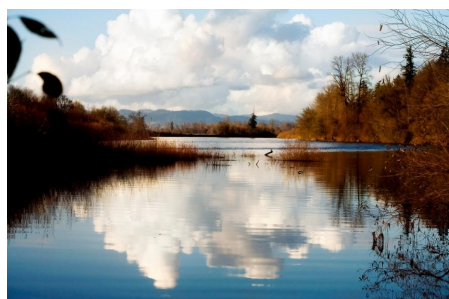




Bringing Oregonians Together

Willamette Partnership Counting on the Environment



“Since an ecosystem approach will provide healthier landscapes and quantifying these values will provide ways for landowners to access revenues for the benefits they provide, it helps landowners stay on the land and also provides a way for the regulated community to more efficiently invest in mitigation activities.”—Project participant

Timeline

January 2008 – August 2009

Region

Willamette Valley

Participants

Cities of Albany, Eugene and Portland; Cascades West Council of Governments; Clean Water Services; Defenders of Wildlife; Ecotrust; Institute for Natural Resources; Mud Slough Wetland Mitigation Bank; The Nature Conservancy; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; Oregon state departments of: Agriculture, Environmental Quality, Fish & Wildlife, Forestry, Land Conservation & Development, State Lands, Transportation, and Water Resources; Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Forest Service; U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service; Willamette Partnership

Project Lead

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Background

The Willamette Partnership, Counting on the Environment Working Group was a collaborative effort to develop an ecosystem services marketplace for the Willamette basin. An ecosystem services marketplace allows businesses and individuals whose activities unavoidably change the environment in ways that no longer meet regulatory standards to buy credits that pay other landowners to make improvements that balance those impacts. For example, a manufacturer who impacts fish habitat by raising water temperatures might buy credits that would pay nearby landowners to plant shade trees to cool the stream. Landowners can also get money from the marketplace to make environmental improvements not directly tied to specific impacts elsewhere.

Issues and challenges

The collaborative process addressed complex technical and regulatory challenges and many types of resources and associated credits while also satisfying the needs of regulatory agencies responsible for enforcing compliance. Previous efforts to create a similar system in Oregon failed to produce consensus among the diverse interests involved.

Results

The Working Group agreed on an ecosystem credit accounting system that includes credit calculators for wetlands, salmonid habitat, upland prairie, and water temperature. They also agreed on an integrated package of assurances; a standard process for issuing credits; voluntary testing; and a one-year pilot.

The accounting system is a cutting edge model for functioning ecosystem services markets nationally. It creates monetary incentives for meaningful conservation and restoration; increases cooperation across private and business sectors; and links the economy and the environment by creating business opportunities in Oregon that advance environmental health.

