

# EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



---

### Work Session: Update on Ridgeline Park Acquisitions

---

Meeting Date: May 11, 2011  
Department: Public Works  
[www.eugene-or.gov](http://www.eugene-or.gov)

Agenda Item Number: B  
Staff Contact: Eric Wold  
Contact Telephone Number: 541-682-4842

---

#### ISSUE STATEMENT

For many years, the vision for Eugene's Ridgeline Park has been a recreation and wildlife corridor that extends from Fern Ridge Reservoir to Lane Community College. This vision has been supported, in part, by the 1998 and 2006 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) bond measures. This work session provides an opportunity for the council to learn about accomplishments to-date and ongoing efforts to achieve the Ridgeline Park vision.

#### BACKGROUND

##### Vision and Policy

The ambitious goal of having a recreation and wildlife corridor along Eugene's south hills requires a long-term commitment. Over the past 15 years, the City Council and the community have supported or endorsed several important efforts aimed at achieving this goal, including:

- In 1998, voters passed a \$25.3 million PROS bond measure, which included \$3.7 million for expanding Ridgeline Park.
- In 2003, the City Council, other elected bodies from the region, and other organizations endorsed the *Rivers to Ridges Metropolitan Regional Parks and Open Space Study: Vision and Strategies*. An expanded recreation and habitat greenway along Eugene's ridgeline was a key element of this plan.
- In 2005, the City Council adopted the *Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Comprehensive Plan*. This plan had numerous goals and strategies for conserving natural areas throughout the City, including specific goals for expanding Ridgeline Park and the Ridgeline Trail.
- In 2006, the City Council adopted the *Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Project and Priority Plan*. The plan included specific goals for expanding Ridgeline Park and the Ridgeline Trail.
- In 2006, voters passed a \$27.5 million PROS bond measure, which included \$5.75 million for expanding Ridgeline Park.
- In 2008, the City Council, other elected bodies from the region, and other organizations endorsed the *Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision and Action Plan*. A trail and habitat corridor along Eugene's ridgeline, extending from Fern Ridge Reservoir in the west to Lane Community College in the east, was a central element of this vision.

##### Collaboration

Achieving the ambitious, long-term goal of a recreation and habitat corridor from Fern Ridge Reservoir to Lane Community College requires a lot of collaboration. The City has benefited significantly from collaboration with the other eight organizations in the Rivers to Ridges Partnership. This partnership,

which was formerly known as the West Eugene Wetlands Partnership, includes the City of Eugene, The Nature Conservancy, McKenzie River Trust, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Long Tom Watershed Council, Willamette Resources and Educational Network, and Oregon Youth Conservation Corps. Together, this group is able to pool its expertise and knowledge to efficiently identify sites with high habitat and recreational value, as well as assist one another with obtaining grant funding to help acquire land or implement capital improvement projects. These partners have helped the City obtain several million dollars in grant funds for the Ridgeline over the past decade.

### Acres

In 1997, Ridgeline Park was 852 acres. The table below summarizes the acres that have been added since then, in large part due to the passage of the 1998 and 2006 PROS bond measures. Through collaboration with other organizations and through leveraging bond funds with matching grants, the City has been able to acquire 1,288 acres, bringing the current size of Ridgeline Park to 2,140 acres.

	<b>Projected Acres to be Acquired</b>	<b>Actual Acres Acquired</b>
1998 Bond	232	397
2006 Bond	100	891*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>1,288</b>

\* includes a pending acquisition.

### Acquisition Funding

The success the City has experienced requires a lot of collaboration, creativity, and expertise. In terms of funding, having bond money in hand created the opportunity to leverage additional funding through matching grant and landowner donations. The City has been successful in obtaining a state grant from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) and federal grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Legacy Program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's North American Wetland Conservation Act Grant Program, and Bonneville Power Administration's Wildlife Mitigation Program. In total, non-City funds account for 27 percent of the total spent on Ridgeline Park acquisition since 1998. The table below summarizes the various funding the City has used to acquire Ridgeline Park land since 1998.

	<b>City \$**</b>	<b>State \$</b>	<b>Federal \$</b>	<b>Donated \$</b>
1998-2006	\$4,074,837		\$552,325	\$542,500
2007-present	\$7,645,714	\$750,000	\$886,825	\$1,655,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,720,551</b>	<b>\$750,000</b>	<b>\$1,439,150</b>	<b>\$2,197,500</b>

\*\* City \$ includes a combination of bond funds, Parks SDCs, and Stormwater Corridor Acquisition funds.

### Recent Recreation and Habitat Capital Improvements

Over the past five years, the City has implemented several capital improvements to Ridgeline Park and the Ridgeline Trail, predominantly with grant funds from state and federal sources and A6 funds. For example, seven trailhead kiosks were added, three trailhead parking lots were graded and re-surfaced, and wayfinding signage was added using a grant from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. Several eroded segments of the Ridgeline Trail were renovated using A6 funds and federal stimulus funds, and one new trail segment (Ribbon Trail) was added using federal stimulus funds. Finally, habitat improvement projects at Mt. Baldy, Moon Mountain, Mariposa Woodland, and Wild Iris Ridge were implemented. The latter two projects were funded with federal stimulus funds and grant funds from OWEB. The City's partner, the Long Tom Watershed Council, obtained the OWEB grant funds for the Wild Iris Ridge project.

### Operation and Maintenance Gap and Capital Backlog

With the tremendous financial support of the community and through substantial support from state and federal grants, Ridgeline Park has grown from 852 acres in 1997 to its present size of 2,140 acres, a size increase of 250 percent. Unfortunately, as the council has heard over the past year, the general fund operations and maintenance (O&M) budget to maintain the Parks and Open Space system has been nearly static during this time. This has led to an annual general fund O&M gap for the entire Parks and Open Space system of \$1.7 million and a capital backlog of over \$15 million. The Ridgeline portion of the Parks and Open Space system comprises \$0.7 million of the annual O&M gap and \$6 million of the capital backlog.

With these financial challenges for maintaining the Parks and Open Space system, including Ridgeline Park, the City needs to be thoughtful about what properties are selected for future acquisition and how fast it moves forward with further implementation of the Ridgeline Vision. An acquisition that staff is currently working on offers one example of how the Ridgeline Park vision can be advanced while reducing further O&M costs. For this acquisition, the City has received grant funding from OWEB and the Bonneville Power Administration. In addition, three years of O&M funding from the Bonneville Power Administration has been secured. Obtaining three years of O&M funds at the time of acquisition is a significant and welcome achievement. However, this is a unique situation, in that Bonneville Power Administration is one of the only granting entities that allow some of its acquisition grant funds to be allocated to operation and maintenance of acquired sites.

For the long-term sustainability of Ridgeline Park, the annual O&M gap and capital backlog will need to be addressed. Continuing to operate Ridgeline Park without increased O&M funding or funding to address the capital backlog will present growing financial and land management challenges, including increased risk of wildfire, spread of invasive species, and deterioration of the Ridgeline Trail.

### **RELATED CITY POLICIES**

- Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Project and Priority Plan (2006)
- City Environmental Policy

### **COUNCIL OPTIONS**

For discussion only; no formal action is required.

### **CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

No action is required on this item; therefore, no recommendations are offered by the City Manager.

### **SUGGESTED MOTION**

No action is required on this item; therefore, no motions are suggested.

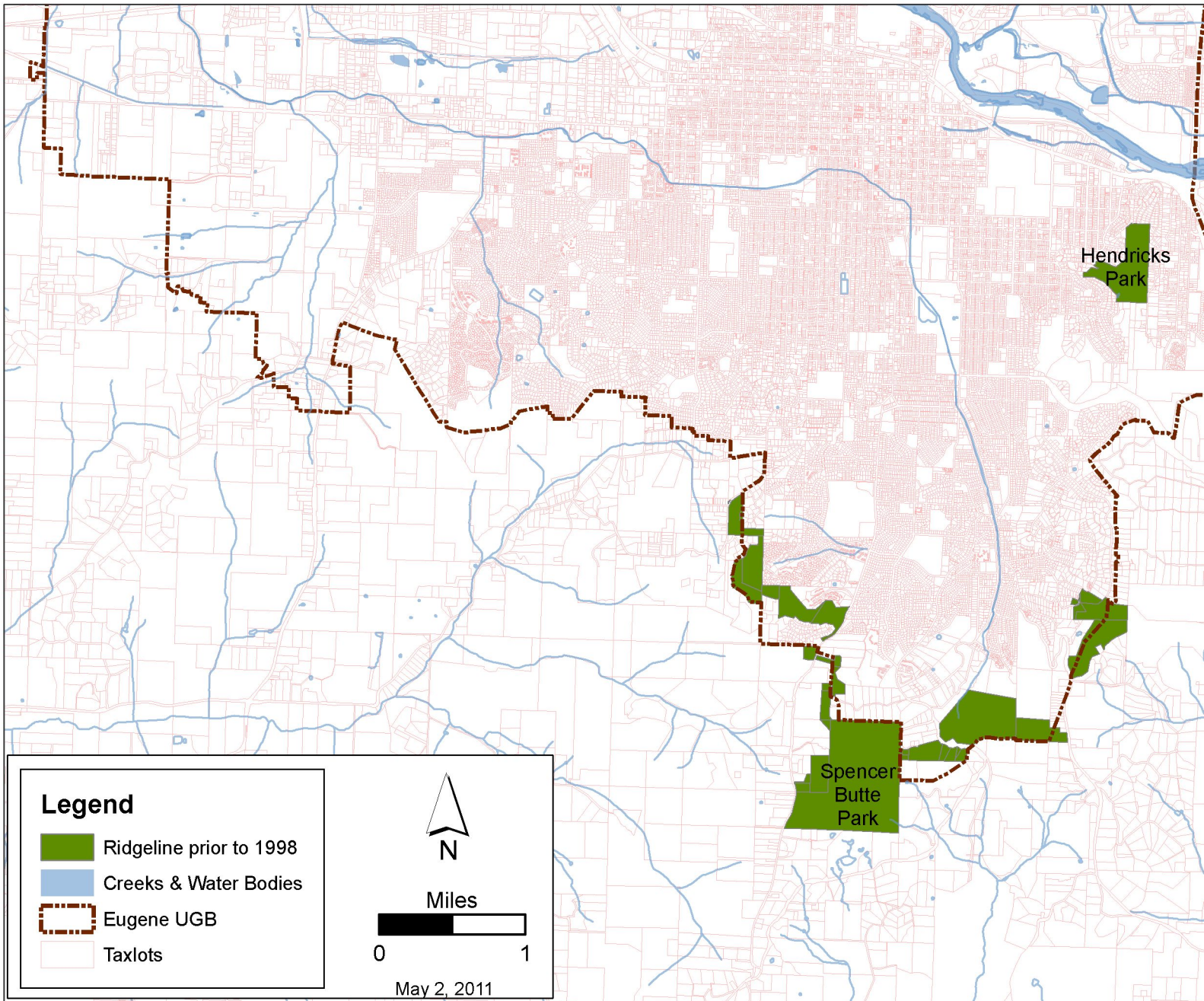
### **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Map: Ridgeline Park prior to 1998
- B. Map: Ridgeline Park in 2011
- C. Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision and Action Plan map and associated map key

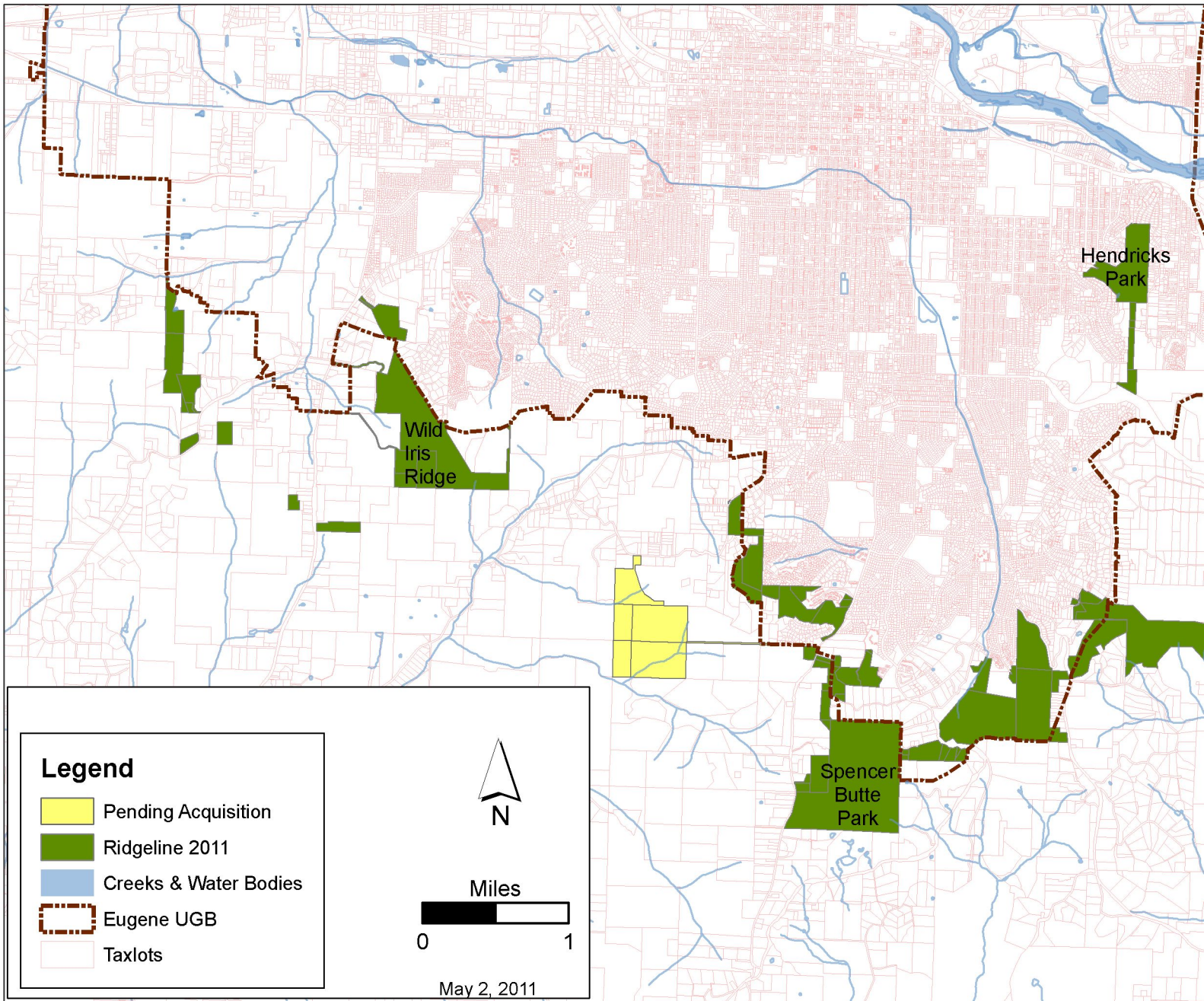
**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

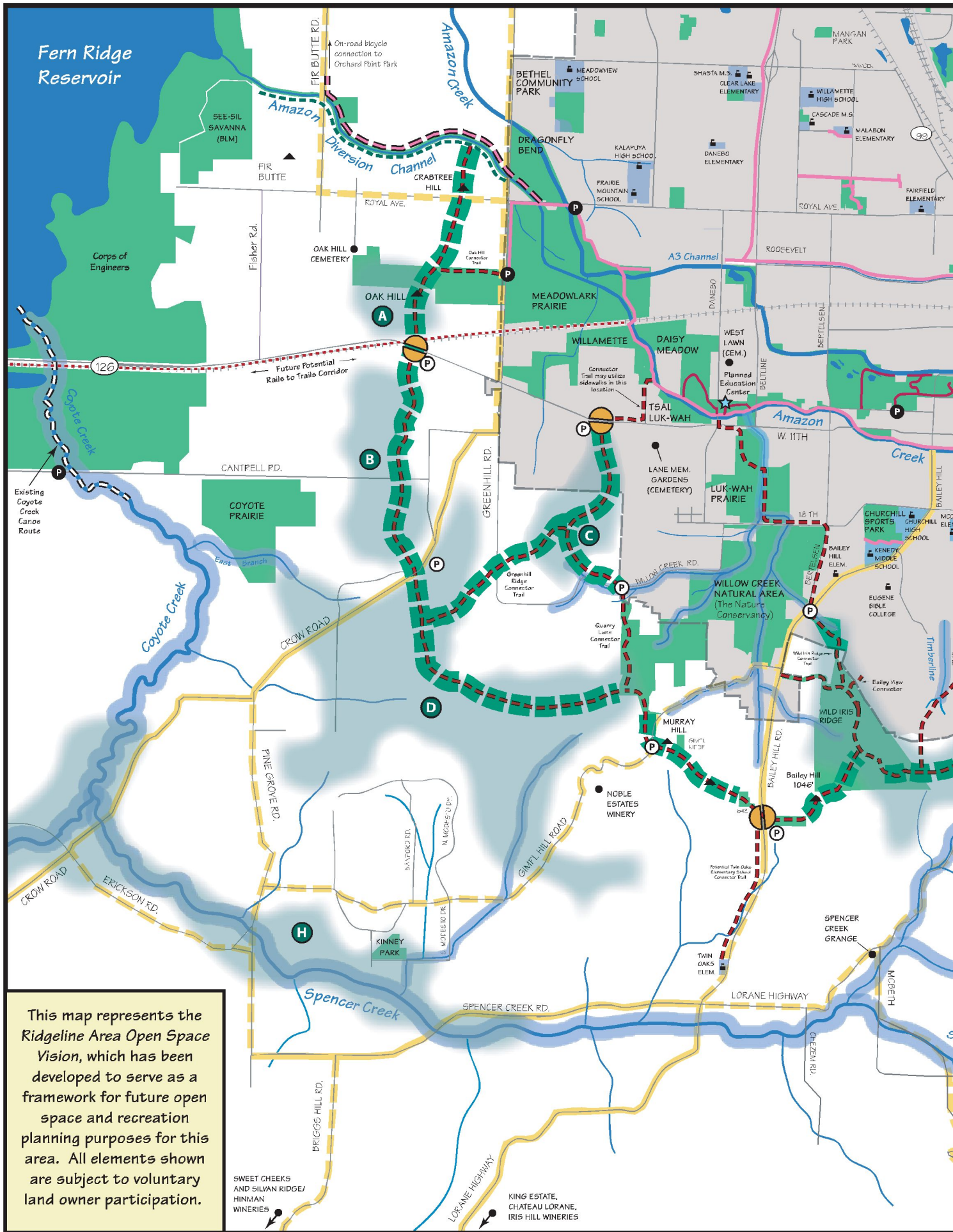
Staff Contact: Eric Wold, Natural Resources Manager  
Telephone: 541-682-4842  
Staff E-Mail: [eric.n.wold@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:eric.n.wold@ci.eugene.or.us)

# Ridgeline Park prior to 1998



# Ridgeline Park 2011





This map represents the Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision, which has been developed to serve as a framework for future open space and recreation planning purposes for this area. All elements shown are subject to voluntary land owner participation.

# Ridgeline Area Open Space Vision - Map Key

The Ridgeline Open Space Vision has been developed to serve as a conceptual framework for future open space and recreation planning purposes for the ridgeline area. The locations of the elements shown on the map are conceptual, are subject to voluntary land owner participation, and do not change the underlying plan designation/zoning or imply regulatory restriction. Vision map elements include:

## Trail/Habitat Corridor

The dashed green lines indicate the approximate location of the proposed ridgeline trail corridor. The trail corridor would be accommodated through a combination of land acquisition and purchase of access easements from willing sellers. In addition to accommodating the trail, this corridor would also serve to provide connectivity between key habitat areas.

## Multi-Use Path

These are hard surfaced trails similar to the existing Fern Ridge Path and accommodate multiple non-motorized modes including pedestrians and bicycles.

## Shared-Use Trail

These are soft surfaced trails similar to the existing ridgeline and headwaters trails. In addition to accommodating hikers and trail runners, many of these trails will be built to a standard that would also accommodate mountain bikes where appropriate and feasible. Trail design and siting will be done in a way that maximizes user enjoyment and safety, while minimizing impacts to adjacent properties and important habitats.

## Equestrian Trail

These are trails designated primarily for equestrian use. The primary equestrian trail identified in the ridgeline vision is located along the Amazon Diversion Channel, with additional facilities likely to be sited on nearby private or public lands in the future.

## Bicycle Touring Route

These are roads within the ridgeline area that are commonly used for bicycle touring and are indicated on the vision map with a yellow line (dashed or solid). The dashed line indicates those roads where improvements are needed in order to better accommodate bicycles such as wider shoulders, more frequent sweeping of the road surface, and improved signage.

## Trailhead Parking

These are designated parking lots at major trailhead locations. New parking lots would be sited and designed in a way that maximizes safety and security and minimizes visual impact to adjacent properties.

## Key Habitat Areas

These are areas where large blocks of high value native habitat are known to exist and include a mix of rare or declining habitat types such as prairie, oak-pine savanna; oak woodland; riparian and headwater forests; and older coniferous forests. Because much of this land will remain in private ownership over the long-term, financial incentives, information, and other technical assistance will be offered as a way to help assist private property owners conserve and enhance these valuable habitats on a voluntary basis.

## Key Waterways

Numerous waterways exist within the ridgeline area and provide an important water quality and habitat function. Enhancement efforts along these waterways will maintain and improve their function.

## Community Gateways

These are major points of entry into the community where the open space system can be utilized to form scenic gateways. Gateways may include amenities such as trailhead parking, visitor information, trail guides, interpretive signage, and outdoor art.