



WATERSHED EVENTS

Glenn and Gibson Creeks Watershed Council Newsletter

Winter 2019-20

Studying the Willamette

Why study the Willamette? The largest river in Oregon, the Willamette River and its floodplain remains the greatest opportunity to preserve and restore the richest and most productive habitats in the most densely populated area of Oregon.

According to *Our Salem*, the recent effort begun by the City of Salem to update their comprehensive plan, a population increase of 54,000 to 95,000 is expected within the Urban Growth Boundary of Salem by 2035. It is safe to assume corresponding growth will occur throughout the Mid Willamette Valley. Increased population brings inevitable pressure to develop environmentally sensitive areas.

Also according to the *Our Salem Scorecard*, we are failing to meet the modest target of 23% tree canopy within the City, we exceed greenhouse gas emission goals, and we fail in clean air standards.

Preserving the Willamette River riparian corridor and the flood plain makes good sense. The flood plain is high risk for development but high value for the environment. This is the logical place to increase tree canopy, preserve and / or restore habitat and sequester carbon.

“ up to **80 percent of all wildlife species are dependent upon riparian areas for at least part of their life cycles**”. coloradoriparian.org/knowledge-center/riparian-questions-and-answers



Willamette River at flood stage April 2019

Photo of Wallace Marine Park taken looking north from the Union Street Railroad Bridge at the soccer fields and bike path leading up to the bridge

Glenn and Gibson Creek Watershed Council proposes to study the Willamette River and its floodplain from Hayden Island (Gail Achterman Wildlife Area) to Windsor Island to evaluate current conditions in order to identify and prioritize both preservation and restoration opportunities.



Willamette River Slough

The oxbow pictured in the right part of this photograph bends around Wallace Marine Park and a gravel mining operation, as well as remnant gallery forest and the slough associated with this old channel of the Willamette River. This area provides habitat for many species of birds, amphibians, reptiles, fish and countless invertebrates. This area is partially preserved as the Wallace Marine Park Natural Area but most of the area is at risk for development including the future Marine Drive that is currently projected to follow the western edge of Wallace Marine Park.

The importance of backwaters

Backwater channels moderate high flows and provide wet spots during drought. Fish find refuge in these areas during times of high, swift flows in the main river channel. These areas are used by juvenile fish for rearing. Tall trees and understory provide varied habitats required by a broad range of species for nesting and feeding. It is difficult to overstate the importance of the habitats provided by these old river channels.

The importance of gallery forests

Also known as riparian forests, forests along rivers protect the soil from erosion and reduce flooding. Forests cycle water between the soil and atmosphere and help make rain. Trees produce oxygen for us to breathe. Trees absorb carbon dioxide so are valuable "carbon sinks"...

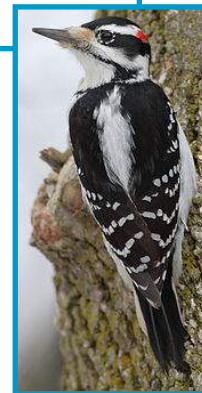


“A slough is typically used to describe wetlands. Sloughs along the edges of rivers form where the old channel of the river once flowed. These areas are also referred to as oxbows because they tend to form at a bend in the old river bed, making them look like the U-shaped collar placed around the neck of an ox to which a plow is attached.” <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/slough.html>



“Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems in the world, comparable to rain forests and coral reefs.”

<https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/why-are-wetlands-important>



Complex River Channel

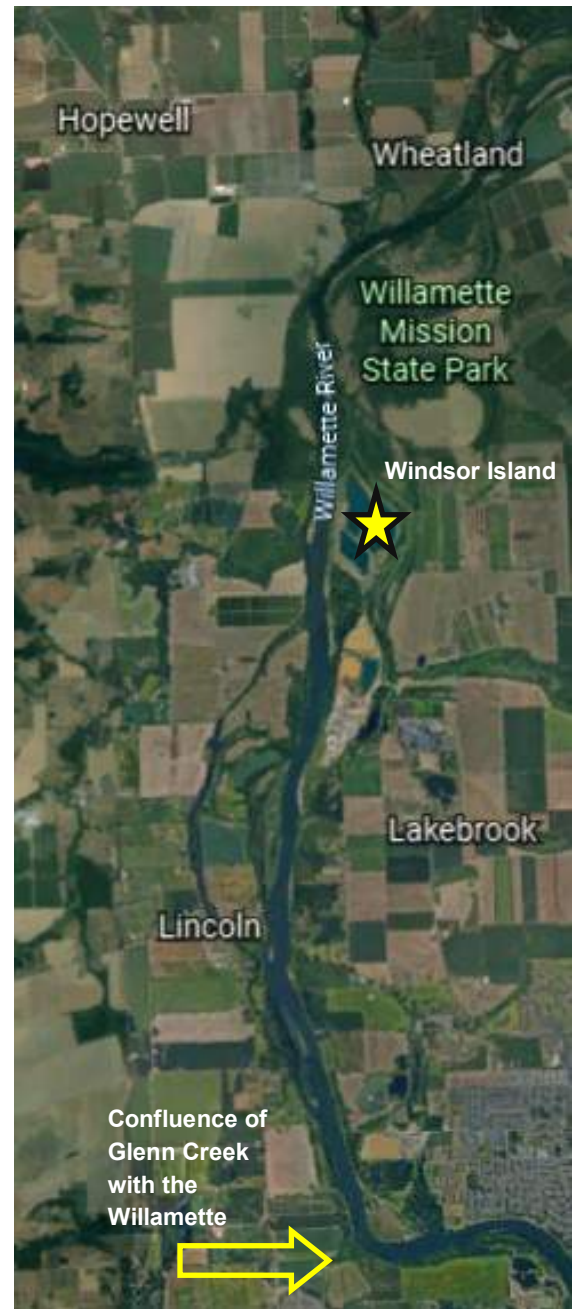
The northern end of the proposed study area shows the remaining complexity of the Willamette within this reach. Historically, this complexity was much greater. Channel complexity provided by the remaining side and back channels is very important for habitats for fish and other species. The back channels increase floodplain capacity and allow for greater tree canopy potential.

Hidden gems



This mixed forest and understory exists just about 100 feet east of Wallace Road, one of the busiest highways in Salem. This is the type of rich habitat that could potentially be lost to development but is also an opportunity for preservation. The owners of this property hope to preserve this riparian habitat while developing the upper portion of their property.

The Glenn and Gibson Creeks Watershed Council hopes to use the proposed study to identify and prioritize areas available for protection and / or restoration. We also hope to identify partners to join in planning projects to achieve these goals for the Willamette River and its floodplain.



Some of the questions...

- What areas are biologically important and why?
- What are the opportunities on both public and private land?
- Programs? Priorities? Projects?

West Salem Pollinator Gardens Partnership update

The latest pollinator garden has been planted in Orchard Heights Park, just north of the Orchard Heights Park Community Garden. The plants in the pollinator garden will complement the existing community garden to provide pollen for the pollinators.

Glenn and Gibson Creeks Watershed Council used the Salem Electric Habitat Improvement Fund to purchase plant materials for the garden.



Thank you Salem Electric HIP participants!



Contact Us

Give us a call for more information

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Visit us on the web at
[https://
glennigibsonwc.org/](https://glennigibsonwc.org/)



Join us

We are always interested in new members or issues of interest to watershed health.

We meet the 2nd Tuesday of every month in the Breezeway Room at Salemtowne Community,



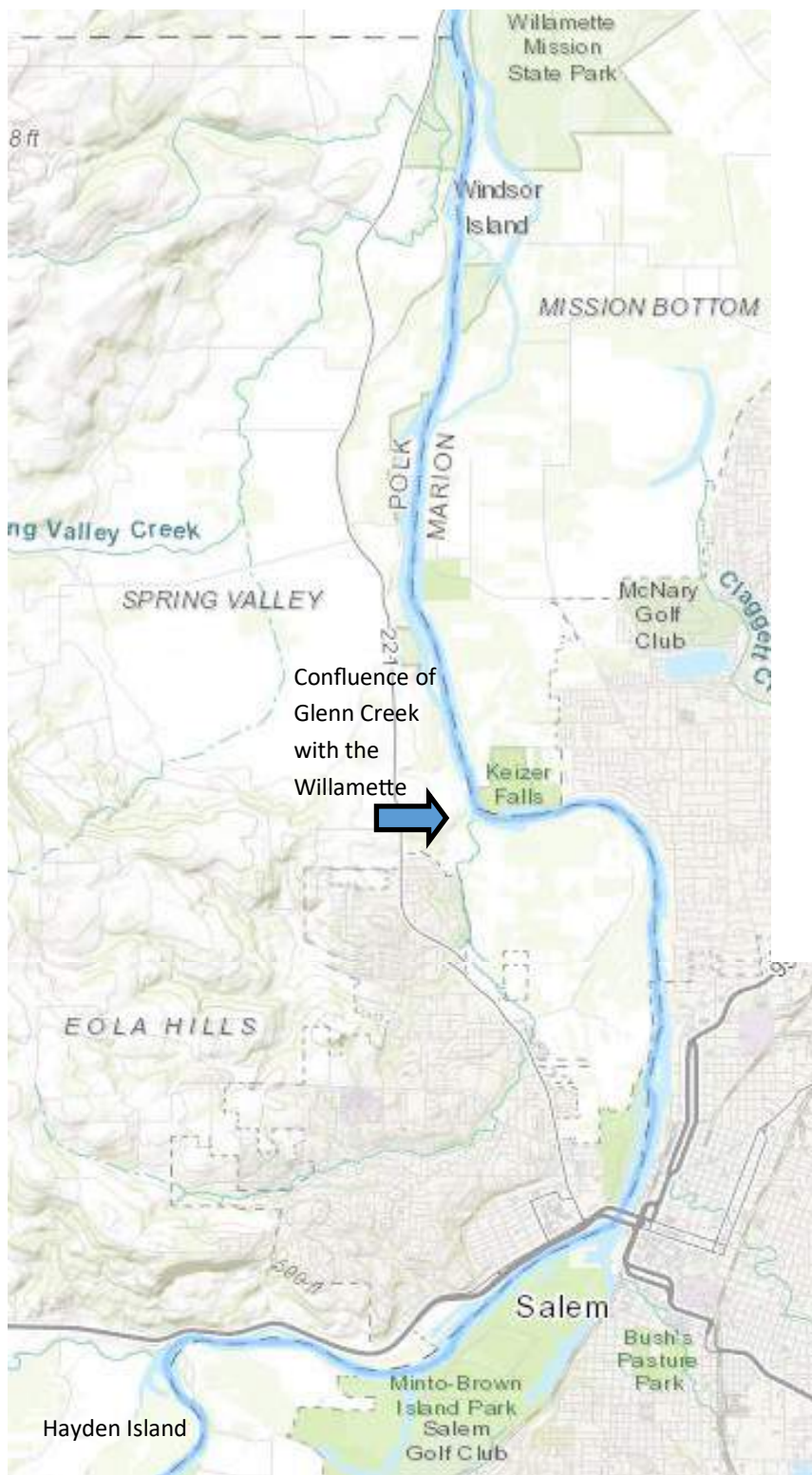
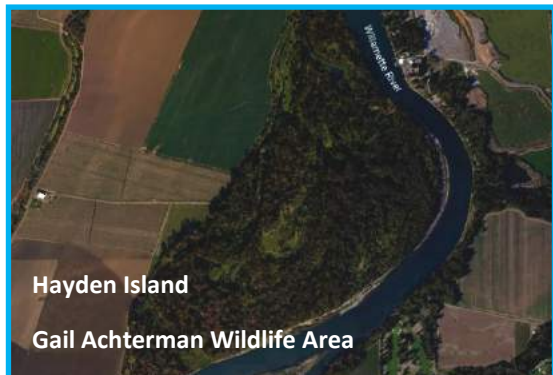
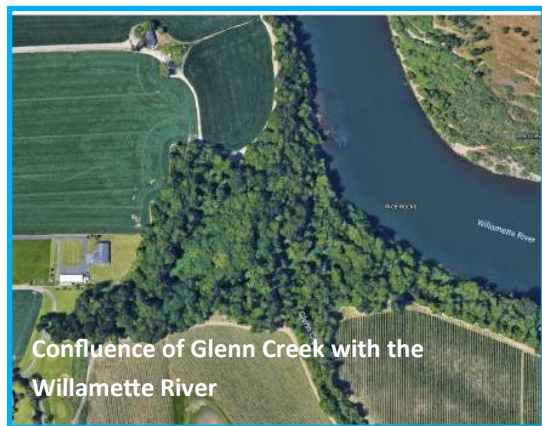
Ways to support habitat improvement projects

- **Donate** at www.glennigibsonwatershedcouncil.org
- Participate in the **Salem Electric Habitat Improvement Program** at www.salemelectric.com
- **Bottle Drop/Give** Your Refundable Cans and Bottles can help improve watershed health. Fill our pre-labeled blue bags with refundable cans and bottles and drop them off at any of the Bottle Drop sites in Salem. Staff will count the refundables and credit the FOWSWS account. Send an e-mail to info@glennigibsonwc.org We will arrange to get the bags to you.

Topographic maps of the proposed study area*

From Hayden Island (mouth of Rickreall Creek) to Windsor Island in Mission Bottom Park.

River Mile 74 to River Mile 89



*Marion County ESRI website