

# Investing in Resilient Communities

## The Willamette Valley

Washington, Multnomah, Clackamas, Yamhill, Polk, Marion, Benton, Linn & Lane Counties

Climate change is already impacting the nine counties in the Willamette Valley where higher temperatures, wildfires, declining snowpack and extreme weather events are disrupting agriculture, forestry, tourism and quality of life. For communities, farms and businesses to adapt and prosper, it is imperative to identify areas of risk and invest in solutions that safeguard and restore natural resources, protect communities and enhance the region's economy.

### WATERWAYS & WATER SUPPLY

Higher temperatures and periodic drought increase demands on the Willamette Valley's water resources. Water shortages will become more common for communities and industries including agriculture. Warming temperatures and low river and stream flows are hazardous for native fish, promote invasive species and increase the potential for toxic algae blooms.

- **Fund** watershed restoration to increase stream flows, groundwater recharge and flood protection.
- **Upgrade** water infrastructure and emphasize water-use efficiency and conservation.
- **Invest** in practices to prevent toxic algae outbreaks and public information to reduce exposure.
- **Restore** wetlands, floodplains, riparian and bottomland forests to contain and manage flood waters, improve water quality and provide wildlife habitat.

### AGRICULTURE & IRRIGATION

Hotter, drier summers and more intense storms increase risks for Willamette Valley farms. Some crops may not adapt rapidly to warming conditions and water shortages will impact productivity. Wildfire smoke brings risk and uncertainty, particularly for the wine industry, and creates health risks for farm workers.

- **Prioritize** measures to reduce depletion of surface and ground water resources and prevent contamination.
- **Provide** farmers and ranchers support to offset costs of climate mitigation.
- **Assist** farmers and with cost-saving measures to reduce energy use.
- **Support** methods that protect soil productivity and enhance its capacity for carbon sequestration.
- **Develop** renewable energy sources to reduce energy costs for valley farms, businesses and communities.

### LANDSCAPES & WILDFIRE

Forests surrounding and within the Willamette Valley will experience more and greater impacts from wildfires. Fires in the wildland-urban interface threaten communities, especially those along the Coast Range and Cascade foothills.

- **Reduce** wildfire fuels in the wildland-urban interface on public and private lands.
- **Assist** homeowners and landowners to implement fire risk reduction strategies.
- **Foster** management practices that increase forest climate adaption, carbon sequestration, and resilience to fire.
- **Support** capital investments for innovation and develop markets for wood from wildland fuels management.

### LIVABILITY & SECURITY

Approximately 70% of Oregon's population resides in the Willamette Valley, contributing to a substantial portion of the state's economy, including agriculture in the lowlands and timber in the Coast Range and Cascades.

- **Maintain** and enhance robust early warning systems for emergency response throughout the region.
- **Prioritize** economic diversification, job creation, skills training and workforce support for disrupted industries including, agriculture, timber and tourism.
- **Collaborate** with Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde to protect shared natural resources and invest in community resilience.
- **Invest** in health services and programs that address climate induced health risks.

[OCCRI Fourth Oregon Climate Assessment Report \(2019\)](#); [Oregon Global Warming Commission - 2018 Biennial Report to the Legislature](#); [Oregon Water Atlas \(2017\)](#); [Willamette Water 2100 Project \(2017\)](#); [ClimateWise: Climate Change Preparation for the Upper Willamette River Basin \(2009\)](#)