

FOR RELEASE
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COALITION OF FARMING, CONSERVATION GROUPS
PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE VISION FOR REGION'S GROWTH

An unprecedented coalition of conservation and farming organizations today provided their proposal for protection of farming and natural resource land in the Portland metropolitan region. The groups released their own map as an alternative to a map being used to determine urban and rural reserves by Metro and Washington, Clackamas and Multnomah counties.

"Farmers and conservation groups have often disagreed in the past," said Washington County Farm Bureau President Dave Vanasche, "but on this issue we strongly agree: urban sprawl destroys valuable farmland, streams, and wildlife habitat. Our proposal achieves a balance of protection for agriculture and natural resources while providing for common sense future growth in the region."

The coalition, which includes the Washington County Farm Bureau, Tualatin Riverkeepers, Save Helvetia, Audubon Society, 1000 Friends of Oregon, Oregon Association of Nurseries, Coalition for a Livable Future, Oregon Council of Trout Unlimited and others, presented a map that proposes approximately 15,000 acres of urban reserves, with another 6,000 acres as possible additional land that can be developed in the future. It also proposes rural reserve protection for the region's most important farmlands and natural landscape features.

"The region's livability depends upon strong protection for our unsurpassed natural resources and world-class farmlands," said Sue Marshall of the Tualatin Riverkeepers. "It's our responsibility to protect our water, land, and natural landscape for future generations."

Laura Masterson, a Clackamas County farmer and owner of a community supported agriculture operation, stated: "This is our generation's opportunity to thoughtfully guide growth in this region – it's our 'Senate Bill 100' – to protect our heritage while providing for long-term economic and environmental sustainability."

"This is the only map that demonstrates how to protect the region's most important farmland and natural resources and identifies urban reserves areas with the fewest conflicts," Vanasche added. "We simply followed the reserves factors prescribed in the law."

“Agriculture is a key industry, with over \$745 million in sales in the tri-county region in 2008,” said Jeff Stone of the Oregon Association of Nurseries. “Protection of agricultural land is vital to a strong economy, keeping and creating local jobs.”

The map provides for future urban growth that supports existing communities and maximizes efficient use of investment in infrastructure.

“Studies show the cost of providing infrastructure on new land at the urban edge is at least twice as expensive as accommodating growth in existing urban areas,” said Mary Kyle McCurdy, Policy Director of 1000 Friends of Oregon. “The region has limited public and private dollars to invest. Large urban growth boundary expansions will cause that investment to move to the edge, competing directly with redevelopment in existing neighborhoods and town centers.”

Sue Marshall complimented the work of the “Core 4” elected officials, representing Metro and the counties of Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington: “This has been a long process and we appreciate the hard work of policy makers and planners to plan the region’s future. The Core 4 has put out a map and information for public discussion. Our map provides a guide to protect the region’s most important farmland and natural features so that we do not sell short future generations who inherit stewardship of this region.

Metro will be holding a series of public hearings on urban and rural reserves. Final decisions from Metro and the three counties are expected in February. More information and a schedule of hearings is available at www.oregonmetro.gov.

The agriculture and conservation coalition’s map is available online at <http://tinyurl.com/yhhhs4z>.