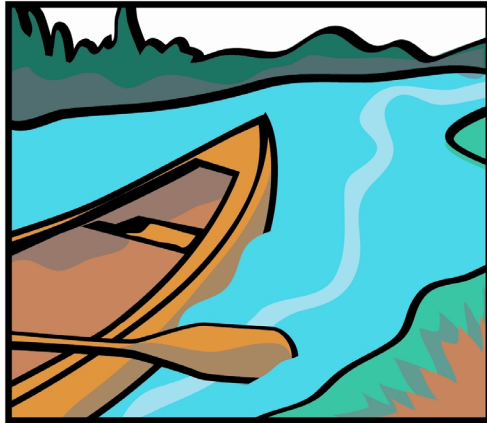


**Willamette River Water Trail
Implementation Plan
June 2004**

WILLAMETTE RIVER



Water Trail

**Prepared by the
Willamette Restoration Initiative**



in cooperation with



Summary

The Willamette River Water Trail is an opportunity waiting to happen—the land and water base is ready-to-go, and it comes with a booming population right next to it that is becoming more interested in paddling every day. Careful coordination and communication combined with smart marketing can make the Trail a reality that benefits both local economies and the environment. The Water Trail can become an Oregon signature recreation experience, and offers promising opportunities for public-private partnerships. Establishing the Willamette River Water Trail can create new opportunities for experiencing Oregon—for example, the chance for a paddler to canoe from Eugene to the sea, once the Willamette water trail links to the Lower Columbia Water River Water Trail.

This proposal identifies a number of discrete Willamette River Water Trail tasks, timelines, and budget items. In summary, these include:

- a. Establishing the Willamette River Water Trail should be phased over a period of 6 to 8 years.
- b. Leg 1 of the water trail (Buena Vista to Wheatland) should be completed by Summer 2005.
- c. Remaining Mid-Valley legs should be completed by Summer 2006.
- d. Costs for b. and c., above, would be on the order of \$100-125,000 (exclusive of site improvements and assuming continued in-kind support from existing partners).
- e. Establishing the remainder sections of the trail should occur by 2010, starting with linking-up with the Portland-Metro area.
- f. Upon completion, the Willamette River Water Trail will be effectively linked with the Lewis and Clark Lower Columbia River Water Trail, creating a system where paddlers will be able to travel from Eugene to the sea.
- g. Cooperative opportunities abound, including in working with :
 - Corporate or other private sector partners to sponsor trail activities, events, and products;
 - existing, effective networks, such as the Willamette Restoration Initiative, the Mid-Willamette River Connections workgroup, Willamette Riverkeeper, American Heritage River program, the Oregon State Parks Trust, and SOLV; and,
 - existing major partners, including the Governor's Office, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, and the National Park Service.

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Willamette River Water Trail Summary Implementation Plan June 2004

I. Background

A water trail is ‘a stretch of river, a shoreline, or an ocean that has been mapped out with the intent to create an educational, scenic, and challenging experience for recreational canoers and kayakers.’ Water trails and hiking trails have a lot in common: they can be short or long; historic or scenic; remote or populated; or challenging or relaxing. (Leger 2004)

There are at least 200 water trails in the United States. They are most popular in the eastern U.S. Water trails can be significant to local and regional economies. In eastern North Carolina, the coastal plains water trail system produces 2.4 percent (\$55.14 million) of tourism economic impact. When combining local and non-local expenditures, North Carolina’s coastal paddling experiences produced \$103.9 million. Canoeists on the Kickapoo spend over \$1.2 million in rural southwest Wisconsin. (Johnson 2002)

Water trails in the Northwest include the Cascadia Marine Trail and the Lakes-to-Locks Trail in Puget Sound; and the Willapa Bay Water Trail in southwest Washington. Oregon water trails that are under development include: the Lewis and Clark Lower Columbia River Water Trail; the Siuslaw Estuary Water Trail; the Coos Regional Water Trail; and the Willamette River Water Trail.

The Willamette River was identified by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department as a prime water trail opportunity in its 1995 State Trails Plan. There are already over 100 publicly-owned properties that are well-distributed along the River’s length—many with easy public access. About 70 percent of Oregonians live within 20 miles of the Willamette. The most recent State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan indicates that Oregonians are seeking more natural recreation opportunities (nature viewing grew by over 250% in the Willamette Valley in the last 15 years) through travel to destinations closer-to-home. (OPRD 2003)

II. Implementation Plan

A phased approach is proposed to implement the Willamette River Water Trail.

1. Finish remaining tasks in the preliminary, organizational phase.
2. Establish the first leg of the Water Trail from Buena Vista, near Independence, to Wheatland, north of Keizer (34 river miles).
3. Complete Mid-Willamette River Water Trail by establishing sections that bracket the first, from roughly Corvallis to Buena Vista; and from Wheatland to Champoeg State Park. (roughly 60 river miles, total)
4. Establish North and South sections of the trail, from Champoeg to the Portland area, and from Eugene to Corvallis.

The Willamette Restoration Initiative has thus far taken the lead coordinating and convening role in advancing the concept of the Willamette River Water Trail, and would

be pleased to continue in this role. The Workgroup, with new members added to reflect new partners, could serve as an effective steering committee. New partners that will be approached include the Governor’s Office, Oregon State Marine Board, and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The effort would continue to be supported through the advice and assistance of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, the National Park Service, and the American Heritage River Program. The principal roles of responsible agencies would remain unchanged—that is, state agencies and local governments would retain their individual authority regarding the management of their Willamette River parcels and related personnel.

1. Finish Preliminary Phase

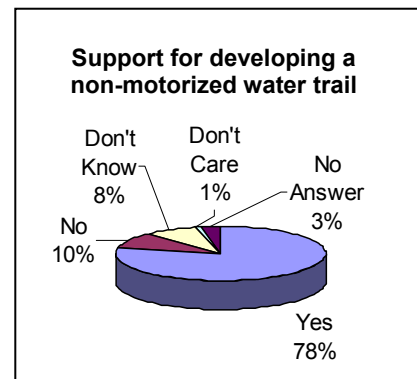
A good deal of work has already been accomplished in terms of priming community understanding of a water trail. One task (development of a concept level plan for the Mid-Willamette Section of the Trail) remains (see section 1.d, below).

a. Mid-Willamette River Connections Workgroup

In 2001, the Willamette Restoration Initiative¹ convened a group of Mid-Valley interests to identify ways to re-connect communities with the Willamette River. The Mid-Willamette River Connections workgroup has met monthly ever since, and includes members from local governments, non-profit groups, tourism organizations, and state and federal agencies, representing interests from Corvallis to Newberg. The group is assisted by the National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program, the Willamette American Heritage Rivers Initiative, and Willamette Riverkeeper. (More information is available at: www.oregonwri.org/mwrc-home-6-02.htm.)

b. Public Open Houses

In late 2002, the workgroup held multiple open houses attended by nearly 200 people to gather the public’s River re-connection ideas. One of the most popular was establishing a water trail. Results of a survey of attendees are shown to the right.



c. Site Inventory

Based on these open houses, the Willamette Restoration Initiative conducted a detailed inventory of publicly-owned sites along the Mid-Willamette (the inventory was funded through a regional lottery grant provided to WRI through the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Development Partnership). The inventory is available at: www.oregonwri.org/water-trail.

Using this inventory, the workgroup identified that the most logical first leg of a water trail would be from Buena Vista (south of Independence) to Wheatland (north of Keizer).

¹ The Willamette Restoration Initiative was established in 1998 by Governor Kitzhaber to develop and implement a broad-based, citizen conservation plan for the Willamette River and watershed. The resulting “Willamette Restoration Strategy” identifies 27 critical actions needed to restore watershed health, including raising public awareness and appreciation of the natural environment in the Willamette River basin. (WRI 2001). WRI is in the process of applying for non-profit status. More info at: www.oregonwri.org

There are 25 publicly-owned properties along this stretch of the Willamette. They include undeveloped islands, simple boat ramps, and big, well developed city and state parks, to 2 of the 3 remaining car ferry sites on the River. The Willamette Restoration Initiative applied for and is being awarded a \$25,000 grant to develop a trail guide, informational brochures, and a system of signage along the river.

d. Concept Plan for Willamette River Water Trail

Even while advancing the establishment of the first leg of the Willamette River Water Trail, the workgroup continues to collaborate with the National Park Service in developing a concept-level plan for the Mid-Willamette section. This concept-level plan will be a simple overview of existing opportunities and immediate needs presented in an easy-to-understand format. There are three local committees working on this—one each for the Corvallis, Salem, and Newberg areas. The plan will be completed in fall 2004, after another round of public open houses.

2. Establish the First Leg

a. Objective: Have the first leg of the Water Trail established by Summer 2005.

b. Location: Buena Vista to Wheatland (34 river miles). Attachment 1 is a map of this section.

c. Tasks:

Generally, tasks fall under the following categories. These are explained in detail in Attachment 2.

- a. Information development and promotion (trail guides, brochures, signage, website, and events)
- b. Volunteer recruitment and coordination (trail adopters—scouts, paddle clubs, other community service organizations)
- c. Private sector consultation (creating commercial infrastructure for paddle rentals, shuttles, developing hospitality and tourism industry connections)
- d. Convening, coordination, and outreach (landowner interactions; recreation providers; public safety/law enforcement; community open houses)
- e. Necessary site improvements (restrooms, fire-pits, paths, tent pads, and the like))

d. Estimated Budget

Full implementation of this phase will require approximately \$50,000 (estimated costs are detailed in Attachment 2). WRI is being awarded a grant of roughly \$25,000 from the Recreational Trails Program that will provide for more limited implementation of this phase.

3. Complete Mid-Willamette Water Trail Sections

a. Objective: Complete Mid-Willamette Water Trail by Summer 2006.

b. Locations:

- Peoria (south of Corvallis) to Buena Vista; (35 river miles)
- Wheatland to Champoeg State Park (27 river miles)

c. Tasks: Same as 2.c.

d. Estimated Budget: \$50-75,000. This phase covers a larger area and therefore will likely have somewhat greater costs resulting from production of new trail guides, additional signage over longer distances, and additional coordination with communities and other stakeholders.

4. Establish North and South sections of the trail

NOTE: This phase is more speculative than earlier phases, as it will entail initiating additional community efforts similar to those in the Mid-Willamette and because of the difficulty of forecasting out-year budgetary resources.

a. Objective: Complete Northern trail section by 2008 and Southern by 2010.

b. Locations:

- Northern trail: Champoeg State Park to Canby Ferry (this essentially will link the Water Trail with the Portland Area) (10 river miles)
- Southern trail: Eugene to Peoria by 2010. (46 river miles)

c. Tasks: The scope of tasks would be the same as in earlier phases. One important difference is that in the Mid-Willamette, the grass-roots workgroup has been collaborating on the project for three years. This is not the case in the Northern and Southern areas, and would have to be accounted for in plan implementation.

d. Estimated Budget: Completing both the Northern and Southern trail sections would probably cost on the order of \$125-150,000. This reflects the costs of convening community groups, additional site inventory, and printing new trail guides for these sections.

5. Funding

In-kind contributions have played, and will continue to play, a large role in funding Water Trail implementation. For example, over the last three years, the efforts of the Mid-Willamette River Connections Workgroup amount to at least \$75,000. The Willamette River Water Trail also represents a prime candidate for private sector sponsorship or support, given the proximity and recreation preferences of a fast-growing population.

The budget needs estimated in this implementation plan relate largely to public awareness, promotion, and coordination. There will be future needs for additional site and facility improvements or expansion, not only resulting from growth in Water Trail use, but from population increases in general. These needs may be met through future agency and organization budgets, including the following sources:

- Federal project funding: for example, National Park Service; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; USFS-BLM; Center for Disease Control for health-related aspects of trail use.
- State sources: for example, Oregon Economic and Community Development Department, Oregon Tourism Commission, OPRD, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife grant programs.

- Local sources: for example, regional lottery funds; local government capital improvement planning.
- Additional private and non-profit sector support (in-kind or direct): for example, outdoor equipment manufacturers, visitor associations, graphic design firms, guides and outfitters.

6. Conclusions

The Willamette River Water Trail is an opportunity waiting to happen—the land and water base is ready-to-go, and it comes with a booming population right next to it that is becoming more interested in paddling every day. Careful coordination and communication combined with smart marketing can make the Trail a reality that benefits both local economies and the environment. The Water Trail can become an Oregon signature recreation experience, and offers promising opportunities for public-private partnerships. Establishing the Willamette River Water Trail can create new opportunities for experiencing Oregon—for example, the chance for a paddler to canoe from Eugene to the sea, once the Willamette water trail links to the Lower Columbia Water River Water Trail.

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Water Trail

First Leg of the Willamette River Water Trail



LEGEND

NAVIGATION HAZARDS

- 79 Rock shoals:** Left side, just upriver from power lines.
- 88 Congested area:** Watch for other river traffic in the downtown Salem vicinity. **THROUGH RM 81.**
- 92 Rocks:** Right side of left channel around island.

Willamette Mission State Park: Methodist missionary Jason Lee established the first Methodist mission west of the Rockies here in 1834. Lee moved his mission to Salem (Chemeketa) in 1840.

Lincoln Access: One of the Willamette's most successful early-day towns—named after President Lincoln—won fame for shipping out a record 350,000 bushels of wheat one year. It boasted a half-mile-long waterfront of warehouses and wharves, none of which remains.

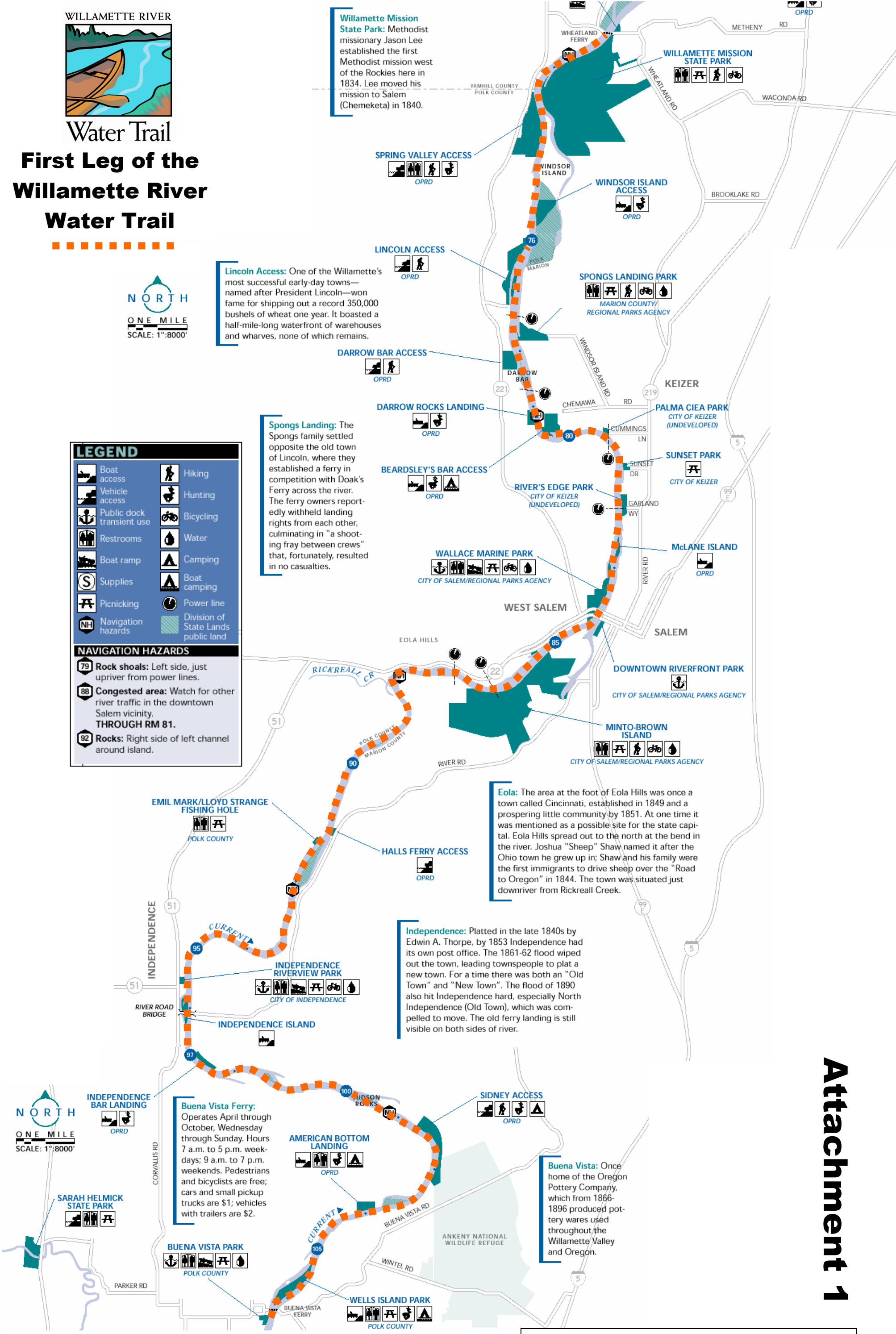
Spongs Landing: The Spongs family settled opposite the old town of Lincoln, where they established a ferry in competition with Doak's Ferry across the river. The ferry owners reportedly withheld landing rights from each other, culminating in "a shooting fray between crews" that, fortunately, resulted in no casualties.

Eola: The area at the foot of Eola Hills was once a town called Cincinnati, established in 1849 and a prospering little community by 1851. At one time it was mentioned as a possible site for the state capital. Eola Hills spread out to the north at the bend in the river. Joshua "Sheep" Shaw named it after the Ohio town he grew up in; Shaw and his family were the first immigrants to drive sheep over the "Road to Oregon" in 1844. The town was situated just downriver from Rickreall Creek.

Independence: Platted in the late 1840s by Edwin A. Thorpe, by 1853 Independence had its own post office. The 1861-62 flood wiped out the town, leading townspeople to plat a new town. For a time there was both an "Old Town" and "New Town". The flood of 1890 also hit Independence hard, especially North Independence (Old Town), which was compelled to move. The old ferry landing is still visible on both sides of river.

Buena Vista Ferry: Operates April through October, Wednesday through Sunday. Hours 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays; 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekends. Pedestrians and bicyclists are free; cars and small pickup trucks are \$1; vehicles with trailers are \$2.

Buena Vista: Once home of the Oregon Pottery Company, which from 1866-1896 produced pottery wares used throughout the Willamette Valley and Oregon.



Map information from:
Willamette River Recreation Guide, Oregon State Marine Board and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, 1998.

Attachment 2
Detailed Tasks for Establishing the First Leg of the Willamette Water Trail (Buena Vista to Wheatland)

Task	Time Period (assumes July 04 start)	Estimated Budget ²
a. Information development and promotion		\$36,000
1. <i>Produce water trail brochures:</i> These will be one-page, nominal-cost information sources for wide distribution to call attention to the water trail. They will be produced on color copiers to allow an evolution in terms of project progress and reportables (i.e., they'll be able to profile the project one way in the fall and quite another by spring.)	Fall 2004 and on-going	
2. <i>Water Trail Website:</i> WRI has already reserved domain names for the Willamette Water Trail and maintains a basic water trail website. This would be improved over time to include far more information, including downloadable versions of the information products described below.	On-going	
3. <i>Produce water trail guide:</i> This will be a map annotated with access points, travel times, leave-no-trace tips, and descriptions of natural and historic features. It will build on the site inventory and be professionally designed in the fashion of Wild on the Willamette (a paddling map put out by the City of Portland and Portland Audubon) and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's Willamette River Recreation Guide.	April 2005	
4. <i>Develop signage:</i> signs will both direct people how to get on/off river, as well as guide them to appropriate, "official" stops on the water trail where public access is assured, safe and supported by basic amenities. MWRC has developed a Willamette River Water Trail logo (in partnership with the Oregon Tourism Commission) and has discussed use of this logo for signage purposes with OPRD. Sign placement would need to be carefully coordinated not only with OPRD, but also with local government parks and transportation staff.	May 2005	
5. <i>Promotions and Events:</i> The Governor's Office has indicated an interest in having the Governor announce the initiation and completion of the first leg of the water trail. There are a growing number of venues that the Governor could take advantage of, as could other water trail interests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Willamette River Weekend (annual; sponsored by MWRC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer 2004-- • Initiation, Summer 2005— 	

² Preliminary estimates that will be periodically verified and refined. Do not include value of in-kind contributions.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Down by the Riverside (annual, sponsored by SOLV) - Paddle Oregon (annual, sponsored by Willamette Riverkeeper) - community concerts and celebrations at waterfront parks each summer (Portland, Oregon City, Salem, Albany, Eugene). <p>In addition to regularly-scheduled events, water-trail specific events would also be slated, including: floats for community leaders; media floats; and more.</p>	<p>“ribbon cutting”</p>	
b. Volunteer recruitment and coordination		
<p>1. <i>Develop Volunteer Recruitment Strategy and Trail Protection Program.</i> Through contacts described below, develop and implement a strategy to recruit volunteers to monitor, clean-up, and maintain natural health along the Trail. Develop a schedule of summer activities, detailing by reach and volunteer organization or individual, how trail support will occur for Summer 2005.</p>	<p>By April 2005</p>	
<p>2. <i>Coordinate with SOLV:</i> SOLV is one of the oldest and most well-developed volunteer organizations in the state. It mobilizes many thousands of citizen volunteers in the Willamette basin alone and has also recently initiated a successful watershed enhancement program (Team UP for Watersheds). Its Down By the Riverside event in 2004 drew over 15,000 participants. SOLV’s energies and expertise could be key to quickly engaging individuals and groups to maintain the cleanliness and improve the natural setting all along the water trail.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	
<p>3. <i>Work with Youth Groups:</i> Contact and work with youth organizations, including Cascade Pacific Council of the Boy Scouts; the Northwest Youth Corps out of Eugene; and the Oregon Youth Conservation Corps to investigate and then line-out youth crew involvement.</p>	<p>By April 2005</p>	
<p>4. <i>Convene paddling and outdoor groups in the Mid-Willamette Valley:</i> Oregon Kayak & Canoe Club, River Ramblers Canoe & Kayak Club, Willamette Kayak & Canoe Club, Cascade Canoe Club of Salem to advise of Trail development plans and get their recommendations, and potential involvement in, volunteer activities to keep Trail safe, clean, and environmentally healthy.</p>	<p>By Fall 2004</p>	
c. Create private sector opportunity		
<p>1. <i>Hospitality Industry:</i> Work with the Salem Convention and Visitors Association, Willamette Valley Visitor’s Association, Oregon Tourism Commission, and other local chambers and visitor associations to assure their awareness of water trail opportunities to attract and serve visitors</p>	<p>Fall 2004- April 2005</p>	<p>\$3,000</p>

<p>2. <i>Water Craft Rental Sector</i>: Work with local craft vendors such as Oregon Canoe Sports; Peak Sports; or G.I. Joe's to solicit interest in serving water trail users through craft rentals and shuttles. Convene interested business people with City and state parks staff to scope in's/out's of establishing rental and shuttle programs.</p>	<p>Fall 2004-April 2005</p>	
<p>d. Convening, coordination, and outreach</p>		
<p>1. <i>Identify and convene key water trail partners</i>: Most of these are already participating in MWRC. However, it will be important to include the Oregon State Marine Board and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, as well as the Governor's Office, Oregon State Parks Trust, SOLV, and others. The partners group would meet regularly, probably on the order of once every 4-6 weeks.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>\$4,000</p>
<p>2. <i>Coordinate task implementation</i>: Use regular meetings of partners/steering group to assure tasks are being addressed on-time. In addition, work one-on-one with key agencies and organizations, including Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, National Park Service, Willamette Riverkeeper, and public safety agencies..</p>	<p>On-going</p>	
<p>4. <i>Outreach</i>: 'Piggy-back' on open houses planned for Fall 2004, by Willamette River Water Trail concept-level plan developers. Equip MWRC members with materials and task members with speaking to their own and other community organizations. Seek opportunity to speak to 150-plus participants in Willamette Riverkeeper's Paddle Oregon about Trail. Tie in with initiation and completion promotions in Task a.5, above. Work with WRI in its cable-TV Willamette presentations to highlight Trail opportunities. Develop media strategy in cooperation with key partners by March 2005.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	
<p>e. Implement necessary and limited site improvements</p>		
<p>1. <i>State and local parks departments/field offices</i>: Using MWRC Site Inventory as base, and in conjunction with the 3 local committees working on the concept plan, identify key sites and high-priority facility needs for Water Trail use and work with parks departments to make necessary improvements.</p>	<p>By April 2005.</p>	
<p>2. <i>Volunteers</i>: Work with volunteers identified in c., above, to assist with limited site improvements.</p>	<p>By June 2005.</p>	