Oregon
Department
of Agriculture
635 Capitol Street N.E.
Salem, OR 97301-2532

Identification of Metro Region Agricultural Lands and Assessing Their Long-Term Commercial Viability

The key factors that ODA has employed to identify significant and intact agricultural lands are provided and discussed below. Such an assessment includes an analysis of the ability of an area to conduct long-term viable commercial agricultural operations. An assessment using these factors is perhaps best described as an analysis of the site and the situation of a subject area. Analysis of site and situation is best understood as an examination of both the capability (ability of the land to produce an agricultural product) and the suitability (ability to conduct viable farm use) of any given tract of land to be utilized for farm use.

Capability Factors

The physical ability of land to produce an agricultural product is a key and dominant factor in any assessment. Quantity and quality of soils and water play a significant role in the viability of agricultural production.

- Soils: USDA NRCS agricultural capability class and importance (prime, unique, important farmlands). The better the agricultural capability, the less management (input) is required by the operator to produce a crop.
- Water: Availability of water for irrigation of agricultural crops and livestock watering. Water is key to the production of many high-value crops. However, many crops, including high-value crops, can be produced using dry land agricultural practices.

Suitability Factors

Most of the suitability factors are related to the position of farming operations as part of a large block of agricultural land or other resource lands. Protecting and maintaining large blocks of agricultural land is key to maintaining the integrity of working lands. Integrity involves many issues including the ability to operate with limited conflicts, curtail speculative land values and maintaining a critical mass of land sufficient to leverage the infrastructure needs of the industry.

- Adjacent Land Use Pattern: Adjacent and area land use pattern (non-farm uses, exception areas). Includes analysis of edges that provide workable buffers between agricultural lands and non-farm uses.
- Agricultural Land Use Pattern: What are the types of crops grown and what is the ability of farming operations/practices associated with producing these crops to co-exist with other land uses in the area.
- Parcelization (number and size), Tenure and Ownership Pattern: Parcelization is important, but not always as a stand-alone factor. All other factors being equal, smaller parcels under multiple ownerships are less favorable for long-term commercial farm use. However, the practice of renting or leasing smaller (and larger) parcels needs to be taken into account. Long term, if the smaller parcels are protected for farm use, they

frequently become available for rent, lease or acquisition for farm use, especially if they do not contain dwellings.

- Agriculture Infrastructure: Elements such as transportation, irrigation delivery, labor availability, processing, other service needs, and agricultural special districts,
- Zoning: Many lands currently employed in farm use are not zoned for exclusive farm use. The long-term suitability of such areas is impacted by the non-farm uses that may be permitted and the ability to further partition or subdivide the area.
- Location in Relationship to Adjacent Non-farmland:
    - The number, size and length of edges and buffers with urban and other non-farm development impact the efficiency and effectiveness of agricultural practices and can impact land values.
    - The scale, shape and size of protrusions of non-farm lands into agricultural lands also impact efficient and effective agricultural operations.
    - Certain non-farm uses are more compatible with agricultural operations than others.
    - The ability to further partition or subdivide.

Other Factors

- Concentration/clusters of Farms:
    - The ability for sharing of labor, housing, equipment and other needed services.
    - The ability to leverage the infrastructure needs of agriculture by maintaining economies of scale.
- Trends: Trends in regional agriculture create different needs and abilities for the industry. Consumer trends are increasingly dynamic and segmented, creating new markets – but ones that are rapidly changing and demanding more specialty products. Specifically:
    - Global trade opportunities and concerns.
    - Demand for organic, sustainable, high quality foods both in the home and at restaurants.
    - Farmers markets, direct marketing opportunities, development of specialty and niche crops.
    - "Agri-tourism"
    - Increasing demand for biofuels/energy development.
    - Growing recognition of food security issues and demand for products from the local food shed.
    - Federal Farm Bill - new conservation incentives

Results

Applying these factors on the ground, the Department of Agriculture identified twenty agricultural sub-regions separated into three main agricultural land categories: Foundation, Important and Conflicted Agricultural Land.

Foundation Agricultural Lands are agricultural lands that provide the core support to the regions agricultural base. These lands anchor the regions larger agricultural base. They incubate and support the larger agricultural industry and are vital to its long-term viability. They have the attributes necessary to sustain current agricultural operations **and** to adapt to changing technologies and consumer demands. These lands include:

- Clackanomah*
- East Canby
- Clackamas Prairies
- French Prairie
- Tualatin Valley*
- Dairy/McKay Creeks

- Sauvie Island
- Scappoose Flats

* Part of sub-region considered Conflicted Agricultural Land

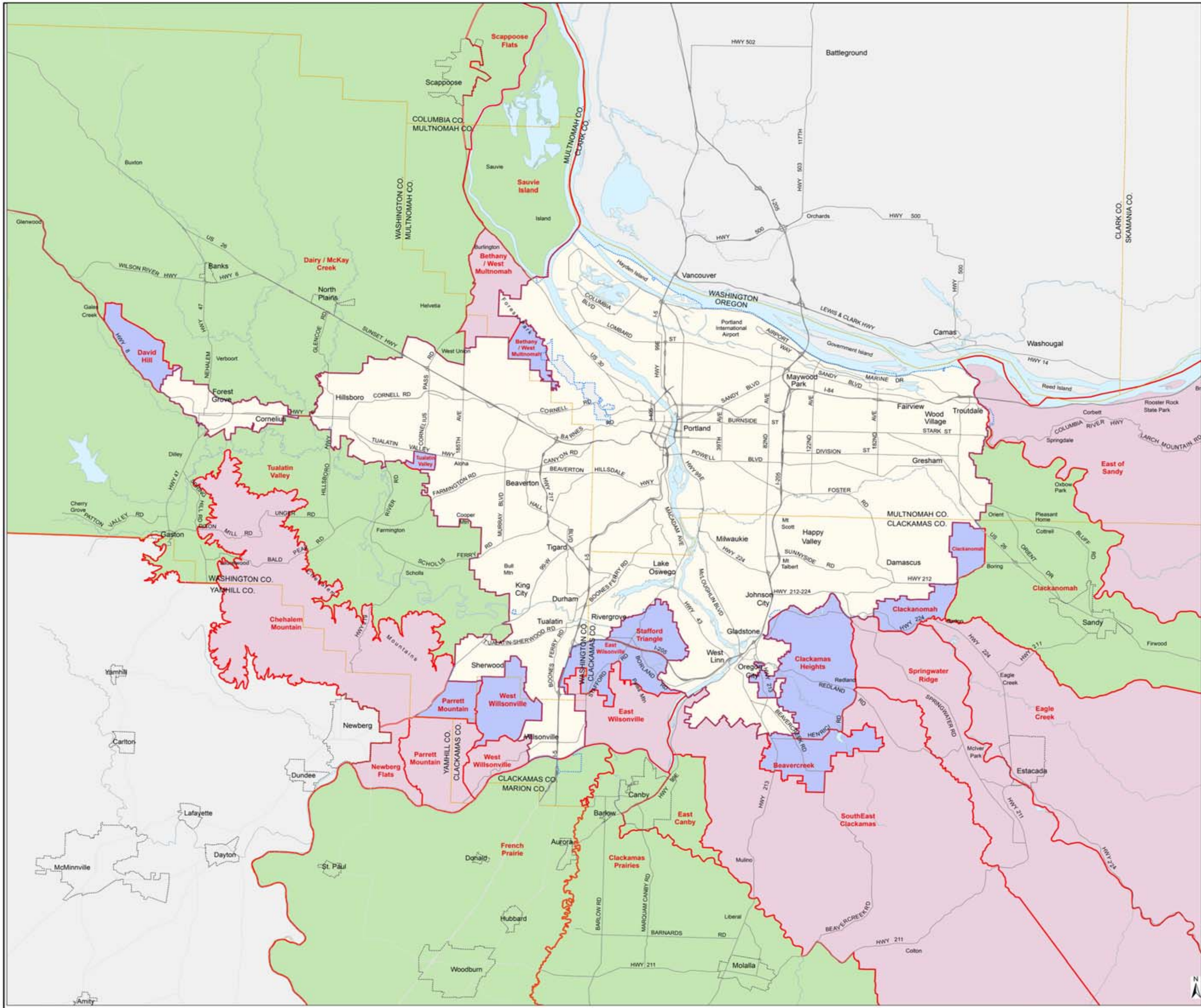
Important Agricultural Lands are agricultural lands that are suited to agricultural production and contribute to or have the capacity to contribute to the commercial agricultural economy. These lands maintain the ability to remain viable over the long-term. They have the potential to be foundation lands, but tend to be not utilized to their full potential. Trends in regional agricultural could lead to a greater development of the agricultural capacity of these areas. These lands include:

- East of Sandy River
- Eagle Creek
- Springwater Ridge
- Southeast Clackamas*
- East Wilsonville*
- West Wilsonville*
- Chehalem Mountain
- Newberg Flats
- Bethany/West Multnomah*

* Part of sub-region considered Conflicted Agricultural Land

Conflicted Agricultural Lands are agricultural lands whose agricultural capability (soils/water) is more times than not considered excellent but whose suitability is questionable primarily due to questions of integrity and ability to operate that in turn lead to issues of long-term viability. These lands are influenced by factors that diminish long-term certainty, which in turn tends to limit investment in agricultural operations by area farmers. These lands could become Important Agricultural Lands with changes in circumstances and trends in the industry. There may be individual or multiple operations within these areas that by them selves are conducting efficient, effective and viable operations. These areas include:

- The area located between the Damascus UGB, the Clackamas River and Noyer Creek.
- The area located north of Boring and Highway 212 and west of 282nd Avenue.
- Clackamas Heights
- Beavercreek Area
- Stafford Triangle
- South I-205 Crescent
- West Wilsonville north of Mill Creek
- Parrett Mountain
- South Hillsboro Notch
- David Hill
- Bethany/West Multnomah south of power line


Scappoose Flats
Scappoose
COLUMBIA CO.
MULTNOMAH CO.
Sauvie Island
Dairy / McKay Creek
Bethany / West Multnomah
David Hill
Tualatin Valley
Chehalem Mountain
Parrett Mountain
West Willsonville
Newberg Flats
Stafford Triangle
East Wilsonville
Clackamas Heights
Beavercreek
Springwater Ridge
Eagle Creek
SouthEast Clackamas
Clackanomah
East of Sandy
East Canby
French Prairie
Clackamas Prairies
Battleground
Vancouver
Camas
Washougal
WASHINGTON
OREGON
Portland
Hillsboro
Forest Grove
Cornelius
Beaverton
Tigard
Gresham
Troutdale
Fairview
Wood Village
Milwaukie
Lake Oswego
Happy Valley
Damascus
Sandy
Oregon City
West Linn
Gladstone
Tualatin
Sherwood
Wilsonville
Newberg
Canby
Estacada
Molalla
Woodburn
McMinnville
Dayton
Lafayette
Carlton
Dundee
Yamhill
Aurora
Donald
St. Paul
Hubbard
Barlow
Banks
North Plains
Gaston
WASHINGTON CO.
YAMHILL CO.
CLACKAMAS CO.
MARION CO.
MULTNOMAH CO.
CLARK CO.
SKAMANIA CO.

RLIS
REGIONAL LAND INFORMATION SYSTEM

Agriculture Land Inventory and Analysis

- Study Areas
- Foundation
- Important
- Conflicted
- Metro UGB
- Neighboring Cities' UGB
- County Boundaries

Oregon Department of Agriculture
635 Capitol St. NE
Salem, OR 97301-2532

1 inch equals 1.42 miles

Location Map

METRO
METRO DATA RESOURCE CENTER
600 NORTHEAST GRAND AVENUE PORTLAND, OREGON 97232-2736