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LANE COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

W. 9. a.

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Jeff Krueger, Lane Council of Governments

TOPIC: Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision and Action Plan

ACTION REQUESTED: Review *Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision and Action Plan* and consider endorsement through letter of support.

BRIEFING STATEMENT: The ridgeline area is a twenty mile corridor extending from Fern Ridge Reservoir to the Buford Recreation Area (Mount Pisgah) and marks the transition from the urbanized Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area to the rural landscape to the south. The area contains unique habitats, headwater streams, picturesque farm and forest lands, and recreational trails, and it forms a scenic backdrop that is visible from much of Eugene and the Spencer Creek Valley.

The open space vision has been developed to serve as a conceptual framework to guide future open space and recreation planning efforts for this area. Lane Council of Governments has coordinated this effort, working closely with a partnership that includes Lane County Parks, McKenzie River Trust, The Nature Conservancy, City of Eugene, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Long Tom Watershed Council, Willamalane Park and Recreation District, and the National Park Service. Over the past year, four public workshops and a targeted outreach effort have been used to help shape and refine the vision. This vision builds on the *Rivers to Ridges* Regional Parks and Open Space vision which was endorsed by the Board of County Commissioners in 2003 by unanimous consent.

Implementation of the *Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision* will be achieved through the combined efforts of the partnership, property owners, and the public. Implementation will rely on a non-regulatory approach and voluntary land owner participation. Because this is a vision document, it is not formally adopted and does not commit the endorsing agencies to any action, but instead is a means of demonstrating widespread support for the regional open space vision and planning effort.

To date, the following bodies have endorsed the *Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision and Action Plan*:

- League of Women Voters
- Lane County Audubon Society
- Lane County Parks Advisory Committee
- Eugene Bicycle Coalition
- Lane County Mountain Bike Association
- Eugene Tree Foundation
- Native Plant Society of Oregon – Emerald Chapter

- Willamalane Park & Recreation District Board
- Eugene Planning Commission
- City of Springfield
- City of Eugene (Pending, scheduled for January or February 2008)

I am including a copy of the vision document for your review. We will be asking the Board of County Commissioners for an endorsement at the January 23 meeting. An endorsement by the Commissioners would demonstrate support for this regional vision in conjunction with the other endorsing bodies listed above.

ATTACHMENTS: *Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision and Action Plan*, dated July 2007. The plan and additional background information is also available at www.lcog.org/ridgeline.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Contact Jeff Krueger, Senior Landscape Architect, Lane Council of Governments, 682-4122, or jkrueger@lcog.org or Todd Winter, Lane County Parks Division Manager, 682-2006, winter@co.lane.or.us.

Ridgeline Area

Open Space Vision and Action Plan



Draft

July 2007

Endorsements

To be listed at completion of process

Acknowledgements

The Ridgeline Area *Open Space Vision and Action Plan* is based on a compilation of public input, existing policy direction, and guidance from the Ridgeline Partnership Team and other local, state, and federal agencies.

Representatives from the following organizations served on the Ridgeline Partnership Team and provided significant guidance, technical information, and/or resources toward this effort:

- Lane Council of Governments (Project Coordination)
- McKenzie River Trust
- Lane County Parks
- The Nature Conservancy
- Bureau of Land Management
- Long Tom Watershed Council
- City of Eugene
- Willamalane Park and Recreation District

Additional Support Provided Through Grants:

- The National Park Service *Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program* provided planning assistance to this project through a technical assistance grant to the City of Eugene on behalf of the Ridgeline Partnership Team.
- The Charlotte Martin Foundation provided funding to help support the public outreach component of this effort.

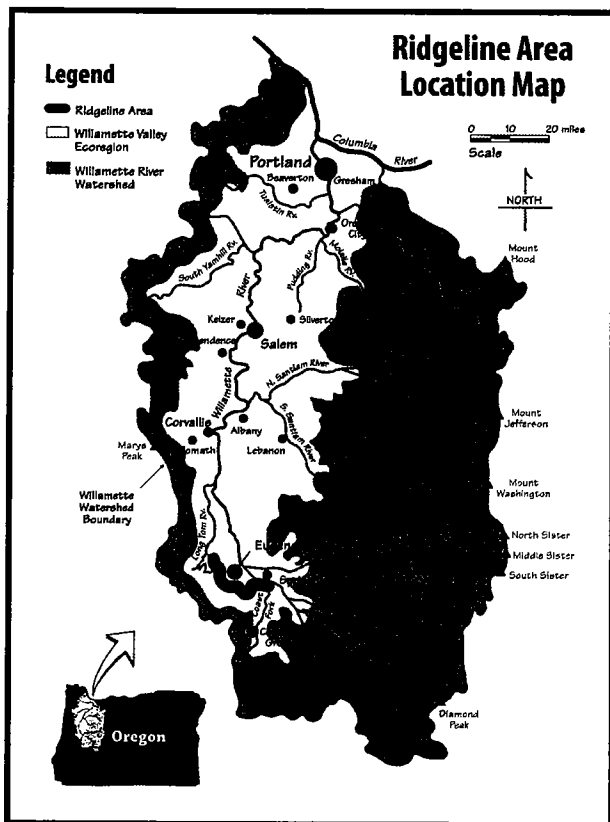
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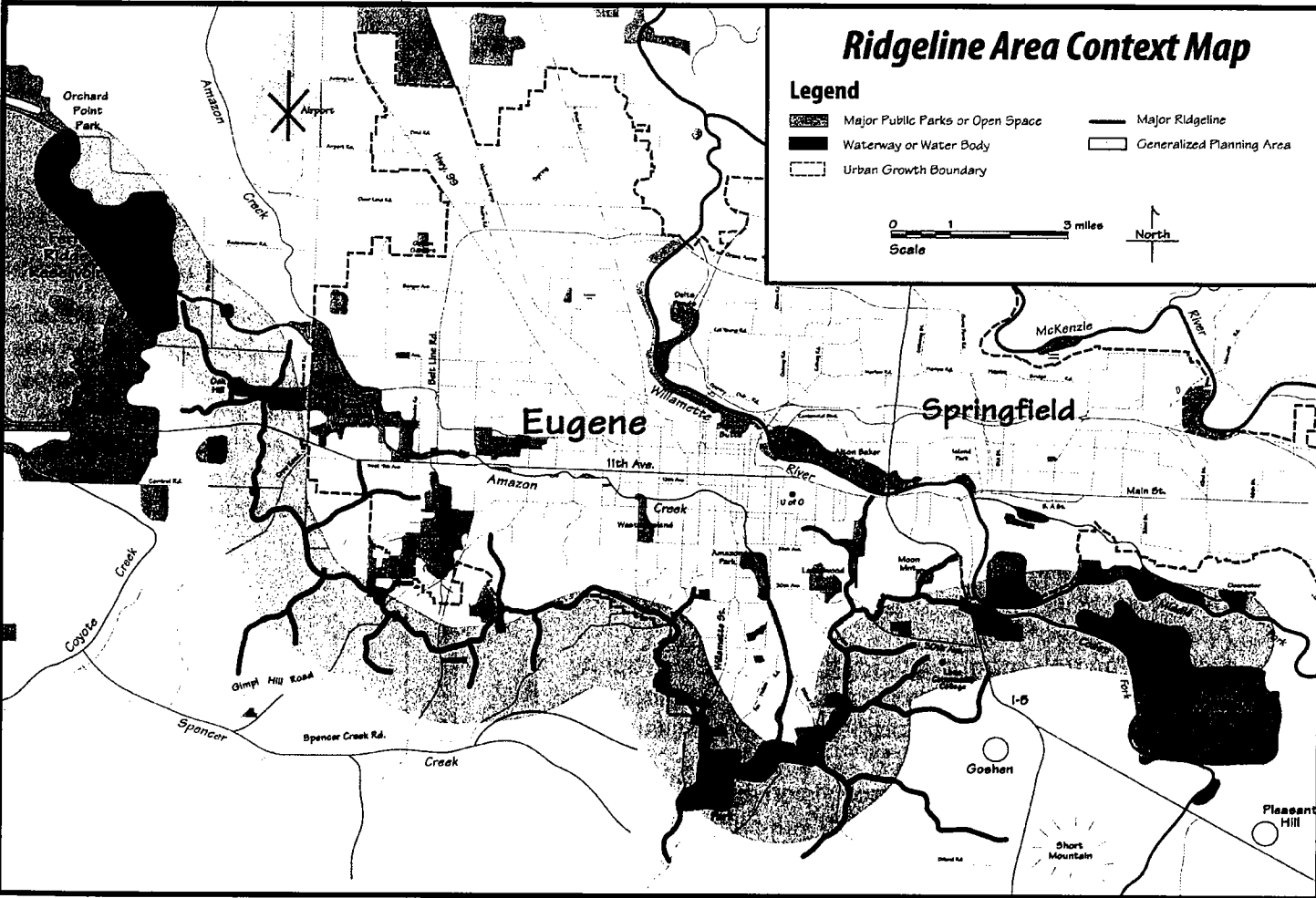
Table of Contents

1	Background and Purpose
1	Key Implementation Guidelines
2	Regional Context
3	Defining Open Space
3	Ridgeline Area Open Space Attributes
5	Ridgeline Area History
5	Naming of Spencer Butte
7	Existing Conditions in the Ridgeline Area
7	Landform
7	Habitat
9	Existing Public Parks and Open Space
9	Planned Future Public Parks and Open Space
9	Existing Land Use in the Ridgeline Area
10	Projected Land Use in the Ridgeline Area
11	Related Studies and Policy Direction
13	Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision
13	The Vision
13	Public Outreach
13	Vision Development
14	Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision - Map Key
17	Ridgeline Area Open Space Action Plan
17	Habitat Conservation and Management
22	Recreation
31	Tourism
32	Water Resources
34	Views and Viewsheds
36	Urban-Rural Transition

Continued next page

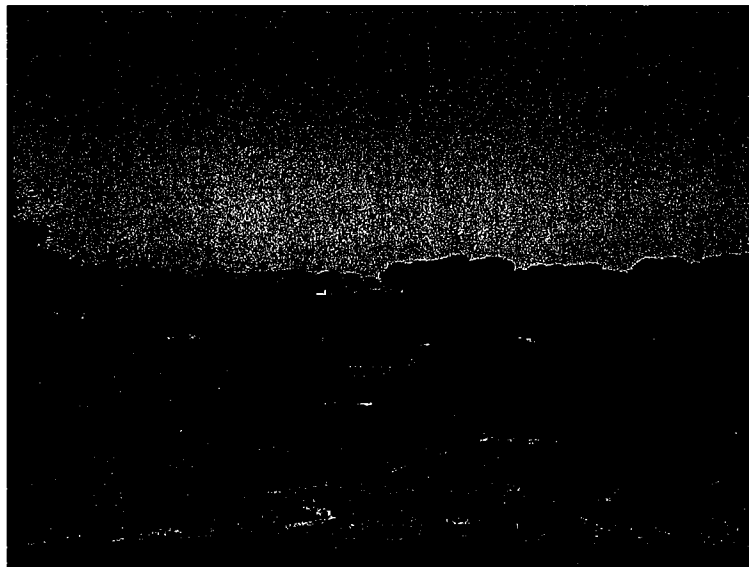


Spanning several watersheds and numerous jurisdictional boundaries, the Ridgeline Area is predominantly in private ownership, but does include a number of significant public park and open space areas including the Buford Recreation Area (Mount Pisgah), Moon Mountain, Mount Baldy, Spencer Butte Park, Amazon Creek Headwaters, the West Eugene Wetlands, Fern Ridge Wildlife Management Area, and Orchard Point Park.

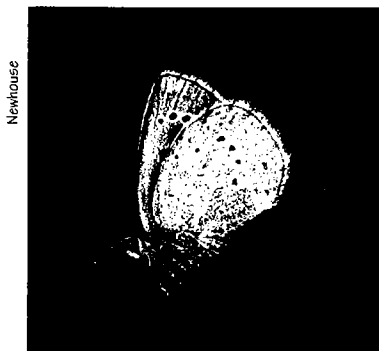


Defining Open Space

For the purpose of this planning effort, *open space* is considered all lands which are not in a developed or urbanized condition, whether in public or private ownership. Open space includes natural areas, designated parks, farms, and forests. Whether in public or private ownership, open space provides important benefits in terms of wildlife habitat, scenic quality, watershed protection, and in some cases recreation. Because much of the Ridgeline Area is, and will remain, in private ownership, voluntary landowner participation will be key in helping preserve the open space attributes found in the Ridgeline Area.



Ridgeline Area to the west of Eugene



Fender's blue butterfly

Ridgeline Area Open Space

Habitat

The Ridgeline Area supports large tracts of high quality habitat including areas of some of the highest quality native oak savanna, oak woodland, and prairie habitat remaining in the Willamette Valley today. These habitats are home to a variety of unique plant and animal species that represent the biological legacy of thousands of years of evolution. Some of the more unique species include the Fender's blue butterfly, acorn

woodpecker, white-breasted nuthatch, Western bluebird, and Kincaid's lupine. It is estimated that only about 13 percent of the oak savanna and less than one percent of the upland prairie that once existed in the Willamette Valley remains today. In addition, patches of older coniferous forest with high habitat value can also be found in the Ridgeline Area, particularly in the vicinity of Spencer Butte.



Acorn woodpecker



Menzies' larkspur
(*Delphinium menzeisii*)



The Ridgeline Area provides a highly scenic backdrop for residents of the metropolitan and rural area alike. Numerous vistas and viewpoints are found along the Ridgeline Area.

Scenic Backdrop

The Ridgeline Area provides a highly visible scenic backdrop for residents of the Metropolitan and rural area alike. Numerous vistas and viewpoints of the valley are found along the Ridgeline Area.

Rural Character

Much of the Ridgeline Area lies outside of the Eugene-Springfield urban growth boundary and has a distinctive rural character. Winding rural roads pass through a mix of widely scattered homes, forest, and farmland, giving visitors and residents a sense of the Willamette Valley's rural character.

Working landscape

Small scale farming and timber practices are common in the rural portions of the Ridgeline Area. These lands, although in production, are still a critical component of the Ridgeline Area open space system as they contribute to the area's visual quality, habitat, watershed health, and sense of place.



Gimpl Hill Road

Water Resources

Numerous headwater streams originate in the Ridgeline Area, feeding into Amazon Creek, Spencer Creek, Russel Creek and eventually the Willamette River. The headwater streams are critical for recharging groundwater, which is the primary water source for many Ridgeline Area residents.



Ridgeline Trail

Recreation

The City of Eugene's existing ridgeline trail system extends outward from Spencer Butte along the ridgeline east toward Spring Boulevard and to the west toward Blanton Road. In total, the trail network covers approximately fourteen miles including spur trails such as the Spencer Butte summit trail and the newly constructed Headwaters trail. Currently, a designated mountain bike trail parallels the ridgeline trail between Dillard Road and Fox Hollow Road and a mountain bike trail runs from Dillard Road to the top of Mount Baldy. The ridgeline trail network was recently granted *National Recreation Trail* status by the National Park Service. In addition to soft surface trails, many of the rural roadways such as Spencer Creek Road, Bailey Hill Road, and Lorane Highway are popular recreational bicycle routes.

Ridgeline Area History

For thousands of years, the southern Willamette Valley, including the Ridgeline Area, was inhabited and managed by native Kalapuya people. Historical documentation suggests that in order to assist with hunting and gathering, the Kalapuya set fires on a regular basis across much of the Willamette Valley, including the Ridgeline Area. The periodic burning maintained open prairie and savanna conditions until the first Euro-Americans began settling the Willamette Valley in the mid 1800s. The Ridgeline Area was largely devoid of the coniferous forests that cover much of the area today with the exception of the north facing slopes of Spencer and Skinner Buttes. This condition was well documented by early settlers and the Government Land Office surveys of the 1850s.



Prior to Euro-American settlement in the 1850s, much of the Willamette Valley was in prairie and savanna condition.

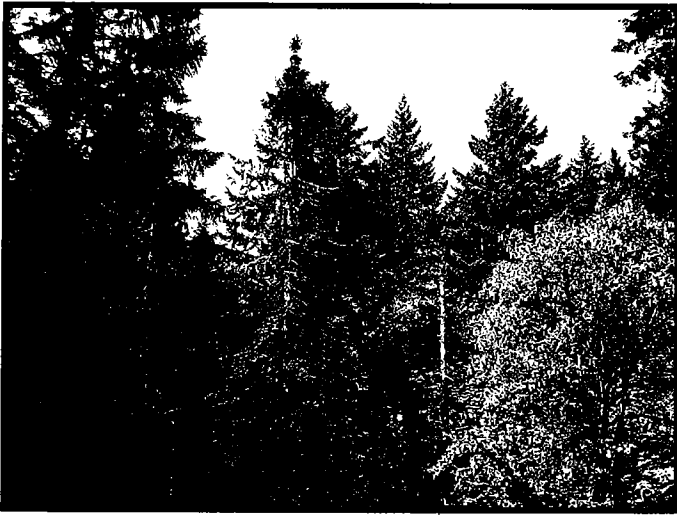
Many of the early Euro-American settlers in the Ridgeline Area came to Oregon via the Oregon and Applegate trails. Spencer Butte was used as a landmark to help guide these settlers when they reached the southern Willamette valley. Early settlers secured their plots and worked quickly to establish farms. The open land of the Ridgeline Area lent itself well to farming and ranching. Crops in the southern Willamette Valley during the early years of settlement were surprisingly diverse and included onions, sweet corn, strawberries, boysenberries, hay, oats, wheat, alfalfa, raspberries, and tobacco. After a few years of gaining title to their land from the U.S. government, many settlers sold their property to larger land holders who established ranches for the grazing of beef cattle, dairy cattle, and sheep. Other settlers in the area made their living by collecting wild plants and by trapping animals, including beaver, foxes, mink, bobcat, and raccoon (Barton, Spencer Butte Pioneers, 1982).

The Naming of Spencer Butte



Spencer Butte, which is the highest point in the ridgeline system at 2,065 feet, can be seen from most of the southern Willamette Valley. According to Oregon Geographic Names, there are three stories about the naming of Spencer Butte (McArthur, 2003). One story states that the butte was named in July 1845 after the U.S. Secretary of War, John C. Spencer. Another story states that the butte was named after a Hudson's Bay Company Englishman named Spencer who separated from his party and was found dead on the butte. According to a third story, an early settler named Spencer was hunting birds when he was chased

up a tree by some wild cattle. Two days later, Mr. Spencer was rescued and legend says that his name became part of butte history. No one really knows how the butte was named, but by 1853, Spencer Butte was commonly used and the post office of Spencer Butte was established. It is thought that the Native American name for the butte was Champ-a-te, which meant rattlesnakes.

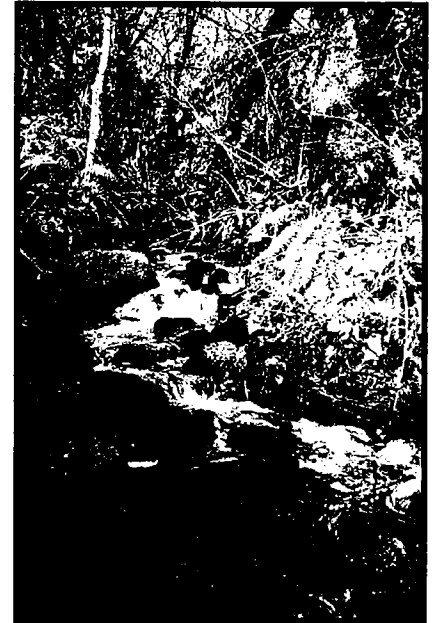


Closed canopied coniferous forest is one of the most common habitat types found in the Ridgeline Area. Patches of older coniferous forest with high habitat value can be found in the Ridgeline Area, particularly in the area around Spencer Butte and Amazon headwaters (above).

In addition to the loss of savanna and prairie habitat in the Willamette Valley, riparian habitat has also seen significant decline. However, significant areas of riparian vegetation can still be found along portions of many of the streams found in the Ridgeline Area including Spencer Creek, Coyote Creek, Willow Creek, Amazon Creek, and numerous headwater streams, but in lesser quantities than historic levels. The riparian vegetation is important for both habitat and water quality.

The two most common habitat types occurring in the Ridgeline Area today are closed canopied coniferous forest dominated by Douglas fir and unmanaged pasture.

Coniferous forests have become more common in the area primarily due to the cessation of seasonal burning in the mid-1800s. Much of this forest land has been logged and replanted in recent decades. However, some examples of older coniferous forests are still present, particularly in proximity to Spencer Butte. Unmanaged pasture, which is also widespread in the Ridgeline Area, is typically dominated by non-native grasses. Although pastures generally contain little native diversity, they can still provide valuable wildlife habitat benefits for species dependent on prairie, savanna, and shrub-scrub structure.



Headwater Stream

Remnants of rare and declining habitats such as prairie and savanna (below) are present in the Ridgeline Area.

Finally, the Ridgeline Area contains some of the best remnant patches of several rare and declining habitat types in the Willamette Valley. This includes prairie; oak-pine savanna; oak woodland; riparian and headwater forests; older coniferous forests, large open grown ponderosa pine; rocky outcrops; and balds. All of these habitat types contain unique species assemblages with many rare species. Many of these areas are relatively small and are not well mapped.

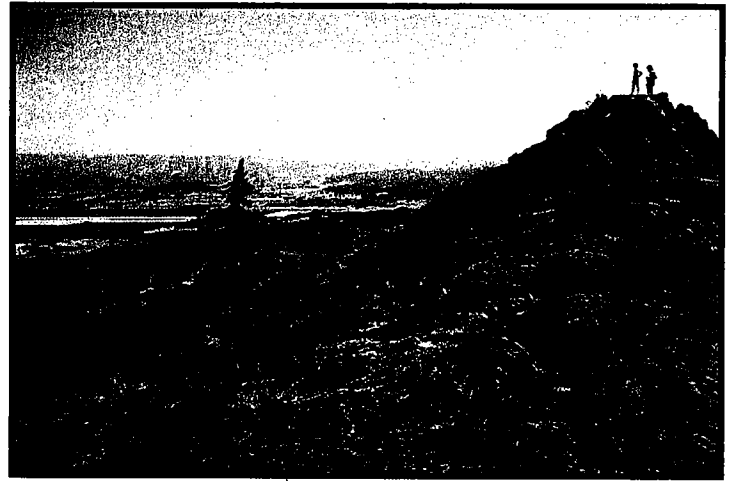


Wild



Existing Public Parks and Open Space

Although the vast majority of the land in the Ridgeline Area is in private ownership, some significant blocks of park and open space lands in public or land trust ownership are also present. The City of Eugene owns and manages approximately 1,100 acres of park land along the ridgeline corridor. This includes Spencer Butte Park, Amazon Headwaters, Blanton Ridge, Mount Baldy, Moon Mountain, Wild Iris Ridge, Murray Hill, and several additional smaller parcels. The Bureau of Land Management owns the 200-acre Oak Hill property, which straddles the western edge of the ridgeline, in addition to its 1,500 acres of West Eugene Wetland ownership in the Amazon Creek watershed. The Nature Conservancy owns approximately 750 acres of land in and around the Willow Creek Natural Area, which includes a mix of wetland and upland prairie, ash forest, and savanna habitat.



Spencer Butte

Significant amounts of public park and open space lands are also located at the Fern Ridge Management Area (U.S. Corps of Engineers), the Buford Recreation Area and Orchard Park (Lane County), and several Willamalane Parks and Recreation District properties such as Dorris Ranch and Clearwater Park at the eastern terminus of the Ridgeline Area.

Planned Future Public Parks and Open Space

The City of Eugene identifies the Ridgeline Area as a key component of its *Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Comprehensive Plan*, which was adopted in 2005. The ridgeline corridor is shown in the plan extending from Amazon Creek to Lane Community College, making connections to existing publicly owned park and open space lands. The *Rivers to Ridges* Regional Parks and Open Space Vision (2003) also identifies this corridor as a *Key Future Upland Connection*, with additional connections extending to the Buford Recreation area (Mount Pisgah) and the Willamalane Park and Recreation District lands including Dorris Ranch and Clearwater Park in Springfield. In addition to the ridgeline connections, *Rivers to Ridges* identifies Spencer Creek and Amazon Creek as *Blueways*. Using the *Rivers to Ridges* definition, a *Blueway* is a key water-based connection enhancing waterway and riparian areas.

New residential development along the ridgeline just inside the urban growth boundary

Existing Land Use in the Ridgeline Area

The Ridgeline Area contains two distinctive land use patterns:

Urban and Urbanizing Lands

The first is the urban or urbanizing land of the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area found on the north side of the ridgeline. These lands lie within the urban growth boundary (UGB) and are developed predominantly with single family homes. Some sizable privately owned areas of undeveloped land can also be found within the UGB and are generally designated and zoned for future residential





Recent residential development in the Ridgeline Area inside the Eugene-Springfield urban growth boundary

development.

Rural Lands

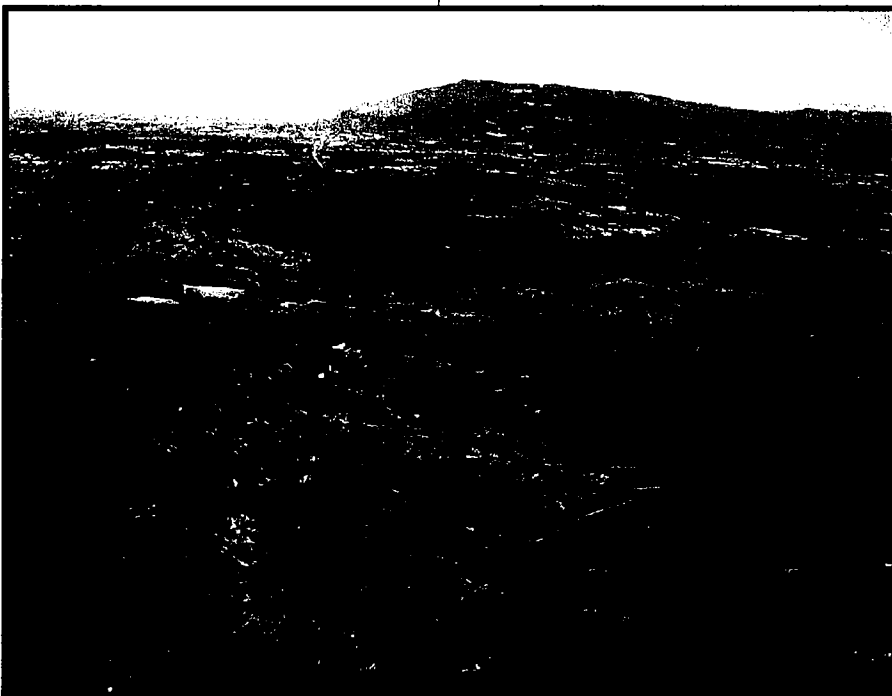
The second land use pattern is found outside of the Eugene-Springfield UGB, primarily on the south side of the ridgeline. These lands contain a mix of low density residential, agriculture, and forestland. The parcels (tax lots) found in the rural area tend to be much larger than those located within the UGB and in the Ridgeline Area are generally between five and three hundred acres in size.

Projected Future Land Use in the Ridgeline Area

Influences such as the economy, state and local land use planning laws, policy, and management decisions by local officials are all factors ultimately determining future land use within the Ridgeline Area. Given the difficulty in predicting these influences, for the purpose of this study, future land uses are being projected based on the build-out of vacant and undeveloped lands under their current designations as regulated by the Eugene-Springfield Metro Area General Plan and Lane County zoning code.

Based on this methodology, much of the undeveloped lands inside the UGB will likely convert to low density residential use in the Ridgeline Area. The lands outside of the UGB will see some increase in residential development as undeveloped parcels with allowable zoning are developed.

Measure 37, passed by Oregon voters in 2004, adds additional uncertainty in projecting land use, especially on lands lying outside the UGB. Measure 37 requires that state and local governments compensate property owners whenever a land use regulation reduces a property's value, or in lieu of payment, waive such regulation. This measure may result in increasing development of lands currently zoned exclusively for farm or forest use within the Ridgeline Area as well as possible intensification of existing rural



Rural development pattern near Dillard Road

residential development.

Related Studies and Policy Direction

A number of local plans give direction and set policy on the subject of parks, open space, recreation, and development patterns for the Ridgeline Area. These include the Eugene Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Comprehensive Plan (2005); the *Rivers to Ridges* Metropolitan Regional Park and Open Space Study (2003); the West Eugene Wetland Plan (2000); the Eugene/Springfield Metro Plan (1987); the Willamalane Park and Recreation Comprehensive Plan (2004); the Lane County Parks Master Plan (1980); the South Hills Study (1974); the Willamette Valley – Puget Trough – Georgia Basin Ecoregional Assessment (2004); the Central Lane Regional Parks Plan (1970); the South Ridgeline Habitat Study (currently underway); and the Southern Willamette Valley Regional Growth Management Strategy (draft, June 2006).

Although each plan gives unique and often specific direction, several recurring themes can be found which relate to the Ridgeline Area. These common themes and management principles were used to guide the development of the *Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision and Action Plan* and include:

1. Variety

Maintain a variety of open space types including natural areas, developed parks, and the working landscape (farm and forest lands) to serve the diverse needs of the community.

2. Scenic Quality

Protect, conserve, and enhance elements of the natural and historic landscape that give the area its uniqueness and sense of place. This includes the forest and savanna covered hillslopes and ridges, agricultural lands, unique natural features, and the rural character of the lands that fringe the metro area. Vistas and viewpoints should be provided along recreational trails, hilltops, and roadways to facilitate enjoyment of the scenic quality of the Ridgeline Area.



West Ridgeline Area

3. Connectivity

Provide an uninterrupted open space and recreational corridor spanning the area between Fern Ridge Reservoir and the Buford Recreation Area that links park and recreational facilities, wildlife habitat, and natural resource areas. Key connections to this lineal open space system should be provided from adjacent neighborhoods, schools, parks, natural areas, and other community destinations.

4. Development Patterns

Promote land use and development patterns that sustain and conserve natural resources, preserve viable farm and forest lands, enhance economic vitality, maintain rural character, and use available water sources wisely.

5. Recreation and Education

Provide a variety of recreational opportunities to meet the diverse needs of residents and visitors in the Ridgeline Area and utilize open space lands for educational purposes including interpretation of natural resources and historically important cultural resources.



Showy tarweed (*Madia elegans*)

6. Habitat

Protect, enhance, and restore a variety of habitat types including unique or at risk plant and wildlife communities. In the Ridgeline Area, unique habitat types include native prairie; oak-pine savanna; riparian and headwater forests; older coniferous forests; rocky outcrops; and balds.

7. Rivers, Waterways, and Wetlands

Protect, conserve, and enhance creeks and associated floodplains; headwater streams; and wetlands in the ridgeline planning area for their habitat, flood protection, water quality, recreation, and scenic values and ensure long-term availability for residential use.

8. Community Buffers and Gateways

Maintain open space between the metro area and nearby small cities in order to preserve community identity, protect rural character, and preserve farm and forest values and operations. Along major points of entry into the metro area, park and open space lands and facilities should be used to provide a scenic gateway into the community and provide a clear urban-rural transition.

9. Public Safety

Work to ensure that public facilities are well maintained and safe for recreational users and minimize potential hazards inherent to the rural-urban interface found in the Ridgeline Area such as wildfire danger, illegal camping, and trespassing.

Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision



The Vision

The Ridgeline Area is a unique and valuable community asset spanning the twenty mile corridor between Fern Ridge Reservoir and Mount Pisgah.

This special area contains high value habitats, outstanding scenery, and working farms and forestland. It protects, connects, and enhances a variety of habitats; provides regional recreational opportunities and trail connections for residents and visitors alike; and showcases the area's natural, scenic, and historic landscape.

Public Outreach

A total of four public workshops were held during the development of the vision, two at the Eugene Public Library and two at the Spencer Creek Grange. The first two public workshops were held in December 2006 with a focus of providing background information and getting public input on key issues, values, and opportunities related to the Ridgeline Area. After an early draft of the vision and action plan had been developed, two additional workshops were held in June 2007. The focus of the June workshops was getting feedback on the draft vision and action plan. A total of 180 people participated in the four workshops. A summary report documenting these public events can be found at www.lcog.org/ridgeline.



December 2006 public workshop

In addition to the public workshops, a number of presentations were made to a wide spectrum of interest groups and organizations between January 2007 and September 2007. The purpose of this outreach was to receive additional feedback on the vision and to collect letters and resolutions of support that help demonstrate broad backing of the vision.

Vision Development

The vision and associated action plan are a compilation of public input, existing policy direction, and direction from the ridgeline partnership team. Vision development included a half day work session in January 2007 where partnership representatives translated public input and existing plan policy into a series of concept plans for the Ridgeline Area. These concept plans were the basis for the Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision included in this document.



Vision development

Vision Implementation

The Ridgeline Area Vision and Action Plan was developed to help coordinate future open space and recreation efforts for this area and will be implemented through voluntary participation of study partners and private property owners.

Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision - Map Key

The Ridgeline Open Space Vision has been developed to serve as a conceptual framework for future open space and recreation planning purposes for the Ridgeline Area. The locations of the elements shown on the map are conceptual, are subject to voluntary land owner participation, and do not change the underlying plan designation/zoning or imply regulatory restriction. Vision map elements include:

Trail/Habitat Corridor

The dashed green lines indicate the approximate location of the proposed ridgeline trail corridor. The trail corridor would be accommodated through a combination of land acquisition and purchase or donation of access easements from willing sellers. In addition to accommodating the trail, this corridor would also serve to provide connectivity between key habitat areas. The ultimate location of this corridor will be dependant on land availability.

Multi-Use Path

The pink lines indicate hard surfaced trails (similar to the existing Fern Ridge Path) that accommodate multiple non-motorized modes including pedestrians and bicycles. Proposed multi-use trails are outlined with a black dash.

Shared-Use Trail

Shared-use trails, shown in red, are soft surfaced trails similar to the existing ridgeline trail. In addition to accommodating hikers and trail runners, these trails will be built to a standard that would also accommodate mountain bikes where feasible. Trail design and siting will be done in a way that maximizes user enjoyment and safety, while minimizing impacts to adjacent properties and important habitats.

Equestrian Trail

Indicated with a green dashed line, these are trails designated primarily for equestrian use. The primary equestrian trail identified in the ridgeline vision is located along the Amazon Diversion Channel, with additional facilities potentially sited on nearby private or public lands in the future once identified.

Bicycle Touring Route

These are paved roadways within the Ridgeline Area that are commonly used for bicycle touring and are indicated on the vision map with a yellow line (dashed or solid). The dashed line indicates those roads where improvements are needed in order to better accommodate bicycles such as wider shoulders, more frequent sweeping of the road surface, and improved signage.

Trailhead Parking

These are designated parking lots at major trailhead locations and are shown on the map as a "P" within a circle. New parking lots will be sited and designed in a way that maximizes safety and security and minimizes visual impact to adjacent properties.

Key Habitat Areas

These are areas where large blocks of high value native habitat are known to exist and include a mix of rare or declining habitat types such as prairie; oak-pine savanna; oak woodland; riparian and headwater forests; and older coniferous forests. Because much of this land will remain in private ownership over the long-term, financial incentives, information, and other technical information will be offered as a way to help assist private property owners conserve and enhance these valuable habitats on a voluntary basis.

Key Waterways

Numerous waterways exist within the Ridgeline Area and provide an important water quality and habitat function. Enhancement efforts along these waterways will maintain and improve their function.

Community Gateways

These are major points of entry into the community where the open space system can be utilized to form scenic gateways into the city as well as portals to the ridgeline trail system. Gateways may include amenities such as trailhead parking, visitor information, trail guides, interpretive signage, and outdoor art.

Legend:

Existing

- Multi-Use Path (hard surface)
- Existing Trail (soft surface)
- Combined Hiking/Mnt. Bike Trail
- On-road Bicycle Touring Route with adequate shoulders
- Trailhead Parking (designated lot)
- Cultural Landmark
- Major Hill or Butte

Potential Future

- Approximate Trail/Habitat Corridor
- Multi-Use Path (hard surface)
- Shared Use Trail (soft surface)*
- Equestrian Trail
- Improved Bicycle Touring Route**
- Trailhead Parking (designated lot)
- Key Habitat Areas***
- Key Waterways (enhancements)
- Community Gateway

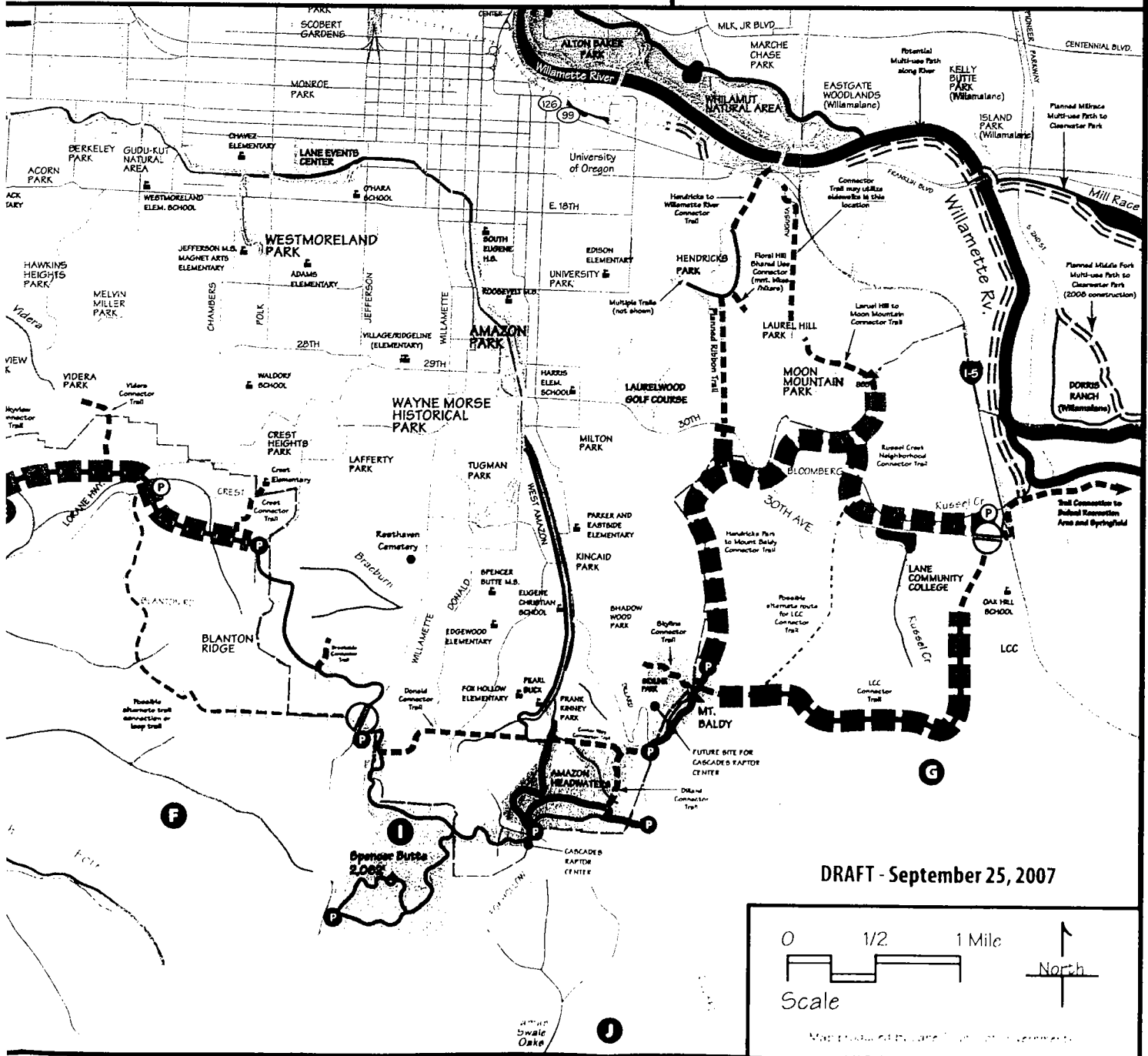
* Shared hiker/mnt. bike trails where feasible (mnt. bike trail may run parallel to hiking trail in some cases)
 ** Safety improvements to facilitate safer bicycle use
 *** Technical assistance and incentives to willing land owners for voluntary habitat management and targeted acquisition of key habitats

Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision and Action Plan

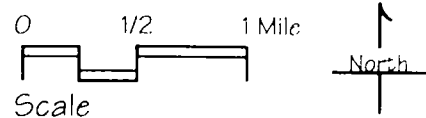
Draft Vision Map

Legend

- Existing Parks and Open Space
- Schools
- Waterway or Water Body
- Eugene-Springfield Urban Growth Boundary
- Major Road

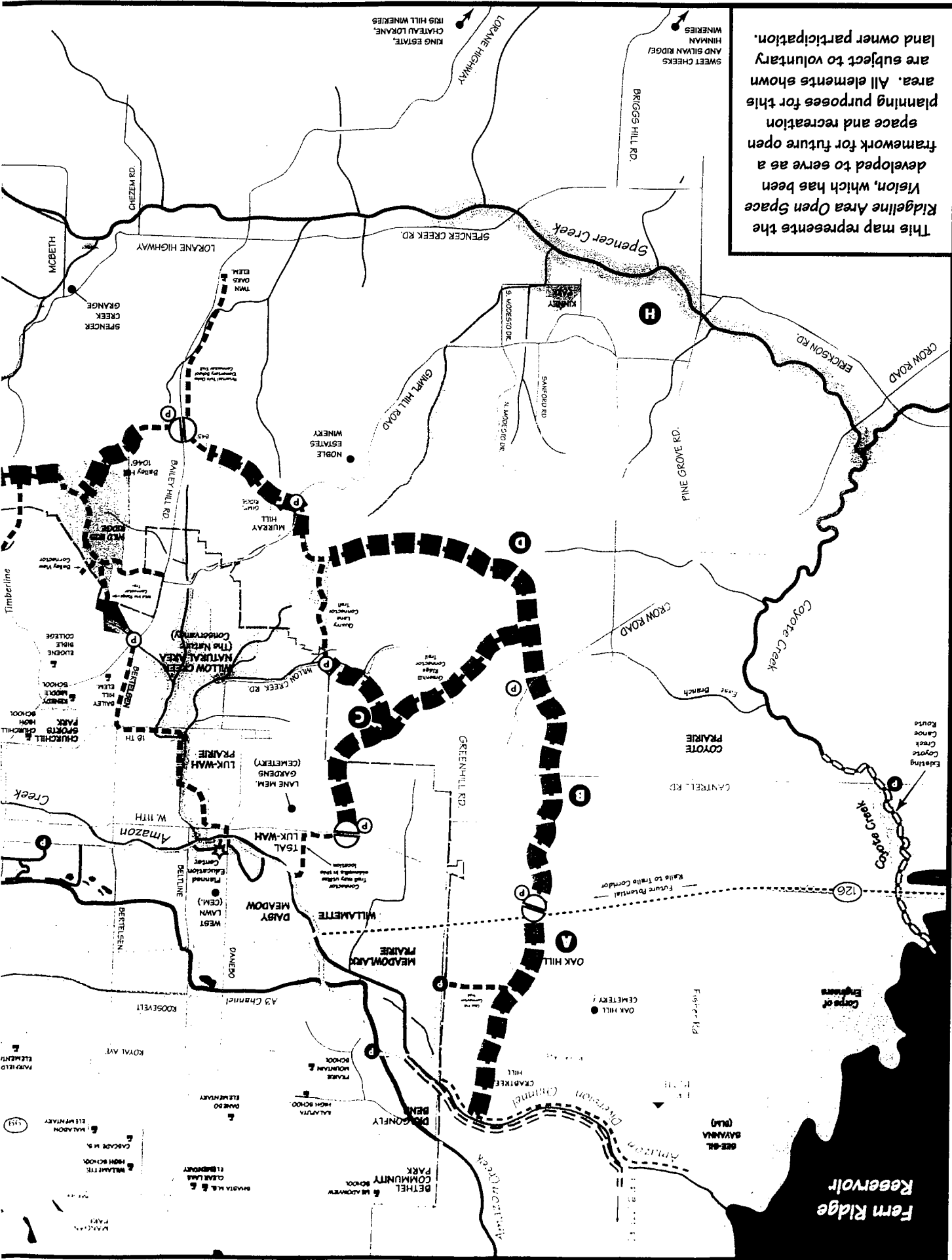


DRAFT - September 25, 2007



Map produced by the City of Eugene, Oregon

This map represents the
 Ridgeline Area Open Space
 Vision, which has been
 developed to serve as a
 framework for future open
 space and recreation
 planning purposes for this
 area. All elements shown
 are subject to voluntary
 land owner participation.



Ridgeline Area Open Space Action Plan

The *Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision* will serve as the conceptual framework for coordinated open space planning efforts in the ridgeline corridor. The vision will be implemented through voluntary participation of partner organizations, the public, and private land owners. The *goals* and associated *recommended actions and strategies* included in this section have been developed to guide the implementation of the vision and are based on review of existing plans and policy; public participation; and partner input. The goals are divided into the following general categories:

- Habitat Conservation and Management
- Recreation
- Tourism
- Water Resources
- Views and Viewsheds
- Urban-Rural Transition

Habitat Conservation and Management

Goal 1: Habitat Conservation

Protect a variety of native habitat types within the Ridgeline Area including unique or at risk plant and wildlife communities. Special attention should be given to rare or declining habitats such as prairie; oak-pine savanna; oak woodland; riparian and headwater forests; older coniferous forests, rocky outcrops; and balds.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Inventory and map habitat conditions and species distribution in the Ridgeline Area to more accurately determine locations of high quality and unique habitats. For much of the Ridgeline Area, the current vegetation and habitat mapping available is not adequate on a site specific basis. A combination of off-site inventory or on-site inventory with owner permission could be used.
- B. Work to identify and conserve high value habitats and unique native plant and wildlife populations throughout the Ridgeline Area where they occur.
- C. Focus habitat conservation efforts on preserving large blocks of high quality habitat that are contiguous to each other or to existing conservation areas (as opposed to smaller scattered areas) to help



Grass Widow (*Olsynium douglasii*)
near the summit of Spencer Butte

Newhouse



Savanna and prairie habitat



Mountain Cat's ear
(*Calochortus tolmiei*)



Older coniferous forest
near Spencer Butte

maintain long-term habitat viability. These *Key Habitat Areas* would include a mix of public, land trust, and private lands that would be managed to conserve habitat benefit by the property owners on a voluntary basis. *Key habitat Areas* identified in the Ridgeline Area total approximately 8,800 acres and include:

- Oak Hill (Area A): Approximately 120 acres of mixed oak woodland, savanna, and prairie in BLM and private ownership.
 - Cantrell Ridge (Area B): Approximately 400 acres of mixed oak woodland, savanna, prairie and headwater streams of Willow and Coyote Creeks, primarily in private ownership.
 - Greenhill Ridge (Area C): Approximately 250 acres of savanna and oak woodland.
 - Murray Hill (Area D): Approximately 1,700 acres of mixed oak woodland, savanna, prairie, and headwater streams of Spencer, Coyote, and Willow Creeks, primarily in private ownership with some TNC ownership.
 - Wild Iris Ridge (Area E): Approximately 500 acres of savanna, prairie, oak woodland, and headwater streams of Spencer and Willow Creeks in private and City ownership (includes 123 acre City owned Wild Iris Ridge site).
 - Upper Spencer Creek (Area F): Approximately 1,300 acres of mixed savanna, prairie, oak woodland, and headwater streams of Spencer Creek.
 - Lane Community College Ridge (Area G): Approximately 850 acres of mixed savanna and oak woodland and headwater streams of Russel Creek and Wild Hog Creek.
 - Spencer and Coyote Creek Bottomland (Area H): Approximately 1,300 acres of mixed oak-ash woodland along Spencer Creek and Coyote Creek.
 - Spencer Butte Area (Area I): Approximately 750 acres older coniferous forest, rock outcrops, balds, and headwater streams on and around Spencer Butte.
 - Camas Swale Oaks (Area J): Approximately 1,800 acres of mixed savanna and oak woodland and headwater streams of Camas Swale.
- D. Create a network of corridors connecting major habitat areas to facilitate native plant dispersal and wildlife movement and reduce genetic isolation of populations.
- E. Coordinate *ridgeline partnership* acquisition efforts (fee simple acquisition and purchase of conservation easements) to create areas of contiguous habitat that can be managed more efficiently and effectively for native habitat values.
- F. Coordinate closely with the City of Eugene's ongoing

South Ridgeline Habitat Study (SRHS), which is identifying high value habitat areas located inside the urban growth boundary.

- G. Provide financial incentives, information, and other technical assistance to help private property owners to conserve and/or enhance valuable habitat conditions where they exist on their lands. These efforts should focus on properties that possess high ecological values or that are contiguous to other large blocks of public or land trust lands. Numerous federal, state, and local programs are in place to provide some level of assistance in this area (Appendix-A).

Goal 2: Habitat Management and Enhancement

Actively manage and enhance important habitat areas in the Ridgeline Area to help sustain their integrity and long-term viability.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Develop detailed management plans for public and land trust properties to help guide long-term site maintenance and enhancement activities and budgeting for those activities. Management plans should include documentation of key site attributes (historic conditions, existing conditions, and anticipated future conditions); conservation issues and threats; habitat management goals; and a schedule of routine and long-term management actions.
- B. Provide information, financial incentives, and technical assistance to help private property owners enhance long-term stewardship on their properties. These efforts should focus on properties that possess high ecological values or that are contiguous to *Key Habitat Areas* and other large blocks of habitat on public or land trust lands. A number of federal, state, and local agencies and organizations can provide financial and technical assistance in this area through various programs (www.lcog.org/ridgeline).
- C. Use a variety of management and maintenance techniques to enhance and preserve habitat quality on public, land trust, and private lands. Key management activities in the Ridgeline Area would likely include:
- Weed management: Weed management is a key activity for ensuring the long-term survival of native plant and wildlife communities. Weed management should focus on control of highly invasive non-native species such as Armenian blackberry, Scot's broom, false brome, English ivy, and other emerging threats. Special attention should be given to areas containing known rare plant and animal populations and control of newly colonizing weed populations.
 - Enhancement of native vegetation community: Native trees, shrubs, grasses, and forbs should be introduced where



Management activities such as exotic species control, maintenance of habitat structure, and planting (above) are key for ensuring long-term viability of native plant and wildlife communities in the Ridgeline Area.



The Western bluebird is a species whose numbers have declined significantly in the Willamette Valley due to loss of habitat. The bluebird prefers open savanna and prairie habitats.

appropriate to increase native cover and diversity (i.e. planting riparian vegetation along waterways, re-introducing native prairie species, increasing diversity of shrub and herbaceous species in oak woodlands).

- Maintenance of habitat structure: Savanna, oak woodland, and prairie habitats all require special management activities to help maintain their open structure and vegetation community. This may be achieved through a number of techniques such as mowing and prescribed fire (where feasible) to prevent woody vegetation from establishing in prairies and savannas; selective thinning to *release* individual open-grown oaks and pine; and removal of younger conifers from oak savanna and woodland areas to prevent *overtopping*.

- Species-specific habitat management: Manage specific habitat features for special status species. Examples of species-specific habitat features include standing snags for cavity nesting birds; light for sun loving species such as *Aster vialis*; nectar/host plants for Fender's blue butterfly; and other attributes that provide key structural or functional elements required by target species.

- D. Implement habitat management demonstration projects (on public, land trust, or private lands) as a way to test and showcase management approaches.

Demonstration projects should be well documented and monitored for success so they can be studied and the results clearly articulated to land managers, property owners, elected officials, and the public.

- E. Improve in-stream habitat for native fish, amphibians, and reptiles in and along Ridgeline

Area waterways. Enhancement techniques could include enhancing channel complexity (large wood, meanders); riparian vegetation enhancement, and restoring side channels where feasible and appropriate. Significant potential for habitat enhancements of this type exist along Spencer Creek, Coyote Creek, and Amazon Creek.

- F. Remove obstructions to fish passage where they exist along perennial streams. This would include replacing culverts that are not fish friendly with box culverts or bridges and removing or providing passage around in-channel ponds (with dams that restrict fish passage).

- G. Increase capacity and experience with habitat management within the *ridgeline partnership* in an effort to continue to improve the success of habitat management techniques and reduce their cost. Partner with other land management agencies and universities to continue to refine habitat management techniques.



Western pond turtle

H. Work with recreational providers to ensure that recreational uses do not negatively impact important habitat areas. Where impacts are occurring, consider actions such as relocating recreational facilities and trails; seasonal closures; signage; or fencing (wildlife friendly).

I. Work cooperatively with the Bonneville Power Administration to manage their power easements in a way that improves habitat conditions in those areas. This would include controlling exotic vegetation, managing special habitat features, and re-vegetating waterway corridors. Because taller vegetation typically must be removed from power easements, opportunities exist to manage these areas for native prairie and shrub communities.

J. Develop and implement qualitative and quantitative monitoring programs for natural areas to identify emerging issues and track the effectiveness of management and enhancement efforts. Use adaptive management principles to adjust management and enhancement practices as needed. Examples of monitoring efforts could include vegetation plots, photo-points, inventories, survival and/or cover data as well as qualitative evaluations.

K. Ensure that sufficient funds for operations and maintenance are available to adequately maintain key habitat areas in public, land trust, and private ownership. Strategies could include the following:

- Develop an operations and maintenance funding strategy for each new site that is brought into public or land trust ownership to ensure that these lands can be properly managed over the long-term. Many of the state and federal land management agencies could be available to assist with, or help fund, ongoing operations and maintenance. Another option could be modeled after land trusts such as The Nature Conservancy and the McKenzie River Trust, which often set up endowments to pay for long-term maintenance at the time of purchase.
- In an effort to reduce initial site management costs of newly acquired properties, attempt to incorporate basic site improvements as a condition of purchase. This could include activities such as disposal of slash piles, culvert repair, debris removal, and road removal.
- Provide information, financial incentives, and technical assistance to private property owners about funding and tax incentive programs that can assist with habitat management activities. These outreach efforts should focus on properties that possess high ecological values or that are contiguous to other large blocks of public or land trust lands.
- Use local funds to help leverage state, federal, and foundation grant funding for significant management activities. This strategy will help stretch limited local funds. The development of site plans that clearly articulate overall management goals and a long-term vision for each site is key to achieving this type of grant funding.



Monitoring programs for natural areas are critical for gauging success and identifying emerging issues.

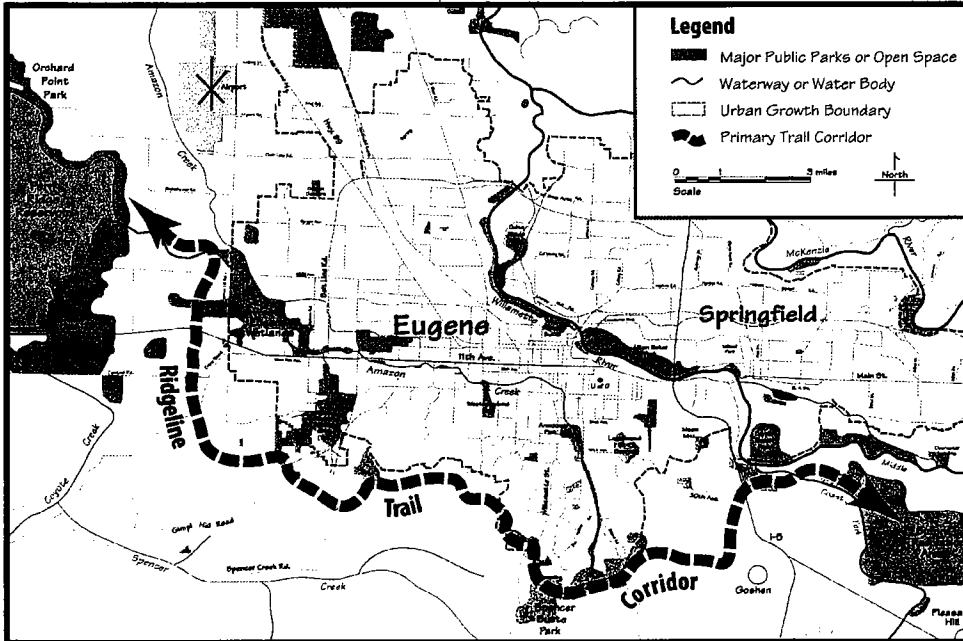


Oregon iris (*Iris tenax*)

Recreation

Goal 1: Public Access and Recreational Use

Provide public access and facilities along the ridgeline corridor that support non-motorized recreational activities such as hiking, trail running, mountain biking, bicycle touring, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, picnicking, and nature study. Public access will be managed in a way that balances human access with protection of vegetation and wildlife and avoids potential conflict with adjacent private property owners.



The ridgeline trail would ultimately span the twenty miles between Fern Ridge Reservoir and Buford Recreation Area.

possible, site the trail in close proximity of the ridge tops to maximize ease of travel and trail construction and provide opportunities for vista points.

Goal 2: Ridgeline Trail

Complete a twenty-mile long ridgeline trail connection between Fern Ridge Reservoir and Buford Recreation Area (Mount Pisgah).

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- Coordinate *ridgeline partnership* acquisition efforts to achieve connectivity between existing public and land trust lands along the corridor.
- Where outright acquisition of the trail corridor is not possible, work cooperatively with private property owners to secure access easements.
- Where appropriate and possible, site the trail in close proximity of the ridge tops to maximize ease of travel and trail construction and provide opportunities for vista points.



The recently completed Amazon Headwaters Trail is an example of a connector trail that provides access to the ridgeline trail from adjacent neighborhoods

Goal 3: Connector Trails

Provide direct trail connections between the existing and planned ridgeline trail system and adjacent neighborhoods; schools; parks and open spaces; and key community attractions. The *connector trails* are intended to provide localized access and therefore will not require significant facilities such as parking lots or rest rooms. *Connector trail* trailheads should include signage to clarify that they are public trails, assist with route finding, and highlight park rules.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- Acquire land or access easements where needed and construct *connector trails* to maximize access to the existing ridgeline trail. The current ridgeline trail system runs between Blanton Road on the west and Mount Baldy and Spring Boulevard on the east. Key connections in this area include:
 - Skyline Connector:** Provide a formal trail connection from the South Shasta Loop area through the City owned Skyline Park

(adjacent to Mount Baldy). An unofficial and unsigned trail network currently provides an informal connection here, but needs to be upgraded.

- **Brookside Connector:** Provide a formal trail connection from the Brookside Avenue neighborhood to the ridgeline trail. An unofficial connector trail currently provides an informal connection here, but needs to be upgraded and signed.
- **Dillard Connector:** Construct a trail through the City owned parcel (located to the west of Dillard Road) to complete the connection from the Mount Baldy area to the Hult Ridgeline Park.
- **Center Way Connector:** Provide a trail connection along the BPA power corridor between Dillard Road and Center Way. This trail would be a critical return route for mountain bikes if the headwaters trail is converted to an uphill only (one-way) mountain bike trail.
- **Donald Connector:** Provide a trail connection from the existing headwaters trail, westward along the BPA power corridor and through the upper Donald Road neighborhood to the existing ridgeline trail.
- **Crest Connector:** Provide a trail connection between the Crest Drive Elementary School and the planned ridgeline trail.
- **Hendricks Park to Mount Baldy Connector:** Provide a trail connection from Hendricks Park to Mount Baldy. The planned ribbon trail will connect Hendricks Park to 30th Avenue on City owned property when constructed. An on-street route along (Spring Boulevard) between Mount Baldy and 30th Avenue may be used to make the connection if a trail route cannot be secured, but an off-street trail route is preferred.
- **Laurel Hill to Moon Mountain Connector:** Provide a trail connection from Laurel Hill Park and the surrounding neighborhood to Moon Mountain. This route may need to travel along sidewalks for some length due to limited land availability. In addition, a safe pedestrian connection should be developed from the Laurel Hill Park and surrounding neighborhood to the Willamette River Multi-use Path network.
- **Ribbon Trail:** Construct the planned Ribbon Trail that will connect Hendricks Park with 30th Avenue. The trail alignment is in City of Eugene ownership.



DenOuden

Forest along the ridgeline trail near Fox Hollow Road

B. Acquire land or access easements where needed and construct formal trail connectors to improve connectivity to the potential future ridgeline trail system. Exact locations of connector trails will be determined by trail alignment and adjacent development activities. Key future connections in this area include:

- **Viderra Park Connector:** Provide a trail connection from the planned ridgeline trail to Viderra Park and the adjacent neighborhood.
- **Skyview Connector:** Construct a trail from Skyview Park to the planned ridgeline trail corridor to the south. This route may need to travel along sidewalks for some length.



Ridgeline trail near Blanton Road



Spencer Butte trail improvements

- **Bailey View Connector:** Provide a trail connection from Bailey View Road to the planned ridgeline trail at the City owned Wild Iris Ridge site.
- **Wild Iris Ridge to West Eugene Wetlands Connector:** Provide a trail connection from the City owned Wild Iris Ridge site to the West Eugene Wetlands, the Fern Ridge Multi-use Path, and the planned West Eugene Wetlands Education Center on Danebo Road. This route may need to travel along sidewalks for some length to the south of Bailey Hill Road to avoid natural resource impacts and would cross West 11th Avenue at a signalized intersection.
- **Oak Hill Connector:** Provide a trail connection from the BLM owned Oak Hill area to the Fern Ridge Multi-use Path at the Meadowlark Prairie overlook and parking area.
- **Greenhill Ridge Connector:** Provide a connector trail along the ridgeline running between Greenhill Road and West 11th Avenue near the Lane Memorial Gardens cemetery.
- **Quarry Lane Connector:** Provide a connector trail between the planned ridgeline trail and West 11th Avenue/West Eugene Wetlands via the City owned Quarry Lane site.
- **Russel Creek Neighborhood Connector:** Provide a trail connection from the Russel Creek neighborhood to Moon Mountain, Bloomberg Park, and the planned ridgeline trail (combine with LCC Connector).
- **Hendricks Park to Willamette River Connector:** Provide a trail connection between Hendricks Park and the Willamette River multi-use path system.
- **Twin Oaks School Connector:** Provide a trail connection between the Twin Oaks Elementary School and the planned ridgeline trail to the north. Consider a route parallel to Bailey Hill Road (sidewalk or parallel trail) if trail access isn't possible elsewhere.

Goal 4: Trail Siting and Design

Site, construct, and maintain the ridgeline trail system at a high standard with the goal of maximizing user enjoyment and safety while limiting potential negative impacts such as injury, trespass, maintenance problems, user conflict, erosion, and impacts to natural resources.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

A. Design and site new trails and upgrade existing trails to meet the following objectives:

- Trails should be sited in a way that creates an exceptional trail experience for the users with special attention given to providing views, access to areas of interest, and a diversity of experiences.
- Trails should be sited in a way that avoids direct visual access to nearby roadways, homes, and other urban features where possible to help maximize visual experience and provide a sense of solitude for trail users.
- Trails should be sited in a way that minimizes damage to natural resources and avoids critically important habitat areas.
- Trails should be located to create loop options of varying lengths where possible.

- The trail network should be designed to minimize potential use conflicts between various user groups. Design features and considerations that help reduce conflicts between mountain bikes and hikers such as chokes (narrowed trail), turns, adequate site lines, and educational signage should be utilized where appropriate.
- Where appropriate, provide side loop trail options off of the ridgeline trail that could access areas of interest or provide a more challenging trail experience for hikers and mountain bikers.
- Any access restrictions or limitations should be clearly delineated (through signage and maps) to prevent potential user conflict, trespass, and damage to natural areas.
- The trails should be adequately surfaced and drained to facilitate year-round use and limit damage to trails and the surrounding area.
- Trails should be designed in a way that limits potential issues of trespass. Designated trails and public property boundaries should be clearly marked and unofficial trails eliminated to avoid confusion and unintentional trespass. Problems of trespass should be addressed immediately to ensure good relationships with neighboring property owners.
- Trails should be sited in a way that does not negatively impact privacy of adjacent property owners. This would include consideration of siting trails to avoid direct site lines from adjacent residents whenever possible.



Good trail design and siting is important for minimizing potential negative impacts to sensitive natural resource areas and adjacent properties.

- B. Evaluate existing and future trails using the *Universal Trail Assessment Process* or similar method, which provides a standard methodology for documenting trail conditions such as slope, surface characteristics, surfacing materials, clearance, and length. This information can be used for both planning maintenance activities and informing trail users of conditions and level of accessibility through trailhead signage, maps, or web sites.
- C. Construct new segments of the ridgeline trail system to a standard that is capable of accommodating multiple user groups including hikers, trail runners, and mountain bikers. Where joint accommodation is not possible due to grade, habitat consideration, levels of use or other constraints, consider constructing parallel trails or routes, converting some trails to one-way use for mountain bikes (where alternate return routes are available), or limiting use seasonally. Because mountain



Constructing trails to a high standard maximizes user enjoyment and safety, minimizes potential for user conflict, and reduces long-term maintenance requirements.



The ridgeline trail will include segments of varying difficulty including some segments that will provide a high level of accessibility such as the trail shown above.

bikes can cover considerable distances, it is desirable to ultimately provide mountain bike connections along the full length of the ridgeline between Fern Ridge Reservoir and Buford Recreation Area. Adding additional mountain bike accessible trails along the length of the ridgeline system will spread out the use and take pressure off of the Amazon Headwaters/Mount Baldy area where almost all of the mountain bike use is now concentrated.

D. Provide a diversity of trails along the ridgeline system (easy, moderate, difficult) to accommodate users of varying skill levels.

E. Surface and grade select trail segments in the Ridgeline Area to provide a high level of accessibility that will accommodate users with limited mobility and allow

them to experience natural areas and vista points. Accessible trails should be located on public transit routes when possible and should also provide support facilities such as restrooms, benches, adequate shade and drinking water when feasible.

Goal 5: Trail and Trailhead Safety

Improve security of trails and trailheads.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

A. Work to minimize vehicle break-ins and vandalism problems at trailheads through the following actions:

- Avoid siting trailhead parking lots in locations that are hidden from view. Where possible, parking lots should be visible from roads so that passing traffic helps deter break-ins and other illegal activities.
- Larger parking lots should be gated at night to prevent illegal use.
- Surveillance cameras should be considered as a deterrent to crime at parking lots and trailheads where problems are occurring on a consistent basis (currently being used at the Spencer Butte parking lot).
- Encourage local law enforcement agencies to follow up on property crimes occurring at trail head parking lots.

B. Consider developing a *neighborhood watch* program where nearby residents could

be enlisted to help monitor and report illegal activities at trailhead parking lots and other potential problem areas. This program would provide residents with instruction and contact information to report problems.

C. Recruit docents or other volunteers to patrol the ridgeline trail system on a periodic basis and report illegal activities, maintenance needs, and other problems.

D. Maintain facilities at a high level to encourage positive and legitimate uses of the area.

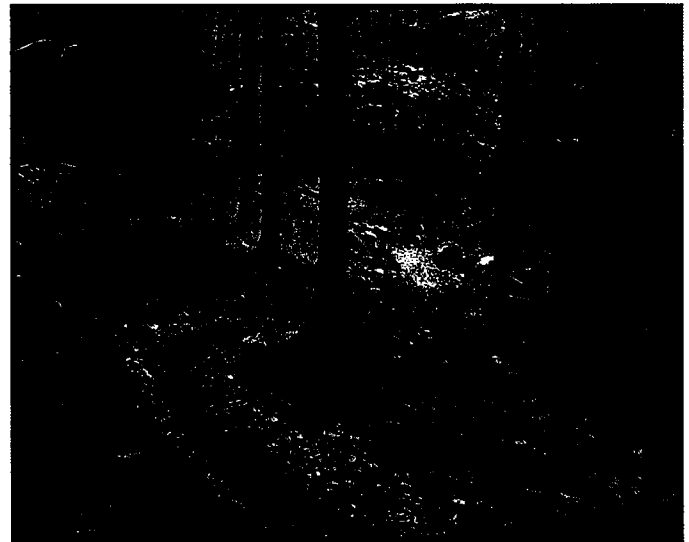


Well sited and designed parking facilities such as the newly constructed lot at Delta Ponds will help reduce illegal activities.

E. Where the ridgeline trail system intersects roadways with high traffic volumes or speeds, ensure safe pedestrian crossing by utilizing warning signage, pedestrian medians (islands), and other traffic calming techniques as appropriate. Special consideration should be given to the following existing and future road crossings:

- Willamette Street
- Fox Hollow Road
- Dillard Road
- 30th Avenue crossing at the south end of the planned ribbon trail
- Crest Drive (future Crest Drive School connector trail)
- 11th Avenue (future trail crossing)
- Bailey Hill Road (future trail crossing)
- Green Hill Road (future trail crossing for Oak Hill Connector trail)

F. Construct and maintain public trails at a high level to help minimize potential injury of trail users. This would include attention to trail conditions such as drainage, surfacing, stream crossings, clearance, and grade.



Shared use trails, if designed and sited well, can provide an exceptional user experience while protecting important natural resources and accommodating multiple users.

Goal 6: Mountain Bike Facilities

Develop a network of mountain bike trails to accommodate varying degrees of skill and styles of riding and tie those trails into existing bicycle facilities (trails, paths, and on-road routes).

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

A. In the short-term, work to improve and expand the existing designated mountain bike trail network in the Mount Baldy and Amazon Headwaters area. Improvements could include:

- Formalize and improve the trail connection between Mount Baldy and the Amazon Headwaters trail along the BPA power easement or adjacent City Park land.
- Consider converting the Amazon Headwaters trail to a one-way uphill trail for mountain bikes once a loop trail is completed using the BPA power corridor (or other parallel option) in that area to provide a downhill return option.

B. Work with user groups and make necessary trail improvements that would permit mountain bike access along the existing ridgeline trail between Fox Hollow Road and Blanton Road (this is not currently a permitted use).

C. Work jointly with area mountain bike advocacy groups such as the *Lane County Mountain Bike Association* to construct and maintain trails and promote responsible trail use.

D. Work with BPA to explore the possibility of accommodating trail use for hikers and mountain bikers within BPA power easements, especially in the segment between Wild Iris Ridge and Mount Baldy. This would provide opportunity to create additional routes



McCauley

Expanding the mountain bike accessible trail network in the Ridgeline Area will better distribute use, which is now focused on a only a few heavily used trail segments.

and multiple loop options. Because these easements cross private property, access agreements with land owners must be secured.

- E. Site a mountain bike challenge course (freeriding course) in the Ridgeline Area and work with local mountain biking advocacy

groups to design, construct, and maintain the facility. The challenge course should be sited in a location that is easily accessed from the existing or planned ridgeline trail system.

Goal 7: Bicycle Touring

Provide safe on-road bicycle touring routes in the Ridgeline Area.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

A. Roads with high traffic volumes or speeds that are also popular bicycle touring routes should be upgraded to add wider shoulders (4-foot shoulder are preferred where feasible) on either side of the road to help reduce the possibility of bicycle-auto crashes.

- B. Post signage on commonly used bicycle touring routes to alert drivers of bicycles on the road.
- C. Sweep road shoulders with sufficient frequency to remove debris and gravel that can lead to bicycle crashes and flying debris.
- D. Work with local bicycle advocacy groups and public safety organizations to promote proper bicycle touring etiquette and safety practices such as obeying traffic laws (stopping at traffic signals and stop signs) and riding single file except when passing.
- E. Provide support facilities such as restrooms and drinking water along major bicycle touring routes and at ridgeline trail heads when possible. The Greater Eugene Area Riders (GEARs) and other bicycle touring advocacy groups may take the lead on coordinating

and siting these facilities, working with business, property owners, wineries, or churches along touring routes.

F. Provide bicycle racks at trailheads and other public facilities in the Ridgeline Area.

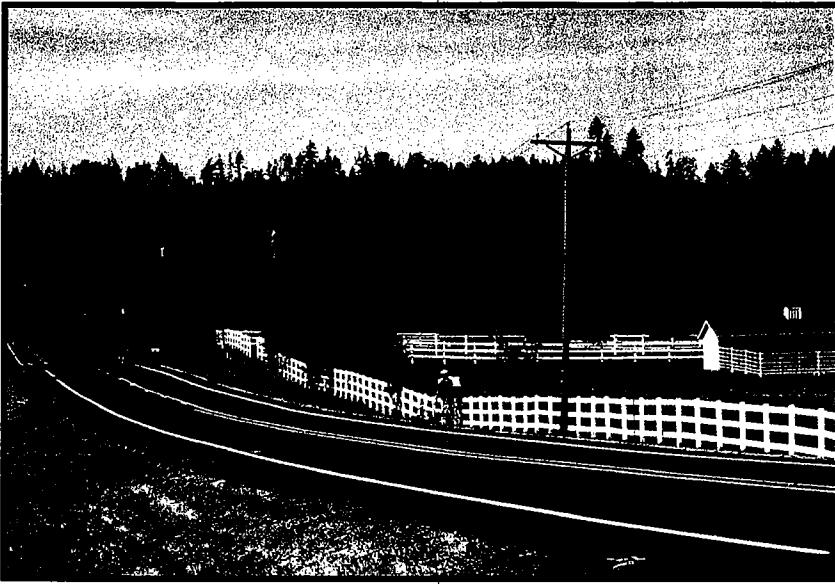
Goal 8: Multi-use Paths

Support the expansion of the regional network of multi-use paths in the Ridgeline Area to improve trail connectivity and access to park and open space areas. Multi-use paths are hard surfaced trails designated to

accommodate bicycles and pedestrians similar to the existing multi-use paths along the Willamette River and Amazon Creek.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Extend the Fern Ridge Multi-use Path along the Amazon Diversion Channel from its current terminus at Meadowlark Prairie (at



Bicycle touring on
Spencer Creek Road



Proposed connections from the
ridgeline trail to the existing Fern
Ridge Multi-use Path (shown above as
it passes through Meadowlark Prairie)
will provide multiple loop options for
hikers, runners, and cyclists.

Greenhill Road and Royal Avenue) to Fir Butte Road.

- B. Support Willamalane Park and Recreation District efforts to construct the planned Middle Fork Path along the Middle Fork of the Willamette River between Dorris Ranch and Clearwater Park and the Mill Race Multi-use Path along the Springfield Mill Race from Downtown Springfield to the Middle Fork Path.
- C. Support regional efforts to provide a multi-use path connection along the south side of the Willamette River to make connections between Eugene, Springfield, and the Buford Recreation Area.
- D. Study the potential for a *rails-to-trails* or *rails-and-trails* conversion of the existing rail line that runs between Eugene and Coos Bay should the line be abandoned in the future. This would provide a much needed bicycle connection between Veneta and Eugene and could ultimately be extended as far as the coast as a recreational trail, creating a major tourism draw.

Goal 9: Equestrian Facilities

Provide designated equestrian facilities in the Ridgeline Area including trails and an equestrian skills park (consider private/public partnership).

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Designate the south side of the Amazon Diversion Channel as an official equestrian trail from Greenhill Road toward Fern Ridge Reservoir and provide services such as parking and loading facilities to support this use. This is one of the few locations in public ownership that is currently open and suitable for equestrian use in the Ridgeline Area. Several stables are located in the area and could potentially provide areas for loading and unloading horses and horse rentals. The trail should not extend into the Corps of Engineers property adjacent to the reservoir or other sensitive areas to avoid habitat impacts.
- B. Provide additional equestrian trails in the vicinity of the Amazon Diversion channel to create longer routes and loop options.
- C. When the western portion of the proposed ridgeline trail is constructed, consider allowing equestrian use in this segment, either on a shared trail or a parallel series of trails.
- D. Look for opportunities for public/private partnerships to provide equestrian facilities on private lands in the Ridgeline Area.
- E. Work with local equestrian advocacy groups such as the *Eugene Area Chapter of Oregon Equestrian Trails* and *Back Country Horsemen* to promote responsible equestrian use that limits potential impacts to sensitive areas and private properties.



Public equestrian trails and facilities are currently quite limited in the Ridgeline Area, but could be expanded using public/private partnerships.

Goal 10: Support Facilities and Materials

Provide support facilities and materials (maps and guides) for users of the ridgeline trail system.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Provide adequate parking facilities at major trailhead locations to prevent unsafe parking situations or conflict with neighboring property owners.



Upgrades to the existing signage along the ridgeline trail system are planned for 2008.

- B. Provide adequate bus parking at select trailheads to accommodate school field trips.
- C. Provide way-finding and informational signage at all trailheads that describe trail conditions, routes, permitted users, and trail rules.
- D. Provide way-finding signage at all trail junctions to help avoid confusion and potential trespass.
- E. Install benches at key locations and vista points along the trail network.
- F. Provide bicycle racks at trailheads and other public facilities in the Ridgeline Area.
- G. Provide restrooms at key locations along the trail system (similar to the Meadowlark Prairie overlook). Site restrooms in locations that are less likely to be vandalized.
- H. Provide drinking water at key locations along the ridgeline trail system.
- I. Provide picnicking facilities and trash receptacles.
- J. Produce a ridgeline trail map/brochure that is available to the public via the web and hard copies distributed by ridgeline partners. The map could include information such as trailhead locations; viewpoints; trail lengths and difficulty; suggested routes; educational information; and GPS coordinates of key features.

Goal 11: Educational Resource

Utilize the natural and cultural resources of the Ridgeline Area as an educational resource:

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Provide direct trail connections from nearby schools where feasible so they can more easily utilize the area as an educational resource.
- B. Develop a comprehensive interpretive plan which directs the installation of interpretive signage, artwork, and interventions at key points along the ridgeline trail network. Topics may include plants, wildlife, geology, human

history, and ongoing habitat management efforts.

- C. Work with School District 4J, Bethel School District, Crow-Applegate-Lorane School District, the Willamette Resources Education Network (WREN), Nearby Nature, Science Factory, Rachel Carson High School, Long Tom Watershed Council, University of Oregon, and Lane Community College to promote and improve the Ridgeline Area as an educational resource.



Interpretive signs like the example above were recently installed along the Fern Ridge Path to help interpret the natural and human history of the West Eugene Wetlands.

With its close proximity to numerous schools, the Ridgeline Area has great potential as an educational resource.

Tourism

Goal 1: Facilities

Work to create a critical mass of recreational amenities and facilities in the Ridgeline Area to attract tourists from around the region and the country.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Implement the *Ridgeline Open Space Vision*.
- B. Coordinate with private property owners who might be interested in establishing camping areas, bed and breakfasts, and other recreational support facilities along the ridgeline corridor.

Goal 2: Promotion

Promote the ridgeline open space system and the associated recreational facilities.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Work with existing area tourism promoters such as chambers of commerce and the Convention and Visitors Association of Lane County (CVALCO) to highlight the Ridgeline Area's scenic and recreational amenities, taking advantage of the growing interest in eco-tourism.
- B. Produce maps and other promotional materials specific to the Ridgeline Area open space system. These would include information about trail access, recreational facilities, viewpoints, natural and cultural features, bicycle touring routes, and other information.
- C. Designate a *Country Trails Driving Route* to promote Ridgeline Area amenities and rural cottage industry. This would be a self-guided driving tour along rural roads with information to help identify and interpret the area's human and natural history; farm and forest practices; geologic features; and cultural resources (historic structures, wineries, Coyote Creek covered bridge, and pioneer cemeteries).



The Ridgeline Area is the gateway to numerous local vineyards and wineries.

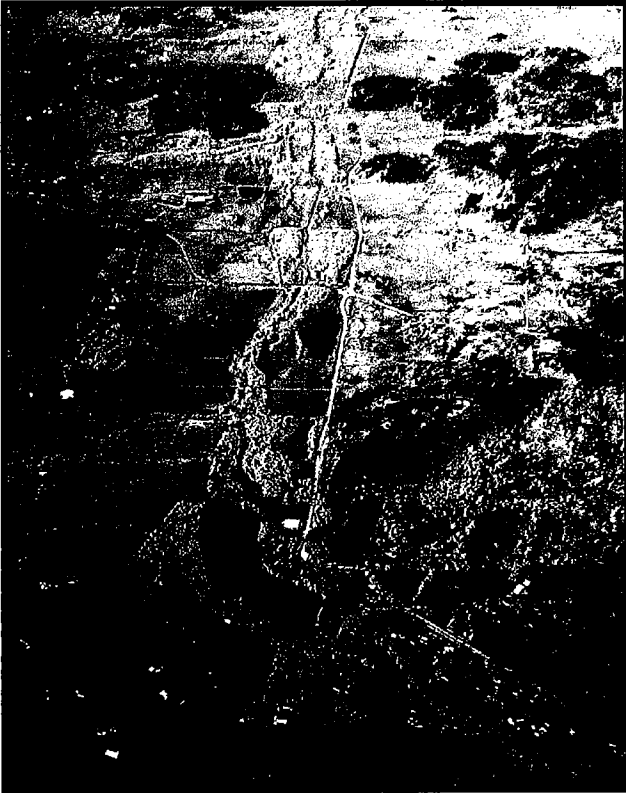


The first annual *Ridgeline Ramble* twelve-mile trail run was held in May of 2007 and was well attended.



The *Co-motion Classic Tandem Stage Race* is held annually in the Spencer Creek/Lorane area and attracts cyclists from around the country.

Water Resources



Water availability in rural areas such as the Spencer Creek watershed (shown above) will continue to be an issue as future residents tap into this limited resource.

The Ridgeline Area includes portions of the Amazon Creek, Spencer Creek, Coyote Creek, and Russel Creek watersheds, which include numerous headwater and perennial streams in both urban and rural settings.

Goal 1: Water Availability

Work to conserve the limited surface and ground water resources in the Ridgeline Area for sustained human use and habitat benefits.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

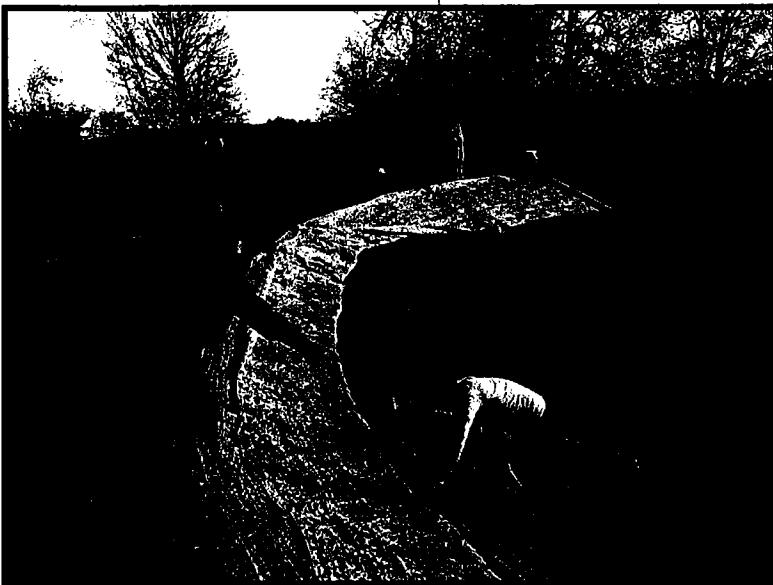
- A. Provide technical assistance and information to rural property owners who rely on wells for water supply to help them reduce consumption. Technical assistance could include providing information on drought tolerant plantings; installation of low flow appliances; and installation of cistern water collection systems.
- B. Work cooperatively with home builders in rural areas to promote wise water use in new development. This could include use of low flow appliances; landscaping that requires little or no irrigation; and installation of cistern water collection systems.

Goal 2: Water Quality

Maintain and improve water quality for humans, fish, and other aquatic life in Ridgeline Area streams.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Enhance riparian vegetation along waterways on both private and public lands to provide shade and filtration of surface runoff from pastures and rural residences. The Natural Resources Conservation Service, Oregon Department of Forestry, the City of Eugene, and the Long Tom Watershed Council can all provide technical assistance in this area and coordinate planting efforts.
- B. Repair and maintain trails, roadways, and culverts on both public and private lands to help reduce erosion problems.
- C. Provide technical and financial assistance to farmers and woodlot owners to help safeguard water quality, riparian, and in-stream habitat in and around key waterways. Techniques to improve water quality might include; establishing buffer strips between agricultural and forestry activities and streams; fencing livestock out of stream corridors; and erosion control measures.
- D. Work cooperatively with home builders to help prevent or avoid potential negative short- and long-term water quality impacts



Waterway enhancement efforts such as the Long Tom Watershed Council's bank stabilization project shown above are key for improving water quality in the Ridgeline Area.

associated with construction of new homes. Techniques to reduce water quality impacts would include preservation of riparian vegetation along waterways for shade and filtration; minimization of impervious surfaces; erosion control practices (during and after construction); and cluster development or other creative site planning to avoid impact to waterways.

- E. Encourage home owners in both the rural and urban portions of the Ridgeline Area to adopt practices that will help improve water quality. Techniques to reduce water quality impacts from residential properties could include reduced use of herbicides and fertilizer on lawns; planting trees and shrubs along waterways to provide shade; and repair and upkeep of septic systems.

Goal 3: Stormwater Quantity

Work to minimize peak flows from urban and urbanizing areas to prevent waterway erosion and damage to habitat.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Work with home builders to implement stormwater *best management practices* that help minimize increases in peak flow runoff such as infiltration, retention, and minimization of impervious surfaces in newly developing areas.
- B. Provide technical assistance to home owners to help reduce existing peak flow from developed areas. Techniques could include downspout disconnection; use of on-site flow controls; and infiltration (where soils allow).
- C. Conserve pervious surface, tree cover, headwater streams, and riparian vegetation to help minimize increases in stormwater runoff, especially in urbanizing headwater areas.



Headwater stream

Views and Viewsheds

Goal 1: Views

Provide and maintain publicly accessible viewpoints along the length of ridgeline corridor where opportunities exist.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Design and site trails to take advantage of vista points where they exist to provide trail users with the opportunity to view the valley below.
- B. Provide viewpoints that are accessible to individuals with



Spencer Butte



Numerous vistas and viewpoints are found along the ridgeline including this view toward Fern Ridge Reservoir.

- limited mobility, either by short fully accessible trails or from designated roadside parking areas or lots (similar to the views available from Skinner Butte).
- C. Manage vegetation at key viewpoints to ensure long-term preservation of important vistas. To maintain vistas some selective tree removal may be considered where appropriate. Vegetation management should be done in a way that limits natural resource impacts and maintains the aesthetic of the view (crown pruning should be avoided).
- D. Site trails and manage vegetation in a way that limits undesirable views from trails, including views to adjacent residential and rural properties.

This will serve to improve the trail user's experience by screening views of structures while at the same time limit visual intrusion onto neighboring properties. Screening, where needed, can be achieved by planting additional native vegetation in key locations.

Goal 2: Community Gateways

Utilize the ridgeline open space corridor as a *community gateway* where it intersects major points of entry into the metro area. Gateways should be used to demarcate the urban-rural transition; help celebrate the community and its open space system; and welcome visitors to the area.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Develop *community gateways* for both functional and aesthetic purpose. Gateways may include amenities such as trailhead parking, visitor information, trail guides, interpretive signage, and

outdoor art. Key opportunities for siting community gateways in the Ridgeline Area would include:

- Highway 126/West 11th Avenue (two possible locations exist for this gateway)
- Bailey Hill Road
- 30th Avenue near Lane Community College
- Willamette Street

Goal 3: Viewshed Protection

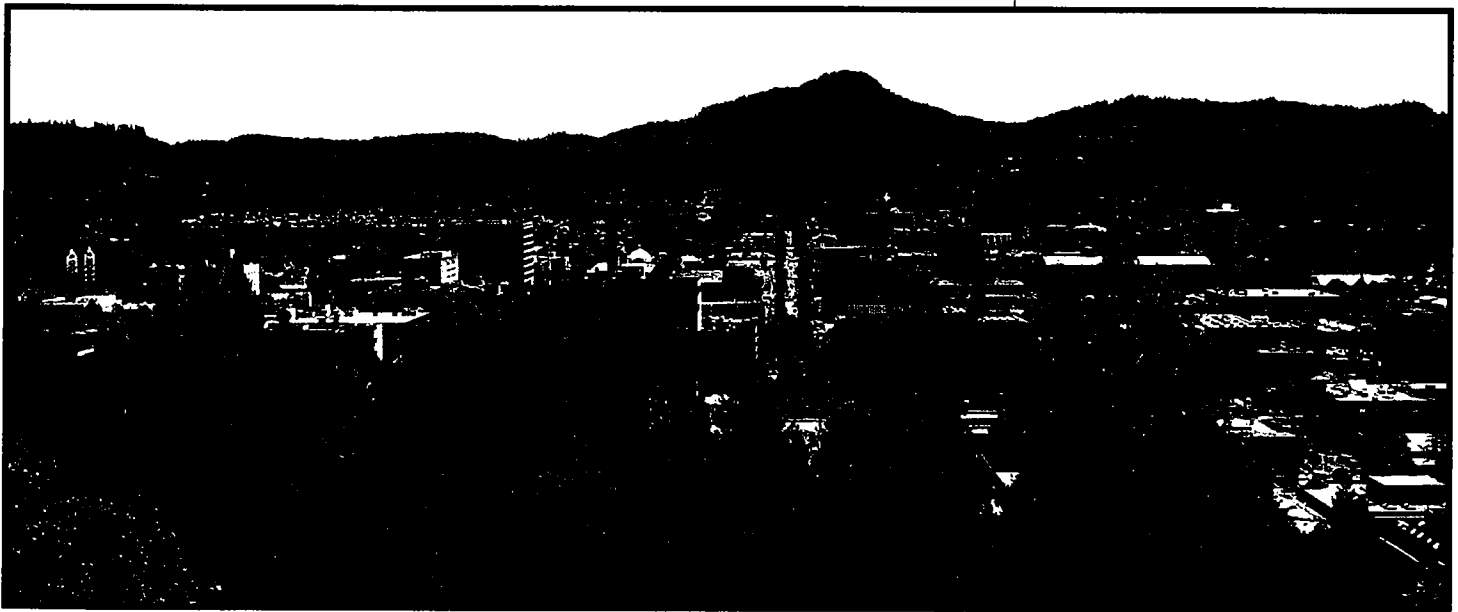
Work to preserve the visual quality of the Ridgeline Area.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Work cooperatively with area home builders and woodlot owners to limit the negative visual impacts of tree cutting on highly visible slopes, especially along the ridge tops.
- B. Work cooperatively with area home builders and landowners to avoid siting structures immediately on the ridge tops if possible. Structure located on the crest of a hill or ridge top tend to be highly visible for long distances.



The Highway 126 corridor (above) is a major point of entry into Eugene. The open space system in the area could function as an attractive community gateway.



The Ridgeline Area provides a highly visible scenic backdrop for residents of the Metropolitan and rural area alike.

Urban-Rural Transition

Goal 1: Farm and Forest Land Management

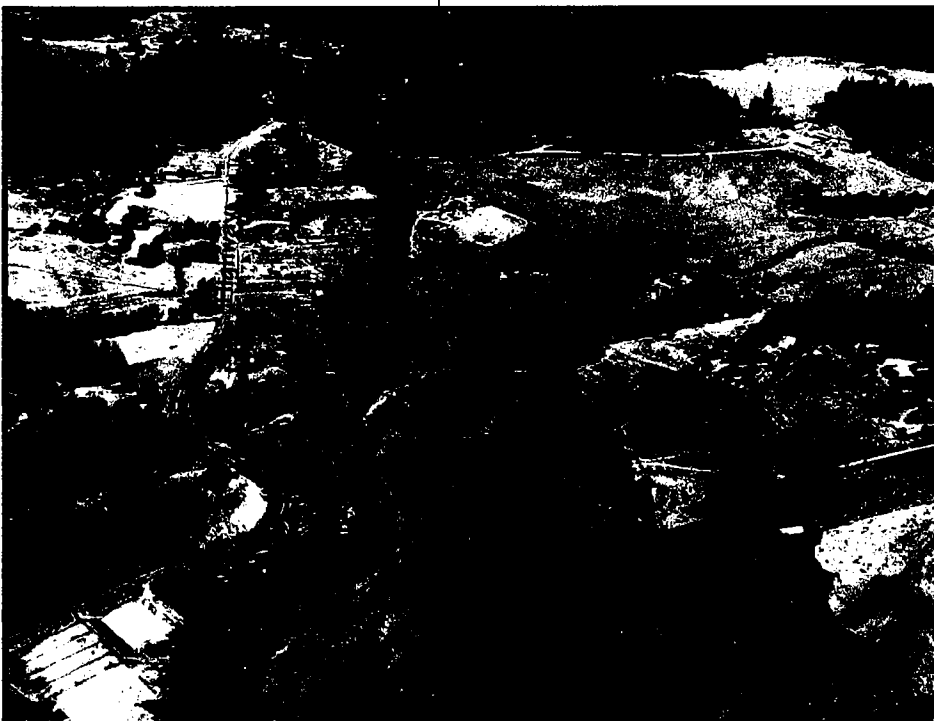
Work to maintain the quality and long-term viability of farm and forest lands in the Ridgeline Area. Farm and forest lands in active production make up a significant portion of the Ridgeline Area and provide significant habitat, water quality, visual quality, and economic value to the rural portions of the Ridgeline Area.



Equipment such as the Timber Jack harvester (shown above) can be used to harvest timber and manage habitat with minimal soil compaction or damage to desirable vegetation.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Provide assistance to farmers and woodlot owners in the Ridgeline Area to help implement management techniques that benefit water quality, habitat, and visual quality. Numerous federal, state, and local programs are in place to provide some level of assistance in this area (Appendix-A).
- B. Focus farm and forest land conservation efforts on larger blocks of properties that tend to be viable for long-term production (avoid fragmentation of important farm and forest lands).
- C. Identify opportunities to co-locate recreational uses with farm and forest lands in ways that could generate revenue for participating landowners.
- D. Implement forest demonstration projects (on public, land trust, or private lands) as a way to test and showcase management approaches. Demonstration projects should be well documented and monitored for success so they can be studied and the results clearly articulated to land managers, property owners, elected officials, and the public.
- E. Utilize farm and forest lands as an educational resource for area schools.



The Spencer Creek Valley (viewed from the air) contains a mix of residences, pasture, and forest, which is typical of the rural portions of the Ridgeline Area.

Goal 2: Wildfire Management

Work to reduce the risk of damaging wildfires in the Ridgeline Area. The heavily vegetated landscape, steep slopes, and the transition of urban to rural landscapes, all contribute to the potential risk of wildfire in the Ridgeline Area.

Recommended Actions and Strategies:

- A. Support implementation of the *Lane County Community Wildfire Protection Plan* to minimize the risk of uncontrolled wildfire occurring in the Ridgeline Area, particularly in the rural-urban fringe. The plan calls for the identification of priority areas for reduction of fuel loads and coordination with homeowners to reduce the ignitability of structures.
- B. Assess public and land trust lands for wildfire hazards and manage the vegetation to help reduce risk of wildfire spreading to adjacent properties. Management plans for each public or land trust property should include an assessment of wildfire hazards and a strategy for reducing those hazards where they exist.
- C. Design and site trails in a way that increases the ability of agencies to manage land for fire safety and access for emergency responders.
- D. Work to educate Ridgeline Area residents and recreational users about wildfire risk and prevention.

