

# **The South Santiam Community Forest Corridor:**

December 16, 2013

## **Why create a community forest corridor?**

Residents of the Sweet Home area recognize and value their connections to natural resources. The public and private forests of this landscape support the local economy, provide recreation opportunities, and support important natural benefits such as clean water, habitat, and cultural sites. Although these linkages are celebrated and clear, physical connections between Sweet Home, public and private forests, public recreation resources, and the upper portion of the South Santiam River are lacking. Local leaders would like to see these connections established, and find better ways to ensure public access to natural resources, provide opportunities for nature-based and cultural tourism, improve public health, support jobs, and promote natural resource health both along the river and in the entire South Santiam watershed.

## **What is the long-term vision?**

The South Santiam Community Forest Corridor will be a physical place that improves and demonstrates the connections between local residents and natural resources. It will allow residents and visitors to reconnect with the natural world. Establishment of the corridor will respect the rights and values of landowners while focusing on capitalizing on win-win opportunities to coordinate land management on public and private forests, generate forest products, and create recreation and conservation education activities. The management of lands associated with the corridor would be focused on economic development, forest stewardship, the provision of recreation opportunities for local residents and tourists, and promotion of improved health and a high quality of life.

Numerous private and public land owners will comprise the community forest corridor when it is established, and management and governance of the forest corridor will be collaborative and respect the values and goals of individual private and public landowners while seeking broad social and natural benefits. Existing public recreation resources and public/private relationships would act as anchors or keystones for establishment of parts of the community forest corridor.

The community forest corridor will be sustainably funded in an entrepreneurial fashion and financially supported through a variety of sources, including revenue from land management and the production of forest products, within and outside of the corridor; Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board grants; revenues from payment for ecosystem services programs; US Forest Service stewardship contracting revenues; Bureau of Land Management grants, environmental mitigation grants, recreation and trail grants; etc.

## What are the long-term goals?

- Increase the physical connection between Sweet Home and the Willamette National Forest via the South Santiam River corridor.
- Help improve quality of life for local residents. A high quality of life and successful, livable communities serve to attract new businesses and residents to the area.
- Provide for public access to local natural resources and the South Santiam River.
- Contribute to job creation in the Sweet Home area through promotion of recreation and tourism, development of more diverse forest products and markets, and forest restoration and management activities.
- Promote improved natural resource health through management and restoration actions within the watershed and implementation of conservation education programs.
- Contribute to improved health of local residents by providing a safe, desirable, and convenient system of recreation opportunities.
- Promote knowledge of and connections to historic local places, including the Santiam Wagon Road.
- Contribute to an integrated system of recreation opportunities, consistent with local values, that attracts tourists and promotes local economic development.
- Protect and enhance important cultural resources in the corridor, particularly Cascadia Cave.
- Establish a research forest of both public and private lands outside the corridor in partnership with Oregon State University College of Forestry to serve as a demonstration area for the public to learn about active management of forests as an integrated component of broad scale, healthy, working landscapes capable of producing key biological and social attributes while also supporting local economies.
- Provide opportunities for volunteers and organizations with available in-kind resources to contribute to achievement of project goals.

## What are some possible segments to include in the community forest corridor?

1. From the Western States Land Reliance Trust site, through city and county lands to Corps of Engineers (COE) land and Andrew Wiley Park at Foster Lake. Continuing around Foster Lake and connecting to the south arm of the Santiam River. Continuing to the eastern boundary of COE land and the beginning of private land areas (e.g., Cascade Timber Consulting).
2. From the boundary formed by the eastern end of COE land and private land (e.g., CTC), continuing to the western boundary of the Willamette NF (potentially via the Triple-T Mill site). There may be opportunities for using county road rights-of-way as necessary in areas of private lands.
3. From western boundary of the Willamette NF and the Triple-T Mill site, continues to Gordon Road and eastward to the Santiam Wagon Road. Coordination with private landowners would be required for some portions of this segment.

4. Cascadia Cave site. Potential future public ownership and governance of the cave site could be considered concurrently with the other community forest corridor development phases. Potential corridor routes both pass through, and go around, the cave site. The particular role and emphasis of the cave site within the community forest corridor can be identified through the Oregon Solutions process and through a corridor governance structure that respects cultural resources.
5. Identification of working forestlands (and their potential governance) that are not necessarily adjacent to the corridor, but that could be tied to the corridor as sources of revenue. Because much of the land in the potential corridor is physically constrained by rivers and highways and timber production potential is limited, other lands are likely necessary to produce consistent and timely revenue.

### **What are the connections between the Sweet Home All-Lands Collaborative and the community forest corridor?**

This community forest corridor project is being managed by Oregon Solutions. A separate entity, the Sweet Home All-lands Collaborative (SHALC), is active in the Sweet Home area and is promoting collaborative coordination of forest management on public and private lands to improve natural resource conditions and contribute to local economies. SHALC supports, and is a participant, in this community forest corridor project led by Oregon Solutions.

The Sweet Home All-lands Collaborative (SHALC) is a diverse group of local leaders that formed in 2012 to collaboratively coordinate land and watershed management in the South Santiam watershed for a variety of benefits including local economic development, forest and riparian health, clean air, a high quality of life, vibrant recreation, and cultural resource protection.

SHALC's mission is to contribute to forest management with explicit goals of creating economic activity and social benefits for nearby communities across the entire Sweet Home region. As such, SHALC sees the community forest corridor as a defined physical location where new management and governance approaches are necessary to foster these outcomes. Early in their work together, SHALC participants identified the corridor area specifically as a place where they had particular interest and where "something needed to happen." The larger landscape of the Sweet Home area is related to the corridor in several ways:

1. Forest management or other revenue-generating activities in areas not physically contiguous with the corridor may contribute funds and resources to the corridor.
2. The corridor may provide a space to test, demonstrate, or otherwise innovate new ideas and practices that could be later replicated elsewhere in the greater Sweet Home area as appropriate.

3. The corridor is a literal, physical space adjacent to Sweet Home that is convenient for the community to reach and reconnect with the forest; this may contribute to their future interest in working and recreating in the South Santiam watershed more broadly/farther afield.

The community forest corridor has the potential to contribute to the program areas of the Sweet Home All-lands Collaborative (SHALC) in several ways:

<b>SHALC program area</b>	<b>Application to community forest</b>
Forest Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land management activities follow and provide opportunities to demonstrate the Collaborative All-Lands Management approach (outlined in the SHALC vision).</li> <li>• Restoration and resource management actions aim to improve the condition and functions of the South Santiam Watershed</li> </ul>
Forest products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A variety of products including saw logs, small diameter material, special forest products, and others are harvested in association with the corridor to meet land stewardship needs in the corridor and create local jobs.</li> </ul>
Recreation and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable trail and recreation infrastructure is developed or enhanced to improve connectivity of the community to the forest and allow access to natural and cultural assets. There is a trail that runs through the corridor.</li> <li>• Programs that support health, fitness, and families can take place in the corridor.</li> </ul>
Conservation education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth conservation crews participate in necessary stewardship work in the corridor where suitable.</li> <li>• Youth camps and other programs use the corridor for educational purposes.</li> <li>• There are opportunities for youth experiential learning involving applying forestry skills and completing resource management activities.</li> </ul>

### *Planning and governance outcomes*

1. With community and stakeholder involvement, reach consensus on a vision statement for the South Santiam Community Forest Corridor including identification of both short and long-term priority projects (including at least those projects listed below) with a particular focus on public access, job creation, fish and wildlife enhancement, and forest health.

2. Clear articulation of the boundaries of the South Santiam portion of the forest corridor and desired endpoints, with identification and spatial alignment of potential land parcels to form the future corridor. Identification of a strategic order to work on those parcels and some first steps in the acquisition processes.
3. In collaboration with the tribal governments of the region, develop a strategy for public acquisition, protection, and governance of the 55-acre Cascadia Cave heritage site.
4. Develop a communications and marketing strategy for the community forest corridor to inform and seek input from the general public and interested parties about the opportunities to improve public access, create new jobs, and improve forest health within the corridor. Develop an understanding of what it might take to reach social agreement.
5. Develop a comprehensive list of potential funding sources and opportunities for implementing and maintaining the priority community forest corridor projects. In particular, examine the recently completed "Forest Invest" study conducted by the Portland State University IGERT Fellows as presented to the National Forest Foundation's Barrett Foundation Prize in August of 2012.
6. Identify one or more non-profit/foundation/trust partners that can provide resources, land management expertise, and asset brokerage services. Include outreach to organizations such as EcoTrust, the Trust for Public Lands, and The Nature Conservancy, among others.
7. Develop a governance structure for sustaining the planning and management of the community forest corridor.
  - Identifying capacities, including resources for a coordinator or other point person, to help carry forward agreements made in the declaration of cooperation following the conclusion of the Oregon Solutions project.
  - Seeking an arrangement that will help create and provide education around a consistent set of management regulations as well as improve the quality of service delivery on this landscape, which currently has complex and disparate ownerships, rules, and policies.
  - Identifying a transparent and sensitive governance structure for the Cascadia Cave area, which is of great significance to Oregon tribes.

### *Activity development outcomes*

1. **Recreation** - Develop plans for enhanced recreation opportunities within the community forest corridor including multi-use trails, expanded camping, fishing, hunting, swimming, rafting, kayaking, scenic vistas, wildlife viewing, and cultural exploration.
2. **Public health** - Develop collaborative partnerships with area health care organizations with a focus on creating healthy lifestyle activities within the community forest corridor. Potential partners include Samaritan Health Services and Western University COMP Northwest.

3. **Redevelopment** - Identify opportunities for redevelopment of the former mill sites at both ends of the community forest corridor as potential corridor "activity anchors" while also recognizing the environmental constraints involved. Both the former Weyerhaeuser mill site in Sweet Home and the Triple-T site east of Cascadia offer tremendous potential to the community corridor concept based on their proximity to the river, undeveloped acreage, and brownfield redevelopment assistance programs.
4. **Local history** - Develop plans to enhance the utilization, recognition, and historical features of the Santiam Wagon Road and its significance to the community forest corridor.
5. **Citizen engagement** - Identify opportunities to engage East Linn County citizens, especially students and seniors, in actively connecting with the community forest corridor through hands-on experiences and value-added activities.
6. **Community information center** - Assist in the exploration of a reestablished Cascadia Community Post office that could also serve as a community information center.
7. **Cascadia State Park** - Explore new opportunities to promote and enhance utilization of Cascadia SP as a significant asset of the community forest corridor.
8. **Land exchange** - Assist in the exploration of potential land exchanges between public entities and private landowners that would result in achieving other vision document outcomes.
9. **Working forest research** – Pursue opportunities for a comprehensive research program to improve the successful application of forest management across landscapes of public and private forests to produce greater benefits for people and businesses while achieving long-term goals for forest health.