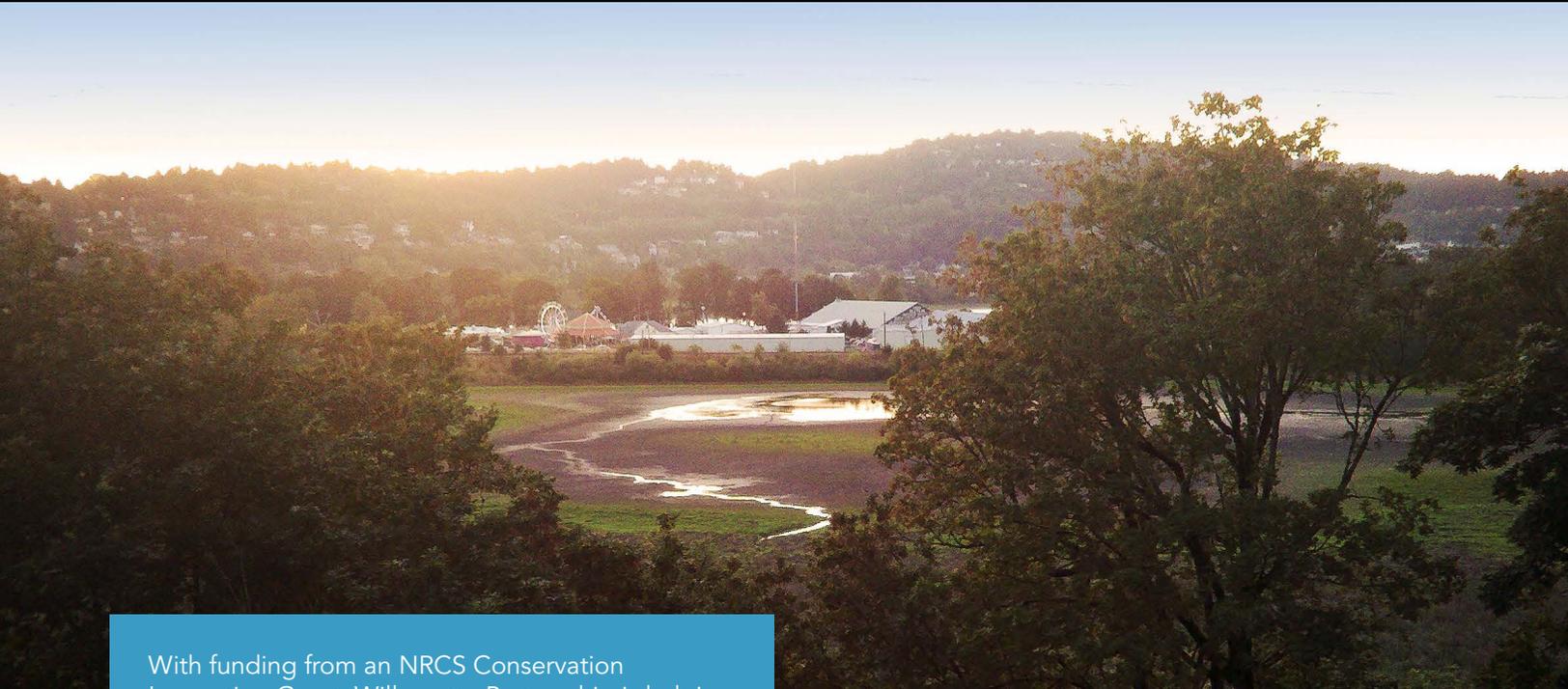




INTEGRATING THE SCIENCE, POLICY, AND TOOLS FOR FLOODPLAIN MARKETS AND INCENTIVES



With funding from an NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant, Willamette Partnership is helping communities build an integrated approach to floodplain management in Oregon.

(Photo Credit: Matt Kowal | View West towards Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge in Portland, OR)

Around the world, people have traditionally settled along floodplains for the many values they provide: fresh water, flat and fertile lands for agriculture and construction, abundant fish and wildlife, and ready transportation. Today we know that healthy, functioning floodplains also improve flood storage, groundwater recharge, and water quality and help make the communities more resilient to the effects of a changing climate.

With those benefits, though, come challenges. Urban and rural communities in floodplains work to limit flood damage while maintaining valuable floodplain functions, and they do so within a complex and changing set of regulatory requirements. Increasing insurance costs, flood frequency, and flood severity in developed areas add to that complex environment.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITIES

Effective floodplain management can create unique opportunities for communities and landowners interested in conserving and restoring floodplain functions. Improved floodplain management can bring ecological, economic, and social benefits, but it requires tools that can help navigate the regulatory and scientific complexity surrounding floodplains.

Willamette Partnership is working with local governments, state agencies, private landowners, local conservation implementation groups, and others to find better ways to leverage and incentivize these opportunities. The Partnership is leading an initiative to combine the best available science with innovative policy approaches, to create a package of tools that urban and rural communities (including governments, landowners, and conservation implementation groups) can use to better manage their floodplains.



(Photo Credit: Sam Beebe | John Day River east of Mitchell)

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT

The project will build from existing quantification and planning tools, adapting them to support an integrated, proactive approach to the management, restoration and conservation of floodplains in Oregon.

The suite of tools will help communities quantify and communicate the benefits and impacts of conservation and development decisions across the range of ecosystem services provided by floodplains. It will also help with coordination of management issues across regulating agencies and land ownerships. As a result, these tools could be used by local communities to articulate their own vision for their floodplains and to improve targeting of incentive programs to support that vision.

The package of tools will include:

- **Basin- and site-scale quantification tools** for i) prioritizing areas for conservation or development, ii) quantifying the ecosystem services provided by floodplains, and iii) measuring the outcomes of conservation and development impacts
- **Template ordinances, planning processes, and permitting tools** that local communities can use independently or in floodplain markets to partner with producers and others to protect and enhance floodplains in their communities
- **Policy options** for building an integrated approach to meeting requirements for the National Flood Insurance Program, Endangered Species Act, and Clean Water Act.

TIMELINE AND OUTCOMES

The project will run from September 2014 through to August 2017 on four main tracks:

- 1** Scoping and Stakeholder Engagement
- 2** Science and Quantification
- 3** Policy and Planning Innovation; and
- 4** Integration, Piloting and Outreach.

Project partners include the City of Portland, The Freshwater Trust, and Portland State University's Institute for Sustainable Solutions. However, we will work closely with many other partners to scope and ground-truth the project's approach and actively pilot and test the tools and innovations from this project.

The outcome of this work will be increased certainty for communities in a very uncertain environment. In the face of climate change and regulatory uncertainty, communities must be able to plan for their own resilience. Integrated approaches to floodplain management, in a way that reduces costs and expands an incentive-based approach for floodplain restoration, will help communities to achieve this goal while working towards improved environmental outcomes.

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