



Building a legacy of environmental and economic vitality & enjoyment.

### Mission

To conserve and enhance the lands and waters of Yamhill County for long-term economic and environmental vitality and enjoyment.

### Partners

The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon

Friends of Yamhill County

The Nature Conservancy in Oregon

Three Rivers Land Conservancy

The Trust for Public Land

U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Yamhill Soil & Water Conservation District

Yamhill Watershed Stewardship Fund

### Co-Chairs

Will Neuhauser *and* Patricia Farrell

## About the Yamhill Partners for Land and Water

*The Yamhill Partners for Land and Water is an association working to help build a legacy of characteristic natural areas and resources in Yamhill County.*

The Yamhill Partners for Land & Water is an association of local and regional organizations that have formed a collaborative, community based association to increase support for conservation and restoration activities in Yamhill County.

The public and private partner organizations that make up the Yamhill Partners for Land & Water are working together to ensure a legacy of characteristic natural areas and resources for those who live, work and visit Yamhill County by conserving significant lands and waters for **wildlife habitat**, for **working lands**, and for **parks and natural spaces** to support the long-term vitality of the Yamhill area.

These partner commitments represent a public statement of intent by each organization to actively participate in this partnership to achieve the partnership's stated goals, to strive to identify opportunities and solutions whenever possible, and to contribute support and assistance and to collaborate with other Partners on various projects within Yamhill County, consistent with the organization's mission and within its resource limits. Organizations supporting the shared mission and willing to commit resources — consistent with their own mission — to the shared goals are invited to join the Yamhill Partners for Land and Water.

By joining together, the organizations intend to use the collective and cooperative energy of other partners more efficiently and to identify opportunities that have greater impact and the possibility of collaboration in the county.

Recognizing that the vitality of the Yamhill County area is dependent on multiple axes of the natural areas and resources, the group's focus areas are: fish and wildlife habitat, working lands, and parks and natural spaces.

## Formation

In 2008, several organizations involved in land trust and related conservation activities in the Yamhill County area began meeting to discuss common issues. Over the course of several months, all agreed that there was a growing need for more stewardship of the lands and waters of Yamhill County, that there were increasing opportunities and that there is growing land-owner interest. The group identified common observations:

- concerns of **limited capacity** for conservation, especially limited financial capacity;
- challenges from a **growing population and changing demographics**;
- **shifting economic and agriculture base**;
- **declining per-capita parks** and park acreage, among the lowest of comparable counties;
- a **crisis level loss of natural communities**, especially Oregon White Oak savannas and woodlands, upland and wet prairies;
- **poor water quality**, especially turbidity, E. coli, and high temperatures;
- a **generational transfer of lands** underway with desire to preserve rather than convert lands; and
- **growing landowner interest** in conservation easements but organizations have limited individual capacity to respond.

## What's Next

In the coming year, the Partnership's objectives are to:

- Develop shared strategic goals
- Contribute to a set of maps of priority habitat & waterways
- Coordinate and cooperate between groups on conservation opportunities
- Offer mutual support and advice on specific on-going projects
- Investigate avenues for increasing funding of conservation and restoration projects
- Increase community awareness of the value of our characteristic natural resources
- Increase community and landowner awareness of conservation and restoration needs and opportunities
- Work on shared priorities to the extent they fit with each organization's mission / priorities

## Yamhill County Background

Yamhill County is primarily a rural county but is feeling the effects of its proximity to Portland and Salem, its attractiveness as a retirement area, the rapid growth of its two largest cities — McMinnville and Newberg — and the burgeoning wine industry and associated tourism. It is also, via Highway 18, an access route to the coast and the popular Spirit Mountain casino.

Prior to European settlement and treaty-signing, the Yamel Kalapuya lived in and managed the resources in what is today called Yamhill County. From 1990, Yamhill County's population increased by over a third to more than 90,000 people. By 2020, the State of Oregon's Office of Economic Analysis projects that Yamhill County's population will see roughly a 40% increase — approximately 33,000 more people, totaling 120,000 people. According to United States Census estimates, just over half of the county's current populace lives in the cities of McMinnville and Newberg, with the remaining residents living on farms and in smaller towns.

Yamhill County's 1993 Comprehensive Plan includes goals and policies to guide growth and development, in recognition that population increases and rural land conversion to urban uses can adversely impact other goals and policies. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the importance of conserving and managing the

integrity and economic viability of agriculture and forest resources through protection of high value soils; it seeks to conserve and efficiently manage water resources, including riparian vegetation; it recognizes the County's rich and varied wildlife resources which include upland game, fur bearers, anadromous and warm water fish and non game species and the importance of protecting ecologically and scientifically natural areas; it stresses the need to increase park and recreational opportunities.

### **The Lands and Waters of Yamhill County**

**Lands:** Located in the northern Willamette Valley, Yamhill County stretches from the Willamette River on the east up to the summit of the Coast Range on the west. About one-third of the area of the county is gently sloped valley bottomland, ranging in elevation from about 60 feet above sea level on the eastern boundary at the Willamette River to about 400 feet above sea level in the upper valleys of the tributaries of the Yamhill River. The remaining two-thirds is forested uplands with elevations up to about 3,400 feet at Trask Mountain. The higher elevations receive much greater annual precipitation (up to 160 inches) than the lowlands (40-60 inches). Differences in elevation, slope, and precipitation, along with the historic role of fire on the landscape, have produced the diverse habitat types in Yamhill County.

**Waters:** Most of Yamhill County lies in the Yamhill River Watershed. Dozens of small creeks supply three sub-basins: North Yamhill, South Yamhill, and the Yamhill River main stem. Uses include: fishing, swimming, boating, wildlife habitat, agriculture, domestic and industrial water supply. The Yamhill River is a tributary to the Willamette River. The rest of Yamhill County lies within the Chehalem Creek watershed (and also a tributary to the Willamette River), a relatively intact wetland and floodplain system providing excellent waterfowl habitat and groundwater recharge.

Water supply varies seasonally with high winter stream flows and low summer flows further reduced by municipal and agriculture use. Low stream flows can negatively impact wildlife by increasing nutrient and bacteria concentrations and by increasing the water temperature.

Many stream sections in Yamhill County do not meet state water quality standards for one or more of: bacteria levels, temperature, flow modification, dissolved oxygen, pH, or for presence of toxic materials such as pesticides. These segments are listed by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) under the Federal Clean Water Act as requiring action to improve water quality to meet state standards.

### **Focus Area: *Wildlife Habitat***

Yamhill County has the largest concentration of Oregon White Oak habitat remaining in the Willamette Valley. Several Federally listed threatened or endangered species are found here including the Kincaid's Lupine and the Fenders Blue Butterfly. Other listed species include winter steelhead, spring chinook, and Nelson's checkermallow. Other species are listed under the state sensitive species list and include red-legged frog, western pond turtle, and white breasted nuthatch, among others.

Historically, oak savanna and woodland with wetland and upland prairie were the dominant vegetation types, primarily due to the Kalapuyans maintenance of early-seral habitats through the use of fire. Now these high priority ecosystems have all but disappeared, in part due to loss of fire as a management tool. Diversity and acreage of natural wildlife habitats in Yamhill County was reduced as land was converted from natural forest and grassland to managed forests, cropland, homesteads, and urban areas. Clearing of lands for urbanization and other developments continues to threaten sensitive plant and animal populations. Invasion of non-native species, both plant and animal, are also reducing the viability of native species.

**Focus Area: *Working Lands***

Rich soil, good climate, and refined production techniques combine in Yamhill County to produce high quality crops and timber. Agriculture and lumber production are the leading industries in Yamhill County with agricultural income ranking from 3rd to 5th among Oregon counties at over \$500 million annually. About 1/3 of soils in the county are considered “prime agricultural land”. Soils once thought to be only suited for pasture and timber production now support the thriving vineyard industry occupying many ridge-tops throughout the county.

Since 1980, there has been a 12% reduction in cropland under production, significant changes in the crops grown (i.e., container-grown and bare-root nursery plant production has become one of our largest industries), and animal agriculture has undergone major changes. Working lands are impacted by development, and a generational transfer of lands is underway with a desire to preserve, not convert, lands.

The local wine industry is a complete vertical industry around the value-added (winemaking and selling) component rather than primarily a commodity (wine grape) industry. The wine industry also generates significant tourist and international industry event-related income. There are currently over 225 vineyards and 89 wineries in Yamhill County. Conversion of land to vineyards is both a threat to these ecosystems as well as a source of conservation ethic and support.

**Focus Area: *Parks & Natural Spaces***

Yamhill County has special natural, scenic, cultural, ecological, and historic resources that are highly valued by residents. The county provides pastoral scenic vistas of farming and nature close to many people. But there is relatively little actual access to, or assurance of, long-term preservation of these assets except some upland forested areas along the Coast Range.

Yamhill County has public parks, outdoor recreation areas, and open spaces managed by federal agencies, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the State of Oregon, Yamhill County, the Chehalem Parks and Recreation District (Newberg and Dundee), and each of the cities in the county.

In terms of area, the vast majority of public parks and natural spaces are in the forested Coast Range uplands in the western part of the county. These are state and federal lands that primarily offer “motorized recreation trails” but also include some roadless areas and a small portion of a state designated scenic waterway. The state has several small river access points to the Willamette River. The large 10,000-acre Grand Ronde Reservation is open to the public and includes five hiking trails, a day-use park, and a campground. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is developing the Wapato Lake Unit of the Tualatin National Wildlife Refuge, a portion of which will be in Yamhill County northeast of Cove Orchard.

Yamhill County currently owns and maintains 17 parks and open space areas totaling just 126 acres. Ten of the sites are developed, six are undeveloped, and one is leased. Most sites maintained by the county need significant improvements, although some progress has been made recently. While representative of natural habitats and historic resources, the small size of these sites makes them marginally beneficial as conservation sites. The parks include river access points for the Yamhill River at Dayton Landing and to the Willamette River at Rogers Landing. The Chehalem Parks and Recreation District covers an area around Newberg with a people-oriented recreation system. Each city has parks of its own.

**About the Partnership**

The Partnership is a collaborative association of existing organizations. It is not a legal entity; it raises no separate funds; it has no staff.