

## Valley folks talk about the future

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**A** By **The Hillsboro Argus**

Local government officials from counties and cities throughout the Willamette Valley met at Willamette University on Monday in an effort to confront the shared challenge of enough clean air and water for everyone heading into the future.

The organizers of the Willamette Valley Resilience Compact recognize prior collaborative efforts at the regional scale for emergency services, water supply and fire suppression.

Participants have the latest information and research provided by the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute and other academic resources located in the health, natural resource, business and public administration departments in the Oregon University System and Willamette University.

Elected commissioners, council representatives, mayors and representatives from Metro seek to offset shrinking budgets and tax bases by identifying mutually beneficial economic strategies, said Albany Mayor Sharon Konopa. There are 2.6 million residents of the Valley now, and recent projections suggest that number will grow to 4 million by 2050.

"We all take for granted the environment we share in Oregon with our clean water and air," Konopa said. "Our local region cannot change the world or how other countries care for their environment, but we can work together regionally to make sure Oregon has a clean and sustainable future."

Growth will place relentless pressure on the state's most productive farmland and valued forest land, and threaten already fragile ecosystems and endangered species in the entire Willamette watershed. Acting cooperatively enables local governments to leverage grant funding and private investment in renewable energy, climate-resilient crops, and farm and forest processing facilities.

These challenges and threats can only be met on a regional level, said Metro Councilor Rex Burkholder.

"Our communities are leaders in sustainability, green job creation, and renewable energy development," Burkholder said. "We -- the Metro region and Willamette Valley -- have another great opportunity to collaborate in making our communities more resilient in ways that will enhance our communities and guide action at the state and federal level."

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