



This atlas exists as a resource for people interested in what the future may hold for the Willamette River Basin in Oregon. Our objective is to provide scientific data and analyses that help both policymakers and local citizens make better decisions about land and water use in the region. While the atlas deals specifically with the Willamette River Basin, we believe the approaches applied can serve as a model for similar decision support efforts in other areas.

We begin, in this chapter, with an overview of the study area and project. These brief introductions set the stage for the more detailed discussions that follow in subsequent chapters. Chapters 2 to 6 describe the Willamette River Basin in physical, biological, and human terms, with a particular emphasis on how people have altered the basin since EuroAmerican settlement began circa 1850. This information on the natural and cultural processes that have shaped the basin provides an essential foundation for projecting future change. In Chapter 7, we present three alternative visions for the basin's future through the year 2050, designed with input from local citizens, organizations, and governments to reflect a range of plausible policy options. We also evaluate the likely effects of these alternative futures on important natural resources, including water availability, terrestrial habitats, and aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. Only by understanding the full implications of the choices before them can local communities make informed decisions about future land and water use. Finally, in Chapter 8, we demonstrate how the data and analyses in the atlas can be used to prioritize and design restoration strategies, focusing on the Willamette River and its floodplain.