

Clark County Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan

**Legacy Lands Program
Environmental Services Department
March, 2014**

Clark County is blessed with a great abundance of natural beauty and resources. The county has some of the best tree-growing ground in the world, productive farmland, habitat for migratory birds in the heart of the Pacific Flyway, and healthy rivers flowing right out of the Cascades. In the coming decades Clark County will grow and change. In the face of this growth, maintaining core natural resources and areas is of great importance.

This plan is the backbone for efforts to keep Clark County's great places – important natural areas, places to recreate, and critical areas that provide us with clean air and water. This plan is designed to support coordination across county departments and with external partners, provide valuable information for project development and grant solicitation, and maximize the ability to leverage precious public and private dollars. The plan puts priority on using conservation projects to achieve multiple benefits, including recreation and public access, wildlife habitat protection, watershed and shoreline protection for clean water, as well as compliance with environmental regulations. The implementation of this plan will help Clark County remain an amazing place to live, work, and experience our natural environment.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

“Clark County contains a diverse mixture of natural resources, parklands, and open spaces. Of the county’s 656 square miles, almost half is in forest and agricultural lands, and surface water. Air, water and land resources are essential to the very existence of human development. They influence every aspect of quality of life from the local climate to the availability of drinking water to flood control and drainage patterns to recreational opportunities and to the habitat that we share with plants and animals.”

- Clark County’s 20-Year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan

1.1 Overview

Clark County possesses a rich variety of landscapes and natural resources that enhance the quality of life for all Clark County residents. Our natural resources range from the Columbia River to the Cascade Mountains and include a diversity of streams and lakes, marshes, wetlands, shorelines, meadows and forests. These land and water resources provide critical habitat for fish and wildlife, and provide opportunities for hiking, canoeing, picnicking, swimming, and other outdoor recreation activities.

Our open spaces also continue to include significant tracts of highly productive farm and forest lands. Clark County’s Comprehensive Growth Management Plan notes that these natural resources are a component of the economy, “providing jobs, tax revenue and valuable products and materials for local use and export.” Moreover, “farmlands and forests also provide aesthetic, recreational and environmental benefits to the public while contributing to the diverse character of the county.”

Historically, Clark County has placed a high value on preserving its landscapes and natural resources, and has used various methods to accomplish this goal. These include regulatory programs such as critical areas ordinances; incentive programs such as current use taxation; and acquisition programs such as Conservation Futures. While these efforts have met with substantial success, there is a continuing need to explore opportunities to preserve, enhance, and steward our high-quality landscapes and natural resources.

The Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan provides a vision for preserving and enhancing a countywide system of conservation lands, including greenways, habitat, farm and forest resource lands. The plan identifies specific project opportunities to pursue over the next six years, identifies high value conservation lands, and highlights a variety of funding mechanisms that can support project implementation. The specific project opportunities represent acquisition projects, but by design most of these projects also include future opportunities for park development, trail creation, and restoration opportunities. The plan prioritizes projects that meet multiple benefits, expand on the existing system, and are aligned with other county plans (i.e. trails plans) and priorities. The plan also encourages the development of partnerships between public and private agencies that have supported development of the conservation lands system for over 25 years.

1.2 Program History

Clark County's Conservation Futures program has been a central focus for the acquisition and enhancement of conservation areas and open space lands over the past 25 years. The Board of County Commissioners enacted this program in October 1985, instituting a conservation futures property tax levy on all property within the county at a rate not to exceed 6 ¼ cents per thousand dollars of assessed value. Per the enabling statute, RCW 84.34, conservation futures funds are dedicated to the acquisition of farm, forest, and open space lands. In 2005, an amendment to the statute enabled a limited amount of each year's levy revenue, equivalent to no more than 15% of the prior year's levy collection, to be used for operations, maintenance and stewardship of conservation lands. In 2006 the Board of County Commissioners renamed the program the Legacy Lands program.

Since enactment of the conservation futures levy, the Legacy Lands program has helped acquire almost 5,000 acres of high-quality shorelines, greenways, open space, and fish and wildlife habitat. Acquisitions include property on almost every lake and river system in the county and include such notable sites as Camp Currie, Fallen Leaf Lake, Eagle Island, Frenchman's Bar, Lucia Falls, East Biddle Lake, and substantial properties within greenway systems on the East Fork Lewis River, Salmon Creek, Burnt Bridge Creek, and the Washougal River. Extensive acquisitions have occurred throughout the county, both inside and outside urban areas and city limits. Conservation futures funds have provided an important source of local revenue to seek and secure millions of dollars of matching grants and partnership resources.

In terms of community-supported planning, Clark County has established a clear, comprehensive vision for preserving and enhancing high-value conservation lands. In the late 1980s, the Board of County Commissioners established the Clark County Open Space Commission to help consider the need for open space protection. The commission addressed five charges:

1. To define open space and consider those qualities, values and physical characteristics that make it something to be preserved;
2. To evaluate the extent to which open space is now being protected in Clark County and the effectiveness of existing programs;
3. To evaluate the need to protect additional open space in Clark County;
4. To identify and evaluate methods that might be used to preserve open space; and
5. To recommend policy guidelines that reflect community values and develop an action program for preserving open space in Clark County.

The Open Space Commission Report, completed in August, 1992, is a primary document guiding the preservation of open space in the county.

Since the Open Space Commission Report, a variety of community-based plans and resource documents have identified the need to preserve and maintain our high-quality natural resources. These include Clark County's 20-Year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan; Comprehensive Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan; Regional Trail and Bikeway Systems Plan; Shorelines Management Master Program; Lower Columbia Salmon Recovery and Fish and Wildlife Subbasin Plan; and the Conservation

Areas Acquisition Plan, which was originally adopted by the Board of Commissioners in December, 2004.

1.3 Management and Implementation

The Clark County Legacy Lands program is managed by the Clark County Environmental Services Department. The Department was created in 2009 to increase efficiencies and collaboration among seven environmental programs:

1. Endangered Species Act program;
2. Legacy Lands program;
3. Vegetation Management program;
4. Community Development Environmental Permitting program;
5. Public Works Environmental Permitting program;
6. Public Works Clean Water program; and
7. Public Works Solid Waste program.

Contact information for the Legacy Lands program and the Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan is as follows:

Legacy Lands
Attn: Program Coordinator
1300 Franklin Street
P.O. Box 9810
Vancouver, WA 98660-9810
(360) 397-2121 ext-4070

Chapter 2 Plan Approach

2.1 Overview

This document is an update of Clark County’s Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan which was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in August 2004. The 2004 plan was developed with the assistance of an 18-member advisory committee, three technical work groups (Habitat, Greenways, and Farm), public meetings, stakeholder interviews and other public outreach. The plan established a long-term vision of an interconnected system of habitat and greenways along the county’s system of rivers, streams, and lakes. The 2004 plan applied methodologies for identifying the most important conservation lands which are still useful today. For greenways and habitat lands, these methodologies included using layers of GIS data and mapping (e.g., wetlands, floodplains, riparian priority habitat, non-riparian priority habitat, regional trail corridors, and existing protected lands) to help identify high-value conservation lands and projects. The data was refined by the advisory committee, work groups, and other experts to help incorporate local knowledge of these systems.

The 2004 plan also included a ten-year, \$45 million Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) proposal to fund habitat, greenways, and farm preservation. The REET enabling legislation, RCW 84.46.070, requires a referral to voters and counties are required to develop spending plans before any ballot measure referral. The funding proposal was developed to meet these requirements. As a result, advisory committees and other stakeholders identified “Tier 1” project areas for inclusion in the funding plan. The tier 1 project boundaries did not extend to the full geographic limits of the county in some watersheds. The Board approved the 2004 plan, but chose not to refer the ten-year spending plan to voters.

The 2014 update maintains the core vision established in the 2004 plan, and utilizes similar methods to identify high-value conservation lands and projects. The 2014 process included an extensive review and update of GIS data that was used to refine high-value conservation lands and to identify high-value projects. The GIS information used for the analysis is described in Appendix C. The high value conservation lands layer from the 2004 plan is one of the layers utilized in 2014 so as to capture expert and community input from that process. Discussion with stakeholders and conservation partners informed the identification of specific project opportunities.

The 2014 update is not connected to any single funding source, nor does it include a specific funding proposal. Rather, the update examines a wide range of funding opportunities that might be used to support project implementation (see Appendix D). Geographic boundaries of the 19 watershed-based county subareas extend to the full county limits in the 2014 update.

2.2 Structure

The Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan is divided into seven chapters and 5 appendices. Appendix D is a Conservation Area Fund Source Manual that provides

summary information about more than 30 grant programs and other tools that might be used to support plan implementation. Specific chapters with the plan are:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Plan Approach
- Chapter 3: Public Involvement
- Chapter 4: Goals and Objectives
- Chapter 5: Conservation Resources Inventory
- Chapter 6: Need
- Chapter 7: Implementation Mechanisms

2.3 RCO Compliance

The Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) manages a variety of grant programs that support acquisition and development of outdoor recreation and habitat lands. For several grant programs and sub-categories (e.g., Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program and Land and Water Conservation Fund), the RCO requires organizations to establish grant eligibility by producing comprehensive plans. Moreover, these plans must include certain elements. These are:

- Goals and Objectives;
- Inventory;
- Public Involvement;
- Demand and Need Analysis;
- Capital Improvement Program; and
- Plan Adoption.

This plan has been developed to comply with RCO planning requirements. An RCO “self-certification” form is included in Appendix F.

2.4 Conservation Framework

The 2004 Conservation Plan identified a conceptual framework that divided the plan into three elements: critical habitat, greenways and trails, and farmland. In the case of habitat and greenways, the 2004 work groups ultimately used similar methodologies for identifying high value project areas. They used the county’s system of rivers and streams as a core framework because of the multiple high-priority conservation values associated with these water bodies. The work groups divided the county into 18 watershed-based subareas. In some cases subareas encompassed an entire watershed (e.g., Burnt Bridge Creek: mouth to headwaters) and in some cases the subareas included subwatersheds (e.g., lower East Fork Lewis: mouth to Heisson Bridge). The work groups ultimately established a group of “Tier 1” project areas based on a variety of criteria such as plan consistency, potential linkages and connectivity, rare or unique conservation values, and threats to the system. The spending plan was premised on habitat and greenway projects within Tier 1 areas. The 2004 plan also included a separate chapter with recommendations and priorities and a spending allocation for farm land. The plan did not include a separate chapter for forest land conservation.

This 2014 update maintains the primary vision of the 2004 plan to establish an interconnected system of habitat and greenways along the county's rivers and streams, while also seeking to preserve other sites that have unique or rare conservation values. It identifies 19 watershed-based subareas, and uses GIS mapping layers to highlight high-value conservation lands and project opportunities. The 2014 update does not create a subgroup of Tier 1 project opportunities. The update recognizes that each subarea possesses significant conservation values for public use, habitat protection, clean water, and other purposes, and believes no project opportunities should be subordinated or removed from consideration for project implementation.

A list of the 19 county subareas, including brief descriptions, is included at the end of this chapter. Detailed subarea narratives and maps are included in Appendix A. While the habitat and greenway element is the primary focus of the 2014 update, chapters relating to Goals and Objectives, Conservation Resources Inventory, and Needs Assessment include separate sections that focus on habitat and greenways, farm, and forest lands.

2.5 Identifying High-Value Conservation Lands and Projects

The 2004 and 2014 plans use similar methods to identify high-value conservation lands within each of the county subareas. This process was modeled upon the aggregate natural resources benefit mapping process used by the Clark County Open Space Commission (1989-1992) to help focus the expenditure of funds on the highest priority lands. The 2014 process uses Geographic Information System data from several agencies and organizations, and applies it the same manner to each of the 19 subareas identified in the plan. The process includes the following steps:

1. Divide Clark County into 19 subareas using 6th level hydrologic unit boundaries from the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service. The only significant deviations from the subwatersheds are in the Vancouver Lake Lowlands, Columbia South Slope, Whipple Creek, and Gee Creek/Flume Creek areas, where boundaries were manually digitized using physical and cultural features. The 19 subareas are displayed and described in Appendix A.
2. Apply within each subarea the general water or stream coverage using guidelines contained in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Management Recommendations for Riparian Priority Habitat and Tier 1-4 fish distribution mapping provided by the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board. This provides the central "thread" of the high value conservation land network within each subarea.
3. Overlay GIS map layers to identify high-value conservation lands. The table on the next page summarizes layers used and definitions for each layer:

Table #1 – GIS Data Layers Used in Aggregate Natural Resource Benefits Analysis

Layer	Definition
Streams	LCFRB EDT Priority Salmon Tiers 1-4
Buffered Streams	Tiers 1,2 = 250', Tiers 3, 4 = 150'
Floodplain	FEMA Q3 100 year floodplain
Riparian Priority Habitat	WDFW PHS riparian zones
Wetlands	USFWS NWI Wetlands within 200' of streams, buffered by 30m
Non-riparian Priority Habitat	WDFW PHS non-riparian, excluding elk and mule deer winter range
2004 Network	High value conservation lands from 2004 plan
Undeveloped parcels	Parcels with no structure, >=50% within network
Developed parcels	Parcels >= 20 acres with assessed improvement >=\$50,000, >=50% within network
Public lands	Non-DNR lands intersecting the network

4. Establish a boundary around outer limit of the aggregate map coverage in each subarea; then superimpose the boundary over aerial photographs to incorporate high-value edge habitats such as forested hillsides.
5. Expand boundary to accommodate public use elements such as greenway corridors between schools, existing conserved land and/or project opportunity areas.
6. Expand boundary to include all undeveloped parcels where more than 50% of parcel lies inside boundary and any developed parcel greater than 20 acres where more than 50% of parcel lies inside boundary. (Definition of “developed” parcel includes any parcel which has a structure greater than \$50,000 in value.)
7. Add Clark County’s protected lands layer to highlight opportunities for expansion, connectivity and linkages.

The seven-step process described in this section was used to develop high value conservation lands maps for each subarea. Appendix C illustrates the aggregate mapping process, using the Upper Salmon Creek subarea as the example. These maps provide important information for identifying specific projects or parcels for acquisition. However, these maps are not intended to be rigid and inflexible. If certain properties provide important conservation values, but lie outside defined high value conservation land boundaries, they may still be considered for acquisition funding. Moreover, parcel-specific acquisition decisions should include, as appropriate, associated upland areas where those properties provide important benefits to the overall system, such as habitat buffers or regional trail corridors, whether or not they are within high value conservation lands boundaries.

2.6 Partnership Opportunities

The 2014 planning process has assembled a wide range of mapping products that individually, or in combination, can help identify high-value conservation lands and projects. For example, mapping products that overlay high-priority salmon reaches, floodplains, and existing protected lands can help focus efforts to implement salmon recovery projects. Appendix C provides a description of the mapping process.

While this plan has been prepared by Clark County, the mapping resources are publicly available. Clark County conducted outreach to conservation partners and stakeholders to develop project opportunity lists in Appendix B. But, it is also hoped that partner organizations and agencies can explore opportunities to use this data to develop their own projects and to collaborate on projects with Clark County. The capacity to aggregate maps can lead to important projects by all partner organizations.

Table #2 - County Subareas – See Appendix A for subarea narratives and maps

System	Project Area	Description
Burnt Bridge Creek	Burnt Bridge Creek	Mouth to Headwaters of Burnt Bridge Creek
Columbia River Lowlands	Columbia South Slope	Along the Columbia River from Fruit Valley Road to the Washougal River
	Steigerwald Lake	Columbia River from the Washougal River to County Line, including Reed Island and lower sections of Gibbons and Lawton Creeks within Steigerwald Lake Wildlife Refuge
	Vancouver Lake Lowlands	Columbia River Lowlands from Fruit Valley Road to Main Lewis River, including Lake River and associated uplands
East Fork Lewis	East Fork Lewis Upper	From the East Fork Lewis River at Heisson Bridge to the Clark County line, including upper Rock Creek
	East Fork Lewis Lower	From the mouth of the East Fork Lewis River to Heisson Bridge including McCormick, Brezee, Lockwood, Mason, Dean, and Mill Creeks
Gee Creek/Flume Creek	Gee Creek/Flume Creek	Gee and Flume Creeks: Mouth to headwaters
Gibbons/Lawton Creeks	Gibbons/Lawton Creeks	Gibbons and Lawton Creeks from SR-14 to their headwaters - (Lower sections of creeks are part of Steigerwald Lake Project Area)
Lacamas	Lacamas Lower	Lacamas Creek from Washougal River to Big Ditch Creek/Burnt Bridge Creek headwaters, including Lacamas, Round, and Fallen Leaf Lakes - This project area also includes Green Mountain
	Lacamas Upper	Lacamas Creek from Big Ditch Creek/Burnt Bridge Creek to headwaters, including wetland complexes, meadows and bottomlands associated with Lacamas Creek, Fifth Plain Creek, and China Ditch
Main/NF Lewis	Lewis River (main) and Allen Creek	The Lewis River from the Columbia River to confluence of East and North Forks Lewis, including Allen Creek and Lake Rosannah
	NF Lewis Lower	The North Fork Lewis River from the confluence of the East and North Forks Lewis Rivers to Merwin Dam
	NF Lewis Upper	North Fork Lewis River from Merwin Dam to County Line, including Merwin and Yale Reservoirs, Souixon and Canyon Creeks, and other tributaries
	Cedar Creek	Cedar Creek from the mouth to headwaters, including Chelatchie Creek
Salmon Creek	Salmon Creek Lower	Salmon Creek from the mouth to Morgan Creek, including Cougar, Mill and Woodin Creeks
	Salmon Creek Upper	Salmon Creek from Morgan Creek to headwaters, including Morgan and Rock Creeks
Washougal River	Washougal River	The Washougal River from mouth to county line, including Coyote and Winkler Creeks
	Little Washougal River	The Little Washougal River from mouth to headwaters including East Fork, Boulder Creek, and Jones Creek
Whipple Creek	Whipple Creek	Whipple Creek from the mouth to headwaters

Chapter 3 Public Involvement

3.1 Overview

The 2014 update of the Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan was informed by an extensive list of comprehensive plan and resource documents and provided a variety of opportunities for public and stakeholder comment that helped shape the vision, goals and objectives, County and Partnership Project Lists, and other key elements of the plan. It also involved a unique public-private partnership that expanded the community outreach and implementation process for the plan.

3.2 Public-Private Partnership and Outreach

To maximize resources and outreach, Clark County and the nonprofit Columbia Land Trust worked collaboratively to update the 2004 Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan and invite public participation. Columbia Land Trust provided funds, GIS capabilities, and a network of partner agencies and organizations that has evolved over the 18-year history of this non-profit land conservation organization - which was founded in Clark County. The Land Trust contacted organization members and partner agencies to review plan priorities; these efforts also included tours of local project areas and sites. In developing the plan, Columbia Land Trust coordinated development of the 19 project area maps that helped identify high-value project areas and specific project opportunities. These maps were used to solicit comment from partner agencies and interest groups to help shape the county's conservation vision and project lists.

3.3 Stakeholder Contacts

Clark County and Columbia Land Trust contacted more than 25 partner agencies and conservation fund managers to revisit the county-wide conservation vision, update GIS data used in the 2004 plan, and discuss partnership projects and funding opportunities. Contacts included both in-person meetings and phone interviews. Agencies and organizations that were contacted included:

- Clark Public Utilities
- Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board
- Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership
- Metro (Portland, Oregon) Regional Government
- The Intertwine Alliance
- Washington State Department of Natural Resources
- Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife
- American Farmland Trust (regional office)

These contacts helped to refine high value conservation lands boundaries, reexamine and affirm the county-wide vision for preserving high-value conservation lands, develop the County Project Opportunities List in Appendix B, and the Conservation Areas Fund Source Manual in Appendix D.

3.4 City Consultation

Clark County and Columbia Land Trust contacted parks managers or other officials from each town and city in the county to discuss conservation lands projects and priorities. These meetings helped explore short- and long-term project needs and opportunities and identified key projects that appear in the Partnership Project Opportunities list included in Appendix B.

3.5 Public Hearings and Work Sessions

The Board of County Commissioners met in a work session on January 8, 2014, to discuss the update of the Conservation Areas Plan and invite public comment. An electronic copy of the plan was posted on the county's web site December 20, 2013, in order for interested parties to familiarize themselves with the document in advance of the work session. The Board of Commissioners held a public hearing on March 25, 2014, to consider adoption of the Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan. An electronic copy of the proposed final plan was posted on the county's web site March 7, 2014, for interested parties to review and prepare hearing comments. The signed resolution adopting the plan and RCO self-certification form appear in Appendix F of this document.

3.6 Plan Support and Background

The 2014 update of the Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan is a continuation of a history of community based conservation planning in Clark County. The Open Space Commission Report (1992):

- articulated an open space vision for the county;
- mapped, classified and analyzed the relative importance of various types and locations of open space within the county for pro-active conservation efforts; and
- identified a number of funding and other tools that could be used to assemble the desired open space system.

The Comprehensive Parks Recreation and Open Space Plan (first adopted in 1965, most recently updated in 2007 with a new update in process);

- assesses public attitudes toward the acquisition, development and management of parks, open space and recreational facilities;
- establishes acquisition and development standards for outdoor recreation facilities and grounds including greenways, open space, trails, special facilities, neighborhood, community and regional parks;
- establishes priorities for the acquisition and development of park, open space and recreational facilities and recreation programs;
- identifies funding sources and other tools for acquisition, capital improvements, operation and maintenance programs and recreational activities.

The Regional Trail and Bikeway Systems Plan (2006):

- identifies trail types and desired trail construction standards;
- completed a gap analysis of trail corridors;
- articulated a desired regional trails system; and
- included a short-term trail corridor acquisition and development priority list.

The Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan (2004):

- included an 18-member citizen taskforce and three technical work groups;
- identifies a system of high value conservation areas within the county;
- establishes a list of priority acquisition projects to pursue over a ten year period.

The 2014 update of the Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan was informed by each of the above community plans, involved review of dozens of resource documents and data bases, and also provided a variety of opportunities for public and stakeholder comment and involvement.

Chapter 4 Goals and Objectives

Overview

Clark County and the state of Washington have adopted goals, objectives, and policies that emphasize the need to preserve habitat, farm, forest, and open space lands. The state's Growth Management Act (GMA) established 13 planning goals to guide the creation and adoption of comprehensive plans in counties that are required or choose to plan under the act. The goals speak directly to the protection of natural resources, open space and recreation, and environmentally sensitive areas. Clark County's 20-Year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan includes a Rural and Natural Resources Element, Environmental Element, and Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element, each of which includes goals, policies, and strategies to preserve conservation lands. Following are selected goals and strategies from the Growth Management Act and countywide comprehensive plan that support proactive conservation actions.

Washington State Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70a.020):

- Goal #8, Natural Resource Industries: Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.
- Goal #9, Open Space and Recreation: Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreational facilities.
- Goal #10, Environment: Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

Clark County 20-Year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan 2004-2024: Rural and Natural Resource Element:

- Goal: Maintain and enhance the conservation of productive forestlands and discourage incompatible uses associated with forestry activities.
- Goal: Maintain and enhance productive agricultural lands and minimize incompatibilities with adjacent uses.
- Strategy: Evaluate a variety of funding sources and their feasibility for acquisition of land and other programs to implement the policies within the Rural and Natural Resource Element and to comply with regional salmon recovery goals and objectives.

Environmental Element:

- Goal: Protect and conserve environmentally critical areas (critical areas include: flood hazard areas, geologic hazard areas, shoreline and surface waters, habitat conservation areas, aquifer recharge areas, and scenic areas.)

- Goal: Protect and recover endangered species within Clark County.
- Goal: Protect, conserve, and recover salmonids within Clark County.
- Goal: Protect and enhance shorelines of Clark County.
- Goal: Manage the parks and open space of Clark County consistent with protecting water quality and critical areas, and with enhancing the recovery of listed species.
- Strategy: Incentives should be developed that encourage open space, recreation, and protection of the natural environment.
- Strategy: Evaluate a variety of funding sources and their feasibility for acquisition of land and other programs to implement the policies within the Environmental, Rural and Natural Resource elements and to comply with regional salmon recovery goals and objectives.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element:

- Goal: Maximize the quality of life in Clark County by providing regional open space, trails, parks, and recreational opportunities and facilities, and planning to acquire, restore, enhance, preserve, develop and manage these facilities and natural resources in such a manner as to afford the maximum benefit to the community.
- Goal: Encourage the retention of an open space system that provides park and recreational opportunities, conserves fish and wildlife habitat, increases access to natural resource lands and provides other community benefits as identified in the Clark County Open Space Commission Report.
- Goal: Develop a network of trails and bikeways throughout the county that will interconnect population centers, community facilities, work places, neighborhoods, recreational opportunities and natural greenspaces.
- Goal: Preserve, conserve, restore and enhance fish and wildlife conservation areas and open space lands and raise public awareness about the importance of these resources.

Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan Objectives

The primary goal of the Conservation Areas Plan is to establish an interconnected system of habitat and greenways along the county's rivers, lakes, and streams, and to conserve other high-value habitat and open space lands. The following objectives are intended to support implementation of this goal. Objectives for habitat and greenways are presented first followed by farmland and forestland objectives, respectively.

Habitat and Greenways Objectives

- Implement high-value conservation projects as described in the Six-Year Project Opportunities List – County Lead included in Appendix B and other opportunities that may arise.
- Support high-value conservation projects with partnership agencies as described in the Six Year Project Opportunities List - Partnership Projects included in Appendix B. The county will also work with partnership agencies to support opportunity projects that may not be included in this list as described in the Conservation Futures Guidance Document.
- Coordinate with local, state, and federal agencies and private land conservation organizations to maximize funding opportunities and create efficiencies in preservation, restoration, enhancement and stewardship of conservation lands.
- Provide continuing opportunities for conservation funding by the County and partner agencies through implementation of the county’s Legacy Lands program as described in the Conservation Futures Guidance Document.
- Establish a conservation system that provides a variety of opportunities for public use, outdoor recreation, and outdoor education, while locating and developing public use facilities that minimize impacts to sensitive habitats and other environmental features.
- Help provide a system of greenways that will support regional trail development consistent with the County’s Regional Trail and Bikeway Systems Plan.
- Provide access to water that supports the concept of water trails and encourages access to water bodies for kayaking, canoeing, other paddle craft and fishing.
- Develop stewardship plans and evaluate long-term management costs for each Legacy Lands acquisition unit.

Farmland Conservation Objectives

In March 2009, Clark County completed an Agricultural Preservation Strategies Report. A 20-member advisory committee met 11 times during the planning process. The committee’s central charge was to develop a plan “that recommends short- and long-term actions to protect the opportunity to pursue and enhance commercial and non-commercial agriculture in the county.” The final report identified a series of “barriers” to productive farming in Clark County, and submitted recommendations to help address the barriers. This subsection is based on findings from the 2009 farm report.

- Cooperate with agencies and interests to support establishment of one or more “Agricultural Production Districts” in Clark County. The Advisory Committee identified a goal of maintaining or aggregating contiguous blocks of land 100-150 acres as a desirable goal for a “district”.

- Continue to explore partnerships that allow existing public lands to be used for farm production.
- Cooperate with agencies and interests to institute a purchase of development rights program that encourages land owners to keep land in agricultural production.
- Funds to acquire additional development rights on farmland should be a component of a major funding initiative for the purpose of acquiring open space and resource lands in Clark County.
- Identify funding sources that can be used to conserve high-value agricultural lands.

Forestland Conservation Objectives

The county's Comprehensive Land-Use Plan includes goals and policies designed to maintain and enhance productive forest resource lands. These lands cover approximately 38% of the county's land area. They include both private and public ownerships. They provide jobs, tax revenues, and products and materials for local use and export, and incompatible uses are discouraged. In the case of state forests, the Department of Natural Resources is required to manage trust lands to provide revenue for public schools, counties, and other beneficiaries primarily from the sale of timber. While economic benefits are primary features of forest resource lands, these lands also include valuable natural resources and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation. The Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan includes strategies and objectives that are intended to support the conservation and maintenance of forest resource lands, while also supporting compatible habitat and outdoor recreation values.

- Coordinate with the Washington Farm Forestry Association, industrial forest land owners, State Department of Natural Resources, and other forest stakeholders to develop short-term (six-year) and long-term strategies that can help conserve and maintain forest resource lands in Clark County.
- Work with forest land owners and conservation partners to conserve properties on the perimeter of "anchor" forests, forest land in-holdings, and properties along the East Fork Lewis, Rock Creek and other streams, which, if conserved, will 1) provide important buffers to forest resource lands and 2) protect high-value habitat, biodiversity areas, and other conservation lands. (The 2006 acquisition by the Columbia Land Trust of the Copper Creek forest area along the East Fork Lewis is an example of this kind of project.)
- Identify forest lands with high conservation values that also have a high risk of conversion and identify strategies to preserve these resources.

- Identify and conserve high-value forest lands that support the recovery of ESA listed salmon and steelhead populations.
- Coordinate with the Department of Natural Resources to support the Western Yacolt Burn Forest Recreation Plan and identify and implement projects of joint interest that are part of the county's Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan; Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, and Regional Trail and Bikeway Systems Plan. (Development of the Lucia Falls and Bells Mountain Trails by Clark County, the Chinook Trail Association, and other partners are examples of these kinds of projects.)

Chapter 5

Conservation Resources Inventory

5.1 Clark County

Clark County is located on the Columbia River in southwest Washington. The area of the county is 656 square miles. The Columbia River forms the west and south boundaries of the county, extending from river mile 87 at the confluence of the Lewis and Columbia Rivers to river mile 130 upstream of Reed Island at the west end of the Columbia River Gorge. The North Fork Lewis River forms the north boundary of the county, and the east boundary lies in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains on the west edge of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

The county's landscape is characterized by low-lying floodplains along the Columbia River, which are most extensive between Vancouver Lake and the main-stem Lewis River and in the southeast corner in the area of the Steigerwald Lake Wildlife Refuge. The lowlands transition into a series of gently rolling alluvial terraces and benches that rise step-like from the Columbia River. The eastern part of the county consists of high alluvial terraces that lie against volcanic foothills and mountains on the western slopes of the Cascade Range. Elevation changes range from a few feet above sea level along the Columbia River to almost 4,000 feet at high points in the Cascade foothills adjacent to Skamania County (Soil Survey of Clark County, Washington, 1972).

Clark County has an extensive system of rivers, streams, and lakes. According to Clark County's 2010 Stream Health Report, the county comprises 18 major watersheds. Individual streams range in size from the Columbia River, the largest river system in the Pacific Northwest, to major tributaries such as the East Fork Lewis and Washougal, to smaller urban streams such as Burnt Bridge Creek and Gee Creek whose watersheds occur entirely within the county. The East Fork Lewis, which enters the county at Sunset Falls at the west edge of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, is Clark County's largest free-flowing stream, and Salmon Creek is the largest stream flowing entirely within the county.

While all these streams vary in size, flow, and complexity, each provides a diversity of conservation values that are uniquely important within the landscape. These include clean water, flood protection, storm water control, ground water recharge, recreation opportunities, urban and rural buffers, historic and cultural resources, scenic views and vistas, and fish and wildlife habitat. In terms of habitat, the State Department of Fish and Wildlife notes that the "...protection of riparian habitat, compared to other habitat types, may yield the greatest gains for fish and wildlife while involving the least amount of area... Wildlife occurs more often and in greater variety in riparian habitats than in any other habitat type..." (Management Recommendations for Washington's Priority Habitat – Riparian, December, 1997).

The county's lakes include both natural lakes and lakes formed by dams. The largest natural lake is Vancouver Lake located a few miles west of downtown Vancouver. It covers approximately 2600 acres, but the surface area varies considerably due to seasonal

fluctuations in water levels in the Columbia River system. Other lakes in the Columbia River lowlands include Green, Campbell, and Post Office Lakes. Battle Ground Lake, located in central Clark County, covers 28 acres and is the central feature of 280-acre Battle Ground Lake State Park. Major lakes formed by dams include Merwin and Yale Reservoirs, which are part of the North Fork Lewis River system, and Lacamas Lake, part of the Lacamas Creek system, north of downtown Camas.

In terms of the built environment, Clark County's landscape has been significantly altered by population growth and urbanization. Clark County is the fifth most populated county in the state. The Washington State Office of Financial Management estimates the county's 2012 population is 431,250. The county contains eight towns and cities: Vancouver, Camas, Washougal, Battle Ground, Ridgefield, La Center, and Yacolt. A portion of the city of Woodland extends into the northwest corner of Clark County. Vancouver is the largest city, with a 2012 population of 163,200. In 2012, 24% of the county's land area fell within designated Urban Growth Boundaries.

5.2 Critical Habitat and Greenways

In developing the 2004 Conservation Plan, the Conservation Areas Advisory Committee established a core vision to preserve an interconnected system of habitat and greenways along the county's system of rivers, streams and lakes, while protecting other high value resources. On a countywide scale, a variety of public agencies and private land conservation organizations have helped preserve and improve high-value conservation lands within this system. Primary agencies and organizations involved with acquisition/preservation include Clark County, all towns and cities within the county, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the State Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Parks, and Natural Resources, and the Columbia Land Trust and other nonprofit conservation organizations.

Existing protected resources within this system include approximately 20,000 acres. These lands are widely distributed throughout the county and include extensive land holdings both inside and outside urban growth areas. Specific sites range from the federal wildlife refuges at Ridgefield and Steigerwald Lake to a variety of urban parks and natural areas. Examples include Fallen Leaf Lake and Camp Currie inside the city of Camas and Stewart's Glen and Leverich Parks inside the city of Vancouver.

The 2004 plan has an over-arching vision to establish an interconnected system of habitat and greenways along the county's rivers, lakes, and streams, and uses watersheds as a planning framework for identifying resources, inventorying protected lands, highlighting needs, and prioritizing projects for conservation funding.

The 2014 update uses a similar framework and expands the number of watershed-based subareas from 18 to 19. As with the 2004 plan, project areas may include an entire watershed (e.g., Burnt Bridge Creek: mouth to headwaters); or may include subwatersheds (e.g., Lower Salmon Creek: mouth to Morgan Creek; Upper Salmon Creek: Morgan Creek to headwaters). Subarea narratives and maps have been developed for each project area, including quantitative metrics (e.g., watershed acres, stream miles,

acres of protected lands); summary descriptions of subareas; and maps which identify watershed boundaries and high-value conservation lands based on GIS data. Appendix A includes the narratives and maps for each of the 19 subareas. Appendix E provides a chronology of conservation acquisitions facilitated by the conservation futures/legacy lands program.

5.3 Farm Resources

Clark County historically has placed high value on the preservation of productive farmland. Moreover, farming continues to be an important element of the county's economy. While still important, the scale and type of farming that occurs in Clark County has changed significantly over the past several decades.

According to the U.S. farm census, 1950 was the peak year for farm acres. The farmland inventory included 219,000 acres, or 52% of the county's land base. Over time, the amount of farmland has generally continued to decline, and farm size has continued to grow smaller. In 1982, farm acres totaled 101,660; in 2002, farm acres totaled 70,679. The farm census showed some increase in farm acres in 2007 to 78,359; however, the average farm size was only 37 acres, and about three-quarters of the county's farms earned less than \$5,000 in business.

The type of farming has also changed. The Soil Conservation Service reported in 1972 that: "Dairying is the most important farm enterprise in the county; it accounts for more than 40 percent of the value of farm products sold. Ranking second and third are livestock and poultry. Other important farm products are vegetables, berries, and orchard fruits." (Soil Survey of Clark County, 1972) As recently as 1984, Clark County supported 84 dairies. Today, as an example of change, there are fewer than 10 dairies still operating in the county (Globalwise, 2007).

While the size and types of farms have changed, resource conditions, including climate and soils, are still highly conducive to farming (phone communication, Clark Conservation District, October 2007). Products that have maintained or grown their position in the county's farm economy include ornamental plants, Christmas trees, poultry, horses, vineyards and wineries and specialty vegetable crops. New marketing trends include Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), which provides subscription opportunities to purchase vegetables and other commodities on a weekly basis. There is also growth in the number of farmers markets within the county and increasing interest in locally grown food initiatives promoted through the Clark County Food System Council and other interests.

Clark County's 20-Year Comprehensive Land-Use Plan establishes a primary framework to preserve agriculture. In the natural resource element, county goals include "to preserve and enhance productive agricultural lands and minimize incompatible uses." Strategies include: evaluating a variety of funding sources and their feasibility for acquisition of resource lands. Moreover, under the state's Growth Management Act, counties are required to designate farm resource lands. Clark County currently has 32,505 acres of designated farm resource lands, and 48,035 acres enrolled the county's

current use taxation program for farming. Appendix A includes a countywide map that shows zoned farmland and farmland that has been placed under current use.

In developing the 2004 Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan, the Conservation Areas Advisory Committee used the designated farm resource lands as a basic framework. These designated lands were divided into 42 subareas, and a profile was created for each subarea. Profiles included total acres; soil quality (expressed as a percentage of prime and unique soils within the subarea); parcel size (expressed as total acres within the subarea that are in parcels 40 acres or larger), and ability to support agriculture (based on ratings by farm resource agency staff). In addition, subareas were sorted into “attached” and “detached” lists based on proximity to habitat and greenway systems. The plan did not prioritize individual projects or subareas. Instead, the plan stated that these profiles should be used as guidelines to help make decisions about conserving the highest priority farm resource lands. While the county elected not to submit to voters a corresponding real estate excise tax funding measure, the profiles still provide one important tool for evaluating farm land and conservation projects. See the 2004 Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan to view the farm profile summary and map.

In March 2008, the Board of County Commissioners appointed a 20-member Agricultural Preservation Advisory Committee to help develop a comprehensive Agriculture Preservation Strategies Report. Modeled after a similar document prepared in King County, the Clark County report identified a series of barriers to a “more robust” agricultural sector and identified strategies to respond to each barrier. Barriers identified in the plan range from insufficient technical support to overly restrictive regulatory requirements. The plan also cites the high cost of land as a barrier to improved farm opportunities.

This update of the Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan recognizes the importance of the 2004 Conservation Plan and 2009 Agriculture Preservation Strategies Report. This update also recognizes that purchase of development rights is only one tool in a broader collection of strategies that will be needed to sustain farming in Clark County.

5.4 Forest Resources

Clark County benefits from extensive tracts of highly productive forest resource lands. Under the state’s Growth Management Act, Clark County has designated 159,697 acres (or 38% of the county’s land area) as forest resource. These are divided into Tier 1 and Tier 2 land-use zones, which are devoted primarily to commercial forest activities and have 80- and 40-acre minimum lots sizes respectively.

Generally, the county’s Tier 1 forest lands are located in the eastern parts of the county in the foothills of the Cascades adjacent to the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and in the north-central parts of the county south of the North Fork Lewis River. Tier 1 forest lands north of the East Fork Lewis River are dominated by privately owned industrial land managers. Areas south of the East Fork Lewis are dominated by the state’s Western Yacolt Burn Forest, which covers approximately 40,000 acres located in Clark County.

As noted in DNR's Western Yacolt Burn Forest Recreation Plan, The Yacolt Burn Forest comprises trust lands that DNR manages primarily to generate revenue through the harvest of timber to support trust beneficiaries including public schools and counties. However, these public lands also provide a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities including camping, hiking, fishing, and hunting. The DNR estimates that each year 50,000 people visit the Western Yacolt Burn, in part because of its close proximity to the Vancouver/Portland urban area and in part because neighboring private land managers restrict motorized recreation trails on their land (Western Yacolt Burn Forest Recreation Plan, August 2010).

The county's Tier II forest lands are generally located on the borders of Tier I industrial forests. They tend to be located at lower elevations and closer to urban centers. While these parcels can be highly productive forest lands; they are also more prone to conversion from spreading development and conflicts with non-forest users. The Washington Farm Forestry Association and other forest businesses and ownership groups have expressed strong concern about the ongoing loss of these kinds of lands to non-forest uses. A map of the Tier I (FR-80) and Tier II (FR-40) forest resource designations is included in Appendix A.

In developing the 2004 Conservation Areas Plan, the Conservation Areas Advisory Committee adopted a conceptual framework that included three core elements: Critical Habitat, Greenways and Trails, and Farmland. While the 2004 plan did not include a working forests element per se, the 2014 update strongly supports the county's GMA resource goal: "to maintain and enhance the conservation of productive forestlands and discourage incompatible uses associated with forestry activities." Moreover, this plan recognizes that public and private forest resource lands, taken together, provide a variety of conservation values which would be lost with the conversion of these lands to residential development and other uses. These include outdoor recreation, surface and ground water resources, views and vistas, and fish and wildlife habitat.

In terms of habitat, the county's forest lands provide some of the most important areas for terrestrial wildlife, including large mammals such as elk, deer, cougar, and bear that are being displaced by population growth and expanding urban and suburban development. The bi-state *Regional Conservation Strategy for the Greater Portland – Vancouver Region* developed by the Intertwine Alliance created landscape-scale maps of high-value habitat for terrestrial wildlife species. This conservation plan shows the county's designated forest lands in combination with these high-value habitats; the resulting map (see Appendix A) clearly shows these relationships. In addition to habitat for terrestrial wildlife, commercial forest areas also include some of the most productive stream reaches in the county for ESA-listed steelhead populations. Especially important in this regard are the upper East Fork Lewis and the Rock Creek tributary to the East Fork Lewis.

Chapter 6 Need

6.1 Overview

Clark County possesses a rich variety of natural resources and landscapes that provide scenic, historic, cultural, agricultural, environmental, and outdoor recreation values. Natural features include a diversity of lakes, rivers, marshes, wetlands, shorelines, meadows, and forests. These land and water areas support a wide diversity of fish and wildlife, including ESA-listed populations of salmon and steelhead. They also provide opportunities for popular recreation activities, including hiking, swimming, fishing, kayaking and canoeing, picnicking, and biking. Our farmlands, while diminished, are still highly productive and an important part of our economy and our forest resource lands cover 38% of the county's land area. While these resources are substantial and a highly valued part of our quality of life, they are also finite and easily impacted by a variety of changing conditions in an urbanizing environment. This chapter examines some of primary issues and needs for conservation lands protections.

6.2 Population and Development Trends

Population growth and new development have the greatest impact, direct and indirect, on our wildlife habitat, farms, working forests and other conservation lands. Between 1970 and 2012, the county's population increased by 235% from 128,500 to 431,250. Clark County is the 5th most populated county in the state, and urban growth boundaries cover 24% of our landscape. While population trends will fluctuate over time, significant growth is almost certain to continue and the state Growth Management Act requires cities, towns, and counties to review urban growth boundaries every 7-10 years to accommodate new growth.

As our population grows, the built environment will continue to expand and undeveloped portions of the landscape will convert to housing, roads, and commercial and industrial uses. Moreover, the division of property into smaller parcels makes land conservation increasingly difficult, and a growing population will increase demand on existing resources for clean water, locally produced crops, and recreation and outdoor education opportunities. These trends create immediate need to preserve our highest priority conservation lands.

6.3 Outdoor Recreation

Clark County residents have repeatedly expressed high demand for protecting our most important conservation lands and providing recreation opportunities. As part of the original 2004 Conservation Areas Plan, the county conducted a countywide public opinion survey to help assess attitudes about preserving conservation lands. The survey involved a sample size of 300 and was conducted by phone. The survey asked: on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 means "highly important" and 1 means "not at all important," how important to you is the preservation of greenways for public use, such as along rivers, streams, and lakes. The average score for all respondents was 8.5. In addition, the survey prioritized outdoor recreational activities based on family participation. The top five activities in order were: hiking/walking/running/jogging, fishing, camping, bicycling,

and swimming. The county's conservation lands system provides an important environment for each of these activities.

This 2014 update continues to identify greenways and trails as a core element of the conservation lands system. In doing so, this plan closely meshes with the County's Comprehensive Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan and Regional Trail & Bikeway Systems Plan. These plans, for example, identify 16 regional, multi-use trail corridors. Eight of these generally align with one or more of the project area corridors that are identified in the 2014 Conservation Plan. These include:

- Lewis and Clark Discovery Greenway (Columbia River Lowlands);
- Lake to Lake (Burnt Bridge Creek, Lower Lacamas);
- Salmon Creek Greenway;
- East Fork Lewis River;
- Battle Ground/Fisher's Landing (Upper Lacamas);
- Washougal River Corridor;
- North Fork Lewis Greenway; and
- Whipple Creek Greenway.

A map overlaying regional trails with high value conservation lands is located in Appendix A.

In addition, the trails plan identifies a high need for a system of water trails to help respond to the growing popularity of kayaking and canoeing in the county. The proposed network includes the Columbia River, Vancouver Lake/Lake River, East Fork/North Lewis, and the lower Lacamas Corridor. To support these activities, the Vancouver-Clark Parks Department and National Park Service, along with a 20-member committee of stakeholders, completed development in 2013 of the county's first water trail guide that covers Vancouver Lake, Lake River, and lower sections of the East Fork and North Fork Lewis. The trail guide identifies access points, key features, trail routes, and encourages compatible recreational uses within some of the county's most important conservation lands.

6.4 Critical Habitat

Clark County's land and water resources provide habitat for a wide variety of fish and wildlife, including over 240 bird species, 55 species of mammals, and more than 40 species of fish ranging from perch and bass to ESA-listed eulachon and salmon populations. Clark County places high value on sustaining these populations and the habitat that supports them. However, population growth, land division, and residential and commercial development place pressures on virtually all of these species. The Washington Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (WDFW 2005) reports that "...Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation are the major threats to the persistence of Washington's Fish and Wildlife..."

In December 2009, WDFW published a guidance document called "Landscape Planning for Washington's Wildlife: Managing for Biodiversity in Developing Areas." This plan describes the wide range of benefits provided by sustaining wildlife habitat and

biodiversity: “Biodiversity has aesthetic, cultural, educational and economic value to people. The retention and restoration of wildlife habitat in the developing landscape provides ecological services important to humans and communities.” A partial list of benefits cited includes improved water quality, control of storm water and floods, and the reduction of carbon dioxide that contributes to climate change.

This document also notes that wildlife are best served by keeping large, connected patches of undeveloped native vegetation intact, and planning open space to incorporate high-value habitat and corridors for animal movement. In developing the county’s 2004 and 2014 plans, these concepts are basic elements of the county’s conservation vision to create an interconnected system of greenways and habitat along the county’s rivers, streams, and lakes. The planning process involves the mapping of high-value interconnected systems that emphasize biodiversity and preservation of areas with the highest aggregation of open space values including wetlands, floodplains, riparian, and non-riparian priority habitat. In doing so, the Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan hopes to meet the considerable challenge of creating a system of wildlife habitat that will support our diverse species as population growth occurs and our urban landscape approaches build-out.

6.5 Critical Habitat (ESA-Listed Salmon Recovery)

Clark County provides essential habitat for four populations of salmonids (Chinook, chum, coho, and steelhead) that have been listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. These fish historically thrived in Clark County’s rivers; however, changes in habitat and other factors have reduced their numbers to levels of potential extinction. Efforts to restore these populations are being coordinated by the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board, whose member agencies include Clark County and four neighboring counties. The Washington Lower Columbia Salmon Recovery and Fish and Wildlife Subbasin Plan (May 2010) provides a comprehensive blueprint for recovering salmon within the region and Clark County. A primary goal of the plan is to “Restore the region’s fish species listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act to healthy, harvestable levels.”

Clark County plays a vital role in the recovery of listed salmon. The East Fork Lewis, North Fork Lewis, and Washougal Rivers support populations of all four listed species and have been specifically identified as key watersheds to support recovery in the Lower Columbia River Salmon Recovery Fish and Wildlife Subbasin Plan. Salmon Creek, Whipple Creek, Flume Creek, and other smaller tributaries all support populations of ESA-listed salmon, and are important for stabilizing existing fish populations. The plan identifies the preservation of intact habitat along the county’s streams as a top priority action for salmon recovery. In addition, the acquisition of riparian and aquatic habitat, even when degraded, provides the opportunity for a wide range of preservation, enhancement and restoration actions.

In the East Fork Lewis, Washougal, and North Fork Lewis Rivers, many restoration partners have implemented projects on county-acquired lands. These include the Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group, Clark Public Utilities, Fish First, Friends of the East

Fork, and the Cowlitz Tribe. Goals and strategies contained in this plan emphasize the need to acquire, restore, and enhance aquatic, riparian and associated uplands habitat as part of the region-wide efforts to recover federally listed salmon populations.

6.6 Resource Lands

Clark County's farm and forest resource managers have identified population growth, expanding development, farm and forest land conversion, and the high cost of resource lands as key issues. Moreover, programs such as purchase of development rights are cited as one tool to help sustain farm and forest practices. In April 2007, Globalwise, Inc., a Clark County-based agricultural economics consulting firm, completed for Clark County a report that examines agricultural conditions and economic trends. The report documents the shrinking inventory of farm acres, but it also highlights the cost of land and the need to address support services. The report states: "Rapidly escalating land prices in the County have created a major barrier for new farmers to enter the business. Intervention in the land market by actions such as purchase of development rights is the only assured way of holding land for agriculture. However, most often these types of land resource programs also need to be implemented with other farm support programs to guide the agriculture industry to greater prosperity in a highly urbanizing county."

Similar conditions and needs are cited in the county's 2009 Agriculture Preservation Strategies Report. The report identifies a series of barriers that restrain a more robust agricultural sector. These range from the need for better marketing and promotion to less restrictive regulations and enhanced technical support. The report also identifies the high cost of farm land as a significant barrier. "Today," the report states, "most new farmers cannot afford to acquire good farmland. Existing farmers cannot acquire additional lands to enhance their operations and many feel economic pressure to sell their land and get out of farming." To reduce these barriers, the report specifically states the need to develop a purchase of development rights program and to include an allocation of resources for acquiring development rights to protect farm resource lands in any new conservation funding initiative.

Forest land managers have also cited population growth and the conversion of forest resource lands as potential barriers to sustaining a robust forest economy. In general, small forest properties located at lower elevations in closer proximity to urban centers are the most vulnerable. While these lands can be extremely productive, they are also located at the interface between urbanizing populations and middle and higher elevations where federal, state, and industrial forest lands are found. These conditions make the family forest resource lands more vulnerable to conversion. While the 2004 Conservation Areas Plan did not include a forest resource element per se, Clark County places high value on preserving these important resources and supports the specific strategy adopted in the County's 20-Year Comprehensive Land-Use Plan to "evaluate a variety of funding sources and their feasibility for acquisition of land and other programs to implement the policies within the Rural and Natural Resource Element and to comply with regional salmon recovery goals and objectives."

Chapter 7 Implementation Mechanisms

7.1 Conservation Areas Fund Source Manual

A variety of funding opportunities are available to counties in the state of Washington to help acquire and improve conservation lands. These include both grants and non-grant programs that generate revenue or otherwise can help achieve conservation lands protection and improvement. A separate manual (Appendix D) has been developed that highlights more than 30 grant programs and other implementation tools.

This separate manual includes summaries, in table format, of 26 grant programs. Entries include information about managing agency, purpose, eligible projects, grant limits, matching requirements, application deadlines and cycles, and available grant amounts and/or grant history. It should be emphasized that this kind of information can be a useful screen to help determine whether a grant program might be a good match for individual projects. However, grant applicants should review more completely grant guidelines, evaluation criteria, and other background materials, as well as communicate with grant program managers, before fully committing to grant development.

This manual also includes summaries of nine other programs that generate funds or otherwise achieve conservation lands protection. These include, for example, Conservation Futures levy, Conservation Areas Real Estate Excise Tax, and the state's Trust Lands Transfer Program. A directory of the fund sources appears below.

Fund Sources – Grants

Acres for American – NFWF

Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account – WA RCO

Coastal Protection Fund (Terry Husseman Account) – WA DOE

Community Forest Trusts – WA DNR

Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (HCP Land Acq. Grants) – USFWS

Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (Recovery Land Acq.) – USFWS

Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program – NRCS

Forest Legacy Program – USFS

Habitat Restoration Program – LCREP

Land and Water Conservation Fund – RCO/NPS

Lewis River Aquatics Fund - PacifiCorp

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (Traditional Program) - USFWS

North American Wetlands Conservation Act (Small Grants) – USFWS

North American Wetlands Conservation Act (Standard Grants) – USFWS

Salmon Recovery Program – SRFB/LCRFB/RCO

Water Quality Financial Assistance Program – WA DOE

(Centennial Clean Water, Section 319, Water Pollution Control Revolving Fund)

Wetlands Reserve Program (Permanent and 30-Year Easements) – NRCS

Wetlands Reserve Program (10-Year Restoration Cost-Share) – NRCS

Whole Watersheds Restoration Initiative – Ecotrust and Partners

WWRP Critical Habitat – WA RCO

WWRP Farmland Preservation – WA RCO
WWRP Local Park – WA RCO
WWRP Riparian Protection – WA RCO
WWRP Trails – WA RCO
WWRP Urban Wildlife Habitat – WA RCO
WWRP Water Access – WA RCO

Fund Sources Public – Other Tools

Conservation Futures
County Bonds (Voted GO, Councilmanic, Revenue)
Impact Fees
Lid Lift
Real Estate Excise Tax Options
Real Estate Excise Tax – Conservation Areas
Trust Lands Transfer Program
Columbia River Estuary Mitigation –BPA

Fund Sources Private

Private-Sector Grants Overview