

# What is a Watershed?

A watershed is a place where everything is connected – forest, fields, industry, businesses, houses, and all creatures. People affect watersheds and watersheds affect the health of our rivers and streams.

- A watershed is any area of land from which water drains to a common point, be it a river, pond, stream or lake.
- Watersheds are separated by each other by topographic features called ridge lines or divides.
- Watersheds are hierarchical, with small watersheds nested within larger ones.
- Watersheds come in all shapes and sizes and can cross county, state, and national boundaries.
- A watershed can be as large as all the land draining into the Columbia River, or as small as 20 acres draining to a pond.
- The term “Basin” is often used to describe the land area draining into a major river such as the Columbia.
- The term “Subbasin” is used to describe a smaller watershed nested within a larger one.

## Protecting Our Watershed.

Unlike the City of Portland’s protected Bull Run watershed, the Clackamas is a multi-use watershed with various users and ownership throughout the watershed.

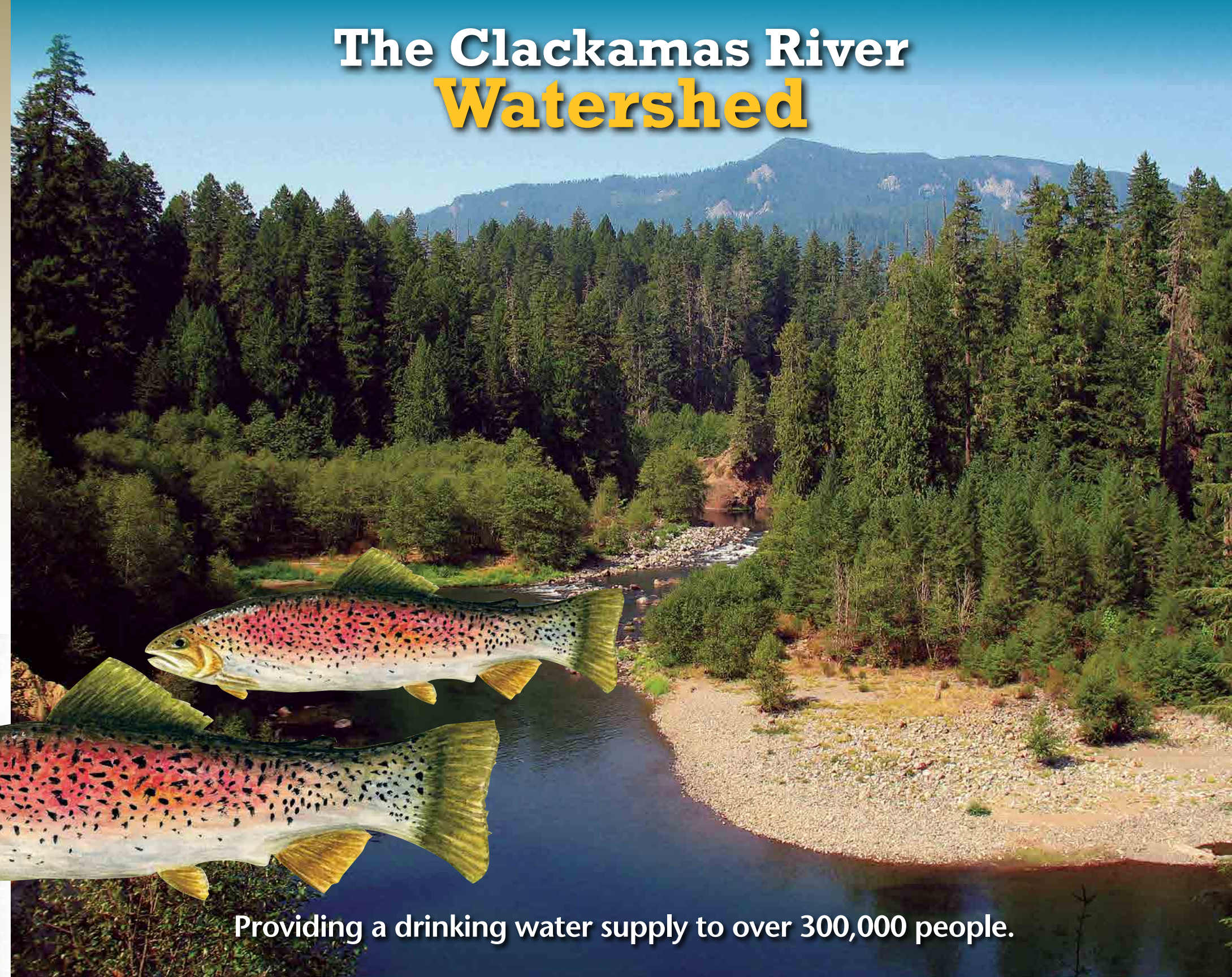
Each time it rains or snows, pollutants wash off the land and flow untreated into nearby surface and groundwater sources. Because all water in a watershed is connected activities in one part of the watershed often affect other areas. A healthy watershed stores and filters water, stabilizes banks, provides shade and habitat for fish and other aquatic life.

Human activities such as construction, timber harvesting, live stock management, fertilizer and pesticide use if not performed responsibly can degrade water quality. In addition impervious surfaces such as parking lots, roads, and roofs carry pollutants directly to our streams and natural water ways. Therefore, the combination of cars, homes, people, and animals in the watershed makes pollution from stormwater a serious threat to our river’s water quality.

Enhancing watershed health requires understanding your watershed and taking appropriate action as needed to eliminate or control polluting activities. While good water quality may be difficult to see, a rich variety of plants and animals, from aquatic insects to cutthroat trout, indicate a healthy watershed and clean water.

*We all play a role in preserving our vital drinking water resource.* Whether you’re a resident, business owner, employee or farmer, you can make a difference.

# The Clackamas River Watershed



Providing a drinking water supply to over 300,000 people.

## Key Concerns in the Clackamas Basin are:

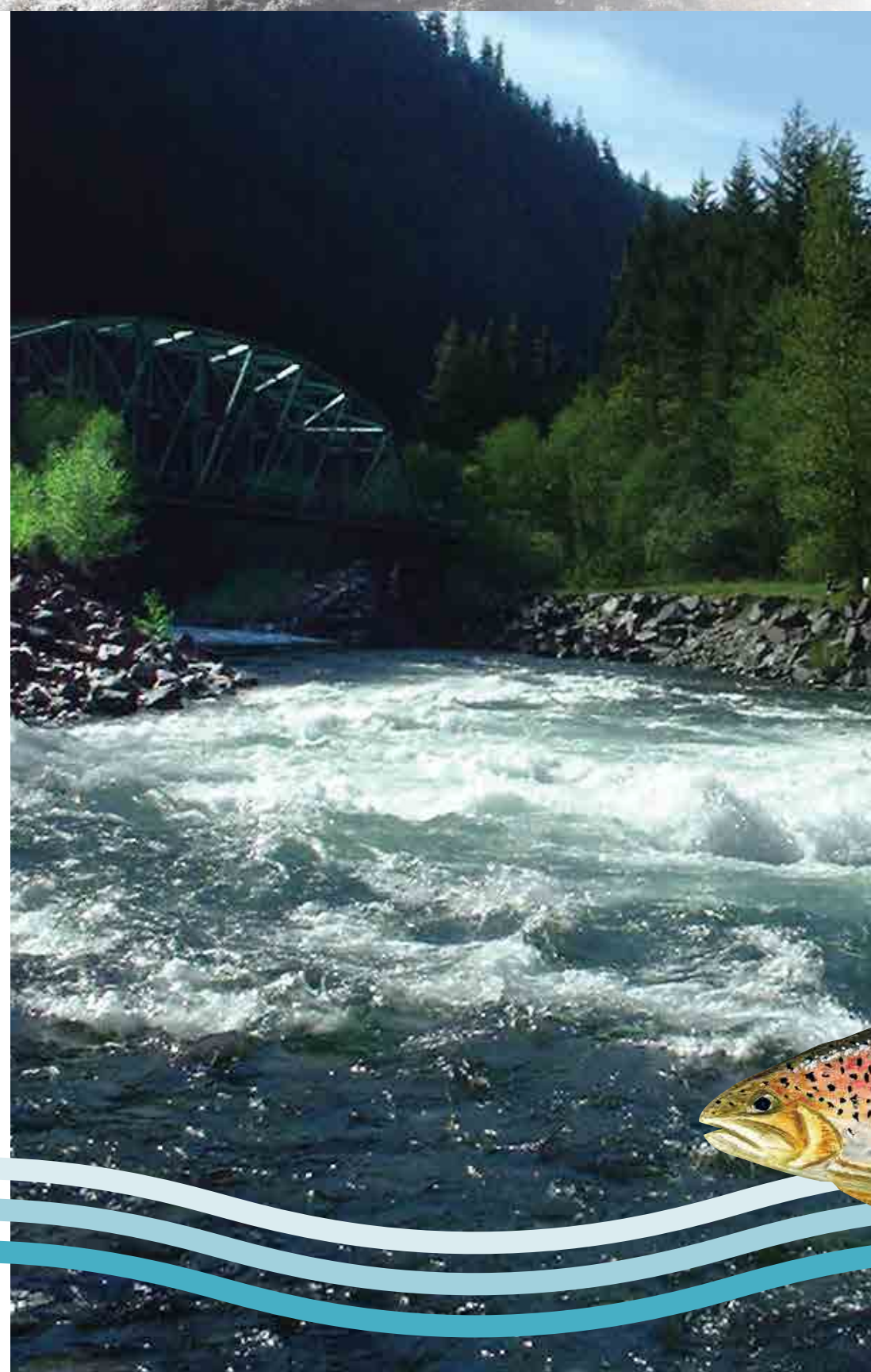
**Naturally spawning anadromous salmonids.** The Clackamas River supports spring and fall Chinook salmon, Coho salmon, Cutthroat trout, and summer/winter Steelhead.

**Land Use.** (Agricultural, Timber Harvesting, and Urban Uses.) Practices such as removing woody debris from stream channels, clear-cutting, removing streamside vegetation, withdrawing water for irrigation, and road building can increase sediment loads and water temperatures.

**Urban Growth.** Increased growth in the watershed can have negative water quality impacts due to increased impervious surfaces and increased stormwater runoff.

**Water Quality.** Portions of the Clackamas River and its tributaries currently do not meet state water quality standards for temperature and bacteria.

**Water Supply.** Water withdrawals for people must be balanced with maintaining sufficient instream flows to support fish and other beneficial uses.



## What You Can Do to Help!

- Allow water to filter into the ground on your property.
- Create your own urban forest and backyard wildlife refuge by planting native trees and shrubs.
- Encourage businesses to practice water efficient landscaping or naturescaping.
- Prevent stormwater runoff, by decreasing impervious surfaces.
- Restore streamside and urban forest vegetation.
- Properly dispose of, or recycle, motor oil, antifreeze, paint, solvents and other toxic materials.
- Wash your car on the lawn and prevent car wash water from entering storm drains.
- Reduce or eliminate your pesticide use to help prevent pesticide runoff.
- Clean up after your pet.
- Conserve water, especially in the summer months when river flows are at their lowest. The more water we save, the more water we can keep in the river for fish.
- Get involved! Attend a Clackamas River Water Providers, city council, or water board meeting.
- Call your water provider for more information.
- Join our local watershed council, the Clackamas River Basin Council.

## Protecting the Clackamas River is one of the top priorities of the Clackamas River Water Providers.

As Clackamas and Washington Counties continue to grow, so does the demand for high quality water. Conserving and protecting the Clackamas River will play a key role in making the best use of this precious resource we share.

For more information about our Watershed Program, or our Public Outreach & Education Program, please visit our website:

**[www.clackamasproviders.org](http://www.clackamasproviders.org)**

or contact us at:

**Clackamas River Water Providers**  
14275 S. Clackamas River Dr.  
Oregon City, OR 97045  
**(503) 723-3511**



The **Clackamas River Water Providers** serve Clackamas River Water (District), City of Estacada, City of Gladstone, City of Lake Oswego, City of Tigard, Oak Lodge Water Services, South Fork Water Board (Oregon City and West Linn), and Sunrise Water Authority (Happy Valley and Damascus).



# The Clackamas River Watershed

*From the FOREST to the TAP...*



## Each time you turn on the faucet...

The drinking water you receive has flowed through the forested hills of the Clackamas watershed. Water is taken out in Estacada, and in four other locations in the lower river, the water is then cleaned and treated for human consumption.

Once the water is treated it moves through a complex system of pipes, valves, and pumps to storage tanks or reservoirs. There it is stored until it is needed by homes and businesses in our communities.

Maintaining the high quality of our drinking water source can help minimize future treatment costs allowing us to keep water bills as low as possible while continuing to protect public health and safety.

## Watershed Facts:

The Clackamas River begins on the slopes of Olallie Butte. The watershed can roughly be divided in half with the upper watershed flowing through forested areas over rugged terrain, while in contrast in the lower watershed the river flows through agricultural and densely populated areas. In addition to supplying high-quality drinking water to over 300,000 people, the Clackamas River watershed:

- Drains more than 940 square miles, and is made up of 16 subwatersheds
- Flows 83 miles from its headwaters on the slopes of Olallie Butte to its confluence with the Willamette River near Gladstone and Oregon City
- Crosses two counties and includes federal, state, and private land
- Is 72% public owned, 25% privately owned, and 3% tribally owned
- Is an unprotected watershed, unlike the City of Portland's Bull Run watershed (which is protected)
- Is considered a multi-use watershed with various users and ownership throughout the watershed
- Is home to Steelhead, Chinook and Coho salmon, as well as Lamprey and Sea-run Cutthroat trout
- Generates hydroelectric power through 5 dams
- Is host to many productive farms and nurseries
- Offers a wealth of recreational activities such as fishing, hiking, camping, white water rafting, kayaking, and hunting
- Provides important habitat for many plant, wildlife, and aquatic species
- Has sections of the River that are designated as Federal and State Wild and Scenic Waterways

