

Willamette Valley Resilience Compact kicks off with local officials 12 Dec.

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(SALEM) - An historic assembly of county and city leaders and administrators will meet in December to launch the Willamette Valley Resilience Compact.

Oregon's populous and resource rich Willamette Valley faces a variety of pressures, from extreme weather to rapid growth, that cross all political boundaries. On December 12th, local government officials from counties and cities throughout the Valley, including elected commissioners, council representatives and mayors from Metro, Benton County, and the cities of Eugene and Tangent, will meet to confront these shared challenges.

This landmark assembly will seek to offset shrinking budgets and tax bases, as well as reduced state and federal support, by identifying mutually beneficial economic strategies based on future population and economic trends.

Participants believe that organizing across political boundaries and sharing resources on a Willamette River Basin scale will likely be more successful than the single issue and single jurisdictional efforts of the past.

The 2.6 million residents of the Valley now represent 70% of Oregon's total population, and recent projections suggest that number will grow to 4 million by 2050. This 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 also enables local governments to leverage state and federal funding and private investment in projects like renewable energy, new climate resilient crops, and farm and forest processing facilities.

Novel and more virulent strains of communicable diseases create a public health threat, particularly as the population grows, while drought, wildfire and flood events increase in intensity with a changing climate. These challenges and threats can only be met effectively on a valley widescale as they require cooperative efforts to contain.

The organizers of the Resilience Compact recognize that they have the advantage of prior collaborative efforts at regional scale for emergency services, water supply, and fire suppression, among others.

Participants will also have access to 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.

The Willamette Resiliency Compact will be coordinated by The Resource Innovation Group, which is affiliated with the Center for Sustainable Communities at Willamette University.

Questions from the media will be taken at the event at 1:45 on December 12th in the Alumni Lounge on the third floor of the Putnam University Center at Willamette University. For more information and to register, please contact: Roger Hamilton: hamilton.roger@comcast.net, 541-912-1419 or Stacy Vynne: stacy@trig-cli.org, 541-654-4048.

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