



**INCREASING THE PACE, EXPANDING THE SCOPE, AND
IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CONSERVATION**

THE WILLAMETTE ECOSYSTEM MARKETPLACE

The **Willamette Basin**, one of the most studied places on earth, has an unmistakable problem – the Willamette River is narrowing and valuable upland habitat is disappearing in the path of population growth and pollution. As a result, the natural processes of the river basin, including the ability to heal itself, aren't functioning very well. The prognosis isn't encouraging.

Federal and state regulations address specific problems such as industrial and wastewater discharges into the river. Sadly, if full compliance were achieved for all existing federal and state regulations, the Willamette Basin still would continue to degrade, negatively impacting the region's economy, resource base and quality of life. Larger-scale actions are needed to rescue the river basin.

Farmers, business leaders, scientists, city officials and environmental advocates formed the **Willamette Partnership** to pursue new approaches to restore the basin to ecological health. Trading mechanisms involving **conservation credits** could expand the use of natural and sustainable remediation strategies, which offer greater opportunities to heal the basin. Instead of paying for concrete and steel systems to chill water discharges from pipes, industry and wastewater treatment operators could pay farmers to allow the river to meander in its floodplain, or plant trees for shade which are nature's way of cooling water temperature. Large-scale, systemic projects of this type will have a stronger effect on reversing the basin's decline.

The Willamette Partnership has received a grant from the federal Environmental Protection Agency to implement and refine its trading mechanism, called the **Willamette Ecosystem Marketplace**. Initially, the focus will be on simple 2-party trades involving, for example, an industry and a group of farmers. Later, more complex trades involving multiple parties are envisioned – all with the goal of restoring the overall health of the Willamette Basin.