

Grand Opening of the Upper Willamette River Water Trail

Join Willamette Riverkeeper, Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department and other water trail partners for the Grand Opening of the Upper Willamette River Water Trail on Saturday, June 3rd, at Marshall Island Access near Eugene. As the second of three sections of water trail (the third to be opening in 2007) the Upper section provides nearly 100 miles of additional water trail for canoes, kayaks, and other human powered craft.

The newest section of water trail provides signage at many parks along the Willamette, site improvements, and a brand new *Willamette Water Trail Guide*. This guide is waterproof and is free to the public during 2006. The first chance to obtain the guide will be at the Grand Opening event.



The Grand Opening event on June 3rd will include a dedication speech with Governor Ted Kulongoski and dignitaries, a canoe and kayak paddle to Harrisburg and a barbecue lunch hosted by the City of Harrisburg. (See page 8 for paddle trip details.) The event also provides a chance to celebrate the collaboration between the many partners that have made this effort a success. Key partners include the cities of Eugene, Corvallis, Harrisburg, and Albany, Lane County, Willamalane Parks, Benton County, the American Heritage Rivers Initiative, the National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program, and of course, Oregon State Parks.

We look forward to seeing you on June 3rd for this great event! If you would like to receive the new *Water Trail Guide*, send us an email at

info@willamette-riverkeeper.org or call 503-223-6418. The guide will also be available online at www.willamettewatertrail.org.

The Upper Willamette River Water Trail includes a section of the Middle Fork Willamette River, Coast Fork Willamette, and the mainstem Willamette from Eugene to Buena Vista. This section of the Willamette Water Trail can be more difficult, as portions of the Middle Fork and mainstem Willamette through Eugene include Class II rapids. One must have experience in whitewater to safely travel the upper portion of this stretch. From below Eugene to Buena Vista (±80 miles) the river has fast current, but no rapids.

The Willamette River Water Trail provides a wonderful way to explore the Willamette's wildlife and scenery. One can see a host of bird and mammal species along this stretch, including Bald Eagle, Osprey, Kingfisher, numerous songbirds and more. It is typical to spot deer and beaver as well. Solitude can also be found along this stretch of the trail, with rustic, undeveloped Willamette Greenway parks available for use. Of course, as with any natural area, it is critical to utilize "Leave No Trace" camping practices in any Willamette Water Trail parcel.



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Willamette Challenge Race & Willamette Riverkeeper 10th Anniversary Picnic

Incorporated as a non-profit in 1996, this year marks Willamette Riverkeeper's 10th anniversary. To celebrate our program successes Willamette Riverkeeper will be holding a boat race and picnic fundraising event at Oaks Amusement Park on Saturday, July 30th.

The Willamette Challenge

The boat race will be hosted in partnership with two REI employees, Laure Dyer and Sarah Shier, who are interested in promoting conservation and raising funds to support the work of Willamette Riverkeeper. Laure organizes the BYOBoat races that happen twice a month in downtown Portland. The Willamette River Boat Race will consist of a clover leaf boating relay for teams of one, two and three people, with male, female, co-ed and family categories. The clover design will have three components that send racers from the Oaks Park beach around Hardtack Island, Toe Island, and to the Sellwood Bridge and back. (See page 9 for map.)



“Working to make the Willamette River Watershed healthy for fish and wildlife, and safe for fishing and swimming, forever and for all.”

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Amy Morrison

Water Quality Associate:

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Mike Lindberg

Mary Lou Soscia

Willamette Riverkeeper

49 SE Clay Street

Portland OR 97214

(503) 223-6418

Fax: (503) 228-1960

info@willamette-riverkeeper.org

www.willamette-riverkeeper.org

Riverscape

Written and produced by Willamette Riverkeeper
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Reflections

From the Riverkeeper

Birds, birds, and more birds — they are seemingly everywhere along the Willamette this time of year. In late March the Osprey started to return from their annual migration down to warmer climates in the southern US and Mexico and now have repopulated most of the nests along the Willamette and its tributaries. Keep an eye out for these great birds diving for fish (90% of which are large-scale suckers and northern pike minnow). Osprey are often confused with the Bald Eagle, yet are only about 2/3 the size of the Eagles.



© Don Baccus

Speaking of Bald Eagles, they are common along the Willamette year-round (if you know where to look). These great birds can be found perched high in the Black Cottonwoods or flying to and from their nests. You can easily see their large nests often located where a tree trunk branches. Osprey nest on exposed perches such as platforms (constructed explicitly for Osprey use) power poles, or large snags.

Another raptor, the Northern Harrier, can also be seen along the Willamette, usually flying at low altitude over a farm field adjacent to the river. These birds are simply magnificent to see up close.

Cedar waxwings can be seen foraging along the river's bank this time of year, displaying their reddish-brown crowns, distinct black masks and colorful tails. Belted-kingfishers will zip along the river bank, always seeming to keep a careful distance from paddle craft.

Killdeer are also numerous along the banks of the river where they lay their eggs in the exposed rocks, as are Spotted Sandpipers zipping along the rocky shoreline.

Great Egrets can also be seen near the shoreline. These large white birds are wonderful to see, but usually take off quickly if you get within 50 yards.

Great Blue Heron are typically numerous, and if you are quiet while exploring side channels and river alcoves, you may even see the elusive Green Heron.

Interspersed among the riparian area and Cottonwood forest one can find a mix of species, including Bewicks Wren, Marsh Wren, a host of Sparrows (e.g., Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow and others), Black-capped Chickadees, Lazuli Bunting and many more. This is one of the joys of paddling the river — an ability to see a wide range of bird species.

The fact that healthy populations of native birds need habitat to survive adds additional importance to protecting riverside lands such as the undeveloped Willamette Greenway parks, as well as restoring floodplain and riparian habitat.

Willamette Riverkeeper enjoys working with our seasoned partners on the birding front (Audubon of Portland, Lane County Audubon, Salem Audubon, and Corvallis Audubon), and providing our ongoing advocacy for the common goal of habitat protection and restoration along the river.

Travis Williams, Riverkeeper

Recognition & Appreciation

We thank the following foundations for their valued support of our work:

The Collins Foundation
The Oregon Community Foundation
The Willamette River Fun(d)

We thank the following businesses and organizations for their support:

Alternative Coop
American Heritage Rivers Initiative
Bureau of Land Management
City of Corvallis
Columbia Gorge Organic Juice
Grand Central Baking Company

Great Harvest Bread Company
National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program
REI
Sundance Natural Foods
True Value Hardware
University of Portland's Bon Appetite

We thank the following individuals for their recent contributions:

Sea Lion (\$500+)

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Robert & Denise Yorke

Sturgeon (\$100 - \$499)

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Martha & Robert Gamblin
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Osprey (\$50 - 99)

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Andy Small
Wesley & Nancy Strange
Linda Wilmes-Smith
Ed & Marion Wilson
Elena Yingling

Bald Eagle © Dan Sherman

Riverkeepers

Staff & Board News



Willing to Serve a Great Organization?

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Willamette Riverkeeper's long-term viability relies on committed Board members who serve three-year terms. We believe it is important for people to learn about the river and our organization through the opportunity to serve on WRK's Board of Directors. Board members can have a variety of backgrounds including natural resource management, finance, and river recreation, to those who simply have a connection with the river and believe in clean water and healthy habitat!

Willamette Riverkeeper's Board reflects an impassioned group of Willamette Valley residents who take their

fiduciary and policy responsibilities seriously, and provide support to Willamette Riverkeeper's staff and programs. Board members meet on the third Thursday of each month.

In 2005 WRK welcomed two new Board members, Bill Young, who is a long-standing WRK member, and Barbara May, who is an enthusiastic volunteer River Guardian. As we continue to grow, we will be working to increase the number of Board members from the current nine to a total of twelve. We look forward to the contributions of additional Board members.

To find out more about serving on Willamette Riverkeeper's Board, please contact Travis Williams, Riverkeeper and Executive Director, at 503-223-6418.

Board Spotlight

To get a better sense of WRK's Board and the work they do in the community, we would like to take this opportunity to highlight the experience and involvement of a current Board member, **Gayle Killam.**

Gayle joined our Board in 2004 and brings to the organization a strong background in Clean Water Act law and implementation, as well as knowledge of local and national environmental policy. Gayle Killam is the Director of River Network's Clean Water Act Program. Gayle has been training and supporting citizens across the country on better implementation and enforcement of the Clean Water Act since 1998. In the last few years, this work has emphasized better implementation of water quality standards (including the anti-degradation policy) and review and enforcement of NPDES permits, particularly stormwater permits.



She recently authored the second edition of River Network's "The Clean Water Act Owner's Manual." Gayle also co-authored "Permitting an End to Pollution, how to scrutinize and strengthen water pollution permits in your state" (with Clean Water Network and Prairie Rivers Network) and "Tracking TMDLs, a field guide for evaluating proposed watershed restoration plans" (with National Wildlife Federation). Gayle has also put together an online Clean Water Act course at www.cleanwateract.org.

Gayle provides a wealth of information for WRK's Clean Water and Sediment Program. Her understanding of environmental policies on a national level sheds a different light on the work we do for the Willamette. In addition, Gayle's volunteer efforts increase the Board's ability to successfully lead and support the organization as a whole.

River Programs & Volunteering

Volunteer Spotlight on Heidi Pannke

It should be known that the work done by all volunteers over the years has made our programs successful. Thank you. While all of our volunteers are deserving of their own spotlight, we focus on one with every newsletter issue.

This issue we are featuring **Heidi Pannke**. After being told she was going to be featured in the Volunteer Spotlight, Heidi's response was "Wow, me?" Once you become aware of her dedication and appreciation for the Willamette River and Willamette Riverkeeper you will not be surprised she was chosen. Heidi has been volunteering with Willamette Riverkeeper for about three years. She started with the River Guardian Program, observing the Willamette River at Kelly Point. Over the years she has become familiar with the park, noticing how its banks change with the seasons and the nearby influences of the Portland Harbor, the Columbia Slough and the Columbia River.



“
...help make it a
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Wanting to do more, Heidi was very excited when the water quality monitoring program started. In addition to her adopted stretch of river at Kelly Point, Heidi started monitoring at Cathedral Park as soon as we would let her. Once a month Heidi stops by the WRK office to pick up a water quality monitoring kit and then collects her samples from the park dock. This year she went through the retraining process to stay up-to-date on monitoring techniques so that she can continue to collect samples in the coming year.

Heidi's dedication does not stop at being a River Guardian Volunteer. She jumps at every opportunity to help the river, whether this includes recruiting more volunteers, or participating in special projects like last summer's mercury fish sampling. She lives in North Portland and has seen how "sick this beautiful river has become." One of her goals is to "help make it [Willamette River] a healthy viable river that people can play in, swim in, and use in the way it was intended." Together we share this goal, and with her work as a volunteer, she is making this goal become a reality.

We are thankful to have her support for and dedication to Willamette Riverkeeper. With her and all of our other volunteers we are continuing to further our goals to watch over and restore the Willamette River. *Thank you, Heidi!*

Special Thanks to Training Donors

We would like to thank the following organizations for their assistance in donating and helping out to make our volunteer programs a success.

Thank you...

University of Portland's Bon Appetite, Grand Central Baking Company, Alternative Coop in Corvallis, Sundance Natural Foods in Eugene, Columbia Gorge Organic Juice, and Great Harvest Bread Company who have provided us with wonderful lunches and treats at our River Guardian Trainings.

True Value Hardware in Sellwood, for a discount on our water sampling supplies.

The City of Corvallis for providing a great space for our training in Corvallis.

River Programs & Volunteering

River Guardian Volunteer Training Update

Spring trainings are underway and Willamette Riverkeeper is getting prepared for another season of volunteer monitoring. This year's River Guardian training sessions have had wonderful turnouts in Portland, Corvallis, and Eugene, with more than a total of 90 people attending the three meetings. We expect similar numbers at our Newberg and Salem trainings. The recent increase in volunteers at the trainings is due in part to the growing interest the public is taking toward monitoring the river they enjoy on a daily basis, but also in part to the informative articles written in the *Oregonian* and *Eugene's Register Guard*. Thanks to this great coverage, Willamette Riverkeeper is no longer the best-kept secret in Oregon.

But for those who have not heard, Willamette Riverkeeper's River Guardian Program is divided into two main monitoring categories: **Observational Monitoring** and **Water Quality Monitoring**. Observational Monitors choose to adopt a stretch of the river to monitor at least four times a year. Observational Monitors can choose to monitor where the river flows through their property, a favorite paddling route or riverside trail. The objective of the Observational Monitoring program is to notice any changes and report issues that occur along the river. Other volunteers choose to become Water Quality Monitors. These volunteers visit a designated spot along the river once a month. They perform

basic water quality tests including temperature, conductivity, pH, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity. The data collected by Water Quality Monitors is sent to the DEQ. Over time this data can be used to gauge the river's health and assist in specific projects and reports.

If you missed out on a training and would like to get involved, please contact us. Call to register for one of our last two trainings this year:

Saturday May 20, 10am-3pm

Location – Senior Citizen Meeting Hall, Newberg

Saturday June 24, 10am-3pm

Location – Downtown Salem Library, Salem



Corvallis training volunteers practice using conductivity meters.

Changes to WRK's Water Quality Monitoring Program

Although Willamette Riverkeeper has been monitoring water quality since 2001, last year marked the first large scale volunteer effort. Over 30 volunteers tested temperature, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, and turbidity at approximately 20 sites. This was made possible by the addition of an AmeriCorps member, Art Bass. Art remains on staff and a new Water Quality Coordinator and AmeriCorps member, Monica Rectenwald, has taken on the volunteer monitor coordinating. With Monica's hard work, Art's lessons learned from the first year, and the expertise of Steve Hanson (the DEQ's volunteer monitor liaison) WRK will extend its Water Quality Program from Scappoose to Eugene and test 40 sites with the help of over 50 volunteers.

Several fundamental changes to the program will improve data collection and increase volunteer opportunities. First, many sites will be moved from the mainstem Willamette

to the mouths of Willamette tributaries. After a year of data collection, it is apparent that the large volume of water moving down the river strongly masks tributary contributions. This creates little variation between testing sites and decreases our ability to identify problem areas. Moving testing sites to tributaries will allow comparisons from tributary to tributary and tributary to mainstem. Monitoring will continue at a smaller number of mainstem sites.

Bucket Sampling

The second fundamental change is in the method used for sample acquisition. Previously, monitors sampled from docks and sites only accessible by boat. Since many of our sites were boat access only, this limited our potential volunteer pool. Furthermore, high water conditions could put volunteers at risk and limit our sampling season.

