

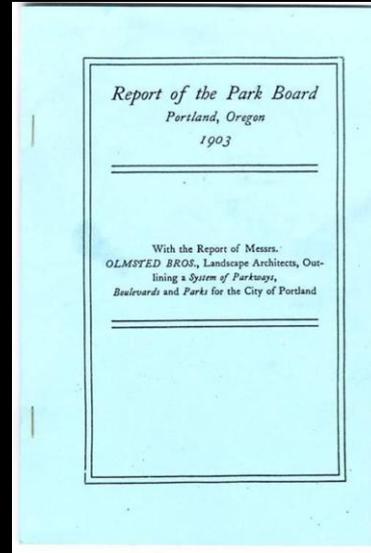
*Proposal:
Ross Island, Forest Park on the Willamette*



Mike Houck, Director
Urban Greenspaces Institute



1903 Olmsted Portland Park Masterplan



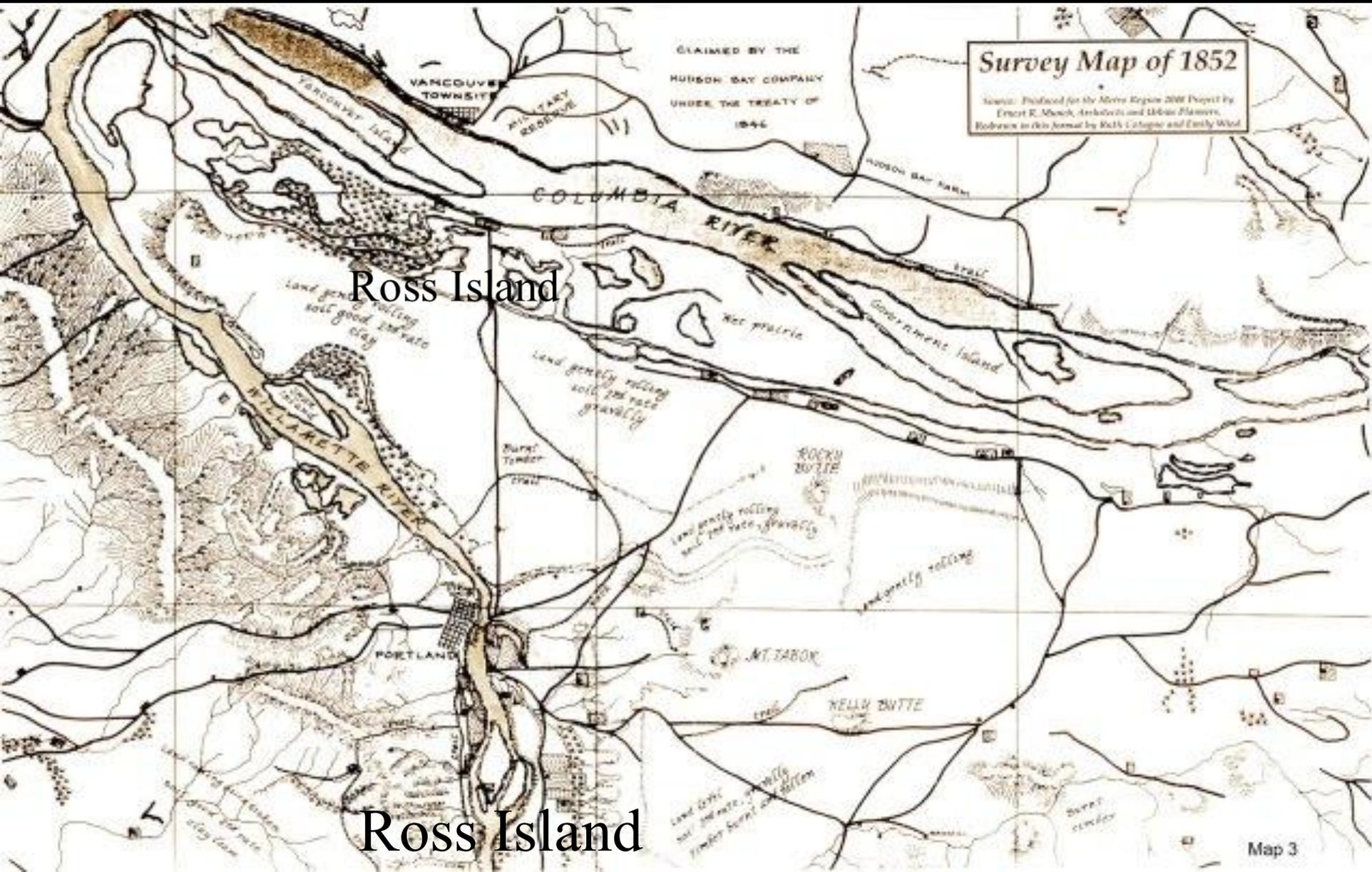
John Charles Olmsted, son of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.

Ross Island Park

"If these islands can be obtained at a reasonable price by the city, their acquisition will unquestionably prove in the long run a very profitable investment....the groves of trees on this island will be a source of pleasure to all who live, or have to pass, within sight of it on both sides of the river."

John Charles Olmsted, 1903

Sherry Ross Land Claim, 1848

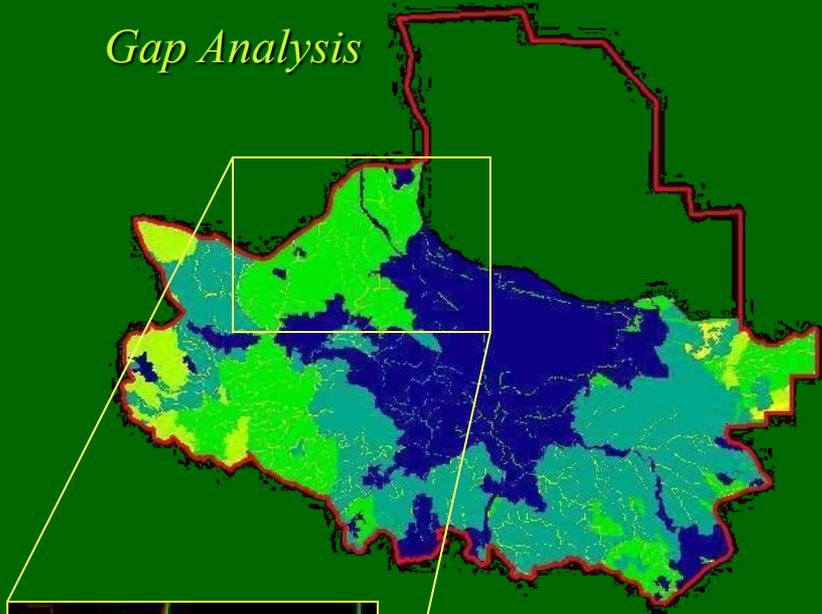


Urban Biodiversity Is Not An Oxymoron



DIFFERENT SCALES = DIFFERENT ANSWERS

Gap Analysis



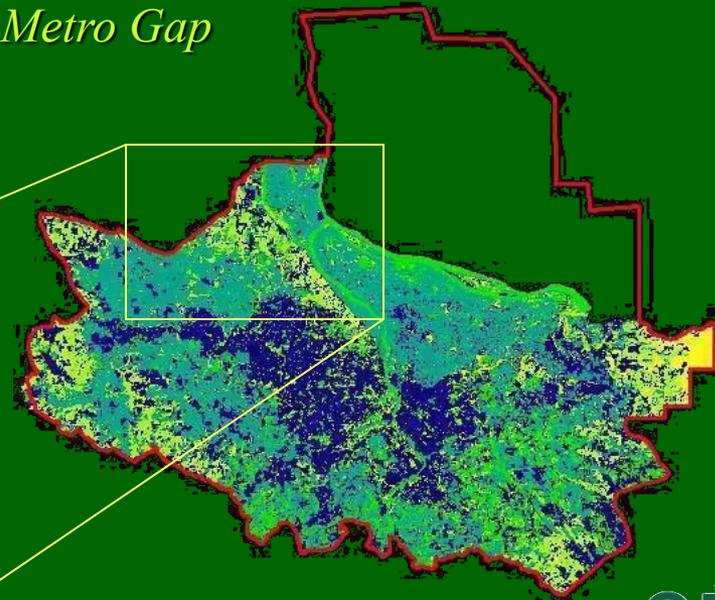
Low
Richness

Hi
Richness



- *Same 57 species*
- *Same Coarse Filter*
- *Different MMU*

Metro Gap



Pond Turtle



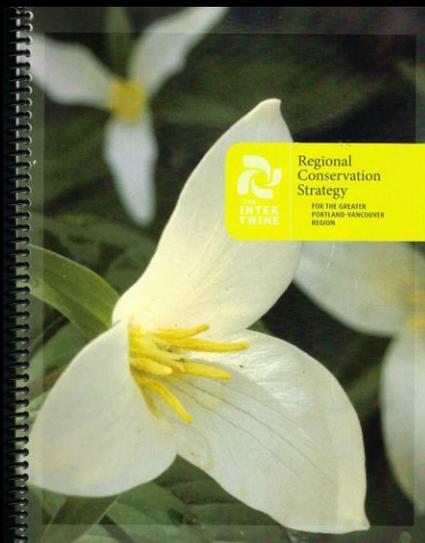
REGIONAL CONSERVATION STRATEGY
BIODIVERSITY GUIDE

FIGURE 1-1

Regional Conservation Modeled Output

High-Value Lands in the Region

This graphic shows ecologically high-value lands in the greater Portland-Vancouver region, based on the InterTwinE Alliance's conservation priority model. High-value areas on the regional map ranked in the top one-third of all areas because of the type, location, and size of their habitat. In short, these areas represent regional priority lands within our nearly 3,000-square-mile region.

Our scientifically based prioritization model divided the region into 5 meter pixels (5 x 5 meter squares) and analyzed them for a number of features, including: existing vegetation, wetlands, habitat patch size and shape, and the presence of roads. To account for habitats in both urban and rural settings, pixels were scored independently and patch size was assessed in relative and absolute terms. This approach generated information that can help prioritize conservation strategies at a variety of geographic scales – from the entire region to the local neighborhood, and allows us to prioritize urbanized habitats as part of a collective effort to preserve the region's biodiversity.

In general, the results are consistent with, but more detailed and geographically comprehensive than, previous efforts to prioritize wildlife habitat within the region. Because the region has both highly developed urban areas and relatively undisturbed landscapes, much of the

highest value habitats fall outside the region's urban growth boundaries. However, more than 19,400 acres of regional high-priority lands occur within and around the region's cities.

Reliable, region-wide information for some important habitats such as oak woodlands, prairie, rare species and high-quality forests, was not available. For now, their inclusion in planning efforts will continue to require expert knowledge. It's also important to note that the model addressed biodiversity, not culturally or visually significant landscapes. Future efforts of the InterTwinE Alliance will address these important issues.

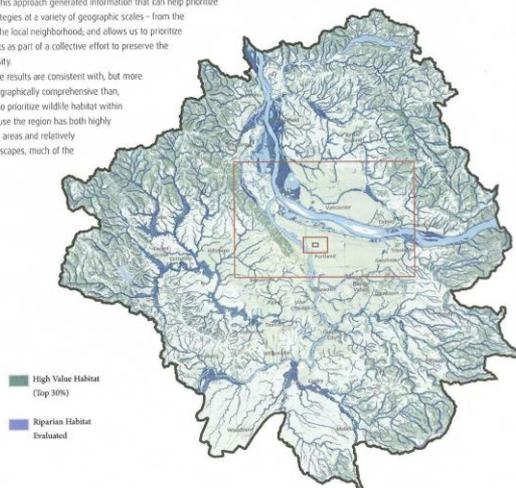


FIGURE 1-2

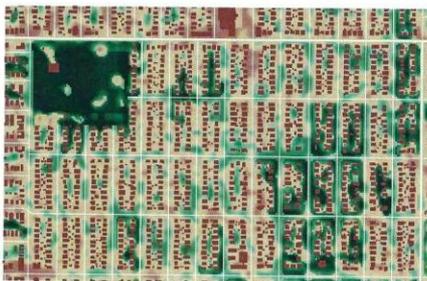
Understanding Conditions at Multiple Scales



Regional 1"=6.3 MILES, OR 33,333 FEET



Local 1"=0.85 MILES, OR 4,500 FEET



Neighborhood 1"=0.19 MILES, OR 1,000 FEET



An important benefit of our approach is the flexibility to analyze data at any scale, from the 3,000-square-mile region to the local neighborhood. The following examples represent patterns of land cover and relative conservation value as one zooms in from the regional to the neighborhood scale.

Regional

At the regional geographic scale, most small, local habitats are not apparent. Only the most prominent features stand out, such as rivers and large forest blocks. The highest scoring areas reflect habitats that have significant conservation value within the 3,000-square-mile region. Most highly fragmented urban habitats are not represented at this scale even though these areas are critical to regional biodiversity.

Local

At this intermediate scale, finer habitat patterns are more apparent while regional elements are still prominent. In this example, blocks of habitat barely visible at the regional scale become more dominant. For example, patterns of street tree density within east Portland become recognizable as a potential regional planning element. Opportunities to create ecological connections between regional sites are suggested. Only the highest scoring areas at this scale are likely to have regional significance.

Neighborhood

At the local scale, the neighborhood, features that appear less significant at the regional scale are apparent. Habitats barely or not recognizable at larger scales, such as local parks, creeks, vegetated hillsides, or tree patches can be woven into a meaningful framework and incorporated into local habitat conservation planning, neighborhood by neighborhood.

Ross Island Archipelago

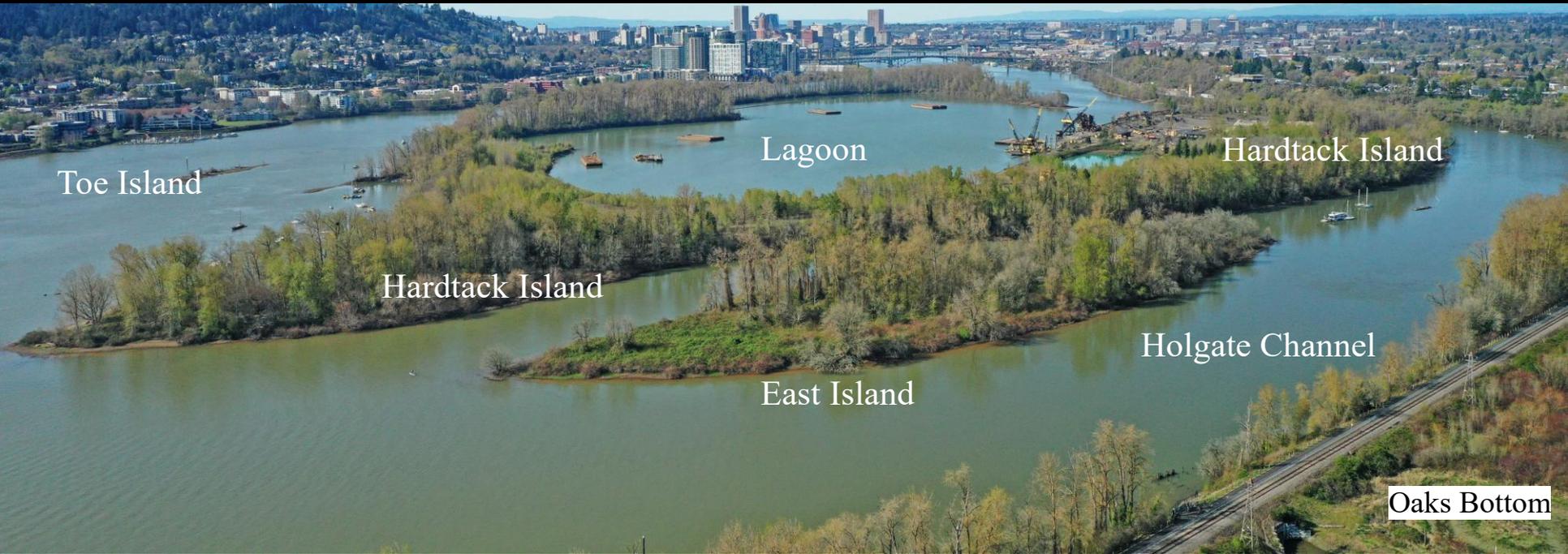


Photo Mike Houck



Timeline

Ross Island has been an important resource for indigenous peoples including the Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Chinook, Tualatin, Kalapuya, Molalla, for time immemorial.

1850 Sherry Ross Homesteads Ross Island for grazing. Ross also ran a distillery turning out “Blue Ruin” Whiskey, “a fluid of high voltage”

1890 Ross Island was known as, “an enclave of proto-beatnik houseboat dwellers, where ‘liberated ladies played ukuleles for gentlemen who recited poetry.’” *

1911 to 1924 Windemuth bath house and dance hall near downstream tip of Ross Island

1912, Emanuel Mische, park director develops a plan for Ross Island including a playfield and croquet and tennis courts.

1926 “a syndicate of local bigwigs—from the dock commission, attorneys, and former governor set up Ross Island Sand and Gravel in a flurry of cozy deals with state and local regulators.”**

1926 US Army Corps of Engineers builds a berm connecting Ross and Hardtack Islands, creating a lagoon for gravel extraction and scouring a deeper channel to the west of Ross Island

1976 Robert Pamplin Sr. purchases Ross Island

1979 Portland City Council renews Ross Island dredging permit

1992-1998 Port of Portland contaminated material deposited in the lagoon

1999 Salmon listed as endangered under Endangered Species Act

2000 Salmon listed as Endangered and Metro and Portland pass resolutions to work toward recovery, not simply avoiding “take”

2001 Ross Island Sand & Gravel ceases extraction at Ross Island due to salmon ESA listing and imports raw material from Columbia Gorge
And continues processing on Hardtack Island

2002 Ross Island’s permit is opened up by the state and a committee revises the reclamation plan.

2004 Ross Island ceases excavation and obtains raw materials in the Columbia Gorge but continues processing on Hardtack Island.

2011 Portland’s Big Pipe project is finished after 10 years and \$1.4 billion. Material is deposited in Ross Island lagoon.

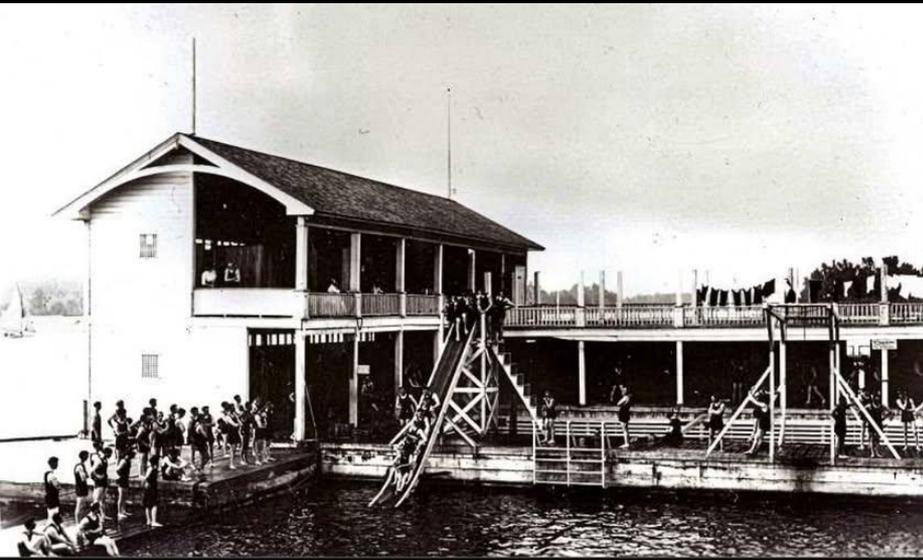
2015 Harmful algal blooms appear as does one of Portland’s first severe “Heat Domes”

2015 Port of Portland donates approximately five acres of the downstream tip of Ross Island to the City of Portland.

2022 Oregon Department of State Lands approves an “adaptive management plan” for reclamation and sets an end date of 2033,

*Nancy Gronowski, Portland Parks and Recreation

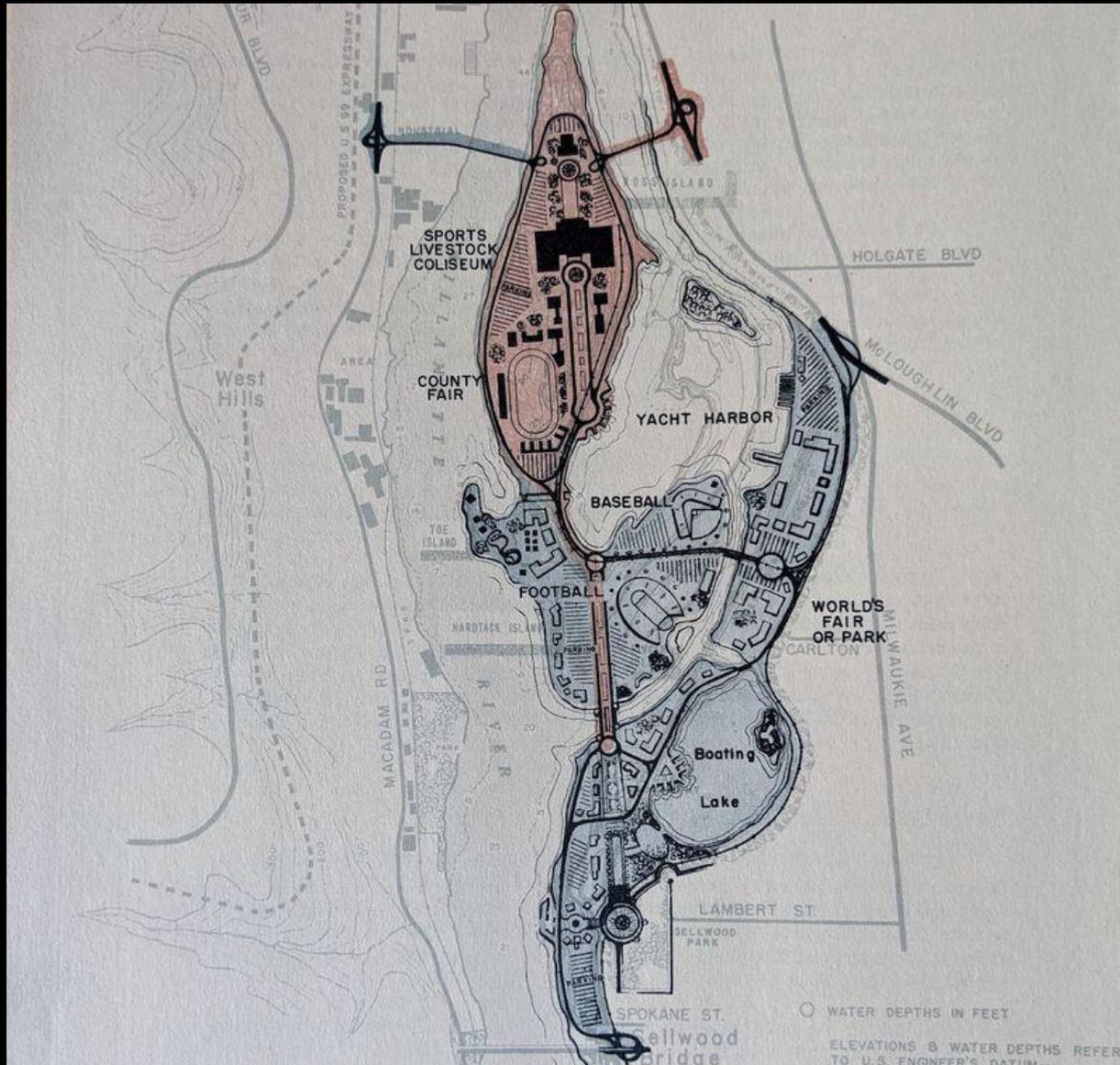
** Paradise Ross, Zach Dundas, Willamette Week



Windemuth Bath House and Dance Hall
“The most popular resort in the city”
1911-1924 as a giant floating platform off
the northern tip of Ross Island and featured
a pool, dance pavilion that featured
“Dances of Delight, and open air gym.
It closed July 27, 1924 due to
pollution in the Willamette River.



1950's Scheme Includes: World's Fair, Football Stadium, Boating Lake, Baseball Stadium, County Fair, Livestock Coliseum, Yacht Harbor,





Aerial Photo of Ross Island – 1942

Oregon DEQ



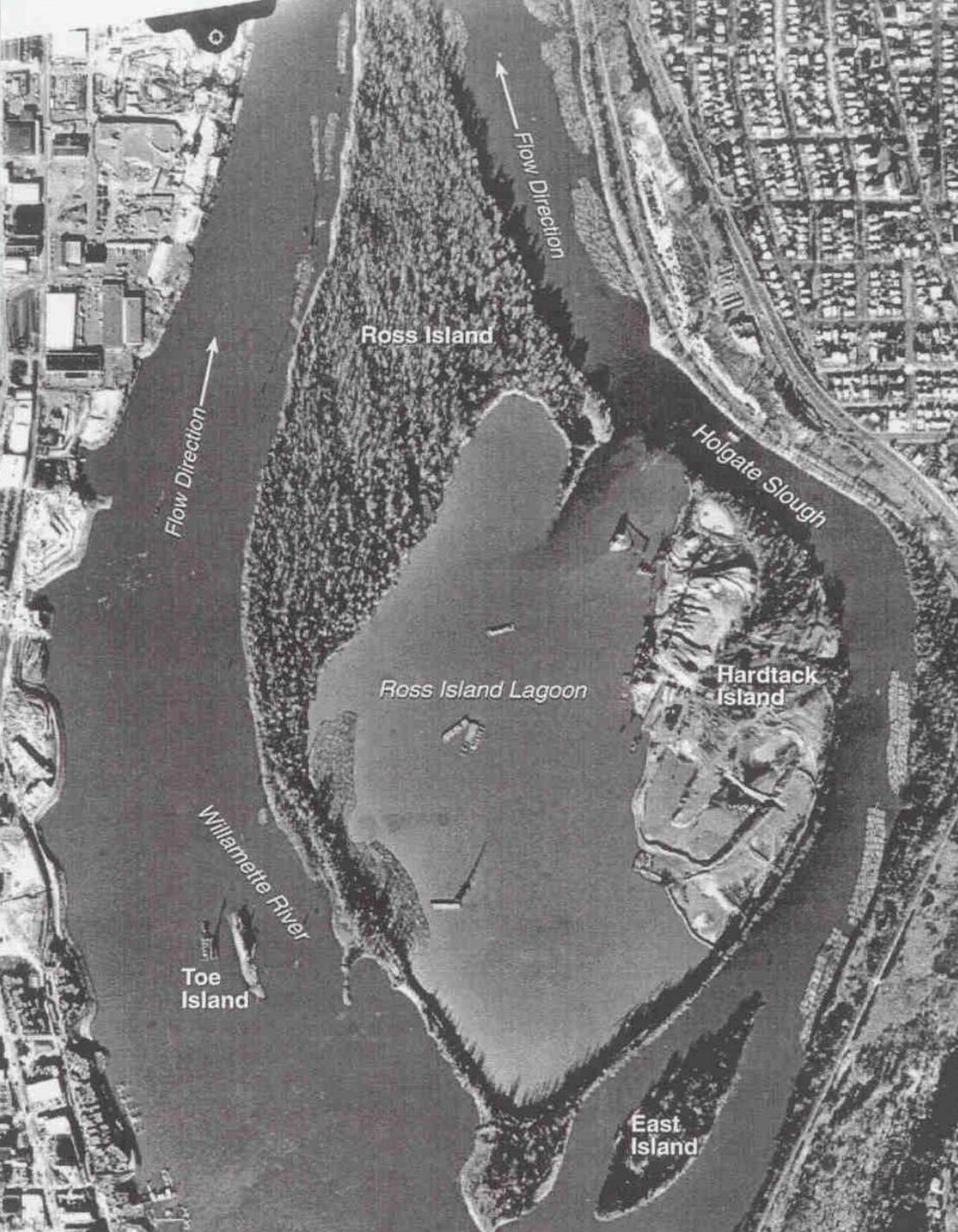
Aerial Photo of Ross Island – 1957

Oregon DEQ



Aerial Photo of Ross Island – 1963

Oregon DEQ



Aerial Photo of Ross Island – 1980

Oregon DEQ



Aerial Photo of
Ross Island – 1996
(during flood)

1979 Reclamation Plan:
Create 135 Acres of Upland Forest
Fill Lagoon to -20 feet (was -130 feet)
20 Million Yards of Fill
350-foot buffer around 55 nest heron colony
Stakes to Monitor Erosion
No State-Mandated Goals or End Date
No Wetland Habitat



Viewed At South Waterfront



**Ross Island
Reclamation Plan**

Ross Island Sand & Gravel Co.
4315 SE McLoughlin Blvd.
Portland, Oregon

September 30, 2002

Prepared by
Landau Associates
Pacific Habitat Services, Inc.
Pam Wiley

2000-2001

Ross Island Reclamation Plan Advisory Committee:

David Bragdon, Metro

Ann Hanus, Department of State Lands

Jim Rue, Ross Island Sand & Gravel

Ben Meyer, NOAA

Erik Sten, City of Portland Commissioner

Mike Houck Urban Greenspaces Institute.

Facilitator: Pam Wiley

The committee revisited the 1979 Reclamation Plan and significantly changed the 1979 plan, including advising against filling the lagoon.

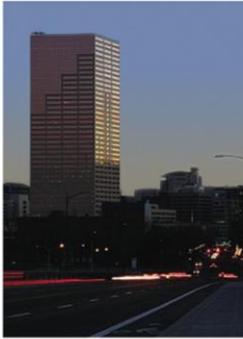
2002 Plan 4.5 Million Cubic Yards of Fill

Don't fill the lagoon

Create Wetland, Riparian and Shallow Water Habitat

Complete by 2013 (later revised to 2023)

Fill required = 50x "Big Pink"

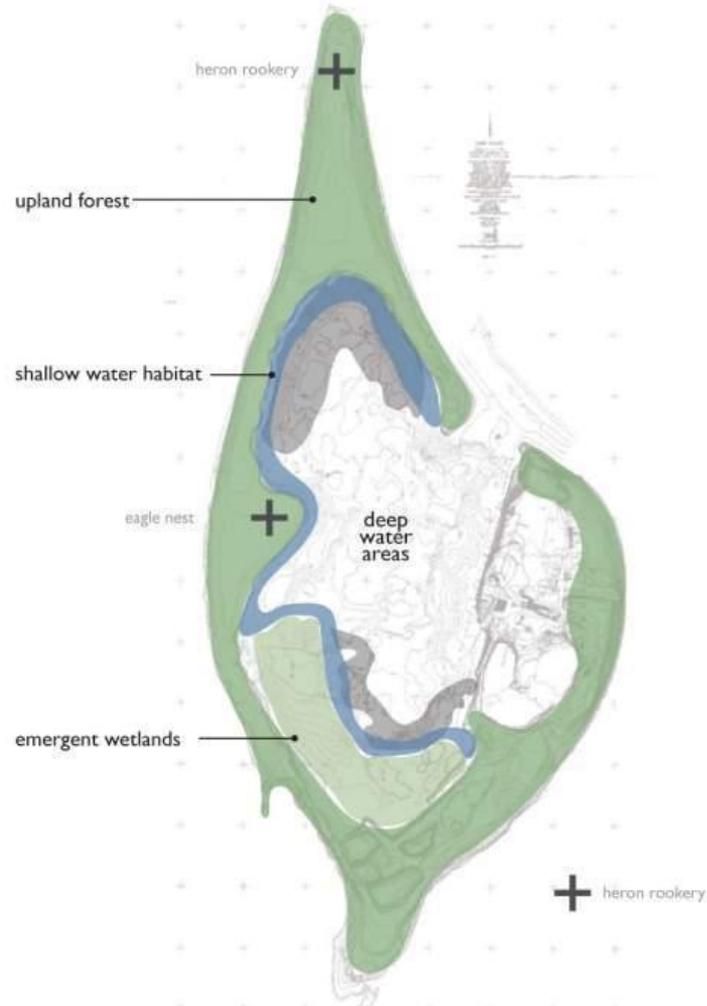


fills up big pink



2002 Reclamation Plan

HABITAT AREAS



Big Pipe: Completed in 2011, the Big Pipe Project took a generation to build – 20 years – and \$1.4 billion. CSOs have been nearly eliminated, dropping by 94 percent to the Willamette and 99 percent to the slough, significantly improving river health. To eliminate 100 percent of CSOs, the project cost would have doubled without a significant increase in improving river health. 14 Feet in Diameter and 3.5 miles long.



Portland paid Ross Island to accept materials from the Big Pipe project. Good news, it saved Portland money, but.....

Another flaw in the restoration plan, Ross Island was not ordered to secure fill. So, they sat and waited for fill, thereby delaying restoration. And, they charged for it.



Mike Houck arranges a kayak trip for the Oregonian Editorial Board



Entire editorial board writes individual follow up editorials calling for completing restoration and public ownership

A very public island

Most everyone in the metro area has glimpsed it in. A new island is growing inside the hollow of the old. But few have ever actually set foot on Ross Island. Some folks think it should stay that way. It really isn't much of an island. It's more of a hole — a very big hole — in the middle of the Willamette River. Much of the sand and gravel used to build Portland came from that hole. Now, in an astonishing

effort at environmental redress, we're filling it in. A new island is growing inside the hollow of the old. Pretty soon, we could build all sorts of stuff out there. Hiking trails. Boat docks. A beach. What would you put on Ross Island? Maybe what it needs is something really cool. Maybe what it needs is

nothing at all. Read our staff editorial and five sketches from members of the Oregonian's editorial board on Page E4. Watch a narrated slide show of an early morning boat ride to Ross Island at oregonlive.com/opinion. (Look for the headline "A very public island") Then, join the debate.



THE OPINION OF THE OREGONIAN EDITORIAL BOARD

The hole at Portland's heart

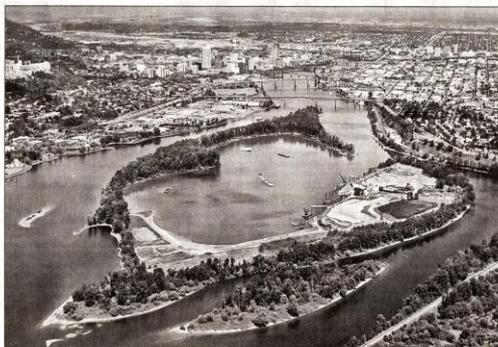
After almost a century of use and abuse, Ross Island needs a hug

There's a hole in the middle of our metropolis, right where its heart should be. That's because, way back in 1926, our booming burg decided Ross Island was the perfect place from which to mine the sand and gravel needed to build a better city. By the time we stopped digging, the hole was 125 feet deep.

Now we're filling it in. The island — actually four isles, Ross, Handtack, Toe and East — survives today as little more than a thin arc of upland forest ringing a huge lagoon littered with industrial waste. Dotted here and there among the detritus are great blue heron and beaver, eagles and osprey, river otter and raccoon.

From Portland's earliest days — when Ross Island was home to the twin icons of frontier living, a distillery and a dance hall — there have been calls to turn it into a public park. The 1903 Olmsted Brothers' plan for Portland parks sketched out a series of ballfields connected by bridges to both east and west bank.

But it was private business, not public baseball, that still was going strong when Robert Pamplin Sr. bought the Ross Island Sand & Gravel Co. in 1976. City officials



ROSS WILLIAM HAMILTON/THE OREGONIAN/2004

have been negotiating with the Pamplin family, not always amicably, ever since.

Late last year, Robert Pamplin Jr. donated 45 island acres to Portland Parks, which manages it as bird habitat. A pair of bald eagles

roosting there last week have young in their nest.

With much of the balance of the island, about 350 acres, remaining private, and its owner apparently intent on keeping it that way, an ad hoc group of environmentalists

of the city of Portland, which is paying him to haul off its dirt from the Big Pipe sewer project. Mining on the island ended in 2001, but work with sand and gravel barged to the on-island processing plant from the Columbia River continues. And could do so for quite some time.

Some Portlanders long for the day when the island is available for recreation. Campers in yurts could look up at South Waterfronters in condos who look down on campers in yurts. Some Portlanders anticipate a time when the island is off-limits to all human activity.

Advocates of some middle ground envisage limiting access to floating viewing platforms, interpretive displays, even waterfront interactive art.

And as for all that industrial history, the debate still rages. Should it be celebrated? Or concealed? Currently there are at least three long-term management plans under way. The landowner's. The city's. And that of the vision group and their Friends of Ross Island. As soon as he takes office, Mayor Sam Adams should move quickly to make a fresh start, uniting all three around a single vision. A great city should have something more than a hole at its heart.

Down broke harsh that squall-lashed summer morn, its sudden tempest stalling the intrepid armada of editorial writers as they assembled at river's edge. But then, girding their kayaked loins, this sturdy crew of sailors all set forth. Make that almost all. There was one, a solitary male, who conspired, damply, to heed instead the siren call of croissants.

The armada faced a simple charge: to explore the ultimate in terra incognita, land that no longer exists. By noon, out there in the space between tumult and lee, each had found his or her own private Ross Island. Herewith the harvest.

Look, don't touch

Shivering in a light rain and a tippy kayak in the Ross Island lagoon, I watch a bald eagle fly back to its nest. Then and there I make two decisions: One, I'm cold and want to go back. Two, I will never set foot on Ross Island.

I don't belong there. And neither do you. I've been to many cities with a small island or two within sight of their downtowns. Look what they've done with them: Littered beaches and green grass, beaten-down trails and graffiti-scarred interpretive centers. Ross Island, now and forever, must have none of that.

I'm not interested in exploring Ross Island's potential for public access, whether it's about recreation or honoring the island's "industrial legacy." This place should be in public ownership and saved not for what it could become, but for what it is, a truly rare bird among major cities, an urban wildlife sanctuary.

We'll always be able to see it: Rent a kayak, walk or bicycle the Springwater Trail, take a motorboat ride — slowly — around the islands. But don't disturb the birds. This is their place. Not yours.

— Rick Attag

Apocalypse bow

Head bowed, arms churning, pants soaked, I felt like Conrad chasing the heart of darkness. Like Col. Kurtz advocating apocalypse now. Nothing, certainly not the horror, the horror (the weather and the capsize of a colleague) would keep me from my quarry.

I would find it: the lost lagoon. There's a spot slap in the middle of the Holgate Channel where, if you pause — considerably harder in a kayak than it sounds — you can spin 360 degrees and see absolutely nothing.

Nothing urban, that is. Not the glint of a gable. Not a crane. Not a car. Just the blue and green palette of perfect, primalval Oregon. There are more than 20 miles of the Willamette River near Portland on which power boaters can have all sorts of vrooming fun. There are a mere two miles of the Holgate Channel on which such activity should — make that must — be banned.

The Oregon State Marine Board must immediately designate a no-wake zone through this area. This will do more than help stall the erosion threatening what little of Ross Island survives. It will signal that we recognize there are among us, still, some river people for whom sail and paddle are all the power they need.

— Jonathan Nicholas

Build a treehouse

How do you mine the meaning of Ross Island, a place at once mysterious, ethereal and manhandled?

Often, we've treated it as a one-way mirror. We've looked at it and seen what we wanted to see: a manhandling side of ourselves. Few have spent much time looking back the other way, using the island as a window on the city. And that's a shame. It's a perfect place to marvel at the city's skyline and frame the question of what it means to be Wild in the City, as well as Serene in the Wild. Of course, eagles and osprey should ultimately rule Ross Island. But should humans be able to enter their kingdom via kayak?

This is one of the easiest places in Oregon to learn to kayak. But it's a bit of a tease to paddle over and enjoy only what the planners call "visual access." Instead of excluding humans, it would be better to let them touch down lightly, gently, quietly. The complex of islands is already post-natural. Like it or not, the fully restored Ross will be an artistic creation. So why not honor its industrial past, yielding sand and gravel to build the city, by building something unique there? Not the classic city park that the Olmstedes envisioned with trails and bridges to the mainland. But an island of wilderness with a small yurt camp and a European-style refugio — the Germans call it a "hütte" — where kayakers could stop to order lunch. Top it all off with an exquisite treehouse.

Call it the Pamplin Aerie, a place where people could come from all over the world, fly across the river on kayaks and imagine for an hour, an afternoon, or an evening, how it feels to be an eagle.

— Mary Pitman Klich

Once was enough

As our floating editorial board headed north on the glassy Willamette, I naively assumed our destination would be the day's reward.

I was wrong about that as we paddled past the colorful floating homes with their charming little birchhouses filled with nesting purple martins.

Wrong again as we glided past the thick white ash and tall black cottonwoods of East Island with its red-tail hawks and great blue herons.

Wrong again as we slipped by the Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge and heard the honking of geese and the trill of red-winged blackbirds.

And still wrong as we gaped at a towering snag where osprey stood sentinel over a nest on Hardtack Island. I hadn't expected to find such a lovely natural setting on the river in the heart of the city.

My urban reverie lasted a little over an hour. Then we paddled out of the river channel and into our destination, the Ross Island lagoon, where the spell was instantly broken.

The dismal sight reminded me of visiting the Oregon mining town of Sumpter. Landscapes ravaged by man hold a certain fascination, but they're not places I like to see twice.

Count me among those who would leave Ross Island to the bald eagles that soared overhead.

— Doug Bates



...including David Reinhard!



Multiple environmental impacts on the islands



Holgate Channel East Bank Campers



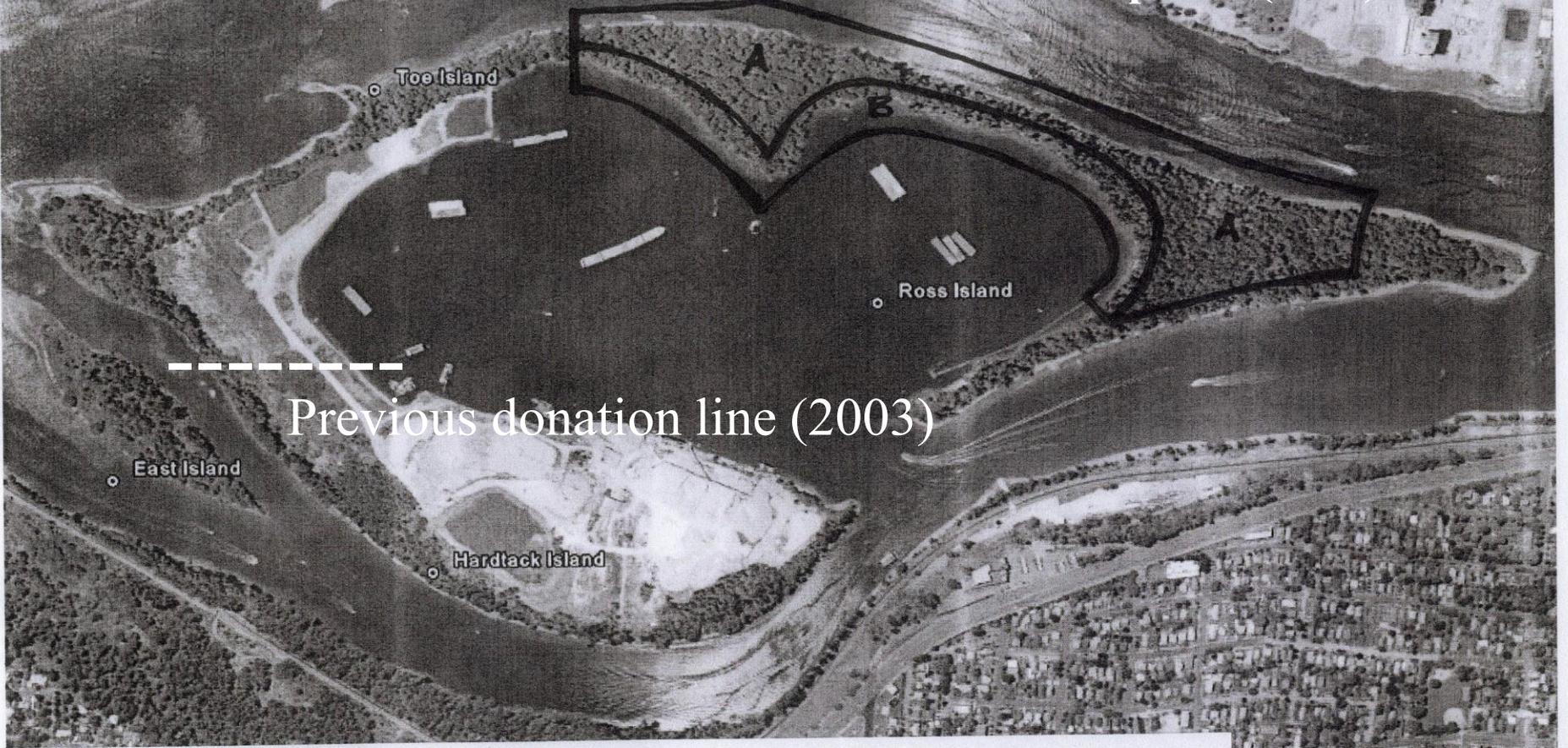
Ross Island Sand and Gravel's Jim Rue, Department of State Lands Director Ann Hanus and Mayor Vera Katz visit the island



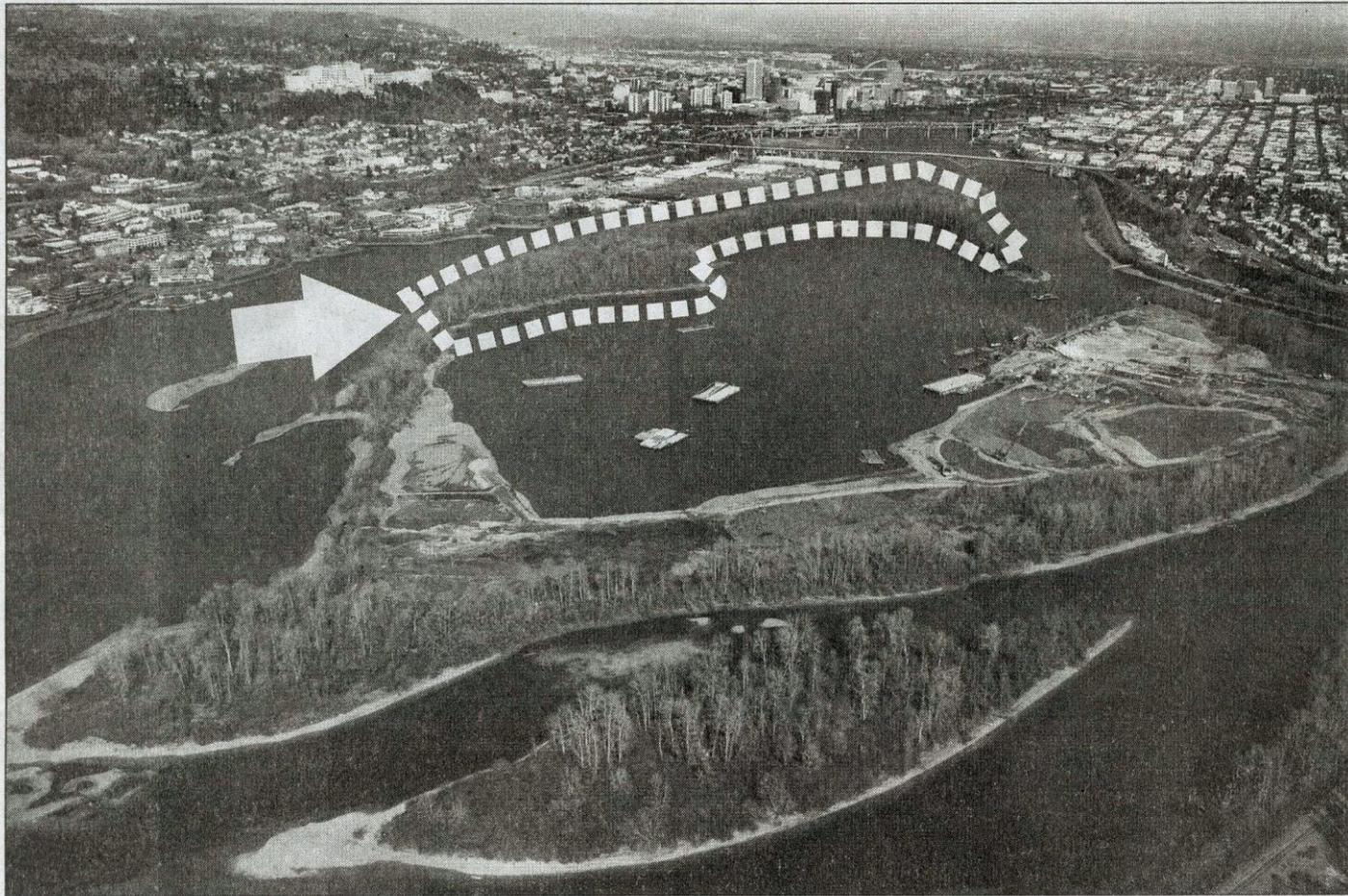
Photo Mike Houck

A = Immediate 45-acre donation (2006)

B = Additional 15-acre donation after restoration is completed (2013)



Approximate parcels of land offered in Dr. Pamplin's 9/27/2006 letter.



TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO: JIM CLARK

The transfer of part of Ross Island to the city will protect about 60 acres of natural habitat on the Willamette River, marked above.

PDXUPDATE

Revised Donation, October 2006

Dr. Pamplin presents Ross Island rock to commemorate the donation



Dr Pamplin testifies before City Council

Mike Houck, Travis Williams and Bob Sallinger with Dr. Robert Pamplin, Jr at Portland City Council at formal transfer of 45 acres to the City

Portland City Council



City accepts Ross Island gift

Environment | Robert Pamplin Jr. will donate 45 acres deemed pristine in a deal that ends years of dispute

By ANNA GRIFFIN
THE OREGONIAN



Pamplin
Still owns more than 350 acres

After years of back and forth, miscommunication and confusion, the city of Portland and millionaire pastor, publisher and philanthropist Robert Pamplin Jr. have reached a deal to turn a portion of Ross Island over to taxpayers.

This time, they seem to mean it.

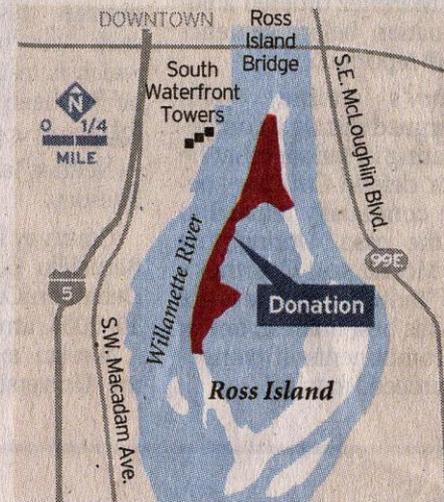
Mayor Tom Potter called Pamplin on Monday to let him know that the city will accept his offer to donate 45 acres of the island complex, actually four pieces of land in the Willamette River a mile south of downtown Portland.

On the public's behalf, Potter ac-

cepted the untouched section of the island and responsibility for any future environmental claims. Potter's aides say there won't be any. Before accepting, city staff and outside experts walked the island and conducted

an environmental assessment. The consensus: The portion Pamplin wants to make public is pristine.

That means that, barring some kind of unforeseen last-minute glitch, city planners and environmentalists will soon begin crafting a long-term plan for both preserving the land and ensur-



ing limited public access. The stretch Pamplin will donate is home to ospreys, hawks and great blue herons.

Environmentalists still hope for more: They'd like to see Pamplin, who has promised to restore much of the more than 350 acres he still owns, work with the city on a comprehensive plan for the entire island. They also would like the Port of Portland, which owns about 10 acres of the island, to give its property to the city.

"We would hope there can someday be a holistic management plan for all the island that would address both restoration and public access," said Mike Houck, director of the Urban Greenspaces Institute.

For the moment, however, Houck and others who have lobbied hard for the restoration of Ross Island are happy just to have a deal between Potter and Pamplin, who could not be reached for comment.

Please see **ROSS ISLAND**, Page C6

Envisioning Ross Island

Urban Greenspaces Institute, Audubon Society of
Portland* and Willamette Riverkeeper

THE FUTURE OF ROSS ISLAND

a presentation by the friends of ross island



* Bird Alliance of Oregon



FRIENDS OF ROSS ISLAND

landscape designers / christina frank + melissa medeiros

urban greenspace institute / mike houck

audubon society of portland / bob sallinger

willamette riverkeeper / travis williams

greenworks, pc / mike abbate + mike faha

PHOTO CREDITS

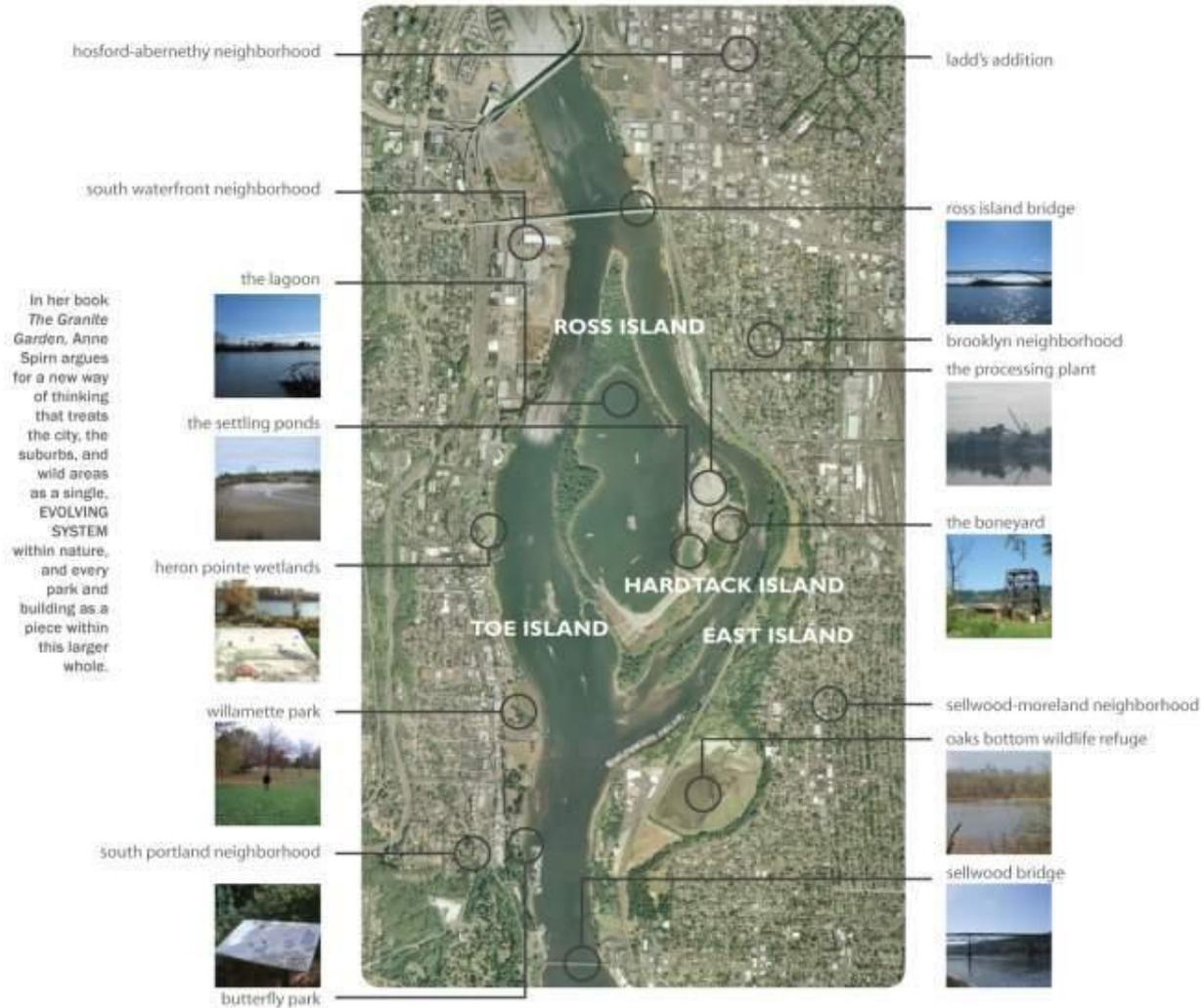
christina frank

melissa medeiros

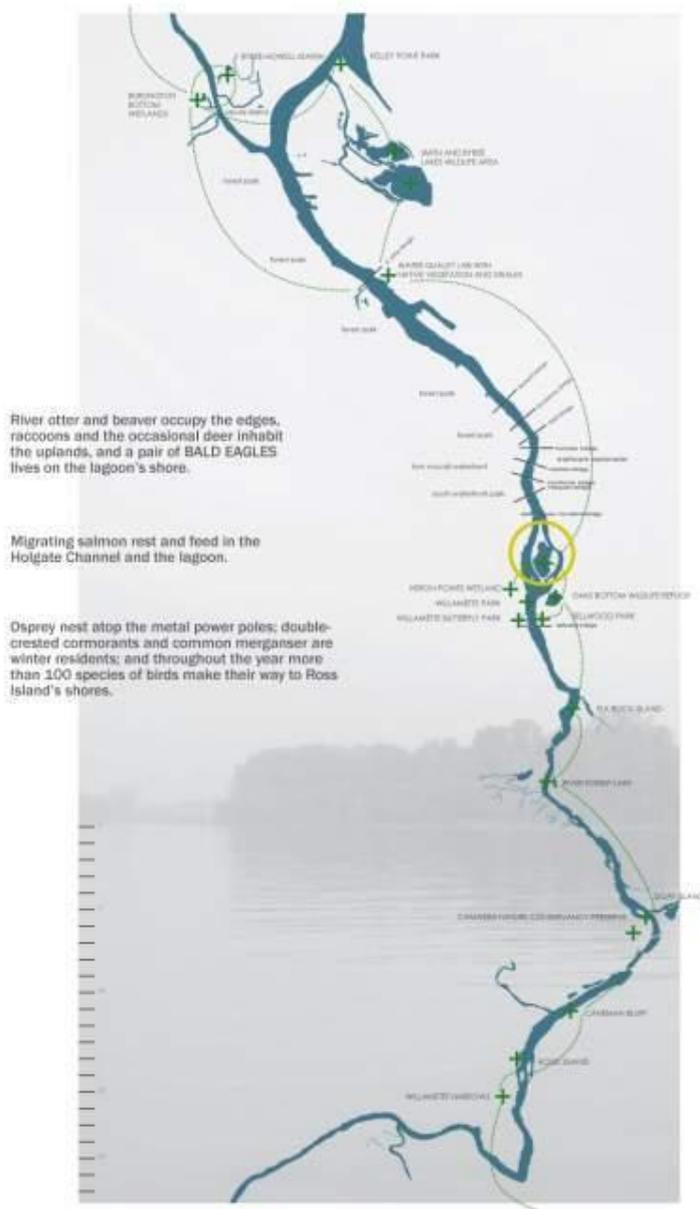
mike houck

jim cruce

Just one mile south of downtown Portland, the Ross Island complex is literally surrounded by the city. Bordered on the west by the South Waterfront development and on the east by the 160-acre Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge, this landscape is a **UNIQUE MIX** of urban and natural environments.



Ross Island is integrally connected to the landscape around it – the city, the neighborhoods, the parks, and the natural areas – and we must **CONSIDER THE ISLANDS IN THIS CONTEXT.**



River otter and beaver occupy the edges, raccoons and the occasional deer inhabit the uplands, and a pair of BALD EAGLES lives on the lagoon's shore.

Migrating salmon rest and feed in the Holgate Channel and the lagoon.

Osprey nest atop the metal power poles; double-crested cormorants and common merganser are winter residents; and throughout the year more than 100 species of birds make their way to Ross Island's shores.

Despite over 75 years of constant mining and a boneyard of discarded parts, THIS ISLAND TEEMS WITH WILDLIFE.

But in order for these animals to thrive, they must be able to safely travel along migration routes and between shelters, food sources, and nesting sites. This makes the islands a vital ECOLOGICAL STEPPING STONE in a connected chain of habitats along the Willamette River, and improving or degrading any one of these habitat 'hot spots' has repercussions far beyond the boundaries of that place.

The Ross Island complex becomes even more critical to migrating fish and wildlife when we realize that Portland's urban waterfront areas have HARDENED EDGES, ones that are suitable for commerce but not for habitat. This means that every inch of Ross Island's 6.5-mile long shoreline matters. A lot.



Principles for Future of Ross Island

principles

06

The following principles were developed by the Ross Island Vision Team, and we believe that they should guide all future Ross Island restoration, management, and public access decisions:

- 1 First and foremost, restore and manage Ross, Hardtack, East, and Toe Islands to ensure their long term ecological functions.
- 2 Consider the islands in their context: as part of a watershed, part of a wildlife system, and part of a city.
- 3 Nurture a mutually beneficial relationship between humans and the islands that improves ecological values and encourages sensitive interactions.
- 4 Cultivate a stewardship ethic that builds public, private, and community partnerships to support the islands' restoration and ecological health.
- 5 Preserve, reveal, and interpret the islands' natural, cultural, and industrial histories.
- 6 Evoke the island's unique qualities and iconic nature.
- 7 Employ an artistic approach to the islands' restoration and management.
- 8 Establish a long term, phased adaptive management plan for the islands.

What becomes of the Hardtack Island Processing Plant?

adaptive reuse

14

Michael Boland defines adaptive reuse as "a process that changes a disused or ineffective item into a new item that can be used for a different purpose." Catherine Howett says it is a form of RECYCLING OR RECONFIGURING that allows a manufactured site's "abstract structures to remain and function in new ways." In either case, on Ross Island this adaptation is already in full swing.

The island is a complex landscape where industrial activities and wildlife habitats **OVERLAP AND INTERTWINE**: osprey live atop the historic power poles; a family of swallows built their nests in the eaves of an abandoned dredge; wintering waterfowl use the rusted barges as a place to perch; and throughout the boneyard, vegetation sprouts from voids in the corroded machinery.

For a place like this, adaptive reuse is an embedded pattern, an already existing language. It reveals the interplay between what once was and what could be, and by acknowledging – and even highlighting – this dynamic, we can **HONOR HISTORY** while supporting a vibrant ecology.



can mining relics be transformed into art pieces, viewing towers, and suitable scaffoldings for animal habitat and vegetation?



continued restoration

08

Even after Ross Island's Reclamation Plan is fulfilled, ongoing restoration will be needed to protect and enhance the islands' valuable habitat.

- + remove invasive species such as ivy and blackberry
- + improve habitat for terrestrial species
- + create nesting boxes for targeted species like wood ducks, purple martins and kestrels
- + remove trash and debris from habitat areas
- + direct human activity away from sensitive ecological areas and important nesting areas
- + control bank erosion
- + perform species diversity monitoring



New Boating Rules on
**THE LOWER
WILLAMETTE**



The Lower Willamette River (from the confluence of the Columbia River upstream to Willamette Falls) is a complex waterway that is shared by many types of boating. There are special rules that regulate operations from the Hawthorne Bridge to Willamette Falls.



**Hawthorne Bridge to
Waverly Marina**

There is a seasonal pass through zone (May 1 - September 30) for boats between the Hawthorne Bridge (RM 13.2) and Waverly Marina (RM 17). In this section of river:

- ▶ All boats may pass through without reducing speed
- ▶ No PWC's above 5mph except to transit through the zone
- ▶ Towed watersports are not permitted in this zone

The penalty for violation of pass through zone rules is a **Class B Violation**, with a presumptive fine of **\$265**.

Ross Island and Holgate Channel

The Holgate Channel and Ross Island Lagoon are slow-no wake only.



For a dynamic web map, visit
Boat.Oregon.gov/map

Oregonian editorial calling for Slow, no wake zone for Holgate Channel and Ross Island Lagoon

Messing about in boats

Ross Island's Holgate Channel deserves protection as a no-wake zone

There are about 200,000 boats in Oregon. On a summer Sunday, it can seem that most of them — especially the really loud, way fast ones — are out on the Willamette.

Much merriment ensues.

Don't get us wrong, we think this is cool. Especially on hot days.

But downstream of the Oregon City falls, there are 26 miles of Willamette water on which people can play. This leads us to believe there might be room someplace for a stretch of calm, a reach of respite. Some spot for the wind-in-the-willows wallowing Mr. Rat enjoyed as "simply messing about in boats."

We have one such place in mind.

Just south of downtown Portland, Ross Island cleaves the river. The Willamette's main channel courses to the west. To the east arcs a narrower passage, a place of sandbars and shadows. The Holgate Channel seems tailor made for slow.

Portland paddlers have dreamed for years about making this channel a "no-wake zone." That's a section of water in which boats can proceed only at speeds slow enough to throw no wake. The advantages extend way beyond peace and polite driving. Wakes erode shorelines, and the shorelines in this narrow section of the Willamette are especially vulnerable.

In recent years, public agencies and private

interests have invested millions in the restoration of Ross Island, home now to a wide variety of wildlife, including nesting pairs of protected species. Across the channel is the splendid Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge. It's time to protect the reach of river connecting these urban oases.

What we need next is an assist from the State Marine Board.

The city of Portland, through its bureaus of parks and environmental services, should petition the agency to declare the Holgate Channel a no-wake zone. That, we suspect, will trigger quite a public debate.

Just the sort of wake-up call our city's boaters need.

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) appear in 2015, same year as a severe heat dome, posing health threat to humans, their pets.....



.....and fish and wildlife

Turkey Vultures feeding on dead salmon



Photo Mike Houck



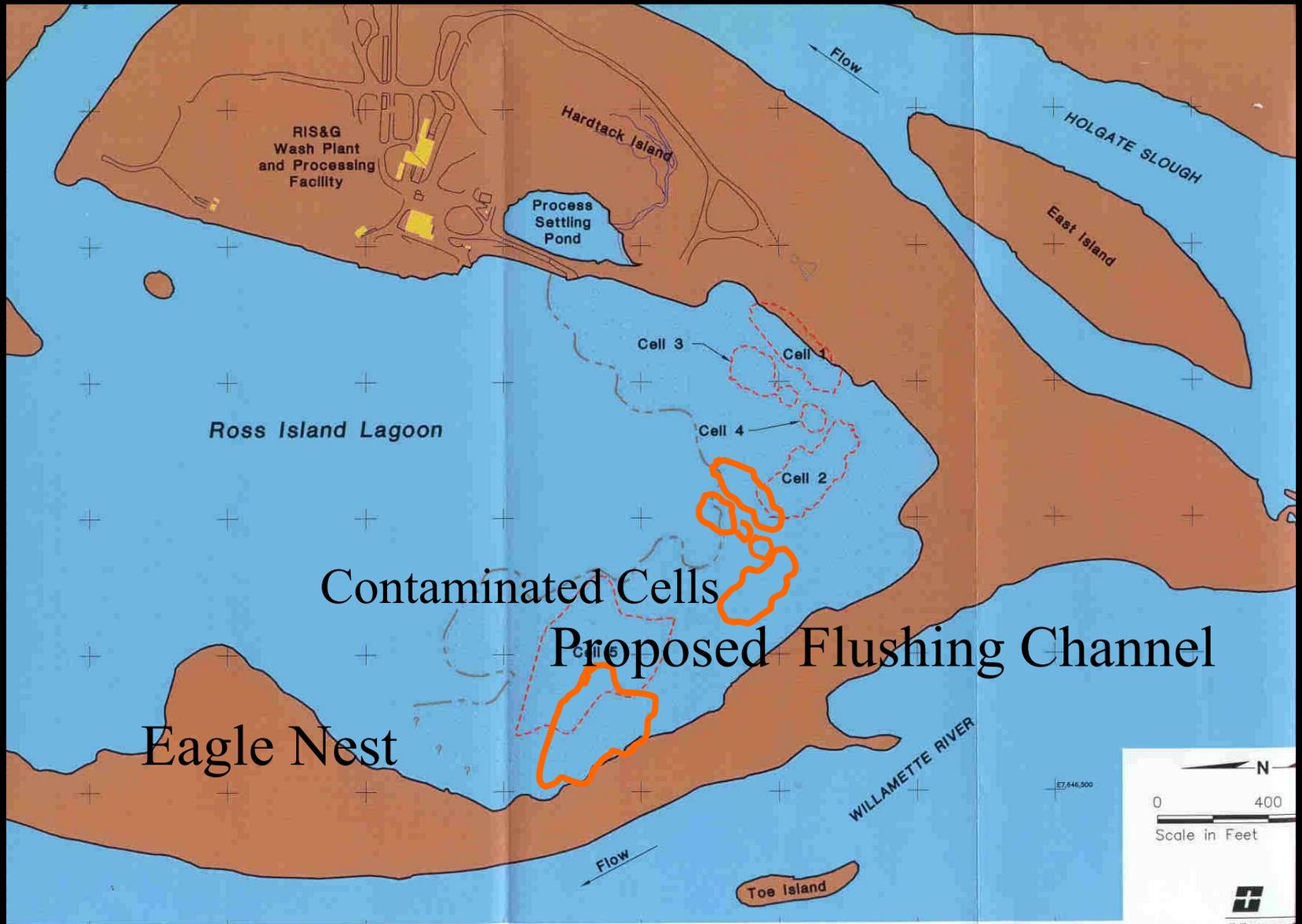
Human Access Project advocates for a flushing channel to address algal blooms



CITY CLUB
of PORTLAND

2025 City Club Research Committee
Launches Ross Island Study
Report Due Early 2026

Port of Portland contaminated cells



Alternatives to Flushing Channel:

Destratification using mechanical mixing systems

Diffuse aeration mixing with bubble curtain

Aeration mixing with bubble curtain

Cold water pumping

Surface cooling without destratification with pump

Immobilization of phosphorus with flocculents

Nature is dynamic! Where herons nested in 1979 eagles nest today. Any management of the Ross Island Archipelago must take that into account.

Where eagles nest today herons or egrets may nest in future years.



Viewed At South Waterfront



Ross Island---Holgate Channel---Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge Ecological Complex



Photos Mike Houck



160-acre Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge

What Now?

Owner Robert Pamplin Jr. under federal investigation for selling Ross Island to his own company's employee pension fund for \$10.8 million in 2022.

A subsequent settlement with the U.S. Department of Labor forced Pamplin's company to reacquire the island and repay the pension fund with interest.

The Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) has proposed a \$2.9 million fine against Ross Island Sand & Gravel for failing to complete reclamation of the lagoon and surrounding uplands after mining ended in 2001

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has filed liens totaling over \$156,000 against the company for unpaid cleanup costs related to its former headquarters.

The International Union of Operating Engineers filed a lawsuit alleging that Ross Island Sand & Gravel withdrew from a union pension plan in 2023, leaving a \$1.9 million withdrawal liability.

In August 2025, Old Republic Surety Company was granted a default judgment of over \$629,000 against multiple Pamplin entities, including Ross Island Sand & Gravel

Ross Island Lagoon site for depositing Portland Harbor Contaminated Sediments?

Empire for Sale

Dr. Robert Pamplin concedes he raided his employees' pension fund. Properties all over Oregon will now be sold so he can pay back tens of millions of dollars.

BY NIGEL JAQUISS njaquiss@oregonjournalismproject.org

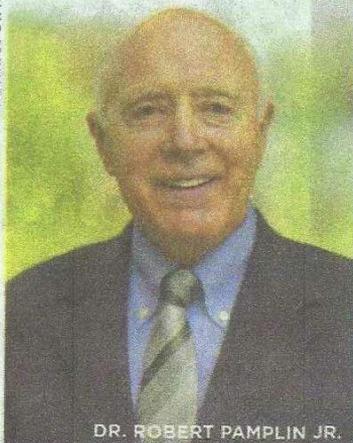
Efforts are underway, the Oregon Journalism Project has learned, to unwind one of the great timber fortunes in the state—at the order of the federal government.

On Dec. 26, Dr. Robert Pamplin Jr., 83, settled a lawsuit brought by the U.S. Department of Labor to resolve allegations he treated his company's pension fund like a piggy bank, selling overvalued company real estate to unwitting pensioners.

Court records show an independent trustee appointed by the feds will sell Pamplin properties all over the state to make the pension fund whole and undo what the feds say are "illegal" real estate transactions Pamplin executed.

Properties that will be sold include the 81,000-acre R2 Ranch, the largest in central Oregon, which sprawls across Jefferson and Wasco counties, along with two prime Yamhill County wineries and Columbia Empire Farms—at its peak,

ALVARO FONTAN



DR. ROBERT PAMPLIN JR.

Oregon's largest producer of hazelnuts. (See map, page 9.)

Pamplin is the owner and CEO of an industrial holding company, R.B. Pamplin Corp., that his father built and he later took over. He was, until last year, the owner of Pamplin Media Group, the state's largest newspaper chain.

An ordained minister and philanthropist who says he's given more than \$150 million to charity, Pamplin nonetheless made a remarkable admission right after Christmas.

He conceded in the Dec. 26 filing in U.S. District Court in Portland that he had, over the previous five years, violated a laundry list of federal pension laws, in effect using his company's pension fund as a bank and diverting tens of millions of dollars from thousands of pensioners whose labor helped make him wealthy. Many of those violations were first reported in the pages of *Willamette Week*.

As a condition of the settlement, Pamplin agreed to a lifetime ban on serving as a trustee, to make the pension fund whole for all losses, and to pay millions in fines.

"It's a severe but appropriate penalty," says Jim Ambrose, a Portland pension lawyer who reviewed the settlement. "What Pamplin did was egregious."

Pamplin agreed to contribute a variety of assets to make up losses at the pension fund. Simultaneously, the trustee will sell real estate Pamplin illegally placed

in the fund. Pamplin's wife and two daughters also signed the consent agreement, certifying they will be responsible if he fails to pay damages and penalties that will total a minimum of \$25 million but could add up to much more.

Pamplin's downfall saddens people who have known him. "It's heartbreaking because he did a lot of wonderful philanthropic things," says property magnate Jordan Schnitzer, who, like Pamplin, has been a major supporter of Lewis & Clark College and the Portland Art Museum. "His father was a legend, but in family businesses, there are a lot of examples of the next generation struggling."

Pamplin's attorneys did not respond to a request for comment.

"It's a severe but appropriate penalty. What Pamplin did was egregious."

Pamplin's extensive admission of wrongdoing is a painful outcome for a man who spent decades building his reputation through philanthropy and civic engagement.

The Pamplin name is on the gymnasium at Lewis & Clark College, the business schools at the University of Portland and Virginia Tech (his father's alma mater), and the Pamplin Historical Park & The Museum of the Civil War Soldier in Virginia, on which Pamplin spent nearly \$40 million. Pamplin endowed the directorship at the Portland Art Museum, where he was a longtime board member. He put his portrait—and a caption, "Owner & Neighbor"—on the front page of the *Portland Tribune* and many of the other 24 newspapers he owned until last year.

Urban Greenspaces Institute's Objectives:

Bring the entire Ross Island Archipelago into public ownership

Ensure Ross Island Sand & Gravel (or other owner) finishes reclamation obligations

Establish, restore and manage a Ross Island Archipelago---Holgate Channel---Oaks Bottom Wildlife Ecological Complex

Any solution to algal blooms must ensure the ecological integrity of all the islands, protect bald eagle nesting sites, and ensure continued restoration

Manage human activity to protect habitat and nesting activity for eagles, herons and other fish wildlife

Focus on Adaptive Management, recognizing nature is dynamic, where herons nested eagles now nest. Climate change will impact the islands and management must account for a more intense flooding regime and species changes.

