



# Willamette Children's Forest



# What is it?

- ▶ A Children's Forest (CF) builds connections
  - ▶ It supports and enhances programs currently offered while creating new programs, events and facilities.
  - ▶ It is a symbolic designation
    - It's more than just a place: it's a new way of doing business.
  - ▶ Connections at the heart of the Children's Forest
    - These partnerships bring together the complementary skills and vision
  - ▶ The Willamette Children's Forest is basing its model off the success of the Children's Forest of Central Oregon.
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# Core Principles

- ▶ Reach Every Kid: reach the greatest number and greatest diversity of youth
  - Includes adults, families, teachers
- ▶ Not only Educate, but Engage...
  - Provide educational experiences so youth can develop a connection with the outside world
  - Hands on immersion programs which develop a lifelong interest in the outdoors
  - Experiences may include
    - ❖ free play in the outdoors,
    - ❖ school curriculums,
    - ❖ professional development for teachers,
    - ❖ service-learning & career development,
    - ❖ family recreation
    - ❖ stewardship of natural resources.
- ▶ Partnership Development and Cohesion...
  - It's about coming together to educate youth!
  - Each group will maintain their autonomy and identity

# Why Now?

## ▶ Why is this “experience gap” happening?

- Distractions offered by new technologies
- Kids spend less and less time outdoors
- Parental fears aggravated by excessive media
- Lure of “safer” indoor activities like computers and video games
- Working parents leave little time for unstructured play

## ▶ Only eight percent of children nationwide regularly spend time playing outdoors.

- An entire generation is missing the physical, emotional, psychological and economic benefits of exposure to nature.
- Missing benefits include critical thinking skills, self-confidence, reduced stress and improved cognitive development.

## ▶ A simple goal is the health and joy that comes from getting outside

- This effort aims to make the outdoors more relevant
- The CF is an organizing force to engage diverse communities in the benefits and stewardship of the outdoors.
- Helps all of us understand, care about and ultimately solve the challenges of today and tomorrow

## ▶ While the Children’s Forest aims to create broad public benefits, the effort expands USFS’s base of partners and resources.

- Makes the USFS more relevant in communities and, in turn, helps revitalize rural communities.

# Who is responsible?

- ▶ Collaboration is at the heart of the Children's Forest.
  - The Forest Service major role is to get the partners to the table and engaging the community
  - A coalition of committed and diverse partners including the health care industry, timber companies, educators at all levels
    - Researchers teaching elementary through high school teachers to teach students about natural resources
    - Resource professional working with youth performing service learning work while providing job shadowing and career development.
- ▶ The primary partner is Discover Your Northwest, operating as a fiscal agent for the whole Children's Forest – managing budgets, distributing funds and managing a coordinator.
  - Discover Your Northwest (DYNW) has been a non-profit partner with the USFS for over thirty years.
  - DYNW serves the same role with the Children's Forest of Central Oregon, with Discover Your Forest (a subsidiary of DYNW) serving as the current non-profit partner.
- ▶ It's truly a collaborative process where committees would handle the daily operations
  - Although the Forest Service will be involved, the desire is not to be in a sole leadership role.



# What are the potential benefits?

- ▶ Improve efficiency and impact of existing programs
- ▶ Recognize the 'niche' of each partner, opportunity to reduce duplication of programs and enhance suitable programs at each organization
- ▶ Potential to expand program offerings
- ▶ Collaboratives and partnerships have access to larger pools of funding
  - ▶ Increased coordination would reduce competition for smaller grants
- ▶ Support state and national efforts to get every child outside
  - ▶ OELP Council, Child and Nature Network

# How is it managed?

- ▶ Strategic Plan Steering Committee – Partners creating short term plans and revising plan as new communities join
  - 12-15 members maximum
    - U.S. Forest Service, DYNW, community leaders, MWC staff, school district Superintendents, politicians, major partners
- ▶ WCF Leadership Team – Made up of diverse partners interested in prioritizing and selecting projects. Verify school curriculums standards are met
  - USFS, DYNW, community leaders, Watershed Councils, school district superintendents, and any partner
- ▶ WCF Working Group – Diverse partners wanting to plan and do projects
- ▶ Programs and Facility Staff – partners who implement programs, events, activities and operative facilities
  - HJA Experimental Forest, Oregon State University, University of Oregon, Mt Pisgah, Fish Lake Remount station, McKenzie River Trust Parcels, EWEB's Demonstration Forest and other conservation education partners

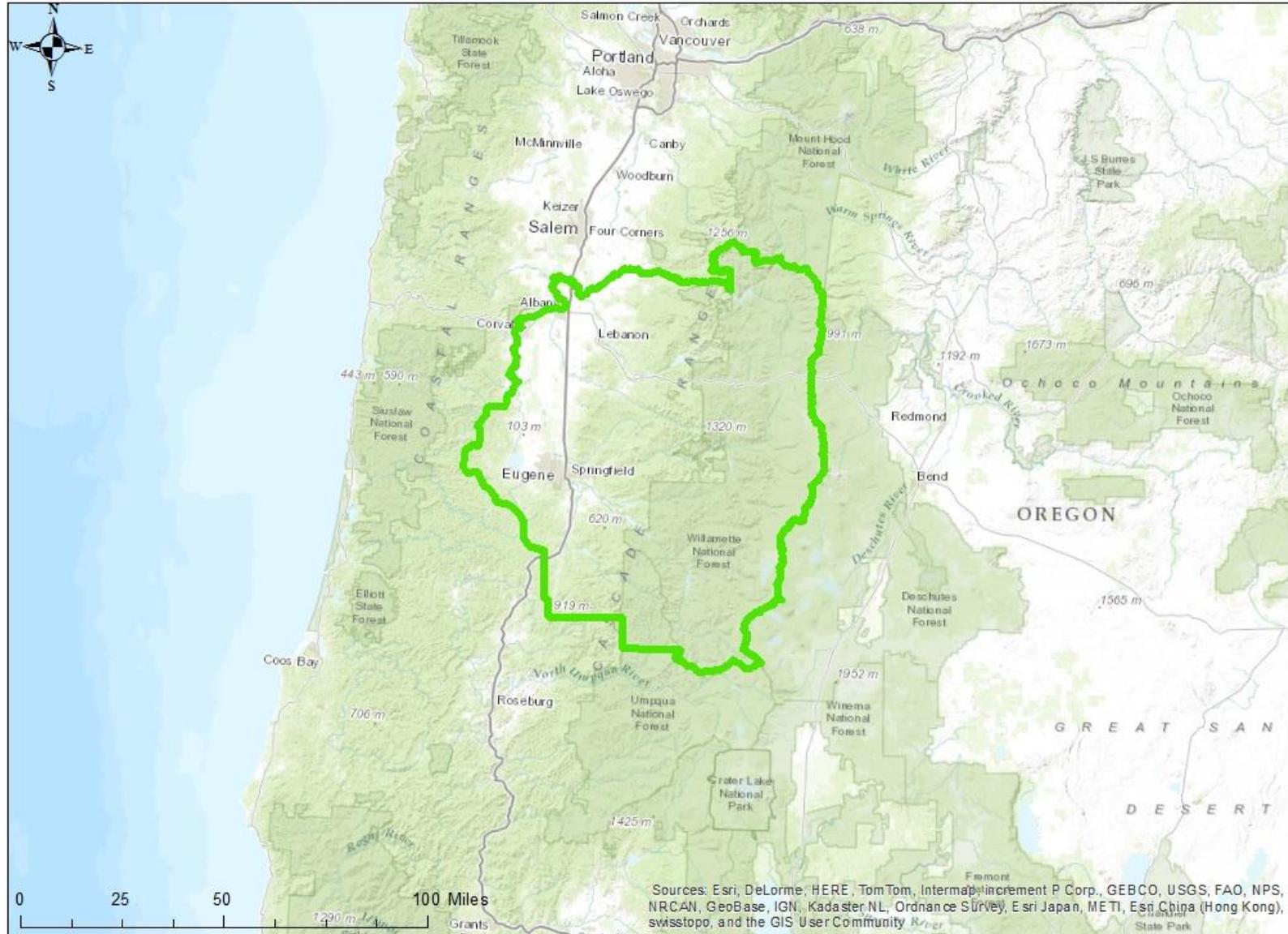


# Partners

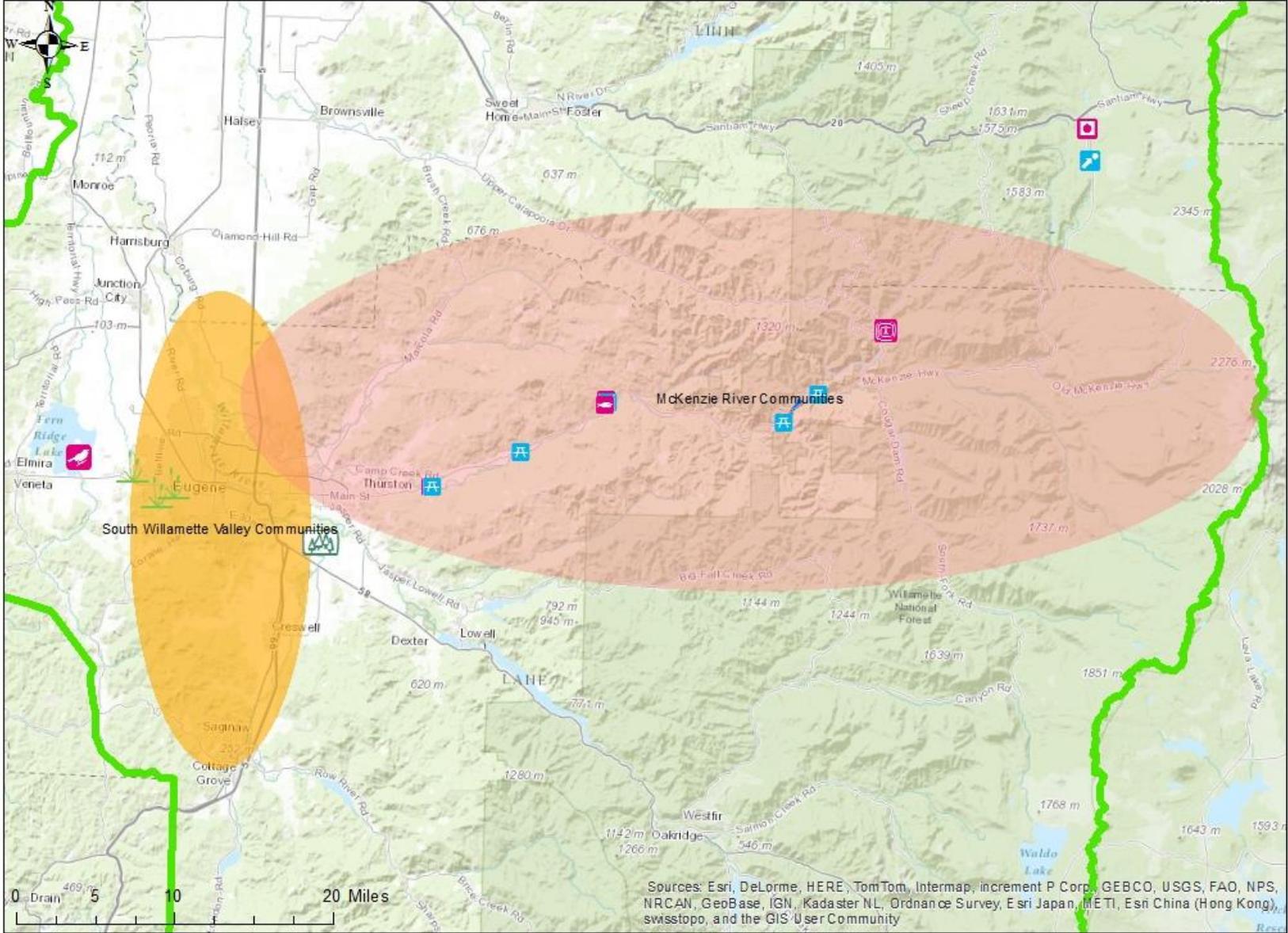


- ▶ USFS
- ▶ Discover Your Northwest
- ▶ McKenzie River Action Team
- ▶ McKenzie School District
- ▶ McKenzie Watershed Council
- ▶ McKenzie River Trust
- ▶ EWEB
- ▶ Northwest Youth Corps
- ▶ HJ Andrews Experimental Forest
- ▶ Springfield Public Schools
- ▶ Eugene 4J Public Schools
- ▶ Lane ESD
- ▶ UO Museum of Natural and Cultural History
- ▶ Forests Today and Forever
- ▶ Tribal Representatives
- ▶ Oregon Forest Resources Institute

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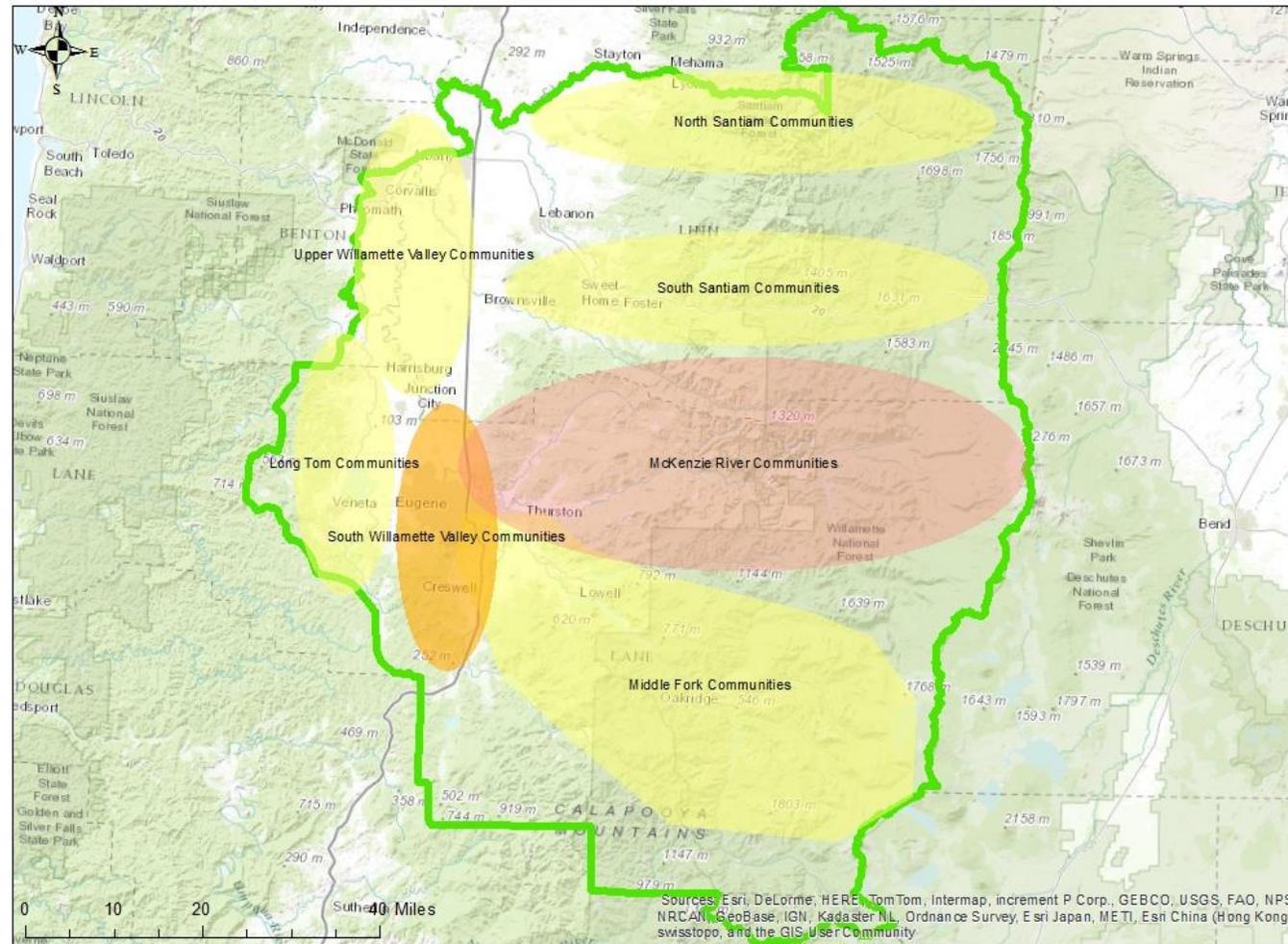
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Potential Sites

# Opportunities for Expansion

## Willamette Children's Forest



Communities



# Strategic Planning

- ▶ Facilitator: Barb Gibbs with NAO
  - ▶ Collective Impact & Network Mindset
- ▶ Two Meetings in June (Friday or Saturday, morning or afternoon)
  - ▶ Impact, Priorities, Vision, Mission, Values, Structure and Strategies
  - ▶ Resources for Implementation
- ▶ 12 to 15 partners