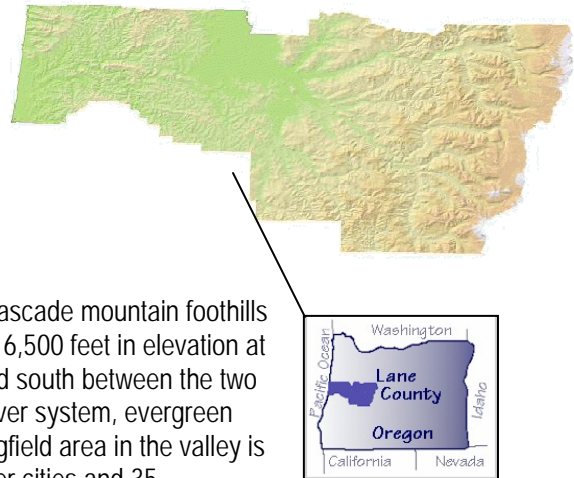


Chapter **: County Profile

Physical Features

Lane County is in western Oregon, approximately 125 miles south of the Washington border and 150 miles north of the California border. Comprising approximately 4,620 square miles, it extends from the Pacific Ocean approximately 120 air miles, and its landscape is some of the most diverse in Oregon. Along the 30 mile ocean shoreline are dunes, estuaries, marsh lands and lush forests. Traveling east from the coast, the terrain gradually slopes up 2,000 feet into the Coast Range (which is 4,000 feet in elevation to the north, in Benton County). Evergreen forests dominate the Coast Range as well as the Cascade Mountains in eastern Lane County. The Cascade mountain foothills adorn the Willamette Valley's eastern horizon before ascending to 6,500 feet in elevation at the eastern county boundary. The Willamette Valley runs north and south between the two mountain ranges. The valley is characterized by the Willamette River system, evergreen forests, oak savannahs, and agricultural lands. The Eugene-Springfield area in the valley is the county's one metropolitan area, and there are also eight smaller cities and 35 unincorporated communities. Approximately 88 percent of the county landscape is devoted to forest use, the majority in federal land ownership.



Numerous lakes, rivers and creeks, combined with a predominantly rural character and prevalence of natural areas, make Lane County a recreation Mecca. The climate is generally moderate with an average summer temperature of 70 degrees and winter temperature of 40 degrees. Annual precipitation is 46", including annual snowfalls in the Cascade mountains and mostly winter rains further west.

Lane County has nine dams and associated reservoirs built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during the 1940's through 1960's. Although the dams were primarily constructed for flood control, they serve several other purposes. The reservoirs behind the dams supply water for municipal, industrial, and agricultural uses, supplement downstream river flows to improve water quality and fish habitat, and provide an abundance of water recreation opportunities. In addition, four of the dams produce hydro-electric power that is distributed by the Bonneville Power Administration. The Carman Smith Dam on the McKenzie River was designed and constructed for hydro-electric power supplied to the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area.

Water is a primary influence shaping the landscape and how people interact with it. Winter rains and melting mountain snow supply water to nine watersheds¹ named for the larger rivers located throughout the county. County parks are located in seven of these watersheds: the Coast Fork Willamette, Long Tom, McKenzie, Middle Fork Willamette, Upper (main stem) Willamette, Siltcoos, and Siuslaw. Portions of the Alsea and Umpqua Watersheds located within Lane County are almost entirely composed of federal forest lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

An overview of the physical characteristics of the seven watersheds that include county parks follows. The Watershed Councils of Lane County were an important source of information for this chapter. Chapter ** is devoted to a description of all county parks by watershed.

¹ A watershed is the land region draining into a river, river system, or body of water.

MCKENZIE WATERSHED



The McKenzie watershed extends from the Cascade Mountains to the Willamette Valley floor. About two-thirds of the land is within the Willamette National Forest, where the river originates in the Three Sisters Wilderness. The majority of Lane County communities and parks located here are along the McKenzie River and a state highway that follows the river. Eight unincorporated communities trace the highway and the river. Three Sisters Wilderness. They are Blue River, Leaburg, Marcola, McKenzie Bridge, Nimrod, Rainbow, Vida, and Walterville. Large scale forestry operations and small farms are also prevalent. The McKenzie is the drinking water source for the Eugene metropolitan area. The Cougar, Blue River, and Carman-Smith dams and reservoirs are located here.

The McKenzie's water clarity and cold temperature make it an internationally recognized salmon fishery. Its excellent wildlife habitat and water quality are why it is also considered a world class recreation magnet for drift boating, rafting, kayaking, and fishing. The most northerly section, from the headwaters at Clear Lake in Linn County, to Scott Creek just inside the north Lane County line, is federally designated as Wild and Scenic. The Mohawk River and Camp Creek form smaller watersheds within the McKenzie.

MIDDLE FORK WILLAMETTE WATERSHED



The Middle Fork Willamette River meanders from the Cascade Mountains west into the main stem of the Willamette River. Its North Fork is a designated Wild and Scenic River, and Fall Creek and Lost Creek are two of its other larger tributaries. The Willamette National Forest and lower Cascade mountains dominate this watershed. There are four dams and reservoirs here --Dexter, Hills Creek, Fall Creek, and Lookout Point.

As is true for the McKenzie, the communities located here generally lie along a state highway that follows the river. The cities of Oakridge and Westfir are located furthest east, near each other in the mountains and surrounded by national forest lands, with Lowell approximately twenty miles closer to the valley floor in the Cascade foothills along with the unincorporated communities of Dexter, Fall Creek, Jasper, and Pleasant Hill. The Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area is partially in this watershed. The 2,200-acre Howard Buford Recreation Area, a county park, is at the confluence of the Coast and Middle Fork Willamette Rivers in the metropolitan area. In addition to a predominance of public forests, many lands outside the metro area and communities are devoted to private forestry operations and farming.

UPPER WILLAMETTE



The Upper or main stem Willamette watershed is mostly north of Lane County. The Willamette River generally flows north into the Columbia River at the Oregon border. Flowing along the valley floor between the Coast and Cascade Mountain Ranges, the Willamette River was an historically important transportation route for forest and agricultural products. Now, Interstate 5, not far from the river, carries the state's products and services north and south and attract the majority of the state's as well as Lane County's population. The Willamette River in many ways defines the City of Eugene's open space lands, providing water recreation opportunities, a major bike trail along both banks, and a necklace of riverside parks.

The Willamette's water quality is continually under pressure to serve an increasing and diverse array of human and wildlife needs. Besides the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area, Coburg, and Junction City, agricultural lands generally characterize that portion of this watershed that is within Lane County.

COAST FORK WILLAMETTE WATERSHED



The Coast Fork Willamette River is fed largely by creeks from the Calapooya mountains, which divide this watershed and the Umpqua basin to the south. The cities of Creswell and Cottage Grove, and the unincorporated communities of Culp Creek, Dorena, London, and Saginaw are located here. These communities largely grew up around the timber industry, which continues to have a strong presence, and historic gold mines in the mountains. There are two dams and reservoirs here –Cottage Grove along the Coast Fork, and Dorena on the Row River, one of the Coast Fork's tributaries. The Row River Trail, managed by the Bureau of Land Management and built in cooperation with several agencies as a Rails to Trails project, extends 16 miles from Cottage Grove to the Umpqua National Forest, passing near county parks, historic covered bridges, and other local attractions.

LONG TOM WATERSHED



The Long Tom River originates in the Coast Range, flowing east to the valley floor and 12,000-acre Fern Ridge Reservoir before feeding into the Willamette. This reservoir is home to three county parks, including Richardson, Lane County's largest Class A park and RV campground.

The Long Tom's waters support more than 140,000 people, and the City of Eugene's major industrial lands and some of its commercial areas lie within its eastern fringe. The City of Veneta and rural farming communities of Alvadore, Cheshire, Crow, Franklin, and Noti are to the west and north. Crop lands make up approximately 30% of the watershed. Over 250 bird species winter or nest at the reservoir and surrounding marshlands. Most of Lane County's numerous wineries are located in this watershed, and they are an increasingly important component of the state's and Lane County's economy.

SIUSLAW WATERSHED



The Siuslaw River meanders extensively for 120 river miles from the Western Cascade mountains south of the Willamette Valley near the town of Lorane, through the Coast Mountain Range to the Pacific Ocean. The Coast Range divides western and eastern Lane County. Several communities are located throughout the low-lying mountain range, along two state highways and along the Siuslaw River tributaries, Lake and Deadwood Creeks. They are Blachly, Deadwood, Greenleaf, Mapleton, Swisshome, Triangle Lake, Walton. The mountainous terrain makes these communities somewhat isolated. The community of Cushman is further west, directly adjacent to the river. The community of Glenada and the City of Florence are on the Pacific Ocean coast. Residents of this watershed were historically employed primarily in the fishing, farm and forest industries. Increasingly, especially on the coast, communities are comprised of retirees, and tourism, recreation, and second homes play a larger role in the economy.

SILTCOOS WATERSHED



A portion of the Siltcoos Watershed is in the southwest corner of Lane County, and it extends into Douglas County along the Pacific Ocean coast. This watershed includes the small city of Dunes City. The watershed is relatively small in size, extending to the ocean from the coastal mountains in the Siuslaw National Forest. It is a remote and

relatively undeveloped area that is important for bird and other wildlife habitat. Siltcoos Lake is the largest freshwater lake on the Oregon coast, with nearly 30 miles of shoreline and covering 3,164 square acres. With eleven species of fish it is a popular fishing destination.

Socioeconomic Characteristics

This section addresses Lane County's population, households, and economy. Numbers and trends are based upon the 2000 Census and estimates for the following four years. Information was gathered primarily from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Population Research Center at Portland State University, and the *Oregon Blue Book*.

POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

In the 2000 Census, Lane County's population was 322,959 people. Its average annual growth rate over the previous 40 years was about 1.7%, with a 1.3% average growth rate between 1990 and 2000. The state Population Research Center estimates Lane County's 2004 population to have increased 3.2% since 2000, to 333,350, based upon births, deaths, and migration to and from the area. Most of this growth, 65%, came from net migration. This compares to the state's overall growth rate of 4.7% for the same period. Other areas of the state, in particular Deschutes and Jackson Counties, are experiencing much of the state's more rapid growth.

About 65% of the population is age 18 to 64; 21% is younger and 14% is older. There is an even division between females and males, with slightly more females (50.8% of the population).

There are an average of 71 persons per square mile in Lane County. This compares to about 35 per square mile for the state as a whole; over 1,500 for Multnomah County where Portland, Oregon is located; and over 9,000 people per square mile in the District of Columbia. The low statewide density is due to the relatively sparse population in the Oregon high desert, east of the Cascade Mountain Range.

In 1960 the number of people who lived in Lane County cities compared to those living outside cities was evenly divided. Today about 70% of the county population lives within a city, with most (60% of the total population) living in either Eugene or Springfield.

Ethnically Lane County is relatively homogeneous especially compared with more urbanized areas in the state (i.e., Portland) and nation. Table ** shows the U.S. Census data regarding ethnicity in Lane County's 2004 population.

Table **: Lane County Population by Ethnic Group (%)

White, not Hispanic	87.5
Hispanic	5.4
Asian	2.5
Alaskan & American Indian	1.2
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	.2
Other	3.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

In recent years, the county's population has increasingly diversified, especially with regard to the Latino and Hispanic populations. The state's official population research center has noted this trend; however, specific data was not immediately available.

Lane County's population is slightly more well educated than that of the state and nation. As of the year 2000, approximately 87.5% of Lane County's population aged 25 and older had a high school diploma compared with

85.1% statewide and 80.4% nationally. 25.5% had at least a bachelor's degree compared to 25.1% statewide and 24.4% nationally.

Despite these educational demographics, the county's population is significantly less well off in comparison to the state and nation. The median household income as of 2003 was \$37,000. This compares with a state median of \$42,593 and U.S. median of \$43,318. Approximately 14% of the population lives below the national poverty level as compared with 12% for the state and 12.5% nationally. 62% of Lane County's households own their own homes compared to 64.3% statewide and 66.2% nationally. There are less than 3 people in each household, on average, as is true for the state and nation.

Trends

According to the state Population Research Center, there are several important population forces affecting Oregon, many of which mirror national trends. The state population is growing faster than the national average and, during the past decade, accelerated its rate of increase. Oregon's population is also becoming older, primarily as a result of the aging of persons born during the baby boom. The overall state median age rose from 34.6 to 36.6 from 1990 to 2000. As previously mentioned, the state's minority population is growing much faster than the white population. As a result the population is becoming more ethnically diverse. The average size of households is decreasing and at the same time, households are becoming more diverse in make-up, with more single person households and families without children than in the past.²

ECONOMY

Historically, Lane County's economy was based on timber and agriculture. Lane County was one of the nation's biggest timber producers, and it continues to be an important industry here. The fertile soil and moderate climate in the Willamette Valley also made the county one of the most productive farming areas in the nation. However, with the reductions in timber harvesting and the continued population growth affecting many agricultural areas, there has been a change of emphasis in the economic development of the county.

Today, Lane County's economy has diversified into a regional center for health care, manufacturing, higher education, and government. Lumber, wood, and paper products remain the largest manufacturing cluster in Lane County, although employment in these sectors is projected to slowly decline over the next 10 years. Transportation equipment manufacturing has become the second-largest manufacturing sector in Lane County and is projected to add more jobs than any other manufacturing sector over the same period. Growth in high technology has also bolstered employment. As the home to the University of Oregon and a federal courthouse, government employment helps stabilize Lane County's economy.³

Tourism is also an important component of the county's economic vitality. Lane County's diverse outdoor resources attract enthusiasts who enjoy activities such as whitewater rafting, drift boating and kayaking, fishing, bicycle touring and mountain biking, hiking, camping and skiing. Numerous award-winning wineries are also a popular draw. In 2005, the Convention and Visitors Association of Lane County Oregon (CVALCO) the University of Oregon, and other community leaders succeeded in attracting the 2008 Pre-Olympic trials to Eugene.

Lane County Parks Division's financial situation is chronicled in Chapter **, Parks Division History. It provides additional information about local economic circumstances in the context of the national economy over the past several decades.

² *Oregon Outlook*, Population Research Center (April 2003)

³ Oregon Employment Department (September 2006)