2.c** Tools for implementing Willamette River Greenway Goals currently include easements, habitat plans, incentives, and stewardship agreements.

**15.2.d** DEQ relies on regulatory mixing zones to dilute end-of-pipe toxicity so as not to impair river water quality, not to kill aquatic life, and not to endanger human health. Typically, regulatory mixing zones are not permitted in recreation areas, however they are allowed along other stretches of the river. Since most of the Willamette River Greenway is considered a water trail with frequent canoe, raft, and kayak travel, special water quality monitoring is needed to protect human health.

**15.2.e** Non-urbanized Greenway lands have less infrastructure, less capital development, and more opportunity to provide restoration projects.

Hulse, D. et al. 2003. Willamette River Basin Planning Atlas. Trajectories of Environmental and Ecological Change, 2nd Ed.

# WILLAMETTE RIVER GREENWAY

## Findings and References

**15.2.f** A number of Greenway policies are derived from the Willamette River Basin Planning Atlas. Central to reducing soil erosion and improving fish habitat, as recommended in this Atlas, is to reconnect the river to its floodplain by reducing hardened levees and instead rely on non-structural means such as meander rehabilitation, side channel restoration, and vegetation bank stabilization to stabilize embankments and reduce flooding.

Hulse, D. et al. 2003. *Willamette River Basin Planning Atlas. Trajectories of Environmental and Ecological Change*, 2nd Ed.

**15.2.g** Tree plantations are semi-natural, often profitable, plantings that substitute for lost riparian forest; they contribute to soil retention, flood protection, and wildlife habitat.

**15.2.h** Gravel deposits in the river channel and in the riparian strip are integral to a healthy river and especially to fish habitat and populations.

Hulse, D. et al. 2003. *Willamette River Basin Planning Atlas. Trajectories of Environmental and Ecological Change*, 2nd Ed.

**15.2.i** Sufficient water flows within the Willamette River are necessary to support water uses such as domestic, industrial, agricultural, recreational, resident and anadromous fish populations. The viability of water dependent uses is dependent on the protection of water and irrigation access rights to the river, and the right to use irrigation equipment within the Greenway Management Area.

### 15.3 Economic Resources

**15.3.a** Farmland forms the matrix of the Willamette Valley fabric and its continuity is essential to the quality of the Greenway.

**15.3.b** The mild climate and fertile soils make the Willamette Valley one of the state's most productive agricultural areas.

**15.3.c** Educational materials, incentives, and assistance are available for converting low-lying flood-prone agricultural lands to natural areas, such as mitigation banking and conservation easements.

**15.3.d** Revised Goal 5, Mineral and Aggregate Resources regulating mineral and aggregate extraction allows mining of these resources while minimizing adverse impacts of extraction and processing and where there are significant conflicts, imposes an ESEE analysis to determine whether conflicting uses should be limited or prohibited. For permitted mineral and aggregate extraction activities, Benton County must work with operators to minimize damage to Greenway resources.

### 15.4 Recreational, Historic, and Scenic Resources

**15.4.a** Deteriorating water quality in the Willamette River has been documented in Hulse, D. et al. 2003. *Willamette River Basin Planning Atlas. Trajectories of Environmental and Ecological Change*, 2nd Ed. and in Oregon Parks & Recreation Department, 2005. *Willamette Greenway Parklands Strategy*. Final Report from the Task Force on Willamette River Greenway Parklands Strategy.

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## Findings and References

**15.4.b** Responsibility for recreational resources is laid out in Oregon Parks & Recreation Department. 2005. *Willamette Greenway Parklands Strategy*. Final report from the Task Force on Willamette River Greenway Parklands Strategy, 70 pp. Coordination efforts should include but not be limited to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, Oregon State Marine Board, Linn County, the cities of Albany and Corvallis, and private landowners.

**15.4.c** The Oregon Parks & Recreation Department, 2005. *Willamette Greenway Parklands Strategy*. Final Report from the Task Force on Willamette River Greenway Parklands Strategy, 70 pp. recommends specific needs for access to recreation sites, priorities for acquisition and expansion, and the need for safe day use river sites. The Oregon State Parks & Recreation Department. 2002. *Willamette River Recreation Guide*. Oregon State Parks & Recreation Department and Oregon State Marine Board, 33 pp. describes the water trail program, a segment of which is planned for Benton County. This is also identified in the *Oregon Trails 2005-2014 Statewide Action Plan*.

**15.4.d** The Willamette River Greenway program seeks to provide suitable public access to the Willamette River and its shoreline for day-use recreation activities such as boating, fishing, swimming, and nature enjoyment, and a system of water trails along and/or near the river, in coordination with the Oregon Statewide Trails Plan and the Benton County Trails System Plan.

**15.4.e** The Oregon State Marine Board contracts with the Benton County Sheriff's office for law enforcement along the Willamette River.

**15.4.f** The State Historic Preservation Office and the Commission on Indian Services maintain an inventory of significant historical and archaeological sites throughout Oregon.

### References

- Allen J. et al. *Restoring the Willamette Basin: Strategic Issues and Challenges*. Willamette Restoration Initiative, 82 pp. 1999. [report providing a planning interpretation of the concomitant study by Hulse et al. 2003]
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- Benton County. Natural Areas and Parks Department. *Jackson-Frazier Wetland Management Plan*. 2005.

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## Findings and References

- Hulse, D. et al. *Willamette River Basin Planning Atlas. Trajectories of Environmental and Ecological Change, 2nd Ed.* Pacific Northwest Ecosystem Research Consortium, Oregon State Univ. Press. 2003. [definitive research summary of the environment and ecological base of the Willamette Valley, displayed in large scale format with analysis by river mile (kilometer strips)]
- Oregon. Department of Land Conservation and Development. *Goal 15: Willamette River Greenway OAR 660-015-0005.* Oregon's Statewide Planning Goals and Guidelines.
- Oregon. Department of Land Conservation and Development. *Planning for Aggregate: A Guide to Planning for Aggregate Resources in Oregon.* November 2001. 64 pp. and Appendices. [comprehensive discussion of the application of the 1996 revision of Goal 5 (OAR 660-023- et seq.) as it relates to aggregate mining]
- Oregon. Department of Transportation, Oregon State Parks & Recreation Branch. *A proposal for the Willamette River Greenway, Benton-Linn Counties, Book 3, 6 pp., River Mile Maps, Appendices.* 1976. [document displaying WRG land use boundary by river mile on photo mosaics.]
- Oregon. Parks & Recreation Department. *Willamette Greenway Parklands Strategy.* Final Report from the Task Force on Willamette River Greenway Parklands Strategy, 70 pp. 2005
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- Sinclair, M. *Willamette River Basin – Challenge of Change.* The Willamette Partnership, 40 pp. 2005. [popular illustrated description of Hulse et al. 2003]
- Willamette Restoration Initiative. *Willamette River Water Trail Implementation Plan.* Willamette Restoration Initiative, Salem, 9pp. 2004. [short description of water trail proposal from Willamette Mission State Park to Buena Vista Ferry]
- Wing, M.G. and E. Pearson. *Willamette River and Greenway Survey.* Unpublished Report prepared for Oregon Parks & Recreation Department, 44 pp. and Appendices. 2005. [on-site and mail survey conducted by OSU students, June – Sept. 2004, under guidance by OP&RD and OSU Survey Research Center of a small number of onsite users per site and approx. 220 valid mail responses]

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