

Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel Scoping Report

04/24/13
Developed for Multnomah County
By CH2M HILL

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Acknowledgements

Multnomah County wishes to acknowledge and sincerely thank the public and local agencies, and organizations that participated throughout the process, whether at meetings, open houses, or online. This involvement was critical to the development of this report. Thanks also go to the public that submitted photos for use in this report. Cover photos by Kent Nakagawa; photo above by J Bergen from the Sauvie Island Community Association (SICA) website.

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1 Executive summary

Between February and April 2013, Multnomah County conducted extensive outreach as part of the Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel scoping process. Local residents, businesses, government agencies, community organizations, and frequent visitors were involved with this scoping process through two open houses, two printed and online questionnaires, two stakeholder meetings, and two focus group meetings. Additionally, Multnomah County staff attended the Sauvie Island Community Fair and a Sauvie Island Community Association meeting, as well as conducting a phone interview with the Grand Ronde Tribe.



Narrow shoulders on the roads are one issue raised by all road users.
Photo by Ericka Dickey-Nelson.

From these outreach activities, several visions (aspirations) for the community's future were identified. Current issues affecting the community and issues that may hinder the community from achieving aspirations were also identified.

The scoping process generated a robust response from community members and stakeholders both in terms of the volume of responses received and the high level of interest and importance respondents placed on the issues and ideas they shared. Based on the number and nature of the issues raised, the high level of community interest, and the age of the existing Rural Area Plan/Transportation System Plan, this report concludes with a recommendation that Multnomah County update the Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel Rural Area Plan and the Multnomah County Transportation System Plan. Both of these updates should build upon the work completed during this scoping process to move toward a shared vision for the community and actions for addressing the issues identified.



River users in the Cunningham Slough; northern Sauvie Island.
Photo by J Hartline, SICA website

2 Introduction

In 1997, Multnomah County developed a Rural Area Plan (RAP) for the portion of Sauvie Island and the Multnomah Channel that are located within unincorporated Multnomah County. Over the last 16 years, much of the community has stayed the same, but several new issues have emerged and some

Multnomah County is responsible for land use and transportation planning in rural areas of the County. Other issues are outside the County’s jurisdiction; these issues will be noted in the plan.

issues present in 1997 have not been resolved. The current scoping process asked community stakeholders what they would like the area look like 20 years from now and what issues should be addressed in a plan update process. This scoping report outlines the results from this community conversation including the issues and visions of what participants want the area to look like in the future, as well as recommendations for next steps in resolving the identified issues.

2.1 The plan area

The Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel rural plan area is located outside of the urban growth boundary (UGB); bordered by U.S. Highway 30 on the west, Columbia County on the north, the Columbia River on the east, and the Willamette River and the city of Portland on the south. The area is dominated by agricultural land uses but also includes a wildlife refuge, various water-related uses on and along Multnomah Channel, residential areas, floating homes, marinas and moorages, a few businesses, and part of the small unincorporated community of Burlington.

The area includes about 15,400 acres of land and several thousand additional acres of water. Approximately 11,800 of these acres are designated in the Comprehensive Plan as Exclusive Farm Use (EFU), with the remainder designated as Multiple Use Agriculture (MUA). About 1,300 people live in roughly 450 units on the island and 200 units between Multnomah Channel and Hwy 30.



The plan area is shown in white and is surrounded by the Multnomah Channel, Columbia River, and Columbia County.

Sauvie Island and the Multnomah Channel provide a unique mixture of:

- Agricultural uses occurring on prime, high-value soils on larger parcels protected by the levees of the Sauvie Island Drainage Company.
- Recreational opportunities - for residents and the greater Portland Metropolitan Area.
- Natural protected areas - primarily wetlands and water areas, which provide excellent wildlife habitat.



The rural nature is one of the most valued parts of the island.

Photo by Kent Nakagawa.

The island and channel area’s current land uses have been guided by state and county land use laws.

2.2 The scoping process

“Scoping” is the first step in the overall planning process. It is a way to understand what may need to be studied further or updated in the current planning documents. Scoping also helps the County staff understand current issues within a community, so that staff is more knowledgeable of the local issues and concerns. The last scoping process for the area was completed in 1995. After the 1995 scoping phase, the planning process continued and eventually resulted in the first Sauvie Island / Multnomah Channel Rural Area Plan (RAP), which was completed in 1997.

The purpose of the current scoping report is to:

- Compile all issues identified through public outreach efforts
- Identify common themes among the many issues identified
- Recommend a plan of action for Multnomah County policy makers
- Forward issues outside of the County’s land use and transportation jurisdiction to the appropriate agencies



A marina during the fall.

Photo by J Bergen, SICA website

2.2.1 Related planning documents

After developing a scoping report, the next step is to delve down into the land use and transportation issues of the community in a RAP, by determining how to accommodate future growth and other issues brought up during the scoping process.

A RAP then becomes part of the County’s Comprehensive Plan, which addresses state regulations and needs to be updated periodically; the RAP should be thought of as a detailed chapter within the overall Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan looks at transportation and land use, but also includes recreational facilities, natural resources, air and water quality, sanitation/sewer systems, and other systems for all of Multnomah County.

2.2.2 Next steps

The Multnomah County Planning Commission will consider the results and recommendations of this scoping report and make a recommendation to the County Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners will then consider the report and the Planning Commission recommendations and make a final decision on whether to proceed with the RAP and Transportation System Plan (TSP) updates.

2.3 Public outreach

Between February and April 2013, Multnomah County conducted extensive outreach with the Sauvie Island and Multnomah Channel community, government agencies, non-government organizations, and other key stakeholders to understand the current issues and visions for the area. The appendices outline the comments collected at each outreach opportunity, and also include each individually submitted comment. Below is a summary of all outreach activities conducted for the scoping report.

Public outreach activities included:

- Stakeholder meetings
- Mailings to residents and businesses
- Open houses
- Printed and online questionnaires
- Focus group meetings

2.3.1 Round one outreach activities

The first round of outreach was aimed at educating the public and agencies about the current RAP and TSP (adopted in 1997 and 1995 respectively) and gathering information on a vision for the area in the future and current issues that the community faces. Specifically, these questions were asked in March 2013:

- What should the Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel community look like in 20 years?
- What are some of the issues the community faces now? What issues could get in the way of that vision?

On March 5, 2013, two stakeholder meetings were held at the CH2M HILL downtown Portland offices to collect issues, questions, concerns, and visions from key stakeholders. Stakeholders were identified from their interest in the last planning process in 1997, as well as their current interactions and communication with the County. The list of invitees was extended to other stakeholders that were assumed to have strong opinions about the study (appendices A and B). Approximately 17 government agencies attended one meeting and five organizations and non-government stakeholders attended the other meeting.



Attendees added issues to maps and spoke with staff members.

The first round of public outreach started in early March with a mailing to all residential and business properties on the island and channel, as well as a press release that was distributed to media



Visions were collected on the walls and questionnaires.

outlets throughout the Metro region. Additionally, information on the study was advertised through the Sauvie Island Community Association’s (SICA) website and meetings.

About 60 people attended the open house which was held on the evening of March 7, 2013 at the Sauvie Island Community School (Appendix C). The outreach also included a questionnaire (Appendix D) which was mailed to residents and was provided at the open house. Forty-four people returned the printed questionnaires at the open house or via mail. One hundred twenty people completed the online questionnaire, which was posted on the website from February 14 to March 15, 2013 (Appendix E).

Copies of individual comments are included in Appendix K.

Multnomah County staff also attended a SICA meeting on February 21, 2013 to invite participation in the study and collect initial comments. Additionally, County staff sought initial input from the County Commissioners on the Scoping process and outreach activities at a work session on March 4, 2013 (Appendix J). A conference call on April 9, 2013 with the Grand Ronde Tribe and county staff ensured that the tribal authorities were aware of the study and had a chance to share their issues and visions.

2.3.2 Round two outreach activities

The second round of public outreach took place in early April. The purpose of this outreach was to get clarity on the issues and visions identified during the first round of outreach through focus group meetings, online questionnaire responses a mailed questionnaire, as well as a second open house. The public was asked to respond to the following questions:

- Did we capture all of the visions for the community’s future? Which visions are most important to you?
- Did we hear about all of the issues facing the community now and in the future? Which issues are most important to you?

About 25 stakeholders attended two focus group meetings, one for island issues on April 4 at the Sauvie Island Grange Hall and one for channel issues on April 8 at the Linnton Community Center (Appendix G).

The following questions were asked during the public outreach activities:

- What should the Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel community look like in 20 years?
- What are some of the issues the community faces now? What issues could get in the way of that vision?
- Did we capture all of the visions and which are most important to you?
- Did we hear all of the issues and which are most important to you?

About 25 people attended the second open house which was held on the evening of April 10, 2013 at the Sauvie Island Community School (Appendix G). The outreach also included a questionnaire (Appendix H) which was mailed to residents and was provided at the open house. Thirty-five people returned the printed questionnaires at the open house or via mail. Fifty three people completed the online questionnaire, which was posted on the website from April 7 to April 19, 2013 (Appendix I). Copies of individual comments are included in Appendix K.

Additionally, Multnomah County staff attended the Sauvie Island Community Fair and annual meeting for SICA on April 18, 2013 (Appendix J). Four questionnaires were collected at the event and staff spoke with several residents and visitors about the process.



Open house attendees spoke with staff members.

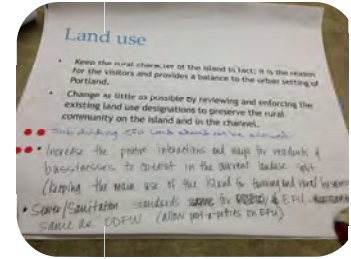


At the second open house questionnaires were collected.

3 Scoping process results

Throughout the scoping process the public was asked to share their ideas for the community's future, specifically they were asked:

- What should the Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel community look like in 20 years?
- What are some of the issues the community faces now? What issues could get in the way of that vision?
- Did we capture all of the visions for the community's future? Which visions are most important to you?
- Did we hear about all of the issues facing the community now and in the future? Which issues are most important to you?



Comments collected at the second open house.

There were several common themes to the responses to these questions, for both visions for the area and issues that the community faces now and in the future.

3.1 Visions

The following visions were heard repeatedly during the public outreach process. These themes establish the groundwork for a RAP update which will include a more detailed visioning process with the community.

3.1.1 Land use

- Preserve the rural character of the island
- Preserve the agricultural nature of the island
- Preserve and enhance the natural environment, both on the island and in the channel
- Balance island activities (hiking, birding, farming, hunting, etc.)
- Revise and look at land use codes; they should be clear, easy to implement, and coordinated between government agencies
- Balance the needs of residents, boaters, and other users of the Multnomah Channel so the uses can be accommodated equally
- Increase level of disaster preparedness

3.1.2 Transportation

- Reduce Traffic conflicts between modes
- Provide for safe roads/facilities for all users

The public outreach activities resulted in the identification and confirmation of a set of visions (to the left).

3.2 Issues

Many of the issues identified during the scoping process were directed at keeping the island and channel as a rural area, with a focus on farming, connections to wildlife and nature, and an overarching concern about the future development of the area. Almost every response submitted indicated that the rural character of the area is threatened. Another major issue raised was inconsistent and unclear policies, regulation, and enforcement.

Land use and transportation issues are summarized in tables 1 and 2. The tables include tasks that will be undertaken in a RAP update, as well as examples of comments collected during the outreach activities.



Bicyclists ride here, mostly, in single-file on the narrow roads.
Photo by Kent Nakagawa.

Table 1
 Land use issues

General issue	Community comment examples
<p>Need clear policies and codes for farm stands and related uses on farm land. and agri-tourism policies and codes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code is confusing and not standardized for all events (for profit or non-profit uses) • Traffic impacts of uses • Need clear standards that are easy to understand and implement • Need standard review/enforcement procedures • Interactions between events and residential uses (traffic, noise, light, sanitation) • Unclear rules about signage for licensed businesses • Food cart codes and use allowed on the island are not clear • Need a policy regarding whether agri-tourism uses allowed by Senate Bill 960 should be adopted, not adopted, or partially adopted by the County
<p>Need land use codes and policies that preserve farming on the island</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential development or subdivision of land should be limited • Minimize land use changes • Farming should continue to be the main characteristic of the island • Concern that it will be too expensive to farm on the island



General issue	Community comment examples
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules and regulations of rural reserve designation are unclear • Enforcement of land use permits/zoning code is only by complaint which results in uneven application of the rules
<p>Need clear policies and codes for floating homes and marinas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate sanitation issues • Balance residential use and the environment • Need a clear, long-term plan for the marinas and channel • Zoning and codes should reflect the unique nature of floating homes • Need better code enforcement • Multnomah County/Metro building codes and floating home and marinas definitions are inconsistent • Illegal floating structures/live-aboards
<p>Need clear policies and codes to protect and enhance the natural environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase native vegetation • Public should have enhanced access to the nature reserves • Protect wildlife habitat • Decrease noise, light, and other pollution • Willamette Greenway regulations are unclear • Examine relationship between flood areas and residential development • Concerns about over-use of beaches and parks • Provide non-peak season access to wildlife areas • Invasive species are common on the island and in the channel and may be spread by County maintenance practices • Address water quality issues in the channel and island lakes • Restoration efforts should be coordinated to be more effective • Too much farmland is being transferred to habitat



Table 2
Transportation issues

Rural Area Plan tasks	Community comment examples
Develop actions for decreasing traffic conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle speeds and speed limits are too high • Too many vehicles are using the roads • Cyclist and drivers do not follow the “rules of the road” • Traffic violations are not enforced • Drivers and cyclists need to be educated about how to share the road
Develop strategies to make the island and channel safe for all travel modes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are not safe facilities for bikes, pedestrians, horses, etc. to safely travel on the island • It is unsafe for farm equipment to use the roads; particularly in summer/fall • Dike/levee road is narrow (add reflectors, shoulders) • Roads are not improved to County standards
Examine the traffic impacts of island visitors during the peak-seasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many off-island visitors use the roads during peak months; demand should be managed • Traffic impacts needs and solutions need to be coordinated with Columbia County • Emergency services cannot respond to issues during peak/congested traffic conditions
Examine railroad crossings and train activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and clean up along train tracks • Railroad right-of-way being used for other purposes such as parking • Safety due to multiple crossing points • Increased trains could hinder access to marinas • Transport of coal and hazardous materials
Examine river traffic speeds and other concerns to establish a recommendation for other Multnomah County offices that oversee this subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate speeds and wake zones are not clear to boaters • Speed and wake violations are not enforced • Boaters and other channel users need education about wake zones and speed limits



4 Recommendation

The issues and visions identified during this outreach process represent the views of a broad cross-section of the stakeholders, including business owners, farmers, short and long-time residents, local organizations, community groups, government agencies, and visitors.

4.1 Rural Area Plan and Transportation System Plan updates

Based on the issues identified during the scoping process, Multnomah County staff recommends updating the RAP to address community concerns and issues that have developed in the past 16 years regarding land uses, agriculture practices (including events and farm stands), and transportation conflicts between modes related to increased numbers of visitors to the island. Additionally, the County should update the TSP to reflect the current use of the road by large numbers of vehicles and bicyclists, in addition to pedestrians, horses, and farm equipment. Table 3 outlines the items to be addressed for the RAP and TSP updates.

Table 3
Recommendations for moving forward

Recommendation	Actions/topics to undertake
Update the Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel Rural Area Plan (RAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine existing concerns to create clear farm stand and agri-tourism policies and codes • Establish land use codes and policies that preserve farming on the island • Examine EFU/MUA transfer for habitat/nature reserve (deferrals) • Examine existing concerns to create clear policies and codes for floating homes and marinas • Examine existing concerns to create clear policies and codes to protect and enhance the natural environment
Update the Transportation System Plan (TSP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine existing concerns to develop actions for decreasing traffic conflicts, including conducting traffic counts; traffic policy discussion for County • Examine safety concerns to make it safe for all travel modes; develop a multi-modal transportation study and speed/safety study • Examine the traffic impacts of island visitors during the peak-seasons; develop a demand management study • Examine railroad crossings and train activity • Examine river traffic speeds and other concerns to establish a recommendation for other Multnomah County offices that oversee this subject

5 Glossary

- **Agri-tourism** – In 2011, the Oregon Legislature approved Senate Bill 960 (SB 960) allowing counties to establish agri-tourism (agricultural tourist activities) and other commercial events or activities. Multnomah County has not decided to adopt any provisions of SB 960 as of May 2013.
- **Comprehensive Plan** – A land use planning document developed for all of Multnomah County which addresses state-wide planning goals and is required to be updated periodically. The Comprehensive Plan guides land uses and planning policies. More information about the Multnomah County Comprehensive Framework Plan can be found at <https://multco.us/land-use-planning/multnomah-county-comprehensive-framework-plan-1>
- **Exclusive Farm Use (EFU)** – A land use zoning designation that indicates that land should be used for farming purposes. More information about zoning and code on Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel can be found at <http://web.multco.us/sites/default/files/county-attorney/documents/ch34.pdf>
- **Farm stands** – Structures designed and used for the sale of farm crops (or livestock) grown on the farm operation or grown on the farm operation and other farm operations in the local agricultural area; including the sale of retail incidental items and fee-based activities to promote the sale of farm crops or livestock sold at the farm stand, if the annual sale of incidental items and fees from promotional activities do not make up more than 25 percent of the total sales of the farm stand. Farm stands do not include structures designed for occupancy as a residence or for activities other than the sale of farm crops/livestock and do not include structures for banquets, public gatherings, or public entertainment.
- **Mass gatherings** – As used in ORS 433.735 to 433.770 and 433.990 (7): (1) “Outdoor mass gathering,” unless otherwise defined by county ordinance, means an actual or reasonably anticipated assembly of more than 3,000 persons which continues or can reasonably be expected to continue for more than 24 consecutive hours but less than 120 hours within any three-month period and which is held primarily in open spaces and not in any permanent structure.
- **Multiple Use Agriculture (MUA)** – The purposes of the Multiple Use Agriculture District are to conserve those agricultural lands not suited to full-time commercial



A large farm tent in a field.
Photo by Ericka Dickey-Nelson



Warrior Point Beach is accessible from Reeder Road.
Photo by I Hartline, SICA website

farming for diversified or part-time agriculture uses and to encourage the use of non-agricultural lands for other purposes, such as forestry, outdoor recreation, open space, low density residential development and appropriate Conditional Uses (when these uses are shown to be compatible with the natural resource base, the character of the area, and the applicable County policies). More information about zoning and code on Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel can be found at

<http://web.multco.us/sites/default/files/county-attorney/documents/ch34.pdf>

- **Multnomah County** – The agency in charge of this planning effort and who oversees the land use and transportation planning for the portion of Sauvie Island/ Multnomah Channel located within unincorporated Multnomah County.
- **Rural Area Plan (RAP)** –A guide to land use, capital improvements, and physical development decision making used by Multnomah County, other governmental agencies, developers, and residents. Typically used for 15-20 years, the current Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel RAP was adopted in 1997.
- **Rural reserve** – An area set aside for rural uses in the future. More information is available at <http://web.multco.us/land-use-planning/urban-and-rural-reserves>
- **Scoping Report** – This document; used to understand what needs to be studied further and to understand current community issues.
- **Transportation System Plan (TSP)** – A long-range plan to guide transportation investments in rural Multnomah County; a state required planning document that is regularly updated.
- **Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)** – Controls urban expansion onto farm, forest, and rural lands. Land inside the UGB supports urban services such as roads, water/sewer systems, parks, schools, fire, and police protection that create places to live, work, and play. The urban growth boundary is one of the tools used to protect rural areas from urban sprawl and to promote the efficient use of land, public facilities, and services inside the boundary. The Sauvie Island/Multnomah Channel plan area is located outside of the Portland Metropolitan UGB and is designated as a rural reserve; meaning that the UGB is not allowed to be expanded into the area for at least the next fifty years.



Kayakers use Sauvie Island as a launching point.

Photo by J Hartline, SICA website



Wapato State Park was mentioned as popular destination