

Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

April 15, 2015

Agenda Item: 11a

Action

Topic: Natural Areas Registration – Willamina/Noble Oaks: Kirkham Tract

Presented by: Noel Bacheller

Background: OPRD is responsible for processing nominations/petitions received to voluntarily add lands of a variety of ownerships to the register of State Natural Areas.

“Registration” and “dedication” are two vehicles for inclusion of properties on the register, with dedication being the more permanent arrangement. Privately owned lands that are registered or dedicated receive a waiver of land use conversion property taxes. Publicly-owned lands are registered because of ecological value without receiving a tax benefit. In all cases of registration or dedication, the subject properties are required to be of high or unique ecological value. The types of habitat that are eligible for inclusion on the register are described and cataloged in the State Natural Areas Plan as “ecosystem elements”. When enough examples of a particular ecosystem element are registered, that type is considered adequately represented and further registrations are no longer allowed for that element.

Per legislation, the steps in processing registration nominations are as follows: OPRD Stewardship staff and the Oregon Biodiversity Information Center (or a convened review board, at OPRD discretion) collaboratively review petitions for meeting the requirements of the State Natural Area Plan. If the subject property meets the requirements and intent of the Plan, OPRD Stewardship staff bring the proposal for registration to the Parks Commission for final decision regarding registration.

In January of 2015, OPRD staff received a petition to register a private parcel in Polk County. A brief description of the property, its ecological value, context, and reasons for registration are included as attachments. Staff has reviewed the petition and has concluded that the subject property is of high ecological value and meets the intent of the State Natural Areas Plan.

Prior Action by the Commission: None.

Action Requested: Staff recommend that the Commission approve the addition of the Natural Area into the registry of State Natural Areas.

Prepared by: Noel Bacheller

NATURAL HERITAGE ADVISORY COUNCIL
OREGON REGISTER OF NATURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES
SUMMARY FORM

1. NATURAL AREA NAME: Willamina Oaks
2. LOCATION: Yamhill County, Township 6S Range 6W Section 7 and Township 6S Range 7W Section 12.
3. SIZE: With the addition of the 195-acre Kirkham tract, the TNC preserve will increase from 474 acres to a total of 669 acres.
4. OWNERSHIP: Richard and Judith Kirkham and The Nature Conservancy
5. CONSENT OF OWNER (PRIVATE), DATE: February 25, 2015
6. REGISTER CATEGORY: State Natural Area
7. PRINCIPAL NATURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES: Willamette Valley, Ecosystem; Hardwood forests, #11, Oregon white oak/grass savanna; #13. Oregon white oak-(madrone)/poison oak/bunchgrass woodland; # 33. Oregon ash/Pacific willow riparian; and # 34. Riparian area dominated by river and Pacific willow.
8. SPECIAL SPECIES: The site has a population of the recently federally listed, threatened species, the streaked horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris strigata*). The site has also been identified as a location for potential restoration of two other, high priority species, Kincaid's lupine (*Lupinus sulphureus* ssp. *kincaidii*) and Fender blue butterfly (*Icaricia icarioides fenderi*).
9. EVALUATION OF CRITERIA FOR REGISTRATION
 - A. PRIORITY IN PLAN: The oak savanna and oak woodlands ecosystems are high priority, unfilled natural area types. The riparian type is medium priority and unprotected.
 - B. ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION: The site represents a critical connection between the Yamhill Oaks preserve, which is the best example of oak remaining in the valley, and the important habitat at Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge. There is sufficient area to represent the oak savanna and oak woodland types. The occurrences of the oak savanna and woodlands will adequately represent the site. The site has excellent opportunities to restore the Roemer fescue prairie habitat, and this restoration is planned by TNC.
 - C. DEGREE OF DISTURBANCE: This represents one of the largest protected areas for oak savanna and woodlands in the Willamette Valley, and much of it is in good quality, although as is the case for most sites in the valley, there is still a significant amount of cover of non-native species, and TNC plans on restoring these important habitats.
 - D. VIABILITY: It is one of the largest remaining sites.
 - E. UNIQUE GEOLOGICAL VALUES: None.
 - F. PRIORITY FOR SPECIAL SPECIES: The streaked horned lark is a List 1 species and is federally and state listed as threatened.
 - G. SPECIAL SPECIES PROTECTION CAPABILITY: Excellent. The population of and area for the streaked horned lark is sufficiently large that with adequate management, it should persist. The capacity for the lupine and butterfly will depend on the area restored and the restoration success.

H. MANAGEABILITY: These are fire-maintained habitats, which will require management. The Nature Conservancy does have experience managing other similar properties in the Willamette Valley. This site is very large for any property within the Willamette Valley, and is especially significant in this regard. The area also is adjacent to two permanent conservation easements held by the NRCS, creating a 700 acre block of conserved land.

10. SPECIAL REMARKS OR COMMENTS: The property will be acquired by The Nature Conservancy to add to their recently acquired preserve. In addition, the site's large area provides the potential for restoration of a population of Kincaid's lupine to support reintroduction of the endangered Fender's blue butterfly, as identified in the Fender's recovery plan.

12. DATE OF ORBIC STAFF APPROVAL: 2/23/2015.

13. SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Oregon Biodiversity Information Center, Mailstop: INR, PO Box 751, Portland, OR 97207. The Nature Conservancy, 821 SE 14th Ave., Portland, OR 97214.

14. VALUE OF NATURAL AREA IN LAY TERMS: This area represents one of the largest blocks of oak woodlands and savannas remaining in the Willamette Valley, and it's location is centrally located between conservation areas in the valley foothills to the west, and the Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge near the center of the valley, to the east. The area provides habitat for the rare and threatened streaked horned lark, a species restricted to grasslands and savannas in the Willamette Valley. It also includes a number of small openings which The Nature Conservancy plans on restoring the very rare Roemer fescue prairie and its associated rare upland prairie species, including potentially, populations listed plant species, and habitat identified in the recovery plan for the endangered Fender's blue butterfly. Lastly, the new acquisition includes 16 acres of riparian habitat and wet prairie, which represents an important type in the Willamette Valley ecoregion. The conservation of this site both protects the rare species, and provides the opportunity for the conservation of a very large patch of the oak woodlands that formerly dominated the Willamette Valley, while expanding conserved lands within an important Conservation Opportunity Area.

Richard M. and Judith Ann Kirkham
9225 Steel Bridge Road
Sheridan, OR 97378

February 25, 2015

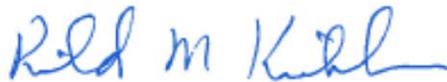
Tim Wood
Director
Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
725 Summer Street NE, Ste. C
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Mr. Wood,

We hereby request and give permission to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission to register the following property in the State Register of Natural Heritage Resources. We have owned the property since 1989.

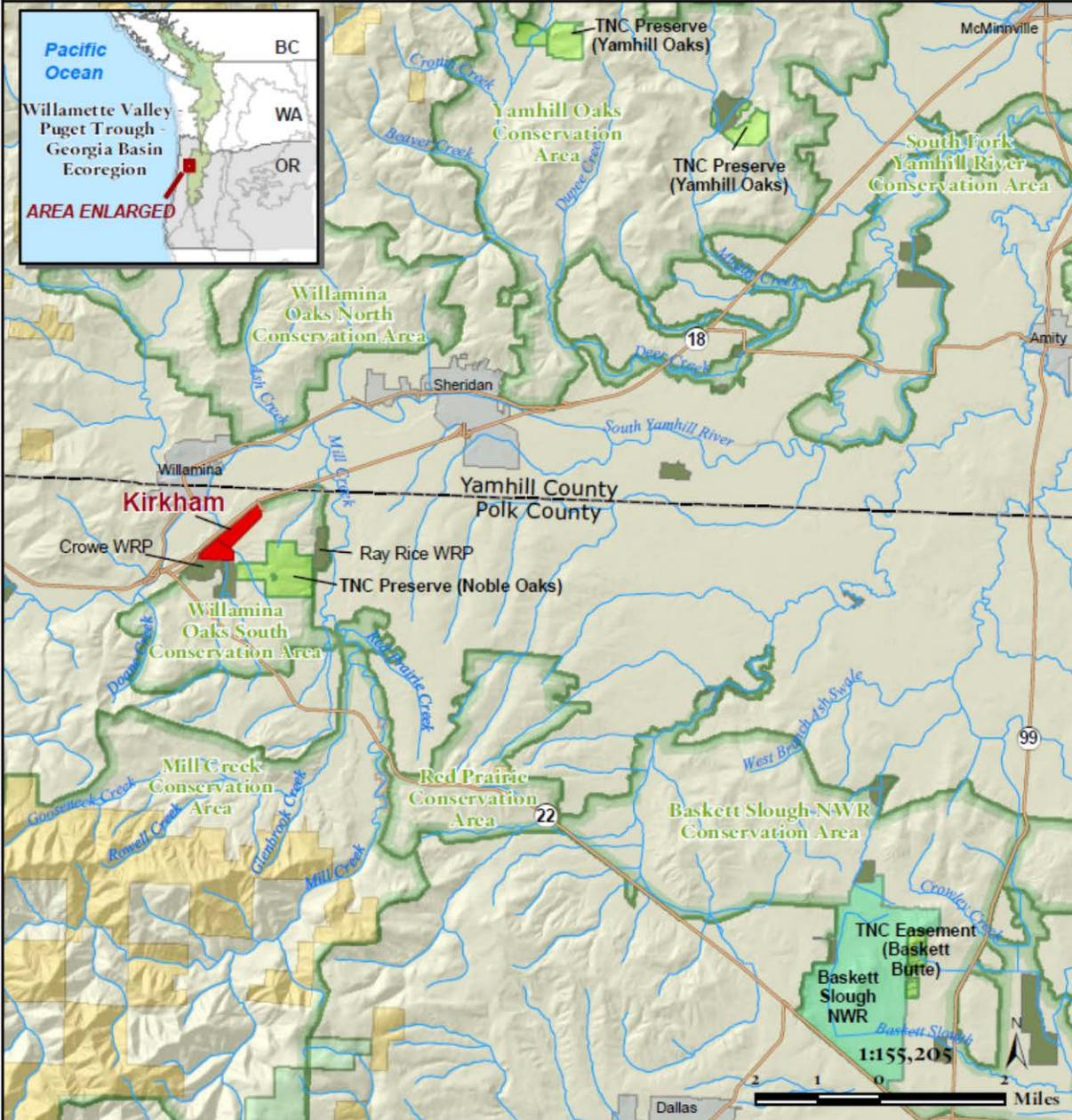
Approximately 195 acres located in Polk County in Township 6S, Range 6W, Section 7 and Township 6S, Range 7W, Section 12 and as depicted on the enclosed map.

Sincerely,



Richard M. Kirkham and Judith Ann Kirkham

Encl. Map



Legend

- Kirkham (195 acres)
- TNC Easement
- TNC Preserve
- NRCS Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)
- Conservation Area
- Managed Lands**
- Local Government
- US Forest Service
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Bureau of Land Management

Other Features

- City Limit
- County
- ~ Waterbody
- Major River
- Highway

December 23, 2014

Map Created by:
Shonene Scott, Oregon Field Office, Oregon

Data Sources:
Tract Boundary - Polk County (2014); TNC Land - TNC (2012);
Conservation Area - TNC (2008); Ecoregions - TNC (2002);
NRCS Wetland Reserve Program - NRCS (2007);
Rivers - NHDPlus (2005); Waterbody - NHD Hydrography (2012);
Highways - Oregon Department of Transportation (2006);
City Limits - Oregon Department of Transportation (2009)

Map Projection:
NAD_1983_Oregon_Statewide_Lambert

file: OR_Willamina Oaks South (Kirkham)_20141223.pdf
map project: WillaminaOaksSouth_Kirkham_map.mxd

Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

April 15, 2015

Agenda Item: 11b

Action

Topic: Scenic Waterways amended designation recommendation

Presented by: Chris Havel

In November 19, 2014, the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission approved an agenda item provided by Oregon Parks and Recreation Department staff related to proposed designation of two new state scenic waterways—portions of the Chetco and Molalla Rivers. The 2014 action included this text:

*Receive Qualification reports, provide them to the Governor and Water Resources Commission [Department?], and direct OPRD staff to return with proponent-supported management plans by December 31, 2015 **as a precondition for recommending** the stretches of the Chetco and Molalla Rivers specified in the qualification reports for scenic waterway designation. [Emphasis added]*

In addition, the agenda brief text indicates the commission recommendation is conditioned on county government support, and a draft management plan from an organized proponent group. As the commission discussed during a public workshop November 18, 2014, these two preconditions are not present in Oregon statutes or administrative rules.

To correct the record and ensure the Commission's actions are consistent with the Oregon Revised Statute 390.855 and Oregon Administrative Rule 736-0040 related to state scenic waterways, staff request the commission adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS the only criteria considered by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department for evaluating potential additions to the state scenic waterway are defined in ORS 390.855 and are summarized as (1) the river segment is relatively free-flowing and the scene from the river and adjacent land is pleasing, and (2) the river segment and its setting possess natural and recreation values of outstanding quality, and (3) the river segment and its setting are large enough to sustain substantial recreation use and to accommodate existing uses without undue impairment of the natural values of the resource or quality of the recreation experience, and

WHEREAS Oregon Parks and Recreation Department staff has consulted with other state agencies during its evaluation, and conducted public hearings in counties containing the proposed segments of the Chetco and Molalla, as required by Oregon statute, and

WHEREAS Department staff recommend exploring the option to include proponent groups, management plans, and county government support at some as-yet undefined point in the designation process in order to ensure future waterway designations are effective and sustainable, but that these ideas are not currently criteria by which designation recommendations are made,

NOW THEREFORE The Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission:

1. Affirms its decision to recommend designation of those segments of the Chetco and Molalla Rivers described in staff scenic waterway qualification reports presented in November 2014 without further conditions.
2. Rescinds every portion of November 2014 action on agenda item 10.a. stating county government approval, the existence of organized proponent groups, and the existence of a draft management plan are conditions to receive a Commission recommendation regarding the designation of a state scenic waterway.
3. Directs Oregon Parks and Recreation Department staff cooperate with advisory groups to pilot test the development of draft management plans for the recommended scenic waterway segments on the Chetco and Molalla rivers, and append the draft management plan reports to the existing scenic waterway qualification reports for Commission review by November 18, 2015.
4. Directs Oregon Parks and Recreation staff to deliver the appended scenic waterway qualification reports and the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission state scenic waterway designation recommendations to the Water Resources Department on November 19, 2015, requesting concurrence of the Water Resources Commission.
5. Directs Oregon Parks and Recreation staff to submit the scenic waterway candidate reports, recommendations of the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission, and concurrence, if any, of the Water Resources Commission to the Office of the Governor no later than December 31, 2015.
6. In concert with Water Resources Department, directs Oregon Parks and Recreation Department staff to return to the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission no later than June 2016 with an evaluation of the scenic waterway study process, and an optional request to open rulemaking or pursue legislative concepts changing the scenic waterway designation process to make it more effective or sustainable.

Prior Action by the Commission: Approval of agenda item 10.a. “2014 State Scenic Waterways Study” by the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Commission November 19, 2014.

Action Requested: Adoption of the current resolution, replacing approval of item 10.a in November 2014.

Attachments: None

Prepared by: Chris Havel