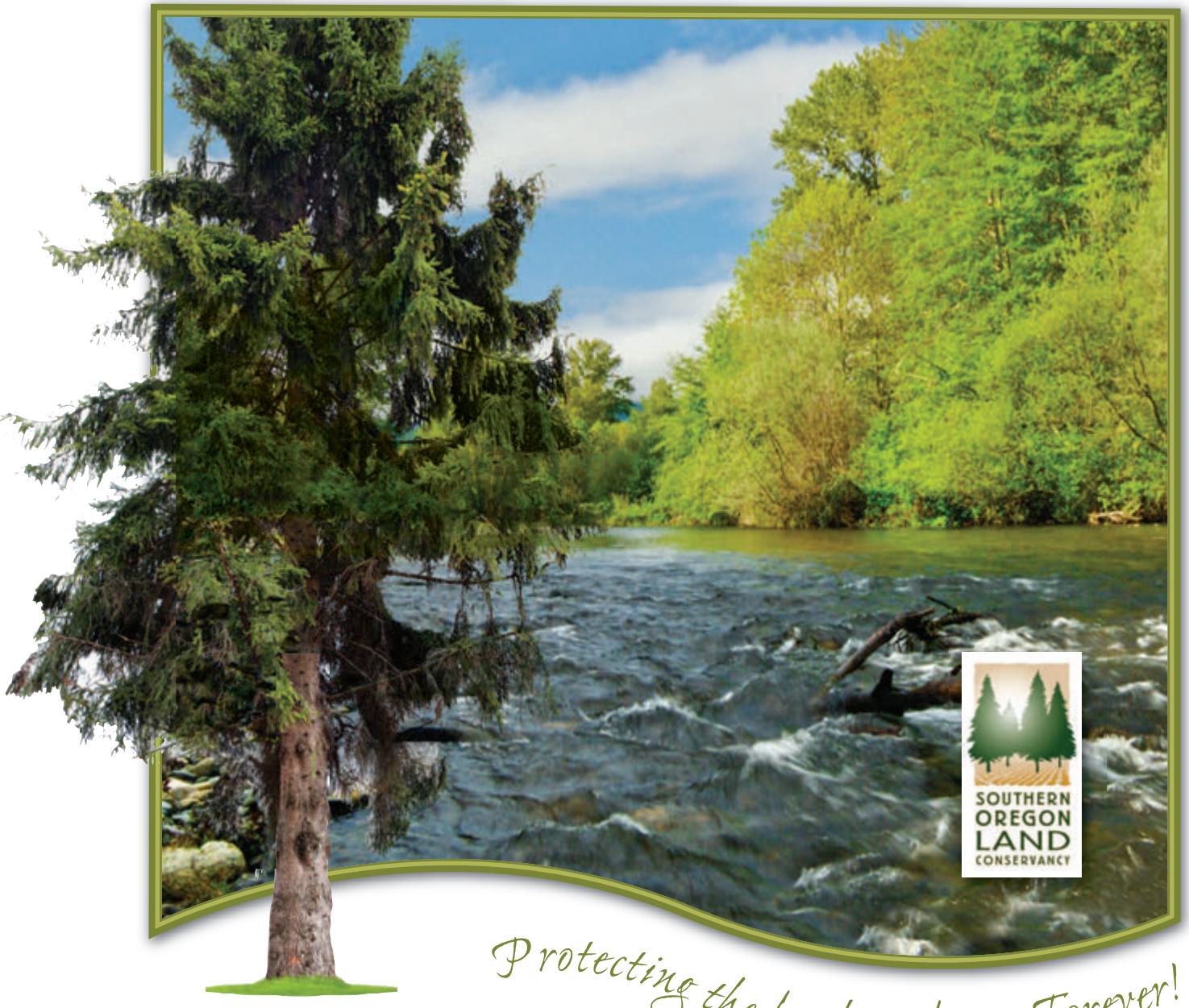
CONSERVATION PLAN

2012-2020



Protecting the lands we love...Forever!

Acknowledgements

We want to thank volunteers Jon Anderson and Peter Hille for their considerable time and skills in creating Geographic Information System maps and analyses. Additional thanks to ESRI Conservation Program for donating ArcGIS software. We also extend gratitude to the many community leaders and agency professionals, including Board members, Trustees, Advisors and members who have contributed time and ideas about how and where to best protect precious lands. Thanks also to Pat Acklin who assisted with writing and planning, John Riha for editorial work, and Howie Milgram for layout and design. Special thanks to Kristi Mergenthaler for her generous assistance and to Dominic DiPaolo who initiated this plan in 2009.

Prepared by Su Rolle
Reprinted in 2013

Cover photo by Thomas Kirchen

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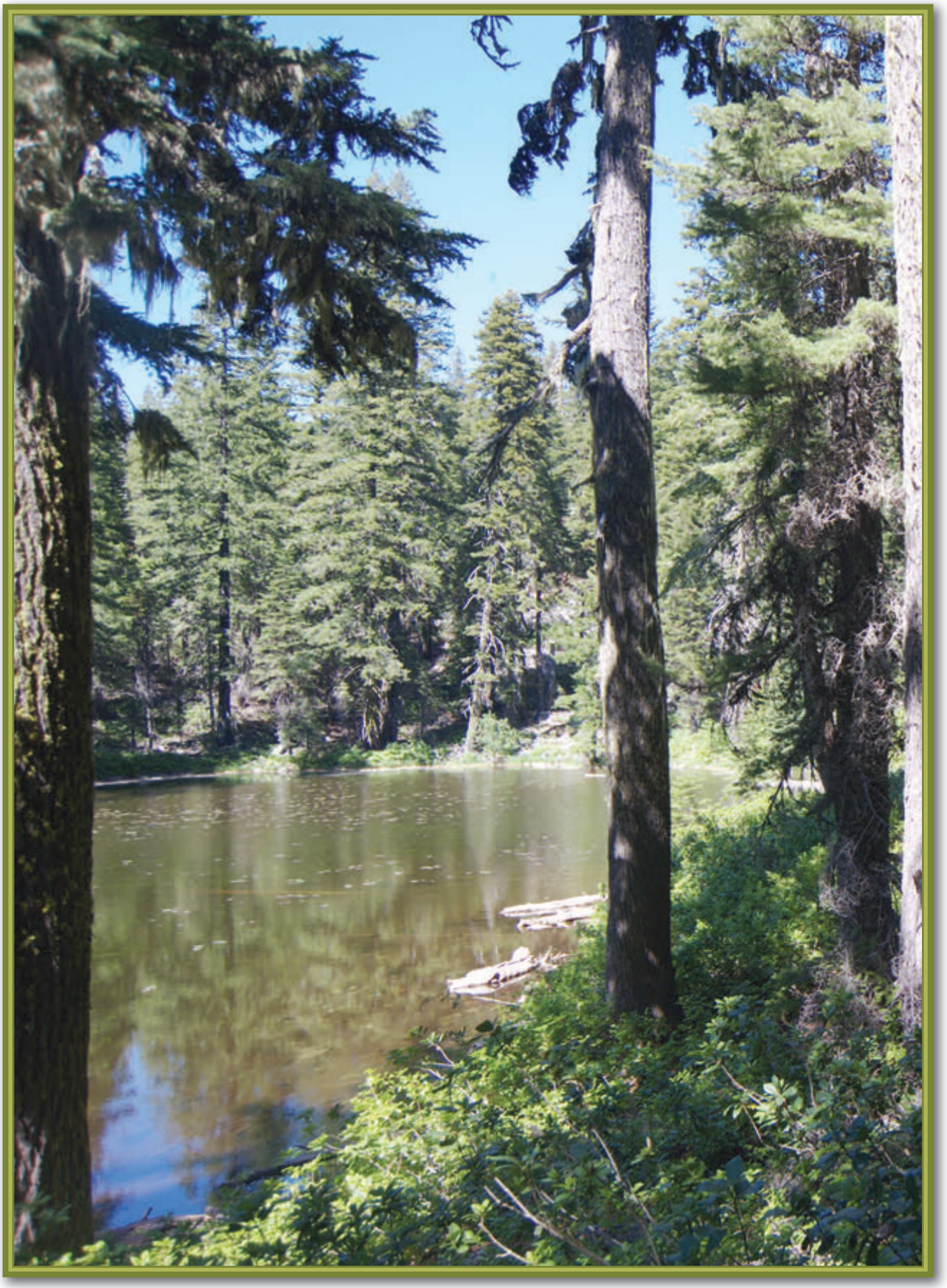

Lee O.Webb

Executive Summary

WE HAVE A VISION—one that's easy to share. It surrounds us every day, from the thickly forested ridges of the Siskiyou Mountains to the verdant valleys of the irrepressible Rogue River and its tributaries: It's the land we love and cherish. Since 1978, the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy has worked on behalf of this magnificent, beautiful resource. Our mission is simple: To protect special lands in the Rogue Basin and surrounding areas for current and future generations by working cooperatively with landowners and communities.

As passionate as we are about the land, we care just as much about the needs and concerns of our neighbors and fellow residents. That's why the Land Conservancy is a leader among regional land trusts in protecting unique properties with important agricultural, ecological, and community values. Since 1978 we have worked successfully with landowners and communities to conserve 9,000 acres of land in the Rogue Basin and surrounding areas on 54 properties.

The good news is that the number of property owners interested in conserving lands is growing. To meet this demand in a strategic manner, we've crafted a dynamic Conservation Plan. This highly collaborative effort has resulted in a tool that will guide the work of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy over the next decade.

WHY NOW?

The Rogue River watershed, also known as the Rogue Basin, includes more than 3 million acres in Jackson, Josephine, Curry, and Douglas Counties. With 95% of the basin located in Jackson and Josephine Counties, a biologically diverse area rich in unique plants and animals, these two counties are the focus of the Conservation Plan.

With population doubling over the last 30 years, pressure to develop land has been significant. The recent recession and falling land prices have threatened loss of agricultural and ecologically important lands as some landowners are forced to sell.

Retaining private lands with high conservation values is more important than ever. These lands support streams & rivers, clean air, wildlife habitat, and offer pathways that allow wildlife to move naturally from one area to another. When carefully managed, they are places to hunt, fish, gather, recreate, and prosper. These offer spectacular scenic views that enrich our lives. They also support historic land-based enterprises, such as farming, ranching and forestry, which are essential to sustaining our communities.

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Retaining private lands with high conservation values is more important than ever.

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT?

The Conservation Plan is driven by two key goals: (1) to conserve areas of high agricultural, ecological, and community importance, and (2) to conserve lands in key locations across the region. Specifically, we want to protect:

- class I & II agricultural lands
- riparian and wetland ecosystems
- critical fish habitat
- key habitat types like oak wood lands, ultramafic (serpentine) areas, and older forests
- outstanding viewsheds
- public parks and greenways
- lands unique features
- working forests
- areas adjacent to or near existing protected lands
- habitat connectivity
- large properties

To help visualize these objectives, we've created maps for most of the special types of land listed above using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), a mapping system that has helped us identify lands with high values.

WHAT DOES THE PLAN DO?

The Conservation Plan has three primary functions:

1. Pursue new projects with willing landowners in areas with high conservation values by working with communities, local organizations, and partners.

2. Assist landowners of conservation properties develop plans for the land and explore funding options for restoration and management.

Lee O.Webb

3. Respond to proposed conservation projects by evaluating the overall context of a landowner's property, its associated values, and its proximity to other protected lands.

WHAT IS VISION 20/20?

We're dedicated to protecting at least 20,000 acres of high-priority land by 2020 as part of our broader Vision 20/20 project—an initiative that will build the capacity of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy. Currently, the Land Concervancy protects 9,000 acres in the Rogue Basin and surrounding areas. Vision 20/20 more than doubles that capacity.

We will talk to owners of properties with good agricultural soils or other high conservation values and identify those who have an interest in conservation. Working with current and potential partners, agencies, and organizations, we'll build relationships with the communities we serve. We'll continue to identify ways that the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy benefits local communities by enriching ecosystems, energizing social oppor-tunities, encouraging economic development, and enhancing the quality of life.

The Land Conservancy will continue to use two primary tools for permanent land protection: conservation easements and fee ownership. Conservation easements are developed in cooperation with willing landowners—this is entirely a voluntary process. The purpose is to create a way to translate the long-term goals for a specific property into a legal document that protects conservation values over time. These become part of the title to the property so that future landowners will manage and protect the land in the way the original owner envisioned. The property is monitored annually by the Land Conservancy to ensure the conservation values are being protected. Fee ownership may be appropriate for special lands when the ability of the Land Conservancy to manage and maintain the property enhances the public benefits.

Both of these tools will be considered when a new project is undertaken, with a final determination based on the conservation values being protected, the partnership and funding opportunities, and the goals of the landowner.

The implementation of this Plan is closely tied to a successful Vision 20/20 project that builds the capacity of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy. With engaged leadership, effective partnerships, and an active, passionate membership working together, Vision 20/20 will realize its goals. We are poised and ready for these next steps in protecting the legacy of the Rogue Basin.

Thomas Kirchen

Background

SOUTHERN OREGON LAND CONSERVANCY

In 1978 a grassroots effort of concerned individuals formed the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy to protect rural lands in the Rogue Basin that were at risk due to a burgeoning population and rising real estate prices. For more than three decades, the mission of the organization has remained the same: to protect special lands in the Rogue Basin and surrounding areas for current and future generations by working cooperatively with landowners and communities.

Throughout its 35-year history, the Land Conservancy has worked successfully with landowners and communities to conserve unique lands throughout our service area. We have served the Rogue Basin, which includes most of Jackson and Josephine counties and portions of Curry and Douglas counties (see Map 1), and we've also protected lands in Coos County. The subwatersheds within the Rogue Basin include: Upper Rogue, Middle Rogue, Lower Rogue, Applegate River, and Illinois River (see Map 2). Currently, 9,000 acres of land

Thomas Kirchen

have been protected through donated conservation easements in the Rogue Basin and surrounding areas. The majority of these properties came to the attention of the Land Conservancy by way of the landowner. The organization decides on a case-by-case basis which properties to hold in trust using an approved set of criteria. Fifty-two properties have been protected using this responsive approach.

The Strategic Plan developed in 2007 by the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy identified Jackson and Josephine counties as focal regions for future conservation. The need to develop a comprehensive conservation planning tool for these two counties was a goal of the strategic plan. As of 2010 census, these two counties have a combined population of slightly less than 300,000, which is more than double the population of 1980. The counties encompass 4,425 square miles (2,832,277 acres) of land and water. Approximately 30% of the land in Josephine County and 54% of the land in Jackson County is held in private ownership.

From 2007-2010, Land Conservancy staff consulted with ecologists, planners, naturalists, and leaders from local communities within Jackson and Josephine counties to determine what kinds of land were important for conservation from their perspectives. This was the beginning of the conservation planning process.

PURPOSE OF THE CONSERVATION PLAN

This Conservation Plan is a collaborative effort and a dynamic tool to guide the work of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy over the next decade. It emphasizes a proactive approach toward conservation in which lands are identified for protection based on their unique values and how they contribute to a larger conservation network.

The Conservation Plan will help identify, prioritize, pursue, and protect important parcels of land by providing a lens through which to make critical decisions. The Plan articulates the conservation priorities that, over the years, have been identified by our regional community partners. It defines a process which locates and evaluates these priorities, and provides guidance on how to achieve lasting conservation.

Lee O. Webb

The Land Conservancy has a strong history of careful on-site evaluation of potential projects using a set of selection criteria that reflects conservation values to assess lands (see Appendix A. Criteria Worksheet). This Conservation Plan is not intended to be the only driver for selecting conservation projects. We will continue to use our criteria screen in assessing all projects, as well as the keen skills of staff, board members, and other advisory councils and partners. In addition, the Conservation Plan provides a framework from which we can appropriately respond to interested land owners.

The Conservation Plan gives purpose and direction to the vision of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy. We are poised to launch a proactive approach to land conservation which will permanently preserve the natural landscape of the Rogue Basin for generations to come.

ROGUE BASIN

The beautiful landscapes of Southern Oregon are the result of geologic and climatological processes that have taken place over thousands of years within two geomorphic areas: the Cascades and Klamath-Siskiyou provinces. To the east, the volcanic Cascade Mountain Range stretches from northern California through Oregon and Washington. To the west, the venerable Klamath-Siskiyou mountain province contains some of the oldest rocks in Oregon. Together, the two provinces define an area rich with unique plant and animal communities. The Klamath-Siskiyou region in particular has been recog-

nized by the scientific community for its extraordinary biodiversity. The Oregonian reported that the World Conservation Union proclaimed the region, "one of the seven areas of global botanical significance on the North American continent."

Today, the area is known as the Rogue River watershed, and includes more than 3 million acres within Jackson, Josephine, Curry, and Douglas counties (see Maps 1 and 2). Annual rainfall in the region varies from about 19 inches in the Rogue Valley in the east to around 60 inches in Cave Junction in the west, with over 100 inches, much of it snow, in the higher elevations of the surrounding mountains. Nearly 75% of the precipitation is received between October and March, resulting in cool, moist winters and hot, dry summers—a Mediterranean-style climate. This distinct weather pattern, along with the complex geology and soils of the area, contribute to an exceptionally diverse and rare ecosystem.

The Native people never developed agriculture, aside from growing small plots of tobacco, so their pressure on the land was minimal. They did, however, use fire to clear the land, probably thousands of acres each year. Added to the lightning-caused fires that raged unchecked for weeks and months each summer and fall, the burns created vast grasslands and oak woodlands in the valleys, and smaller meadows in the high-country forests. As a result, the composition and appearance of major vegetation communities were significantly altered.

Early pioneers first came to southwestern Oregon in the late 1820s and through the 1830s. Many were fur trappers passing through, stopping to take beaver from the rivers and streams. With the first wave of gold miners and farmers during the 1850s, the ecosystem began to change. Antelope and bighorn sheep eventually disappeared due to hunting, and cattle ranchers undertook an intensive campaign to extirpate grizzly bears and wolves. The grizzlies were gone by the 1890s, and wolves by the 1930s.

Settlers were lured to the region in hopes of agricultural success on land-claim farmsteads, bringing with them seeds and saplings from their home states.

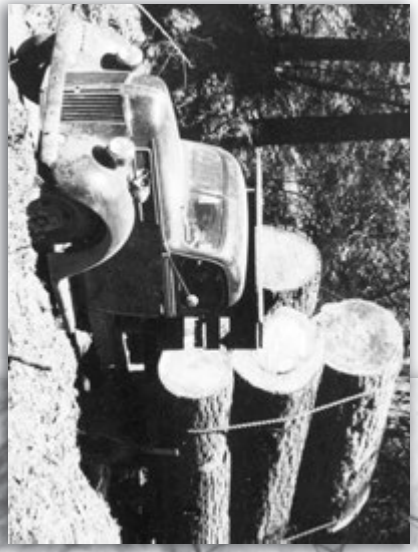
HISTORY AND LAND USE

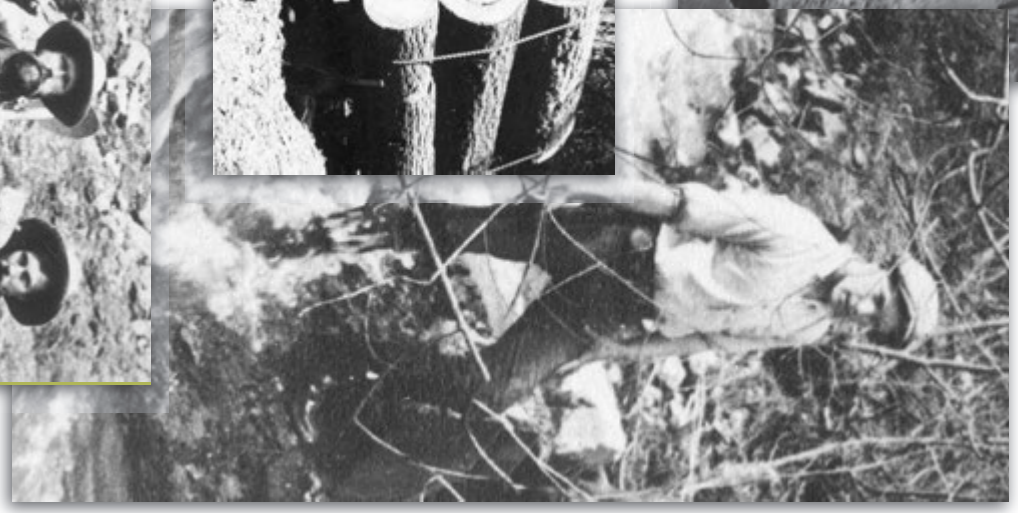
The first humans probably arrived in what is now southwestern Oregon about 11,000 B.C., during the closing centuries of the Pleistocene Epoch, or "Ice Age." At that time there were dense spruce forests in the mountains and abundant sagebrush in the valleys, while wooly mammoths and giant ground sloths roamed the land.

During the 1870s-1890s, hydraulic gold mining operations replaced the small placer workings of the first miners. These powerful water cannons dumped thousands of tons of silt tailings into the rivers, turning them a thick, muddy red and wreaking havoc on salmon spawning grounds. Prospectors

Rogue River - Siskiyou National Forest

Rogue River - Siskiyou National Forest





Rogue River - Siskiyou National Forest

Kerbyville Museum

searching for hard-rock gold deposits in the forests of the Siskiyou Mountains cleared land by burning off vast acreages—fires that were often far more destructive than lightning or native-set fires.

Settlers were lured to the region in hopes of agricultural success on land-claim farmsteads, bringing with them seeds and saplings from their home states. The completion of the railroad in 1887 offered the growing fruit industry a chance to connect with national markets, and land developers speculated on the demand for agricultural opportunities in this idyllic setting. Numerous orchard subdivisions were platted, and the majority of the land on valley floors went into private ownership.

Although timber was abundant, logging was a very limited endeavor in southwestern Oregon until well after the coming of the railroad in the late 1880s. By the early 1920s, a large-scale railroad-logging operation began to reach deep into the Cascades, bringing pine and Douglas-fir logs down to large new mills in Medford. After World War II, the postwar housing boom brought a seemingly permanent economic bounty from the timberlands of southwestern Oregon.

In addition to private timber interests, large acreages came under the management of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Forest Service. The U.S. Dept. of Interior's Bureau of Land Management acquired railroad lands in 1946 and also was vested in timber production. The resulting "checkerboard pattern" of private and federal ownership has made protection of watersheds and wildlife habitat problematic. Maps 4 and 5 show lands protected in Jackson and Josephine counties in federal, state and local ownerships as well as lands protected by land trusts such as the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy and other nonprofit organizations.

By the 1950s, federally subsidized access roads into the higher-elevation forests brought truckload after truckload of logs to the valley's lumber operations. As demand for timber increased and more forests were made accessible to the industry, the effects of vigorous timber harvests began to collide with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Recent decades have witnessed ever-increasing residential, commercial, and industrial development, with expected effects: habitats have shrunk, aquifers are under stress, and the ranges of various big game species have been compressed. Recreational uses, including hiking, mountain-biking, cross-country skiing, and the use of all-terrain vehicles, continually introduce more people than ever to formerly "remote" places.

ECONOMY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

By the late 20th century, the economic activity of Jackson and Josephine counties had begun to shift from timber and wood products to tourism and regional services. Recreational forest uses, such as rafting, fishing, and the Mt. Ashland ski area, along with cultural attractions that include the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Britt Music Festival, and the Southern Oregon University give the area a quality-of-life reputation that is as distinct as the natural flora and fauna. As a result, both Jackson and Josephine Counties have experienced significant population growth. In particular, the area is a retirement haven for those seeking recreational opportunities and a mild climate.

Agriculture is still important to the region's economy, and the same unique climate so attractive to visitors and residents supports a significant fruit industry. Sprawling orchards cover large swaths of the

Diane Garcia

valley floor along the Bear Creek watershed between Ashland and Medford, providing a spectacular springtime display of blossoms. However, while there are still many orchards in production, they are at risk due to rising land prices and changing market conditions.

With characteristic adaptability, Southern Oregon has begun to supplant the fruit-producing industry with new agricultural opportunities, particularly vineyards and vegetable crops to serve the growing local foods movement. The composition of the region's soils and its Mediterranean climate are especially favorable for wine grapes, and the American Viticulture Association and the Jackson County OSU Extension Agency report that the number of acres of wine grapes in production in the region has increased from 309 in 1984 to 1,760 in 2007. The number of wineries has increased from three to 39.

Citizens have organized in a number of creative ways to respond to land issues and uses in the last several decades. In addition to common interests of recreation, conservation, and industry, private citizens are also working with agencies to restore watershed health. Watershed councils are local voluntary organizations formed to improve watershed conditions on private lands and are able to seek supporting state funds, federal and other sources to accomplish work. In the Rogue Basin watershed councils are organized by watersheds with common communities (see Map 3) which is slightly different from the ecological units of watershed boundaries seen in Map 2.

Quality of life in Southern Oregon has long been tied to the land, its natural resources, agricultural opportunities, clean water and air, recreation, and scenic beauty. Nevertheless, those same qualities contribute to increasing pressure on a unique, fragile ecosystem that is particularly sensitive to change. There's little doubt that the resources of the Cascade and Klamath-Siskiyou provinces need—and deserve—careful management, stewardship, and protection.

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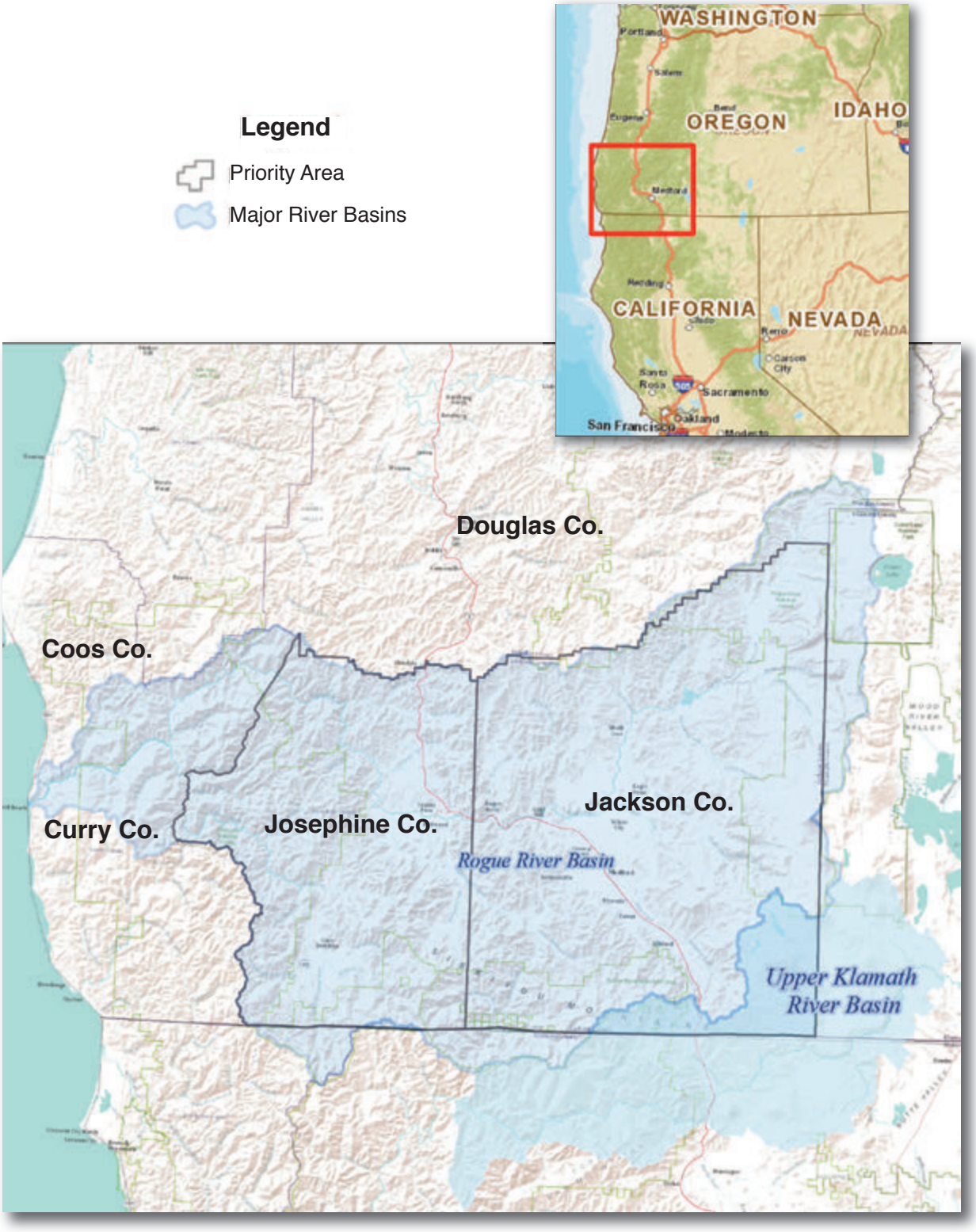
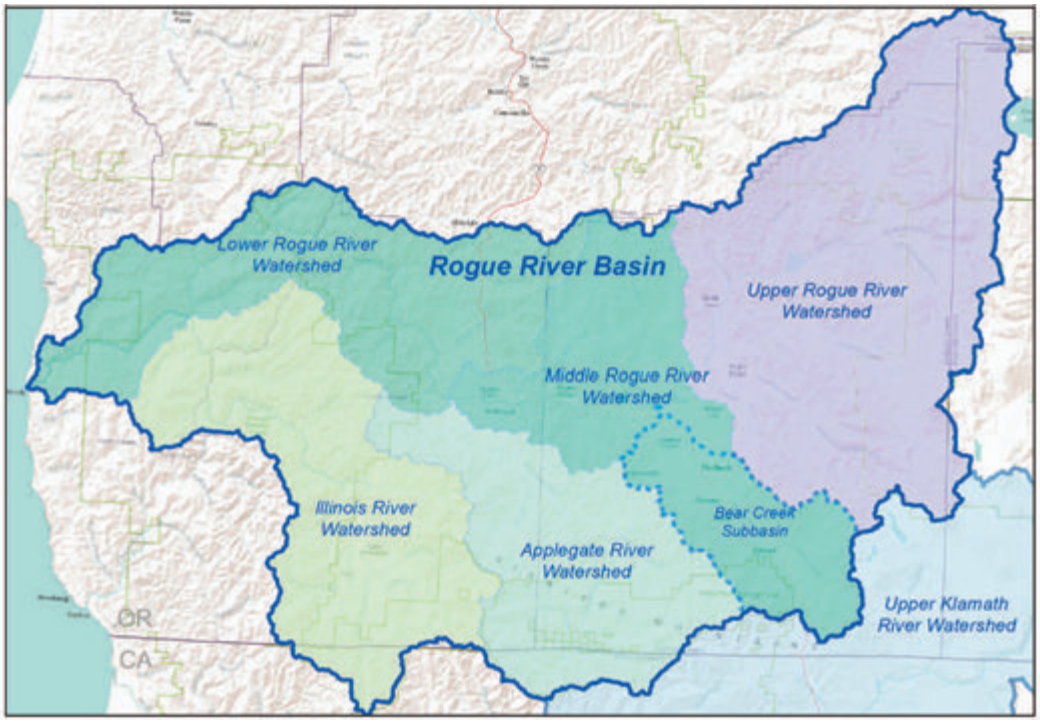

Legend
Priority Area
Major River Basins
WASHINGTON
OREGON
IDAHO
CALIFORNIA
NEVADA
Douglas Co.
Coos Co.
Curry Co.
Josephine Co.
Jackson Co.
Rogue River Basin
Upper Klamath River Basin

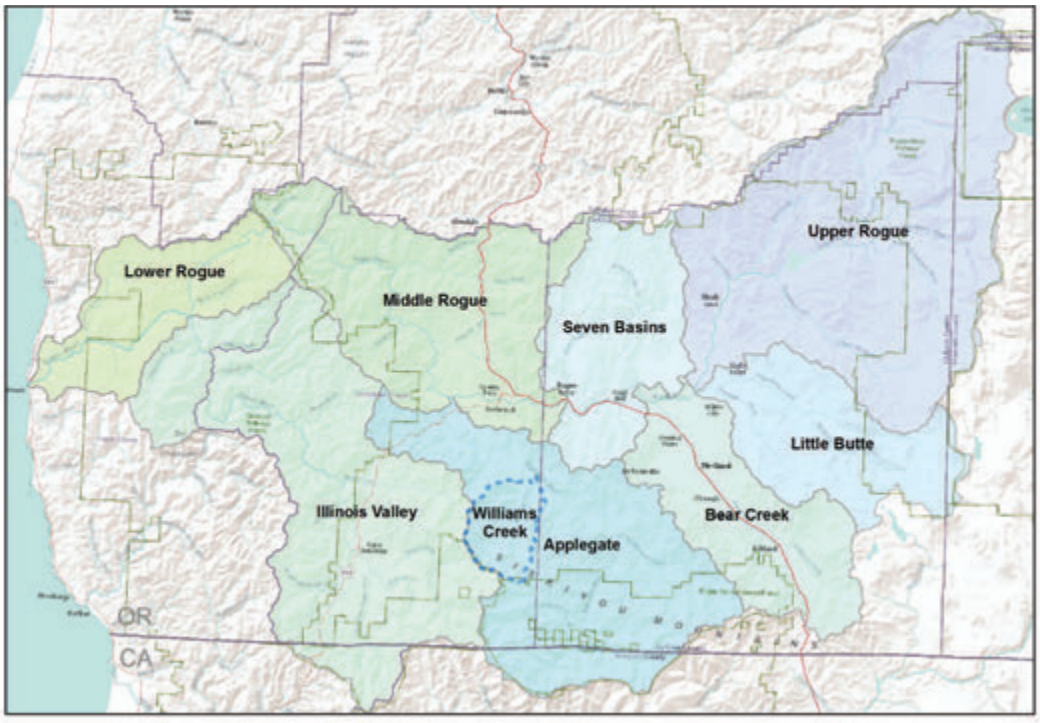
ROGUE RIVER & UPPER KLAMATH WATERSHEDS

2

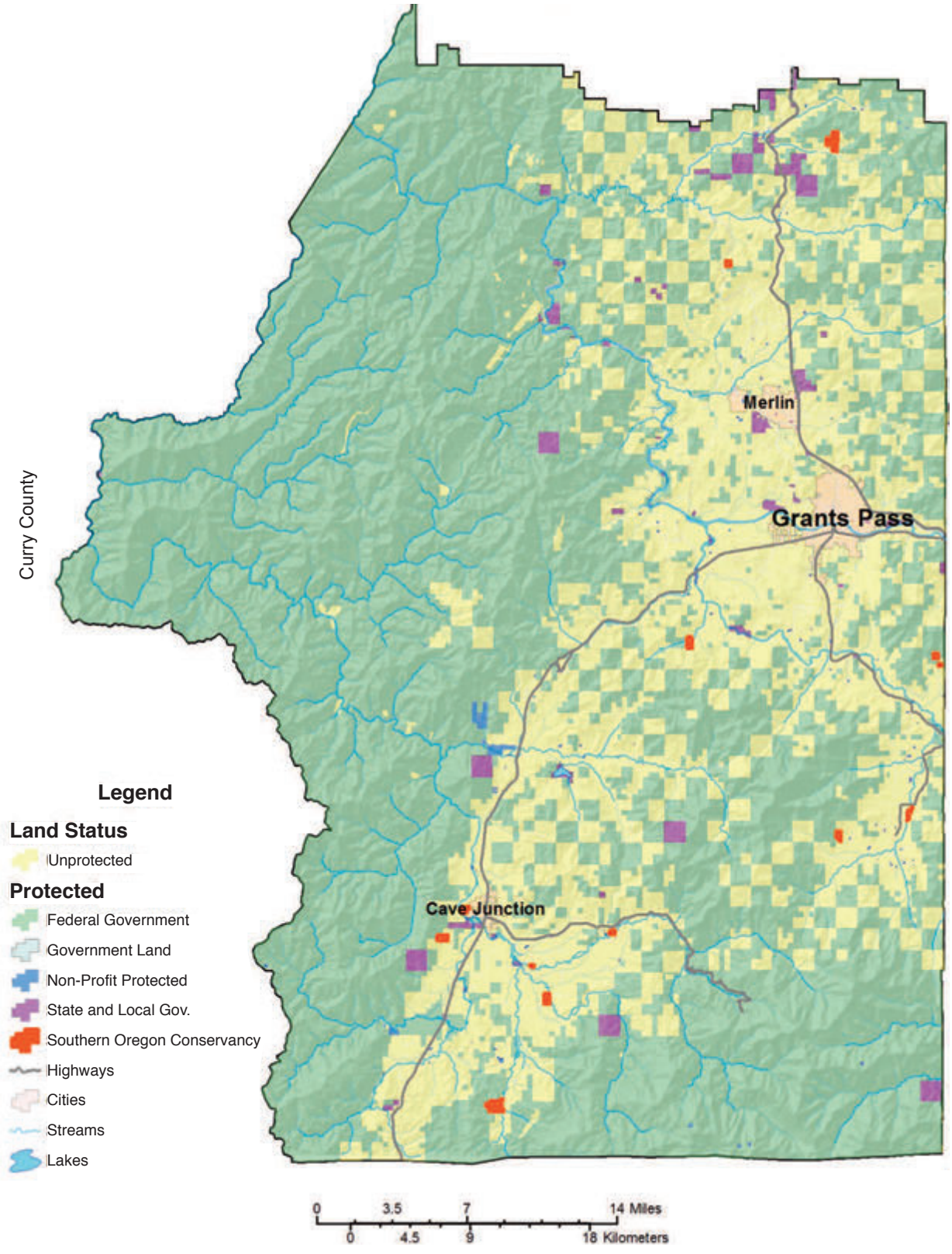


ROGUE BASIN WATERSHED COUNCILS

3

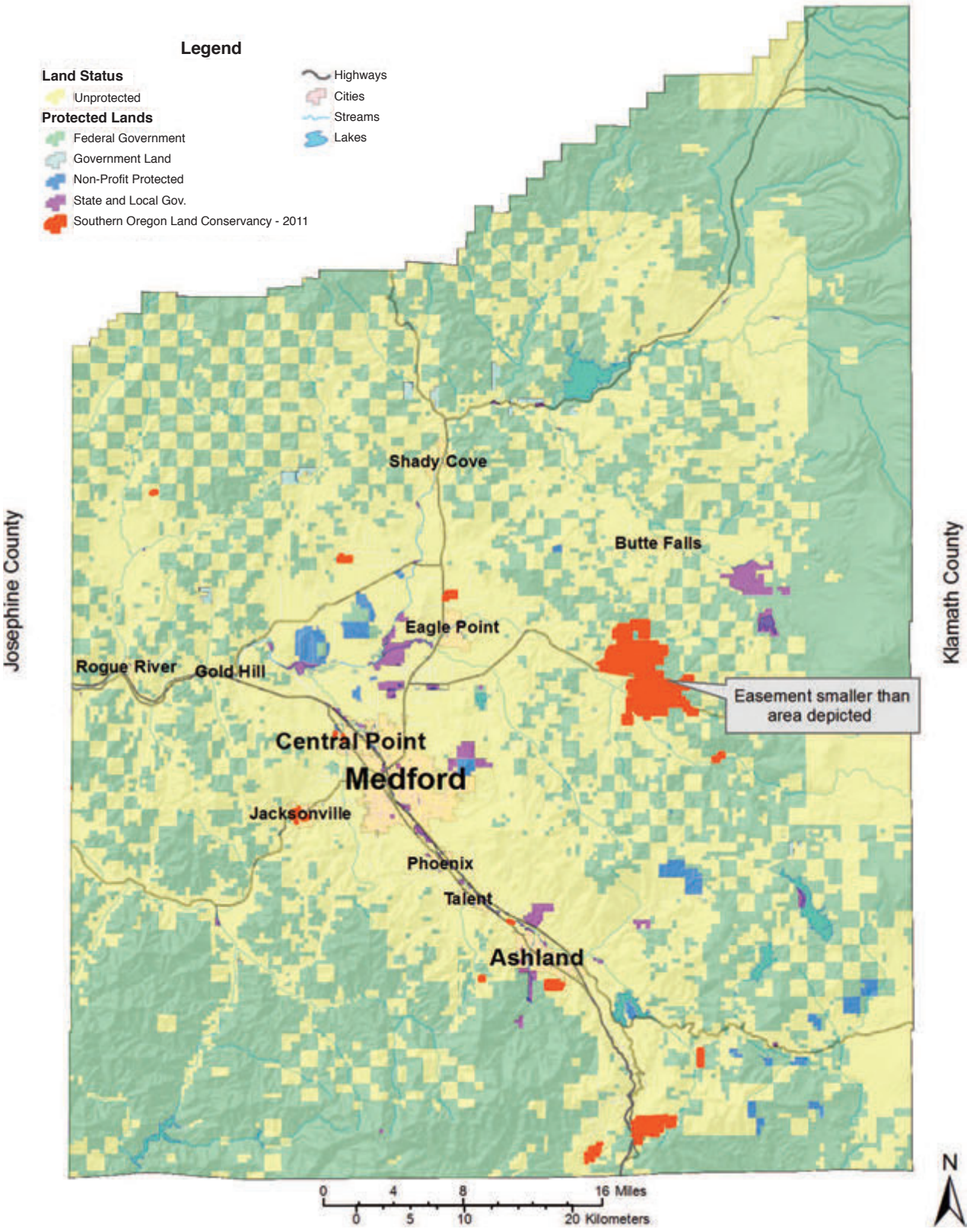


PROTECTED LANDS
JOSEPHINE COUNTY, OREGON



PROTECTED LANDS
JACKSON COUNTY, OREGON

5



Thomas Kirchen

Conservation Goals, Objectives & Spatial Tools

In protecting lands in Southern Oregon, there are a number of decisive elements that priority conservation projects include. These have been used over the last decade as we evaluate new projects and are reflected in the Criteria Worksheet (see Appendix A).

ELEMENTS INCLUDE:

- High conservation values: The project area embodies one or more priority land types as defined below; has been identified by a local jurisdiction or planning process as encompassing an exceptional natural resource; or has otherwise been recognized by knowledgeable individuals as having unique and irreplaceable conservation value.

- Contributes to an established or emerging conservation network: The project area compliments the protection of targeted conservation values on adjacent or nearby public land or currently protected land; is itself an important hub in the emerging network; and/or helps connect the emerging network of conservation areas.

- Adequate size: The project area is of the appropriate size to shield against potential harm to an area's conservation values caused by changes in surrounding land use, catastrophic disturbances, and global climate change. Conservation areas are large enough to capture and protect significant extents of priority land types.

- Degree of risk: There is strong likelihood that the priority conservation values present within the project area will be lost, diminished, or converted to other uses in the near future.

- Community interest and opportunity for partnerships: The project area is of considerable interest to other entities working in the community with similar conservation goals, and are willing to collaborate to achieve these goals. For example: Watershed councils working to improve water quality; natural resource agencies charged with land and resource conservation; soil and water conservation districts concerned about farmland; city and county governments planning for open space; and other non-profit organizations engaged in land conservation.

These elements can be summarized in broad goals that continue to guide land protection and drive this Conservation Plan:

1. Conserve areas of high agricultural, ecological and community importance.
2. Conserve lands in key locations across the landscape.

The goals, specific objectives, and priority land types identified from community meetings and our work over the last few years are displayed in Table 1. Additional ways to protect lands across the landscape in order to meet Goal 2 are also described in Table 1. "Spatial tools" refers to ways we can translate specific objectives, land types, and locations into maps. Where feasible, we used Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping to identify the high priority land types, and other spatial tools in the GIS modeling approach to identify key locations. Detailed information about the data sources and methods used is described in Appendix B.

CONSERVATION GOALS	OBJECTIVES	SPATIAL TOOLS
1- Conserve areas of high agricultural, ecological, and community importance	CONSERVE:	
	1. Important agricultural lands	Land capability classes I-IV
	2. Riparian and wetland ecosystems	Riparian, wetland, and vernal pools
	3. Important fish habitat	Fishbearing streams
	4. Other key habitat types (e.g., oak woodlands, older forests, etc.)	Key habitat: oak woodlands, savannahs, grasslands, older forests, ultramafic geology
	5. Important viewsheds	Viewsheds from key view points
	6. Urban parks and greenways	Parks and greenways
	7. Unique features (natural or cultural sites)	Unique features (natural or cultural sites)
	8. Working forests	Working forests
2- Conserve key locations across the landscape	CONSERVE:	
	1. Areas adjacent to or near existing protected lands	Protected land map, Proximity map (lands adjacent to federal or other protected lands)
	2. Habitat connectivity	Habitat maps, proximity maps
	3. Large properties	Tax lot size (used in analysis)

Table 1. Conservation Goals, Objectives and Spatial Tools

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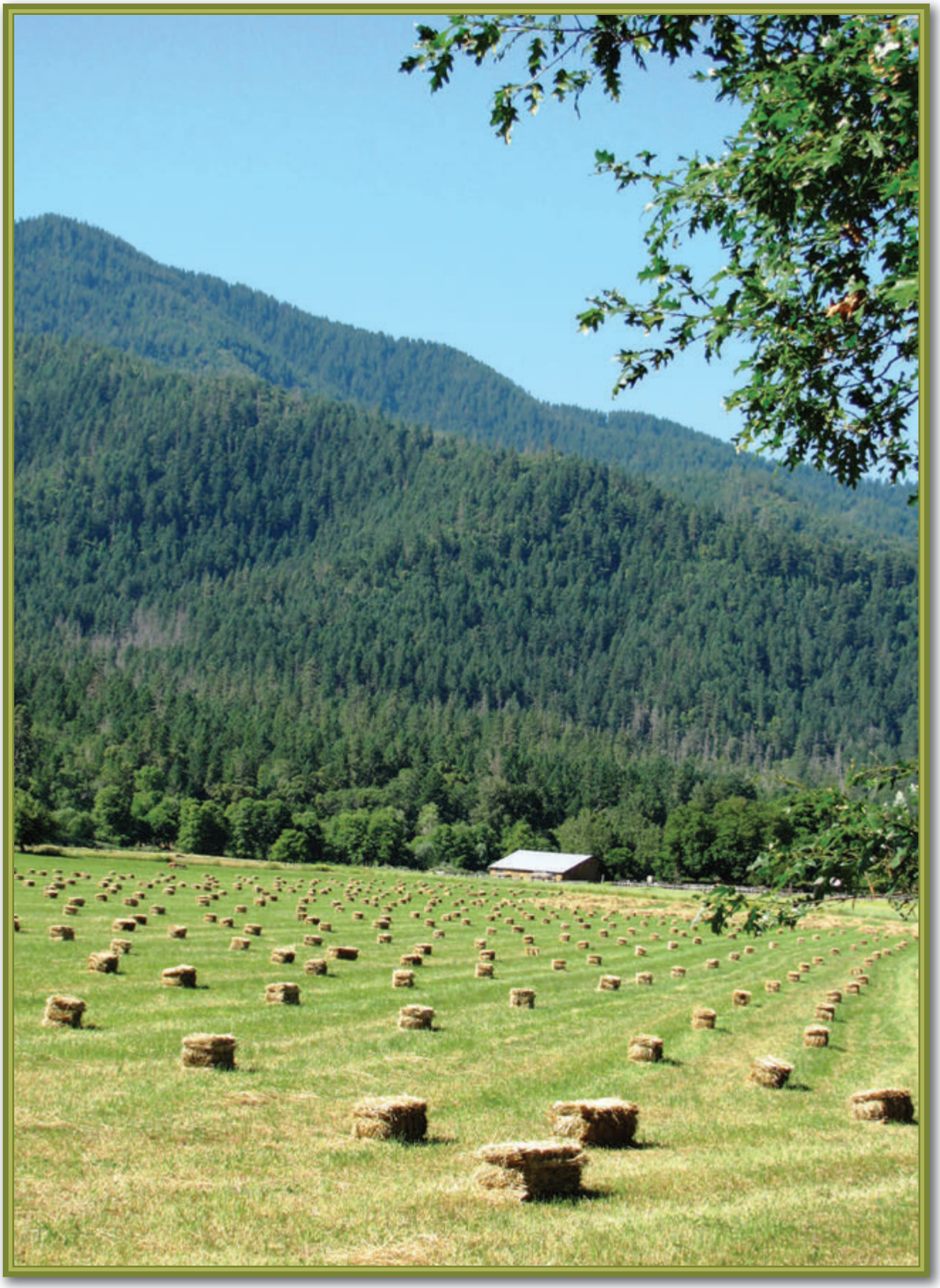
Priority Land Types

PRIORITY LAND TYPES are those lands of high agricultural, ecological, and community importance. For the purpose of this Plan, we have identified special land types that reflect these values. Protection of specific habitat types, for example oak woodlands and ultramafic geologic areas, serves to safeguard rare, threatened, and endangered species associated with them. A variety of laws and policies have increased protection of natural systems on federal lands. By working with voluntary private landowners, we can protect priority land types on private lands as well.



Su Rolle

AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Rogue Valley agriculture remains a fundamental part of our region's economy and significantly contributes to the scenic character and quality of life important to communities. Orchards and vegetable farms occupy much of the prime irrigated farmland in the valley bottom. Increasingly, vineyards cover the low foothills and slopes around the bottomlands which are less suitable for field crops. Ranches operate on the irrigated pastures and in the oak woodlands and grasslands of the foothills. Small organic and truck farms and other specialty operations also abound in rural locations throughout the Rogue Valley.

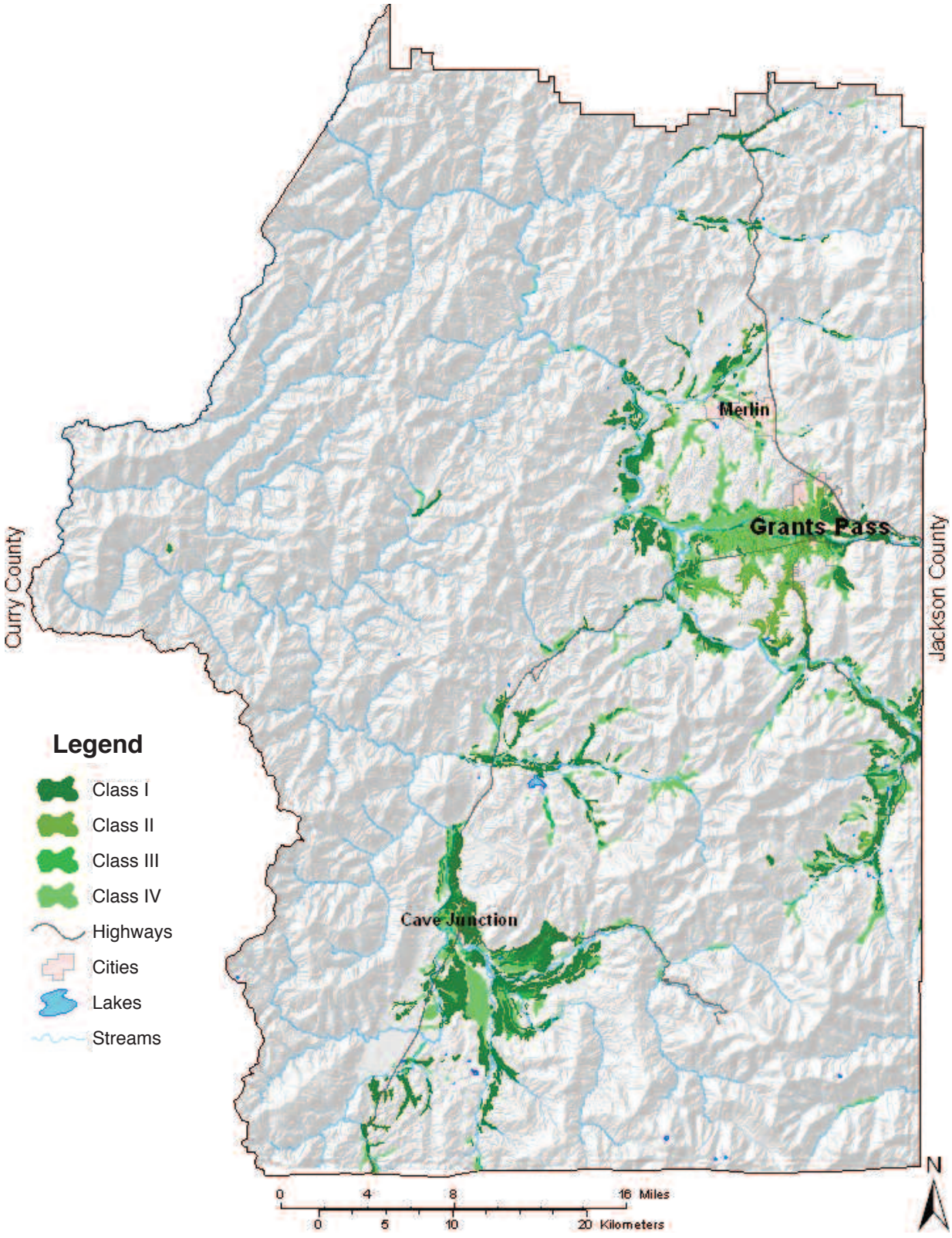
However, land that can support these agricultural activities is very limited in Southern Oregon. Much of this land is located in the valley bottoms and adjacent low country along the Rogue, Applegate, and Illinois Rivers, and their larger tributaries. These lands represent a small percent of the total land area of the Rogue Basin, yet they are the same areas where population growth and development is occurring. For example, the Bear Creek Valley, which includes the cities of Ashland, Talent, Phoenix, Medford, Central Point, and Jacksonville, contains one the most extensive areas of valuable agricultural soils in southwest Oregon, as well as the largest and fastest growing population.

Land capability classification is a way to identify the suitability of soils for most kinds of field crops. Classes range from I-VIII: The lower the number, the more suitable that group of soils is for growing common crops or pasture plants. Analysis of suitable lands for wine grapes is not included here but could be considered in future plans. For the purpose of this Plan, we are focusing on the top four classifications as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

Class I: Soils have slight limitations that restrict their use.
Class II: Soils have moderate limitations that reduce the choice of plants, or require moderate conservation practices.
Class III: Soils have severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants, or require special conservation practices, or both.
Class IV: Soils have very severe limitations that restrict the choice of plants, or require very careful management, or both.

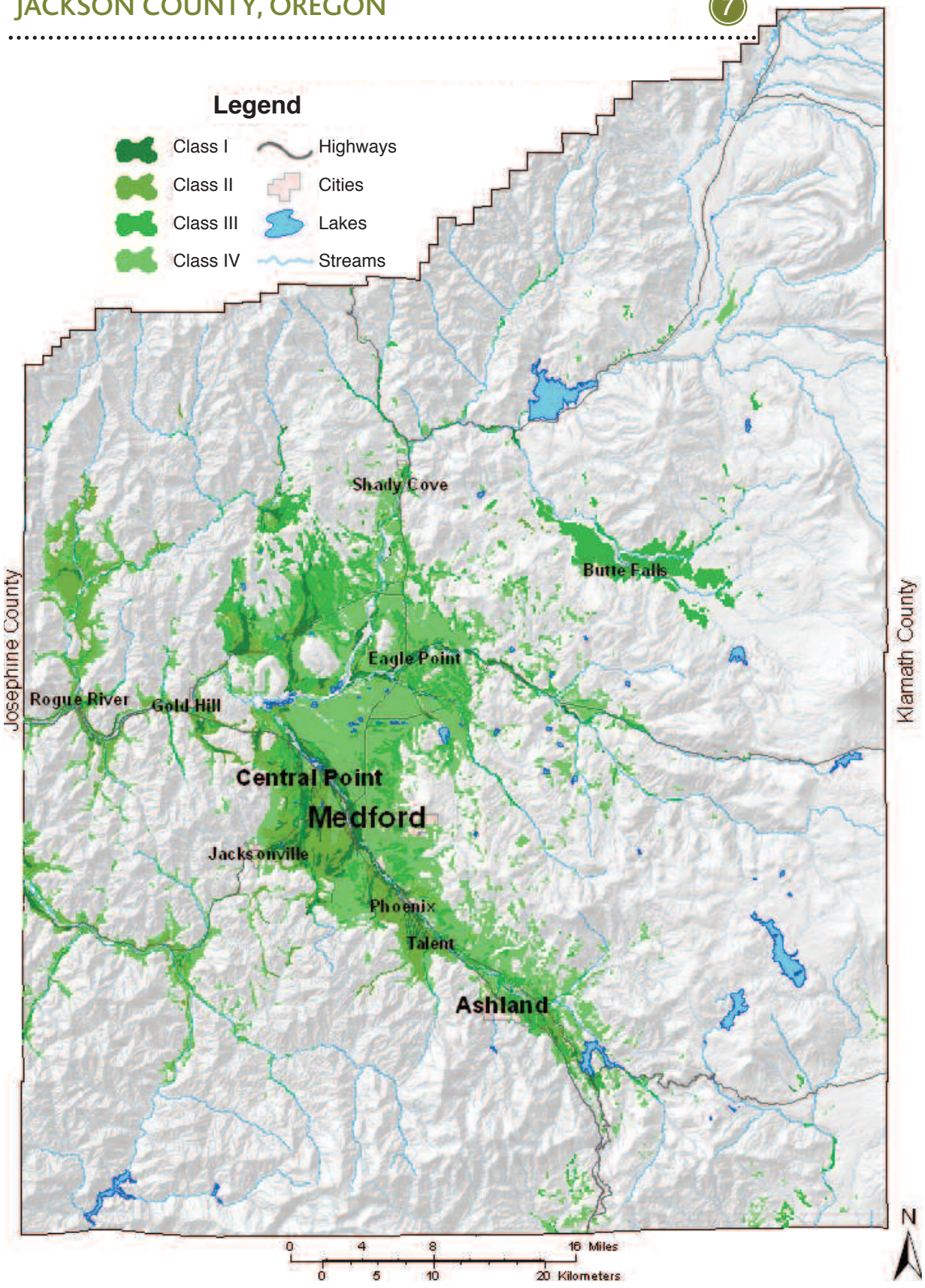
Maps 6 and 7 display Land Capability Classes I-IV remaining in Josephine and Jackson counties. It is difficult to identify ideal ranchlands beyond the pasturelands at this time. Many of the ranchlands are captured in the oak woodland and grasslands land types.

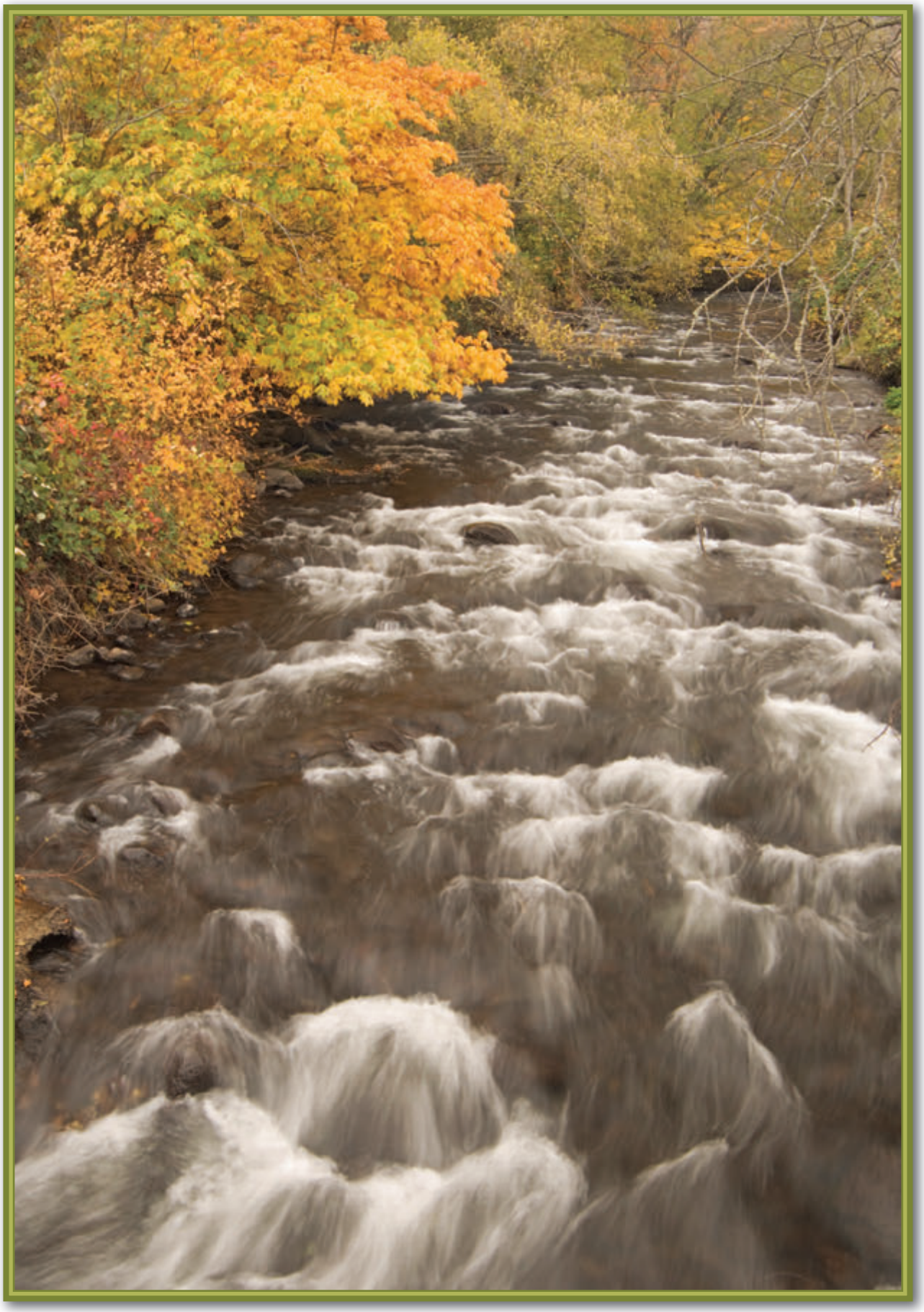
AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSES
JOSEPHINE COUNTY, OREGON



AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSES
JACKSON COUNTY, OREGON

7





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RIPARIAN AREAS, WETLANDS, AND VERNAL POOLS

Protecting riparian areas, wetlands, and vernal pools is essential to ensuring long-term watershed protection and water quality. Riparian areas are the vegetated lands adjacent to streams, rivers, marshes, and shorelines that form the transition between the land and water environments. Wetlands are lands that are inundated by surface or ground water often enough to lead to the development of hydric soils and groups of plants and animals adapted for life in saturated soils.

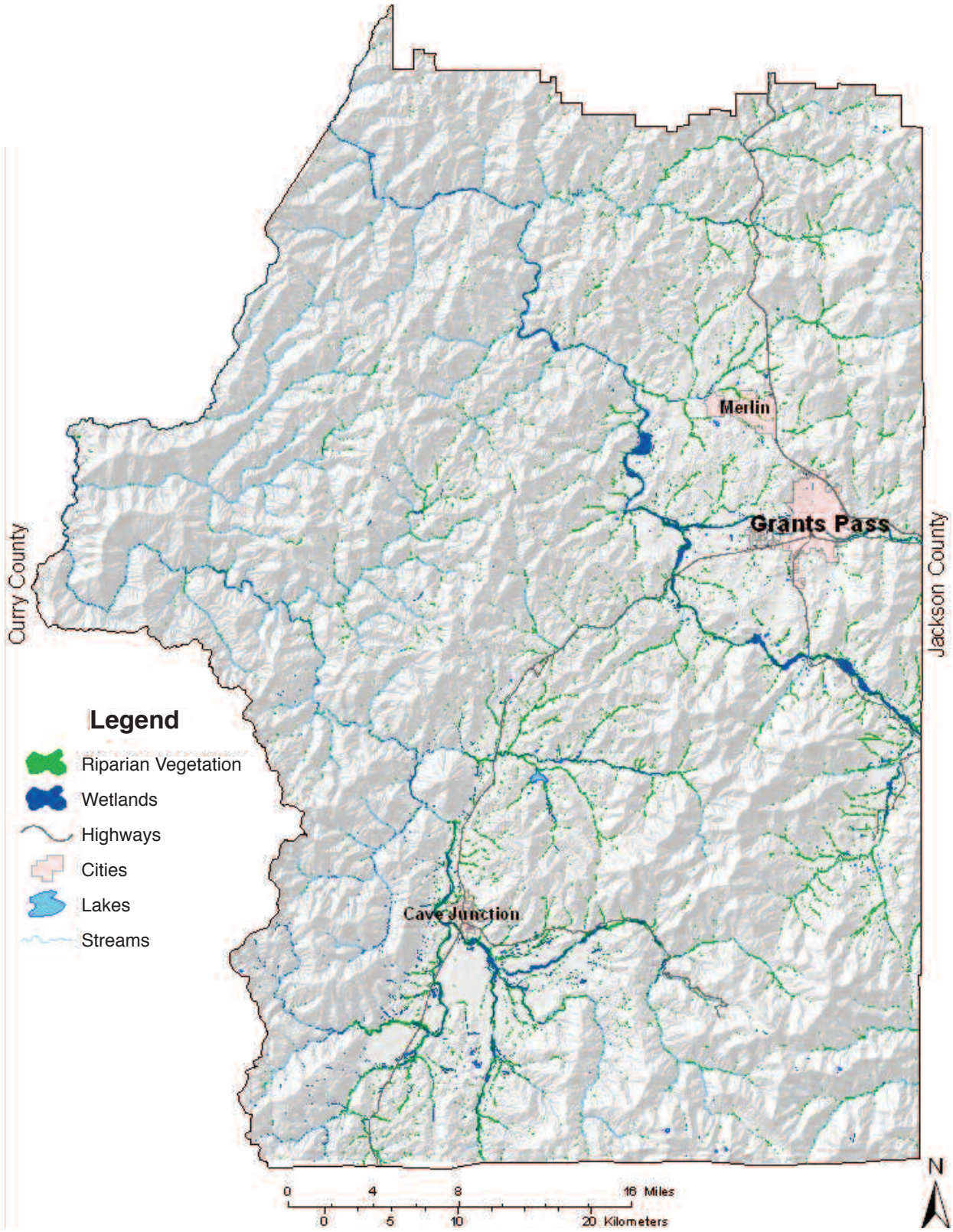
Vernal pools are seasonally wet pools and swales that have associated plants and animals that are adapted to short periods of growth and reproduction within the inundated or drying pools. There may be long dormant periods and extreme variation of rainfall.

Riparian areas, wetlands, and vernal pools offer many benefits to nature and humans. These include:

- Mediating surface water flows by retaining water in the soil, slowly releasing the water and recharging groundwater
- Reducing the impact of upland sources of pollution by trapping, filtering and converting sediments, nutrients and other chemicals
- Maintaining the integrity of stream channels and shorelines reducing erosion
- Providing habitat, food, thermal protection, and breeding areas for fish, local and migratory birds, amphibians, insects and other wildlife and plants

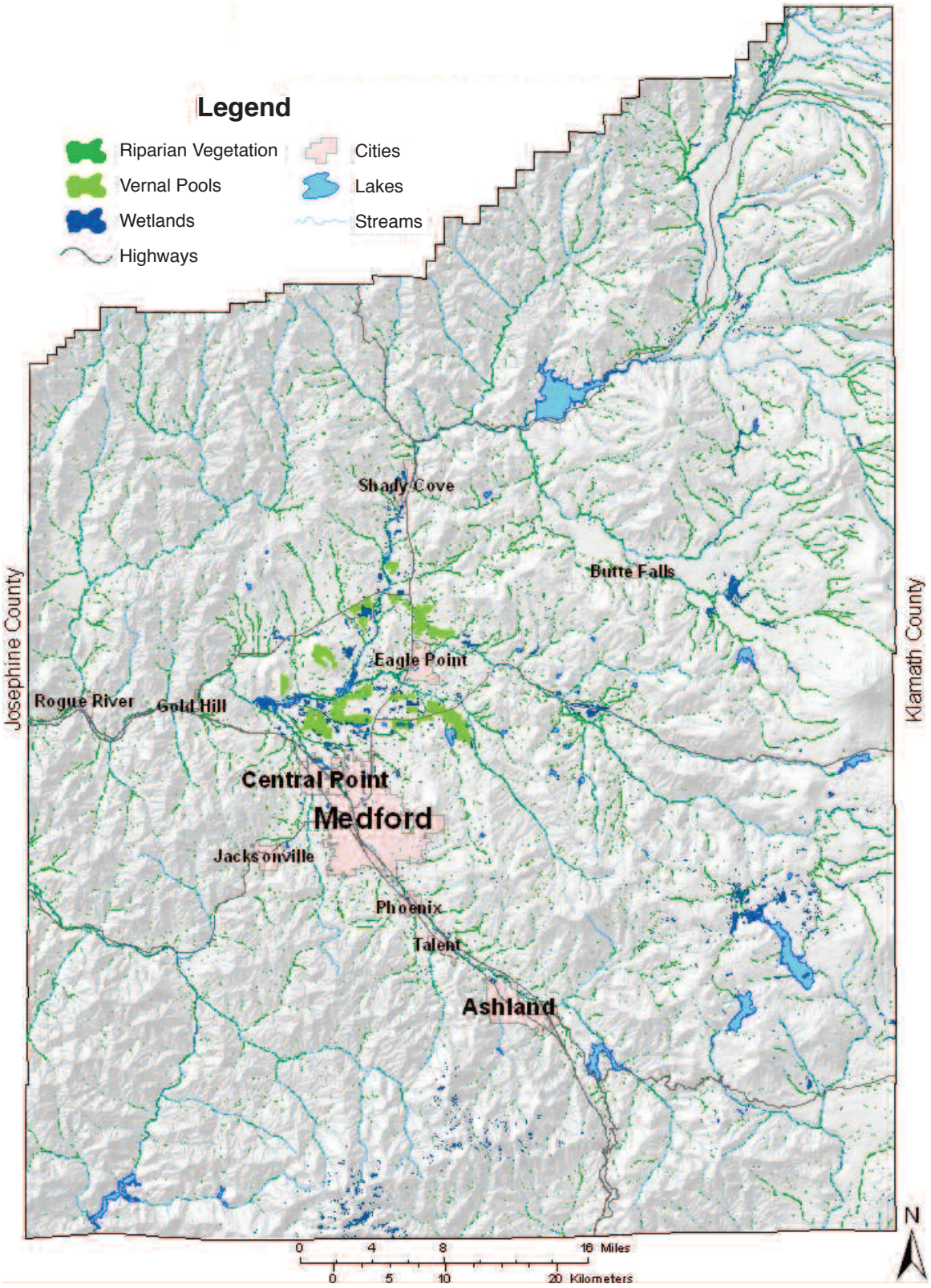
Riparian areas, wetlands, and vernal pools occur in low lying areas throughout the Rogue Basin. However, their extent has been severely diminished over the last 150 years of settlement. While some of these features enjoy federal and state protection, many others in private ownership are located near development and are likely to suffer from further loss and degradation without additional conservation measures in place.

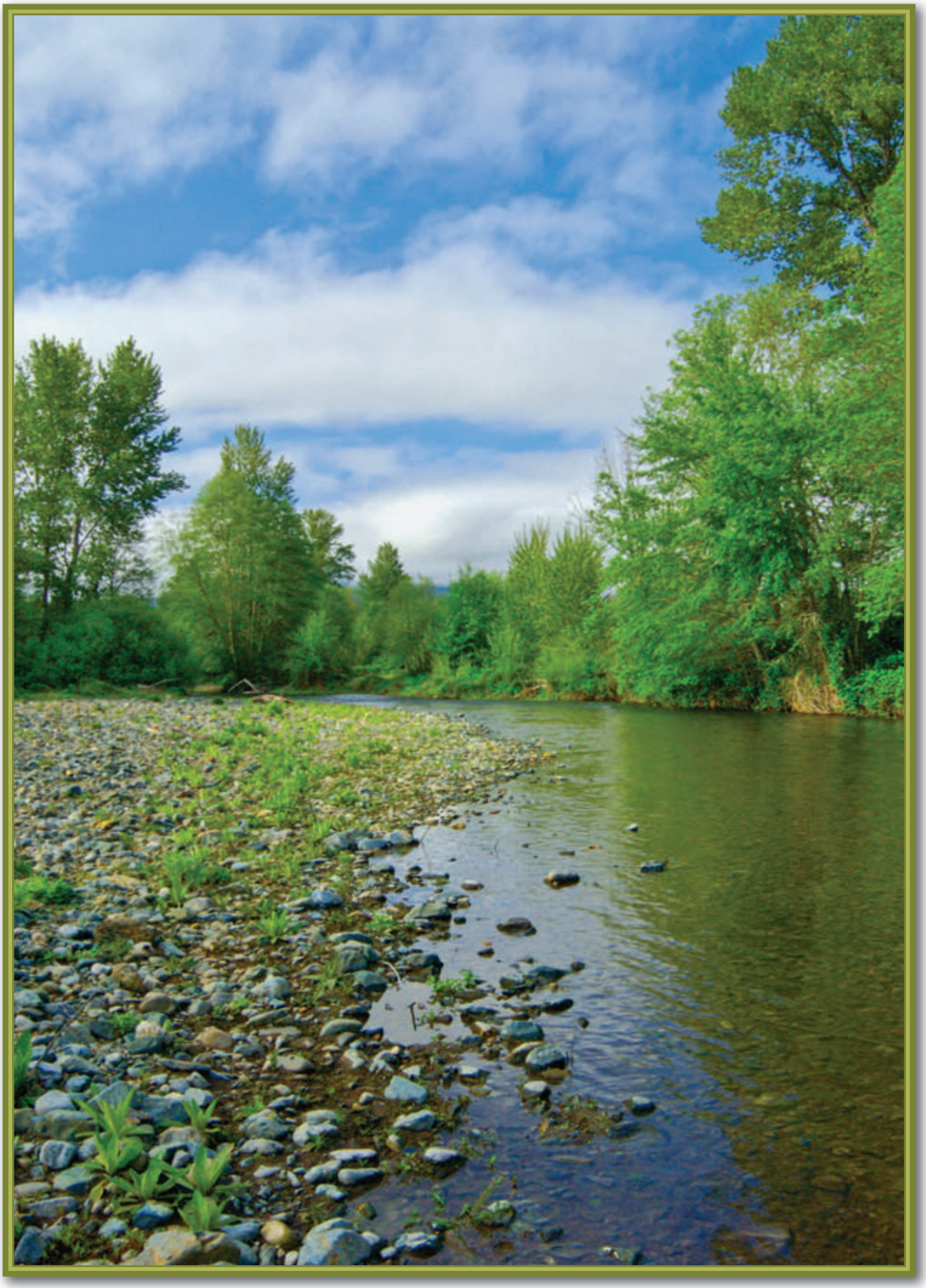
Maps 8 and 9 display riparian areas, wetlands, and vernal pools in Josephine and Jackson counties.


Curry County
Jackson County
Merlin
Grants Pass
Cave Junction
Legend
Riparian Vegetation
Wetlands
Highways
Cities
Lakes
Streams
0 4 8 16 Miles
0 5 10 20 Kilometers
N

RIPARIAN AREAS & WETLANDS
JACKSON COUNTY, OREGON

9





Thomas Kirchen

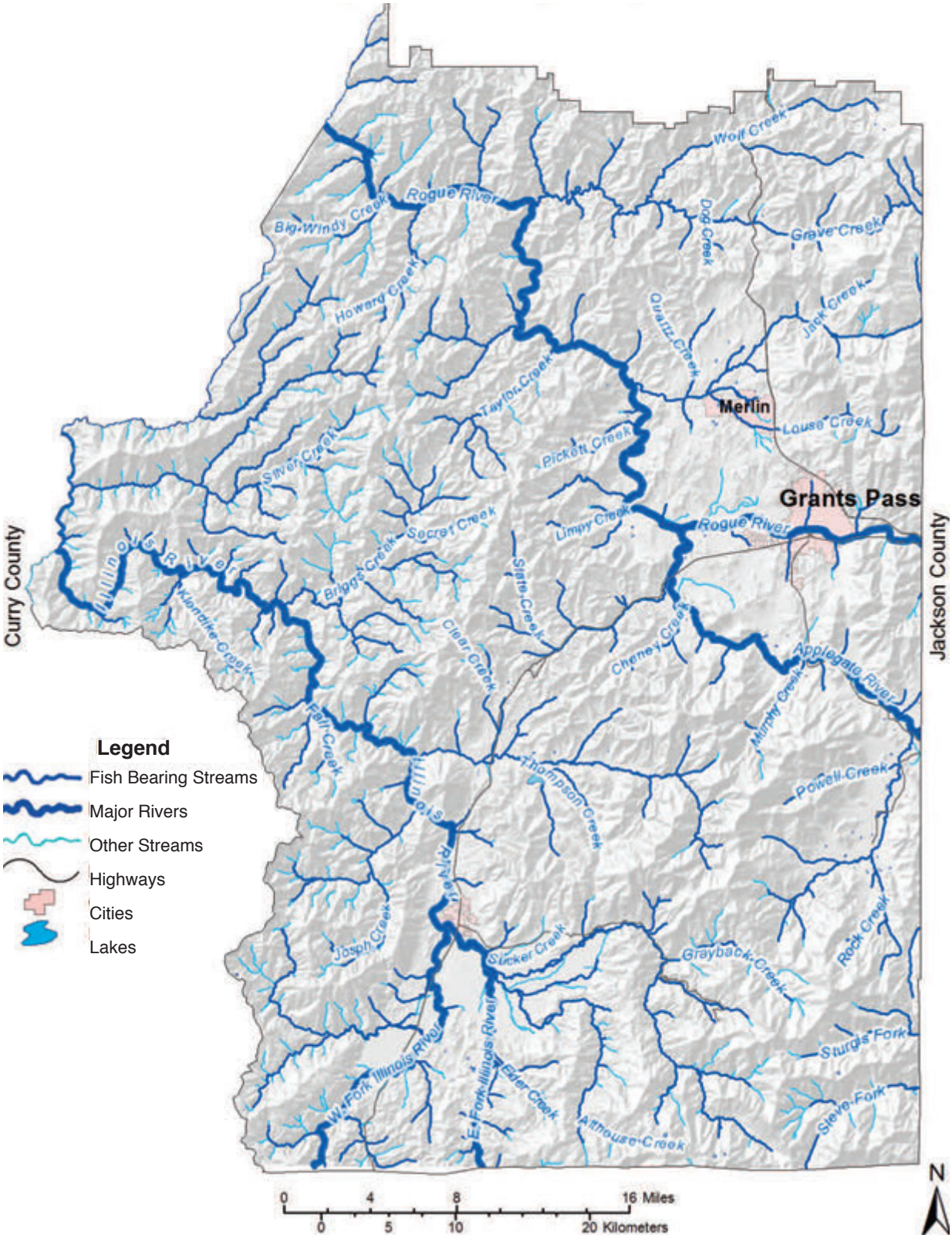
FISH-BEARING STREAMS

The Rogue Basin is known as a valuable habitat for numerous species of fish. Included are large numbers of anadromous and resident salmonid fish, notably fall chinook, coho salmon, winter and summer steelhead trout, and rainbow and cutthroat trout. Non-salmonid fish are also present, including lampreys, suckers, and sculpin. Fish populations in lakes and reservoirs are often non-native and provide recreation for many residents and visitors.

Most streams and rivers in the Basin have been altered through logging, mining, road building, and other development that has taken a toll on the native fish populations. Protection of fish-bearing streams is of high value to communities and for the ecological health of the region. Survival of anadromous fish is of primary concern; coho salmon habitat, in particular, requires low-gradient valley stream courses that are most often found in private ownership.

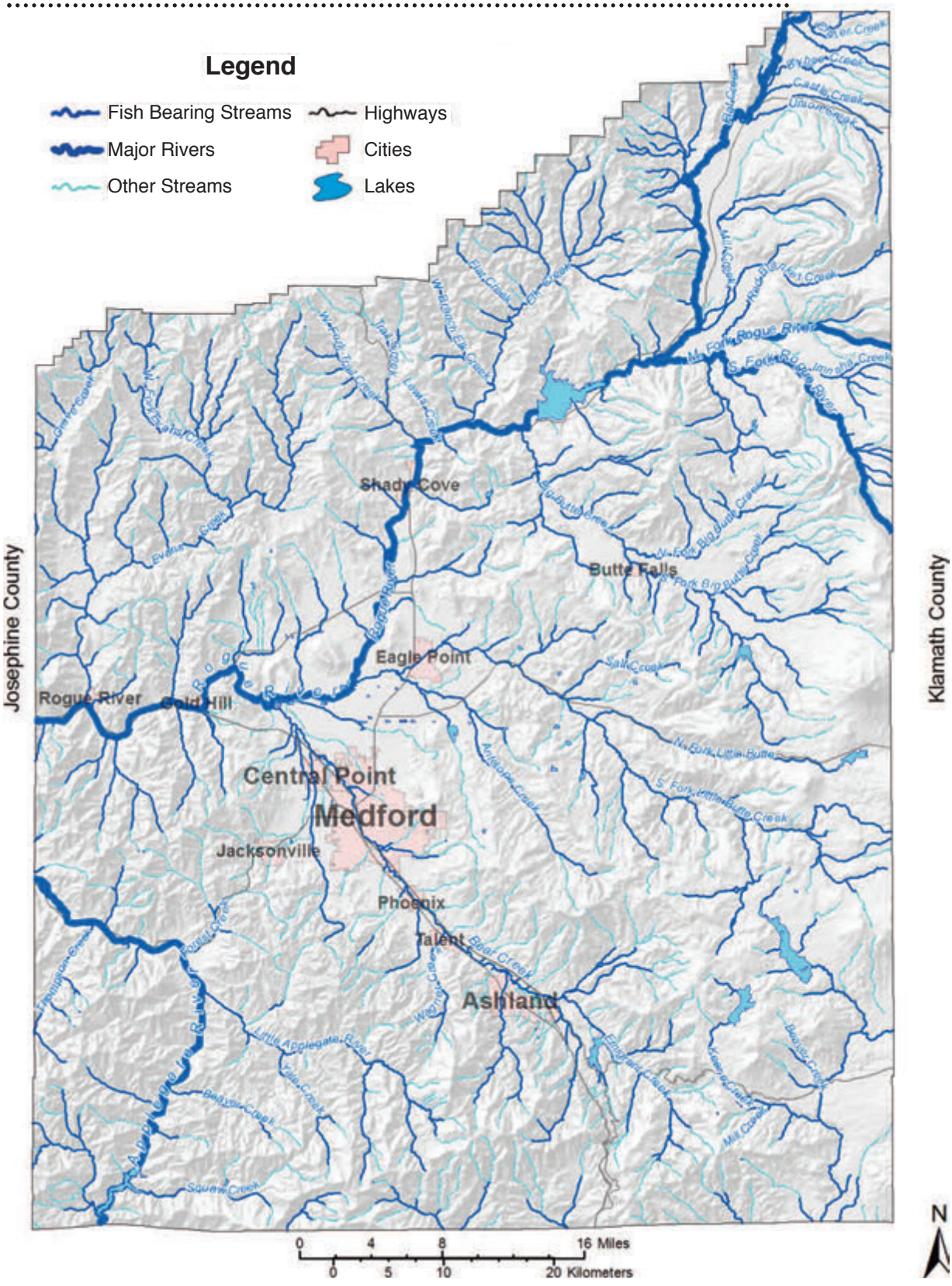
Maps 10 and 11 show the fish-bearing streams in Josephine and Jackson counties.

FISH-BEARING STREAMS
JOSEPHINE COUNTY, OREGON



FISH-BEARING STREAMS
JACKSON COUNTY, OREGON

11



Lee O. Webb

OAK WOODLAND, CHAPARRAL, AND GRASSLAND

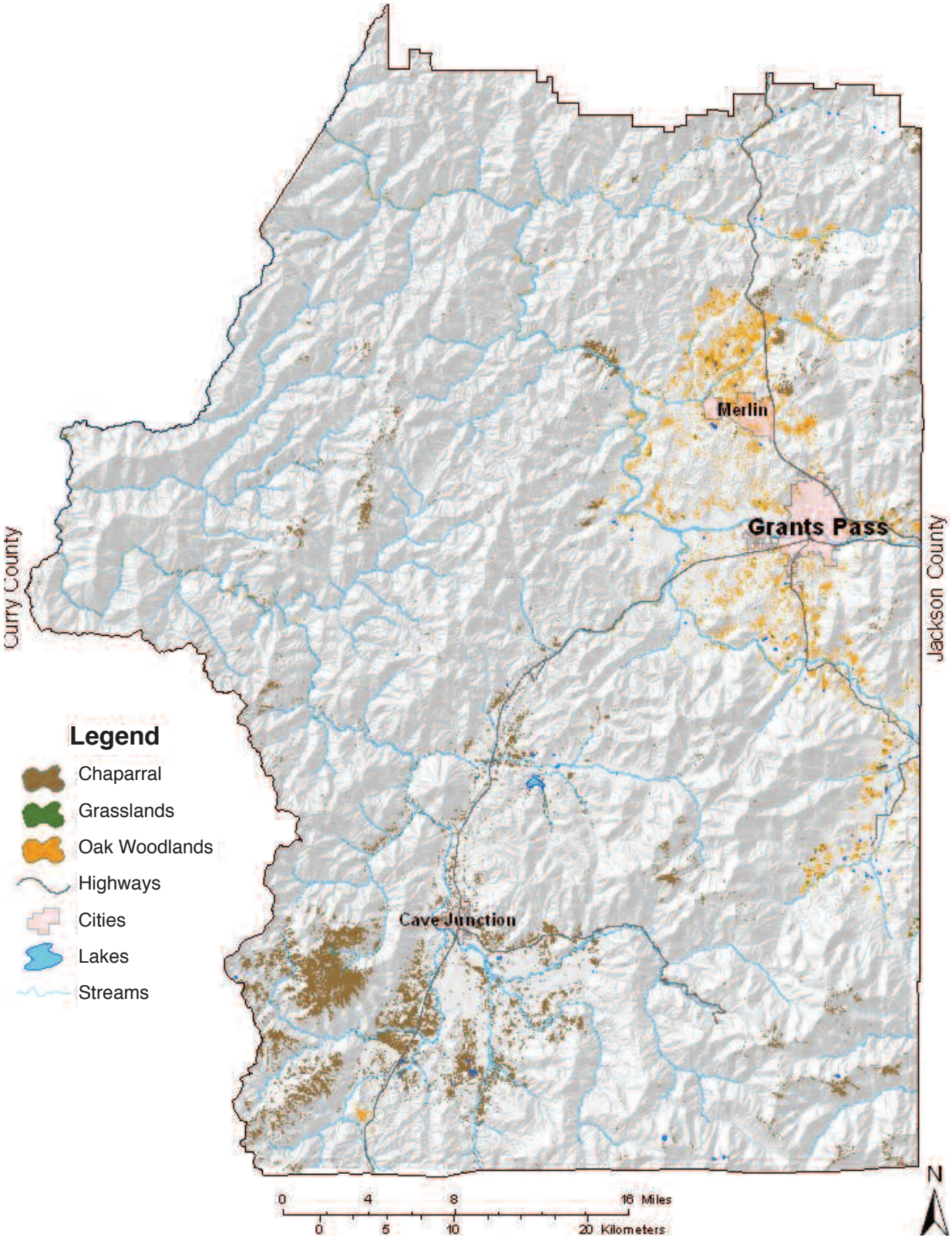
Key habitat types are identified as important due to their role in supporting high biologic diversity and rare or declining plants and animals. In western Oregon and Washington, less than 1% of oak woodland and savanna remains following European settlement. This endangered habitat, occupying primarily private lands on the valley floor and lower mountain slopes in the Rogue Basin, has been converted to farms, ranches, cities, industrial zones, and residential areas while fire suppression has interrupted the natural fire frequency, shifting oak woodlands into mixed conifer forests. Invasive non-native plants like Himalayan blackberry and Scot's broom reduce the survival and growth of oak seedlings as well as other native wildflowers.

In Southern Oregon, the oak savanna complex forms a mosaic of open oak savanna, denser oak woodland, chaparral and meadow. This mix of habitat types is one of the many factors that enhance biodiversity due to the "edge effect." The edge effect is an ecological term that describes how the juxtaposition of a variety of habitats increases the tendency to support a greater number of plant and wildlife species. For instance, Gentner's fritillaria (*Fritillaria gentneri*), a federally endangered red lily only found in our region, is most often found where oak woodland or chaparral habitats intersect with other habitat types. The list of rare or declining plant and animal species associated with oak woodlands is large, but includes: gray squirrel, acorn woodpecker, Lewis Woodpecker, Western meadowlark, Western bluebird, white meconella (*Meconella oregana*), Ashland thistle (*Cirsium ciliolatum*), Southern Oregon buttercup (*Ranunuculus austro-oreganus*), and Greene's mariposa-lily (*Calochortus greenei*). In the spring, oak savannas support a beautiful carpet of native wildflowers and provide critical habitat for numerous neotropical songbirds. Large tracts of the oak savanna complex also provide important wildlife corridors offering dispersal through changing climate and connectivity to other protected lands.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has identified Strategic Opportunity Areas for important habitats such as oak woodlands.

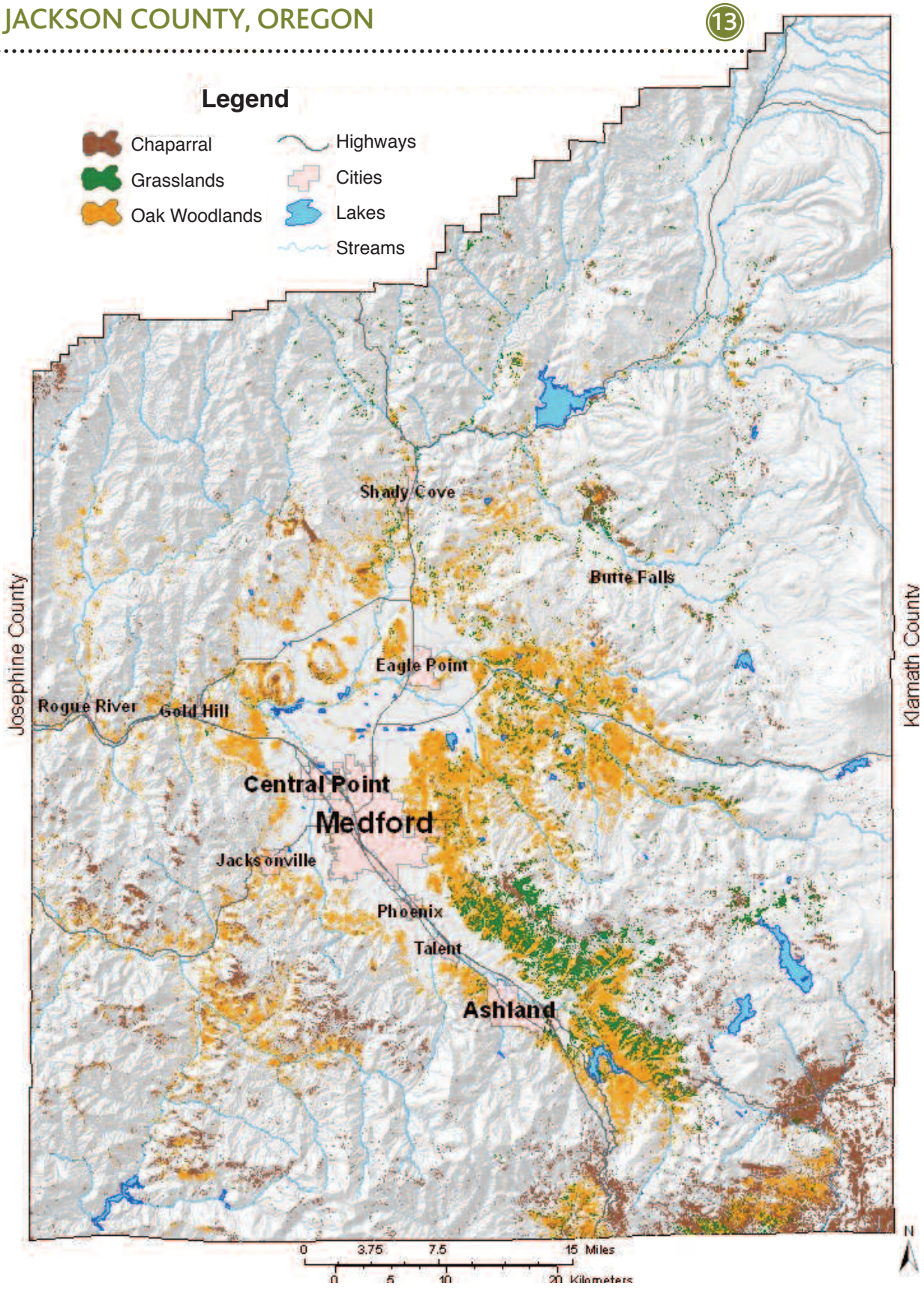
Maps 12 and 13 show the oak woodlands, chaparral, and grasslands in Josephine and Jackson counties.

OAK WOODLAND, CHAPARRAL, GRASSLAND
JOSEPHINE COUNTY, OREGON



OAK WOODLAND, CHAPARRAL, GRASSLAND
JACKSON COUNTY, OREGON

13



Su Rolle

ULTRAMAFIC GEOLOGY AND VEGETATION

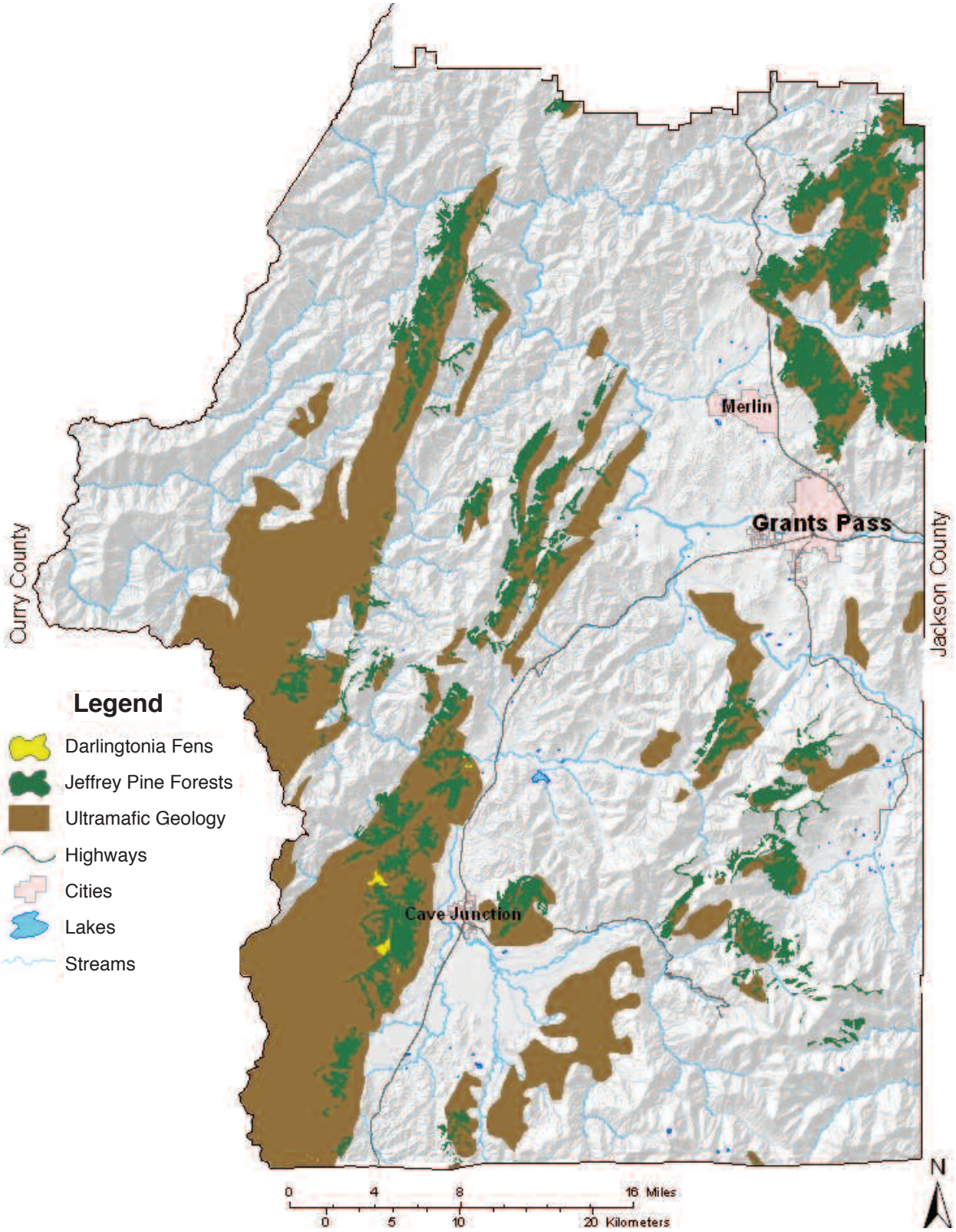
The Klamath-Siskiyou region is one of the most biologically diverse regions in North America, second only to the Appalachian Mountain region. The Klamath-Siskiyous support an exceedingly high number of plant and animal species. One primary reason for this biodiversity is due to the complex geology of the region including the largest concentration of ultramafic bedrock in North America. Ultramafic bedrock originates from mantle rock deep in the earth's crust, including rocks like serpentine and peridotite. Serpentine rocks are green and slippery-looking while peridotite is knobby and red to black. Ultramafic means that the rocks are high in iron and magnesium. Soils derived from these rocks weather to a striking red color.

Many rare, threatened, and endangered plants are associated with ultramafic soils such as cobra lily (Darlingtonia californica), Lee's lewisia, (Lewisia leeana), and Waldo gentian (Gentiana setigera). Some of these rare plants are endemic to the region and grow nowhere else. At least 40 species in Southwest Oregon and Northwest California are considered endemic serpentine plants. About 11% of federal and state listed rare plants in the Klamath Siskiyou region only grow in ultramafic soils. A number of unique vegetation types, such as Darlingtonia fens, Jeffrey pine savanna, and Port-Orford-cedar riparian areas are also associated with ultramafic soils. Some lands, such as the Jeffrey pine savanna, can often be seen at a distance appearing more barren than surrounding landscapes due to the harsher growing conditions. Ultramafic soils support plants that are tolerant of extreme conditions and are adapted to:

- Low calcium-to-magnesium ratio
- Deficiencies in nutrients such as nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus
- Concentrations of the heavy metals like chromium, cobalt, iron, and nickel

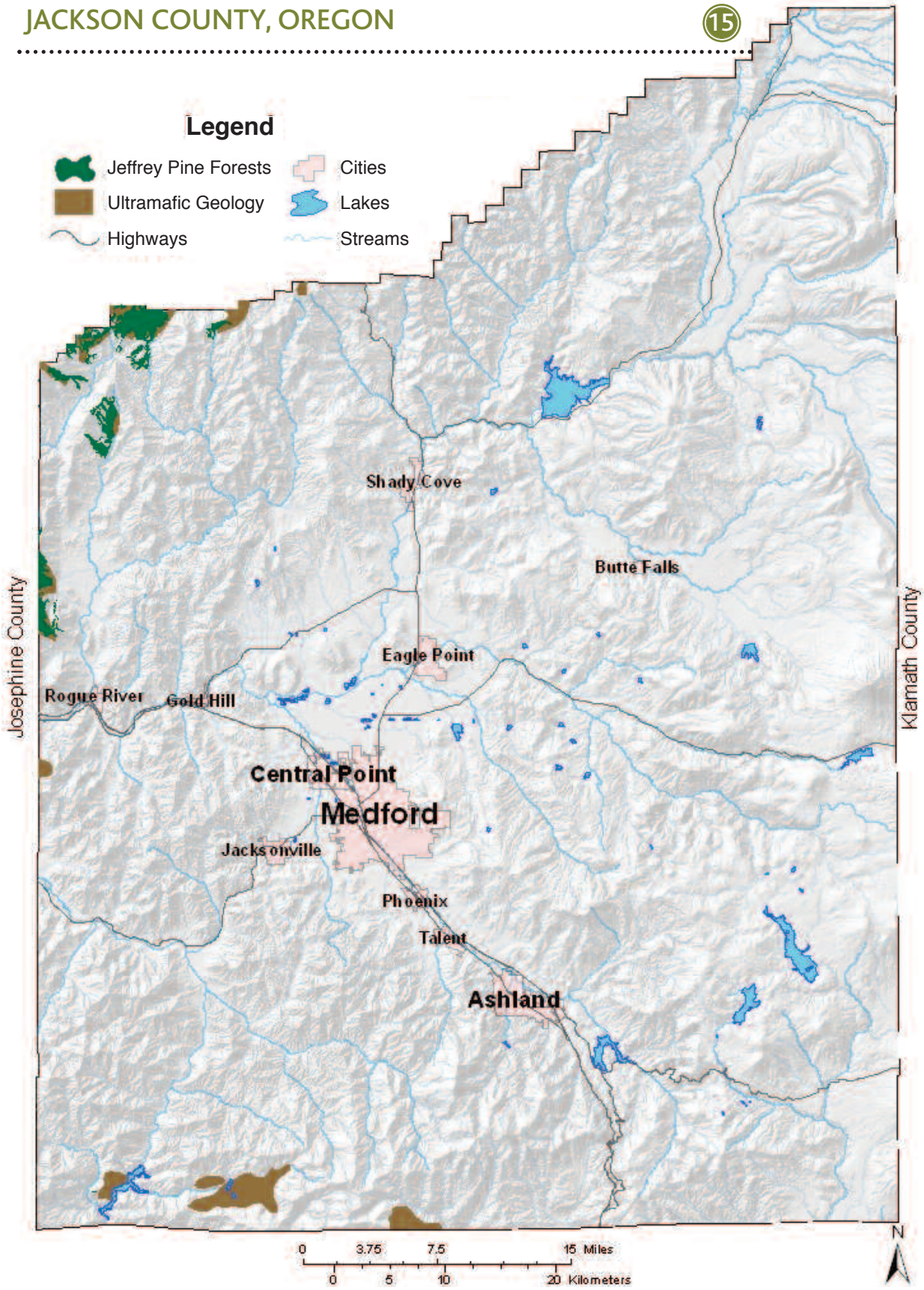
Maps 14 and 15 show the ultramafic geologic areas in Josephine and Jackson counties.

ULTRAMAFIC GEOLOGY & VEGETATION
JOSEPHINE COUNTY, OREGON



ULTRAMAFIC GEOLOGY & VEGETATION
JACKSON COUNTY, OREGON

15



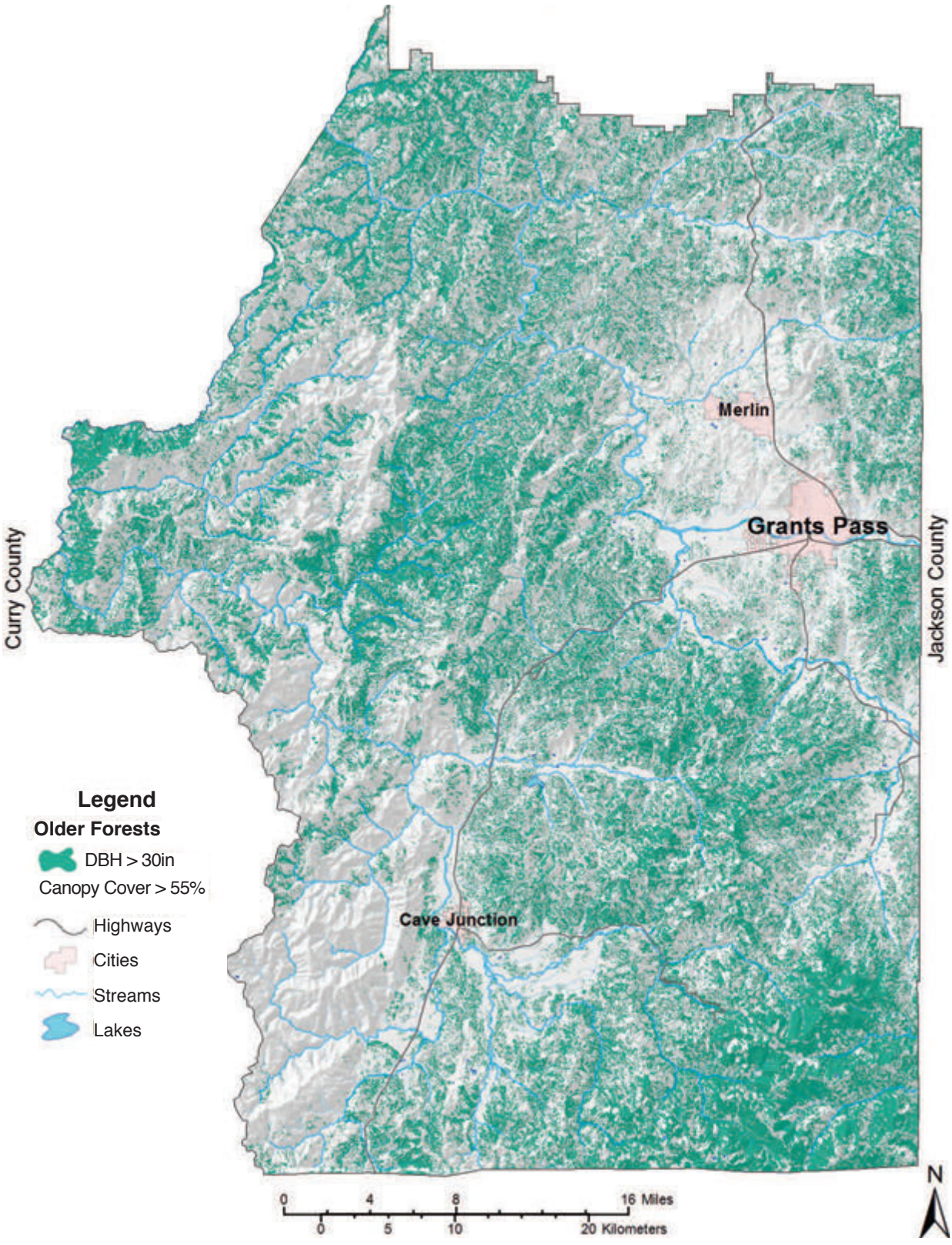
Lee O. Webb

OLDER FORESTS

Older forest habitats refer to those areas where trees are large enough to support the variety of species associated with "old growth," such as spotted owls, red tree voles, Cyperpidium orchids (mountain lady slipper and the clustered lady slipper), and other fauna and flora. Habitat associated with older forests (also called late successional habitat) is often synonymous with northern spotted owl habitat and may refer to those areas commonly used for nesting and roosting. As with other special habitats, there are far fewer older forests in southwest Oregon than 100 years ago due to logging, development, and wildfire—factors which continue to threaten these areas—especially on private lands. In our region the size of trees used by spotted owls is often much smaller than that used by owls further north in Oregon and Washington. For the purpose of this plan forests with trees averaging 30 inches in diameter with 55% canopy closure are considered older forests.

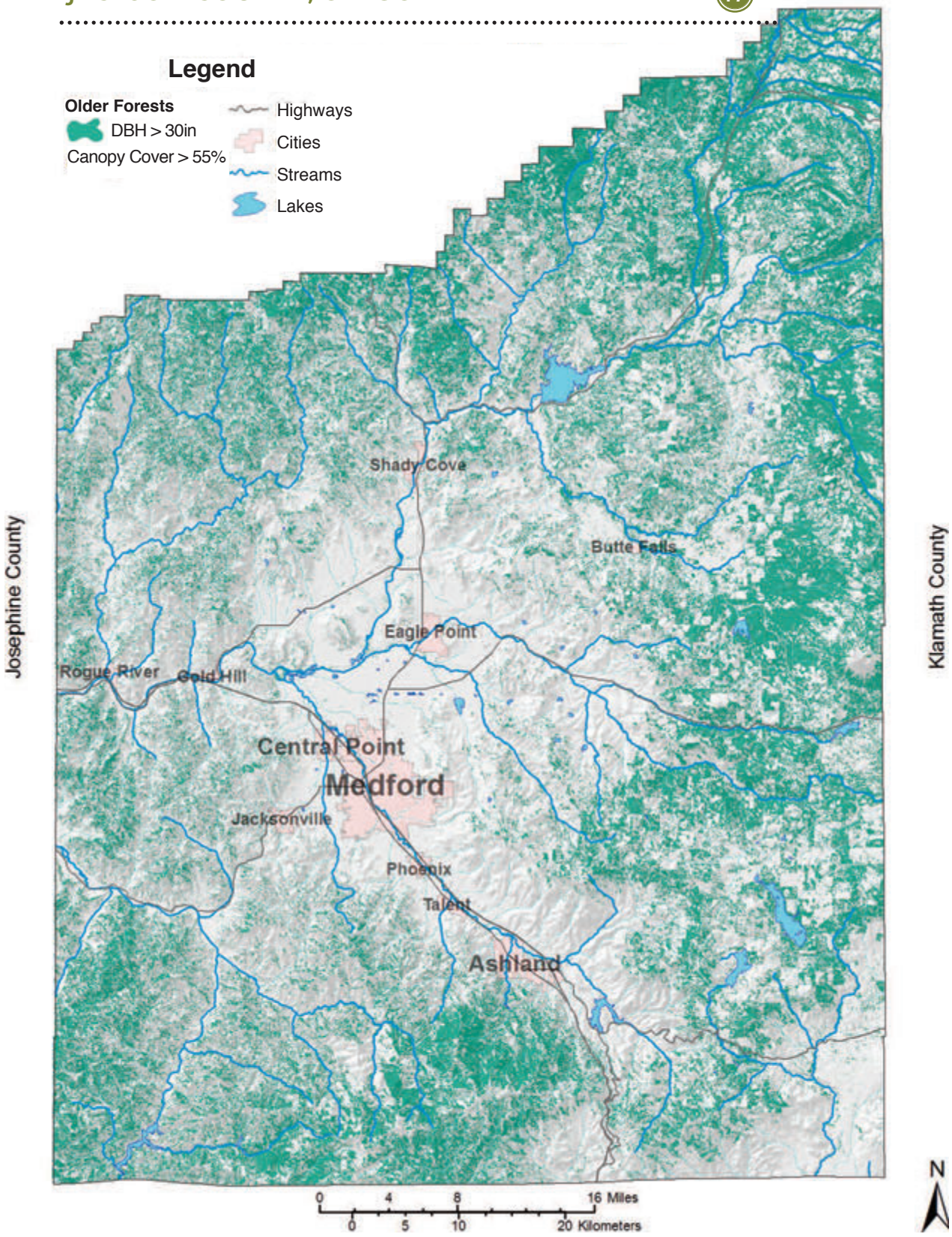
Maps 16 and 17 show the older forests in Josephine and Jackson Counties.

OLDER FORESTS
JOSEPHINE COUNTY, OREGON



OLDER FORESTS
JACKSON COUNTY, OREGON

17



Su Rolle

VIEWSHEDS

Viewsheds refers to our scenery—the hills, ridges, mountains, and valleys we can see from the places where we live. They form the backdrops of our towns and cities. They are the views from prominent vista points and trails. Viewsheds also frame the natural and rural character of the region. They are the signature landscapes of the Rogue Basin: The farms and orchards, the Rogue River, the golden grassland slopes and oak covered hills, the tall conifer forests and high peaks beyond. Viewsheds are important factors in developing a sense of belonging to a place and identifying with one's surroundings.

Because the public perception of an area is often determined by the landscape along major state highways, the scenery along travel corridors is vital to how visitors from outside the area form their image of the Rogue Valley. The Rogue-Umpqua Scenic Byway is a nationally designated scenic byway that extends from Gold Hill to Shady Cove and Prospect past Diamond Lake and on to Roseburg, forming an extensive, publically accessible viewshed.

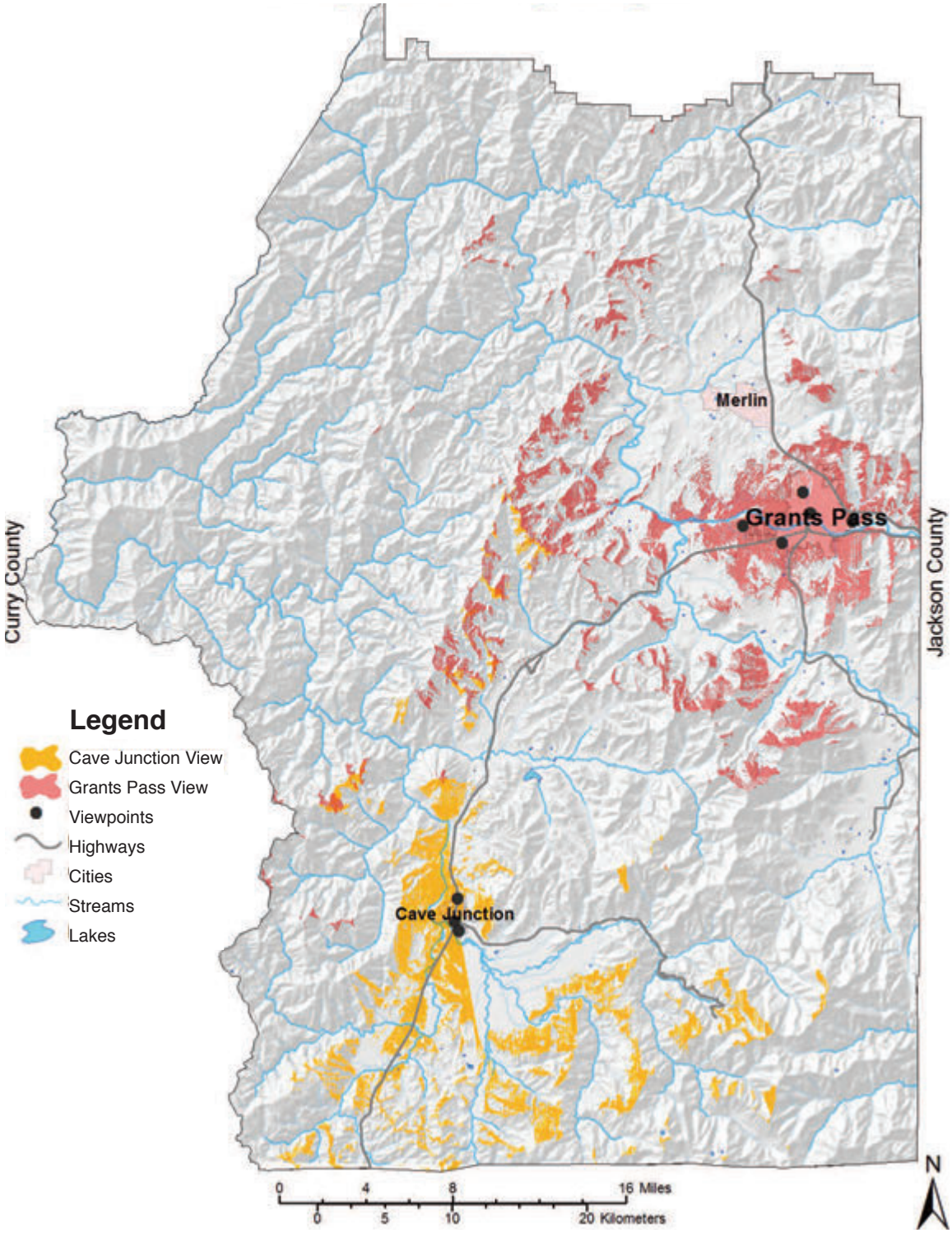
Prioritizing viewsheds is difficult because such a process is literally "in the eye of the beholder." However, we can apply objective considerations, such as how visible a place is to most Rogue Valley residents, particularly from major population centers and scenic byways; how important the area is to the community; and how vulnerable it is to alteration.

A few viewpoints and the resulting viewsheds from Medford and Ashland in Jackson County, and Grants Pass and Cave Junction in Josephine County, were created for the purpose of this Plan. These views do not reflect the entire viewsheds for all people living in these communities; rather they offer a broad brush value as landscapes are evaluated.

Also important to communities is the protection of lands that preserve the scenic entrances to cities or otherwise contribute to the scenic characteristics of cities. Future planning efforts can identify key lands seen as we enter and experience cities.

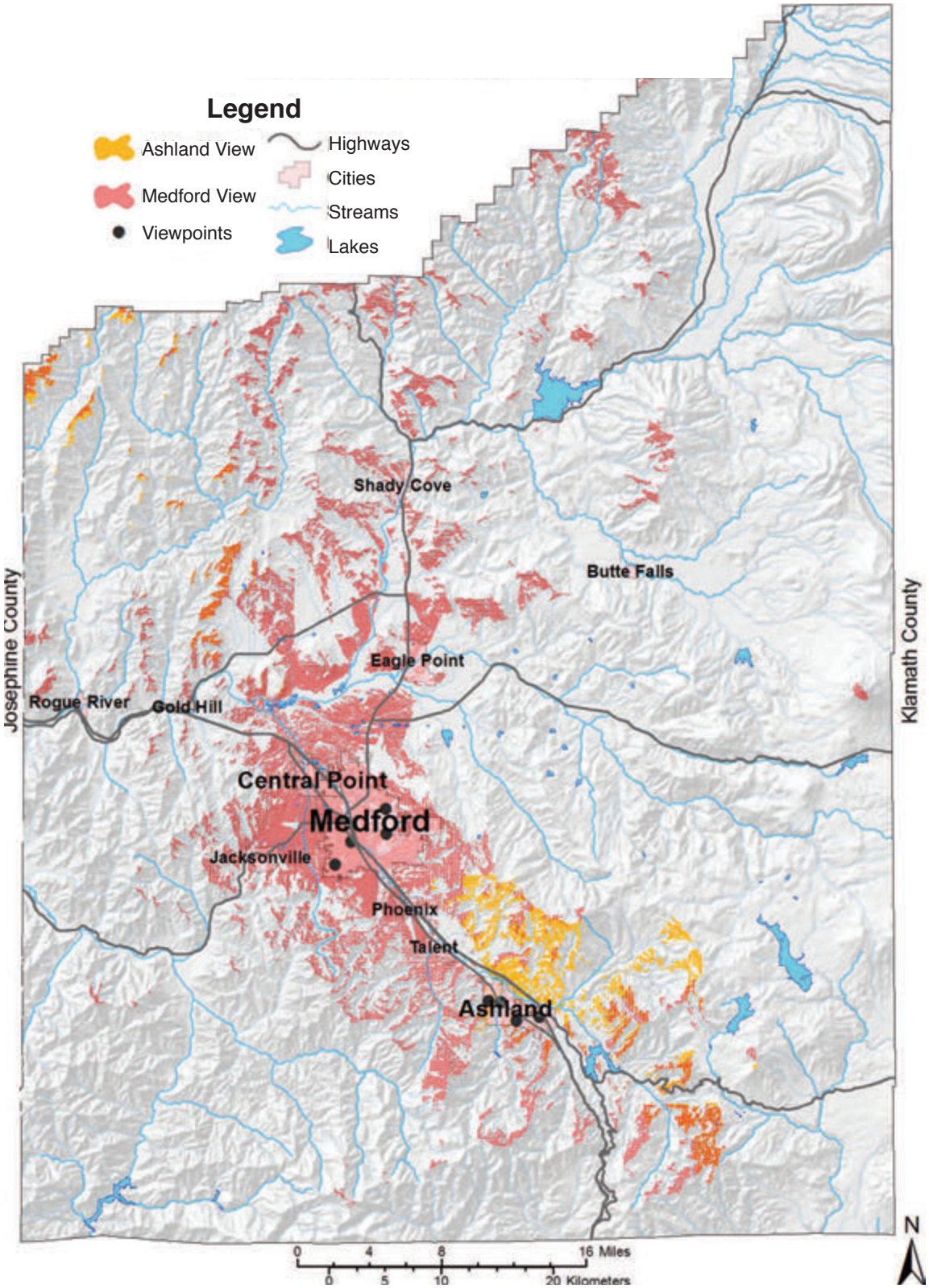
Maps 18 and 19 show the viewsheds in Josephine and Jackson Counties.

CAVE JUNCTION AND GRANTS PASS VIEWSHEDS
JOSEPHINE COUNTY, OREGON



ASHLAND AND MEDFORD VIEWSHEDS
JACKSON COUNTY, OREGON

19



John C. Bruckman

PARKS AND GREENWAYS

Parks, trails systems, natural areas, stream corridors and floodplains within city limits, as well as the open spaces surrounding towns, are valuable resources contributing to the quality of life. Natural areas and parks in town, and the trail systems that connect them to one another and to public lands beyond, are invaluable assets. Stream corridors and wetlands within cities are likewise superior public resources and require special consideration and care. Undeveloped lands in and around cities contribute to the scenic qualities of a town, provide a place for community farms and gardens, and offer refuge to wildlife species that live in or pass through urban areas.

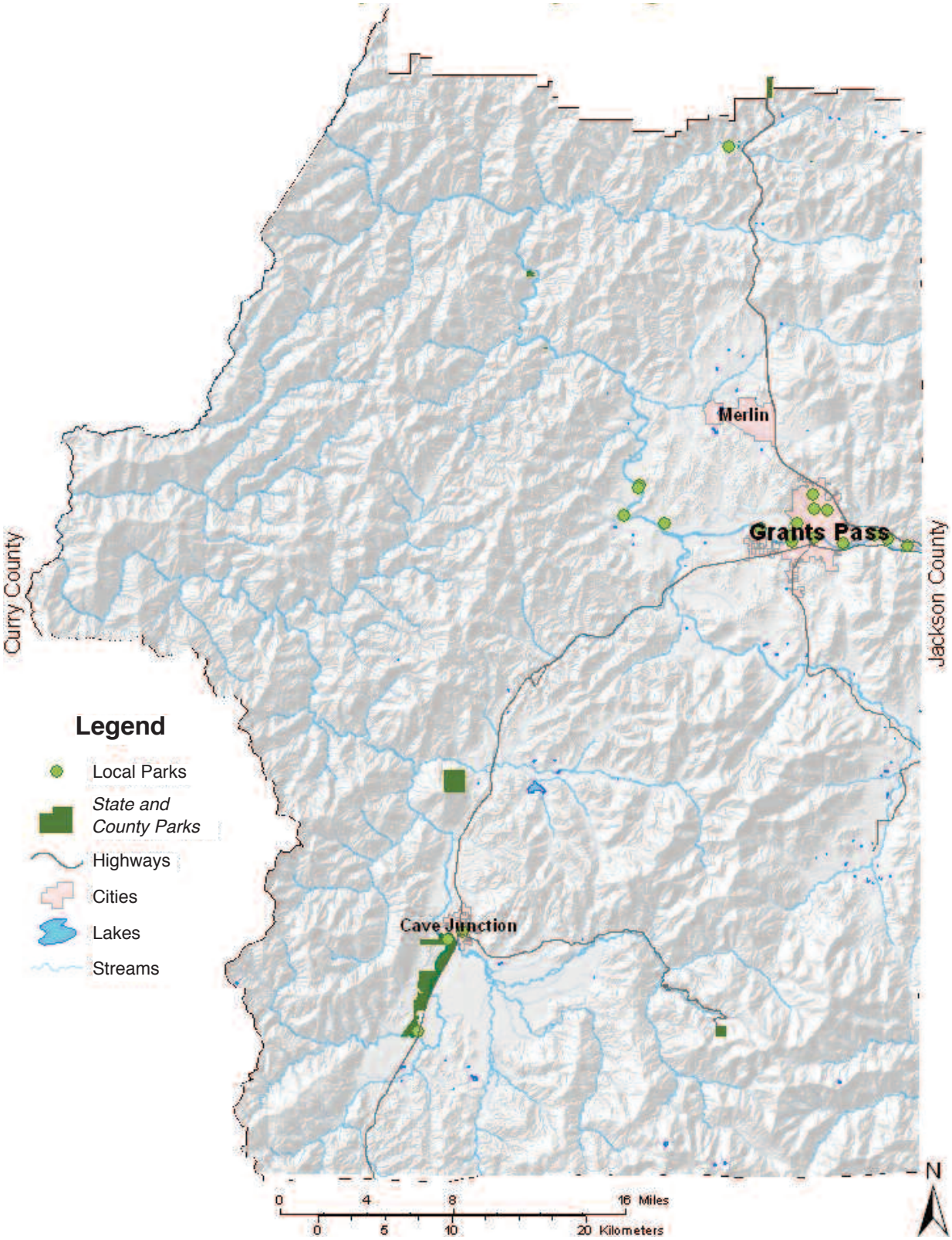
Unless protected, nearly all open space in urban areas will eventually be slated for development in some way. Through encouragement and collaboration with governments and citizens, it is possible to conserve key pieces of undeveloped urban lands, as well as enhance protection of existing conserved lands, so that they remain available for the use and enjoyment of the area's residents.

Buffer areas between cities help preserve the character of each individual city by providing a "natural" break in development. Open spaces surrounding cities also help buffer urban areas from the resource lands beyond by allowing a more gradual transition from blacktops to treetops. These types of areas provide an opportunity to enhance the existing Bear Creek and Rogue River Greenways as well as connect communities through natural corridors such as expanded greenways, trails, farms, and scenic open space.

Forming partnerships on urban area conservation projects with local governments and citizen organizations will ensure that mutual goals are attained and conflicts are avoided. Future urban parks and greenways will include:

- Areas that have been identified locally as significant natural and open spaces or have historically allowed access and been used by the public
- Lands in proximity to existing protected areas that provide connectivity between protected areas or enhance the boundaries of existing protected areas
- Open space corridors that connect towns through trails, scenic drives, shared natural areas and agricultural zones and also serve as community buffers
- Existing public spaces that lack adequate protection as parks or natural areas

Maps 20 and 21 show the older forests in Josephine and Jackson Counties.


Curry County
Jackson County
Merlin
Grants Pass
Cave Junction
Legend
Local Parks
State and County Parks
Highways
Cities
Lakes
Streams
0 4 8 16 Miles
0 5 10 20 Kilometers
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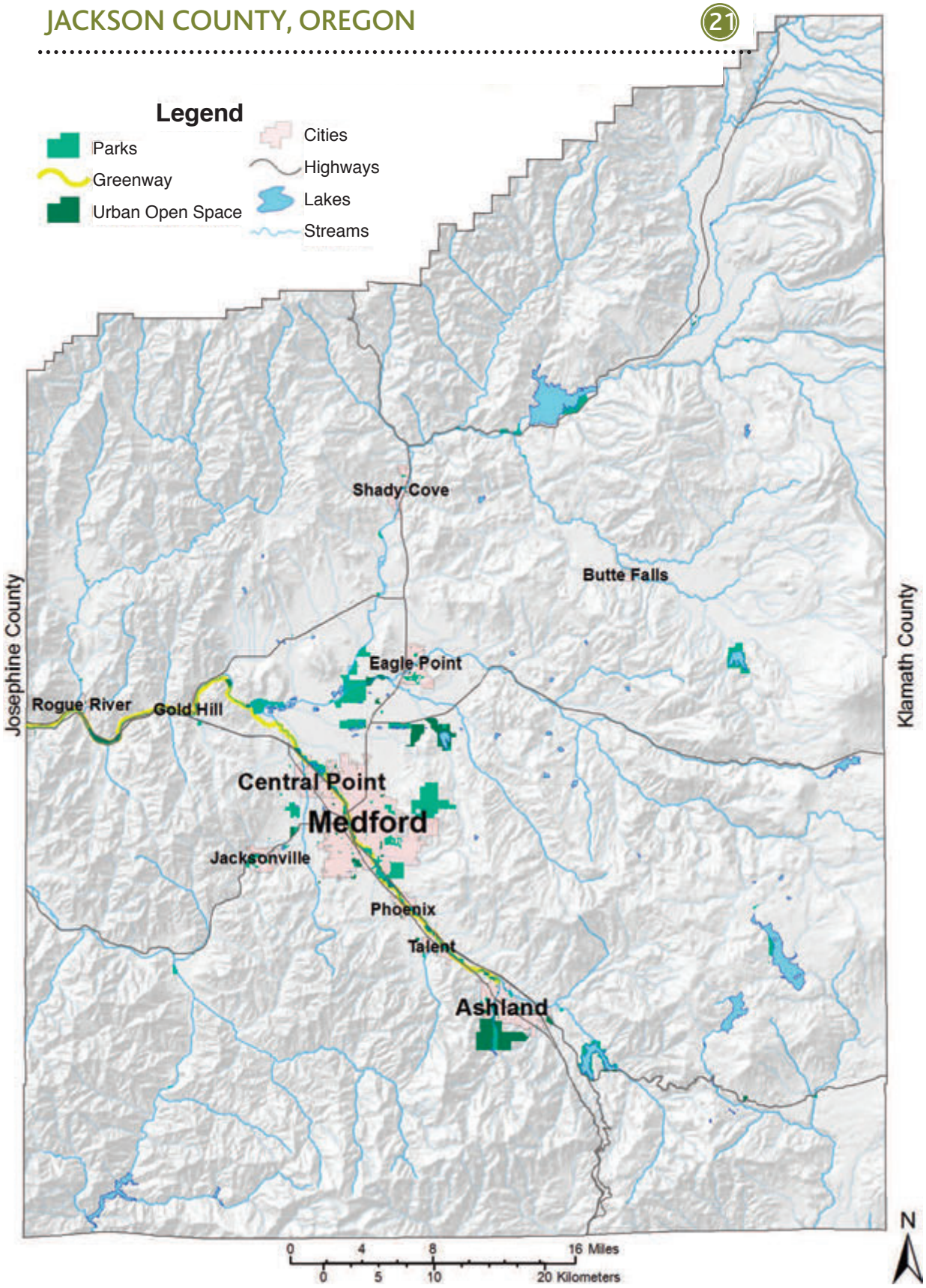
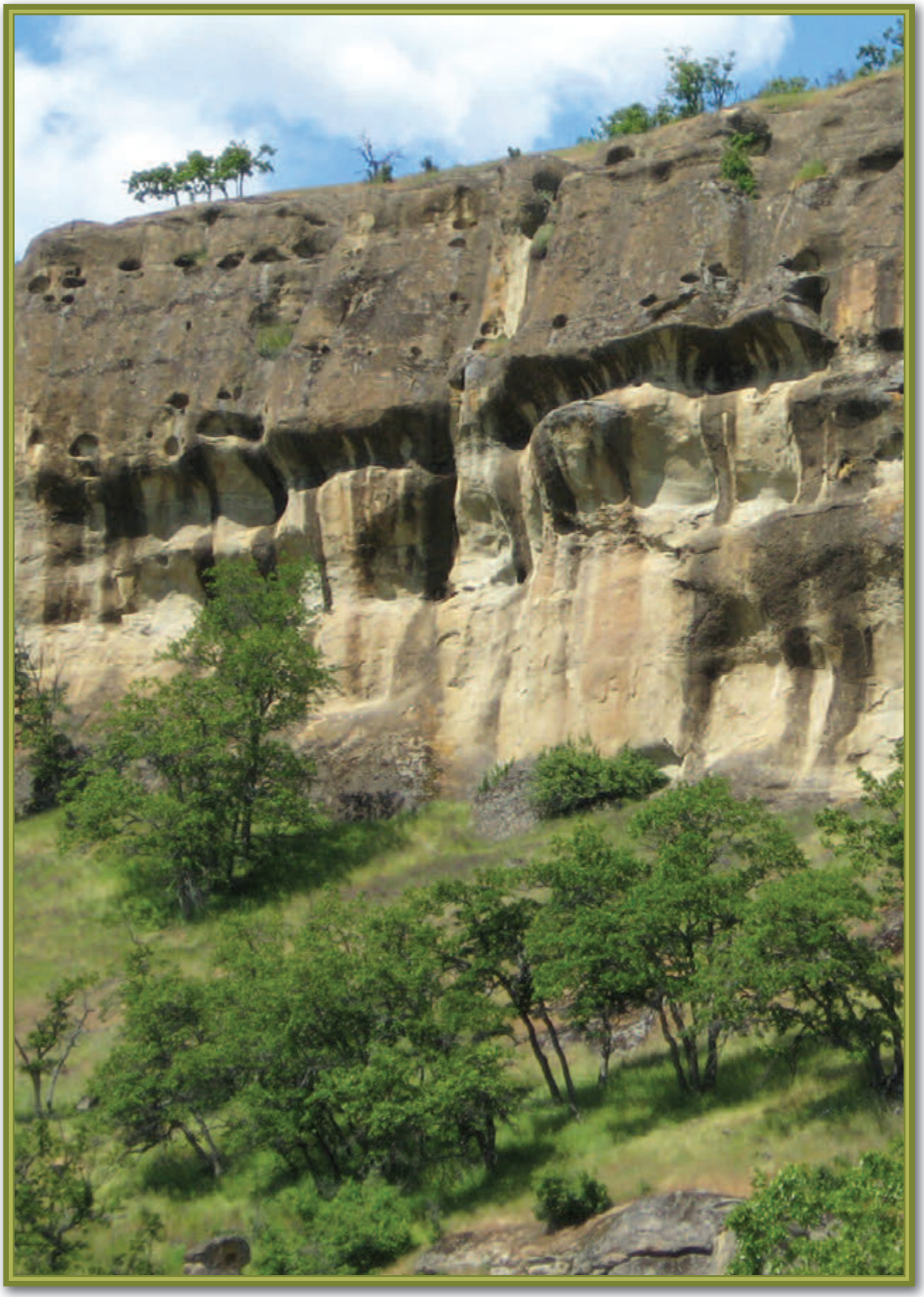
PARKS, GREENWAYS AND OPEN SPACES
JACKSON COUNTY, OREGON

21





Martin Zukis

UNIQUE FEATURES

These portions of the landscape are so special, exceptional, and rare that their disappearance or ruin would be an irreplaceable loss to our conservation legacy. The term "unique features" refers to both natural and cultural features. Examples of unique features include prominent or unusual geologic features, rare and unique plant communities or species habitats, and exemplary waterfalls. Unique features represent the most vulnerable of the priority land types because of their rarity and limited extent. Their complete loss, further degradation, or restriction from public access is almost assured in the next century without action.

The protection of unique features provides future generations the chance to experience all that is spectacular and unusual in the natural world of southwest Oregon. These rare sites offer connections to the past, cultural sites, uncommon remnant valley bottom vegetation, and exceptional features of the region that deserve to be conserved.

Other than the rare and special plant and animal habitats, unique features in Jackson and Josephine counties have not been mapped by any one agency or organization. Over time we will continue to identify prominent or unusual geologic features, exemplary waterfalls, extraordinary spring complexes, natural curiosities, historic farms, and other cultural sites to enhance future land protection efforts.

George McKinley

WORKING FORESTS

Responsibly managed working forests provide benefit to the public and for the environment through a sustainable supply of wood products, jobs for rural communities, diverse vegetation, wildlife habitat, as well as clean air and water. Private timber companies own many acres of land in the counties with smaller parcels owned by individuals and family partnerships. Some privately owned forestlands are managed primarily for the inherent economic values that they offer—especially production of forest products such as logs, lumber and other products that support the forest industry. However, private forestlands are increasingly being managed to retain, protect and promote both economic and ecologic values. Most often occurring on non-industrial private small woodland parcels, these types of forestlands have come to be known as "working forests."

Goals for working forests often include managing for older larger trees of long-lived species. Goals may also include creation or enhancement of special habitats for a variety of plant and animal species. Healthy forests across landscapes have a diversity of seral stages just as a healthy human population has a diversity of age classes. Activities in working forests are carefully planned over time with basic guiding principles such as:

- focusing on what will remain (or be created) in the forest after an activity rather than what will be removed
- maintaining the productive capacity of soils
- using systems that replicate natural disturbances, such as fire, wherever possible
- encouraging diversity and growth of species that might naturally occur on that particular site
- avoiding fragmentation of plant and animal habitat (often caused by roads and large clearcuts)
- evaluating the site as part of a larger ecosystem with respect to adjacent lands and sensitive areas such as riparian areas. Conservation goals across landscapes can only be met with the engaged participation of private forest ownerships

Common activities in working forests include removing small diameter trees and selected brush to reduce fire danger and enhance growth of preferred species, low intensity underburning through carefully prescribed fires, pruning branches of remaining trees, as well as careful selection of commercially viable trees to be removed within the context of broader more ecologically appropriate goals and objectives. In the words of ecologist Tom Atzet, "Managing forested ecosystems relies on science and art with a healthy dose of humility."

Specific working forest lands have not been mapped due to the changing nature of ownership and difficulty of identification. Working forests are of significant value and are rated highly as we consider priority conservation projects.

John C. Bruckman

Implementing the Plan

THE CONSERVATION PLAN shows that there are many large properties with high conservation values that need protection in Jackson and Josephine counties. A number of privately owned lands greater than 300 acres show up on map after map. For instance, an individual property may have fish-bearing streams, oak woodlands, older forests, and be part of our viewshed. Additionally, the Plan shows that there are precious few properties with the highest capability of agriculture which are not within cities or other development. Protection of these important lands is critical to sustaining healthy communities.

Thomas Kirchen

This Plan will assist staff of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy in several important ways to:

- Evaluate proposed conservation projects by examining the overall context of a landowner's property, its associated values, and its proximity to other protected lands. We visit each proposed property and carefully assess the conservation values using a "Conservation Criteria" checklist (see Appendix A)

- Assist landowners with existing conservation easements to develop conservation plans and explore funding options for restoration and management

- Initiate new projects in areas with high conservation values. Staff will work with communities, local organizations, and partners seeking willing landowners

We're dedicated to protecting at least 20,000 acres of the best agricultural and other high priority land by 2020 as part of our broader Vision 20/20 project—an initiative that will build the capacity of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy. Currently, the Land Conservancy protects 9,000 acres in the Rogue Basin and surrounding areas. Vision 20/20 more than doubles that capacity.

The initial way we will implement this Plan is a concentrated outreach and education program to reach landowners of these high priority properties in order to identify those who have an interest in conservation. In this evolving process we will:

- Work with current and potential partners including watershed councils, agencies, and other organizations to build networks and relationships within the communities we serve.

- Send owners of high priority lands the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy's newsletters, brochures, and other educational materials

- Send personal invitations to events, hikes, and other activities to key landowners

- Network informally with individuals and existing groups and organizations in the communities and seek introductions to the men and women who own properties with high conservation values

- Identify ways that protecting lands will benefit local communities, such as enriched ecosystems, expanded social and community opportunities, economic development, and enhanced quality of life

The Land Conservancy will continue to use two primary tools for permanent land protection: conservation easements and fee ownership. Conservation easements are developed in cooperation with willing owners—this is entirely a voluntary process. The purpose is to create a way to translate the long-term goals for a specific property into a legal document that will protect conservation values over time. These become part of the title to the property so that future land owners will manage and protect the land in the way the original owner envisioned. The property is monitored annually by the Land Conservancy to ensure the conservation values are being protected. Fee ownership may be appropriate for special lands when the ability of the Land Conservancy to manage and maintain the property enhances the public benefits.

Both of these tools will be considered when a new project is undertaken, with a final determination based on the conservation values being protected, the partnership and funding opportunities, and the goals of the landowner.

The implementation of this Plan is closely tied to a successful Vision 20/20 project that builds the capacity of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy. With engaged leadership, effective partnerships, and an active, passionate membership working together, we will realize the goals of Vision 20/20. We are poised and ready for these next steps in protecting the legacy of the Rogue Basin.

APPENDIX A: CRITERIA WORKSHEET
Southern Oregon Land Conservancy

PROJECT NAME: _____ DATE: _____

CONSERVATION VALUES	HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW, NA	COMMENTS
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS (for all projects)		
Overall quality condition of the property		
Priority land type/ high priority features as identified in Conservation Plan		
Within priority area identified in Conservation Plan		
Threatened or at risk		
Adequate size to protect conservation values		
Signs of prior contamination by hazardous or other waste		
Connectivity with other protected areas		
PUBLIC BENEFIT (for all projects)		
Environmental education potential		
Public access and recreation potential		
Scenic value/distinctiveness and public visibility		
Water quality, quantity, aquifer recharge importance		
Cultural/historical significance		
Identified under a federal/state/local govt. conservation policy/overlay		
Proximity to urban area or major/scenic transit corridor		
Public interest		
PROJECT FEASIBILITY (for all projects)		
Potential for partnerships		
Potential for funding		
Landowner willingness to conserve primary conservation values		
Access to property for monitoring		
AGRICULTURE AND RANCH LANDS		
Soil Productivity		
Irrigation/ water rights		
Signature, scenic or historic farm		
Rangeland condition		
Rangeland site suitability		
Rangeland native vegetation composition		
Protection of drainages and other sensitive features		

CONSERVATION VALUES	HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW, NA	COMMENTS
RIPARIAN AREAS AND WETLANDS		
Buffers or protects a stream/wetland/watershed		
Riparian area with intact floodplains and side channels		
Ecologically unique riparian area or wetland		
Potential for restoration		
NATIVE HABITATS/WORKING FORESTS		
Significant, rare or diminished natural community or ecosystem		
Rare, threatened or endangered species		
Native habitat/species diversity		
Native plant community and functional condition intact		
Little or no noxious/invasive species		
VIEWSHED		
Comprises a prominent viewshed of a city or town		
Signature landscape visible from scenic byways, parks, major trails and vistas		
Scenic entrances to backdrops to cities or towns		
UNIQUE FEATURES		
Prominent or unusual geologic feature		
Remnant native upland vegetation in the Rogue Basin valley bottom		
Exemplary waterfall, spring complexes or other natural curiosities		
PARKS AND GREENWAYS		
Proximity to existing public trails or park near cities		
Proximity to existing protected areas		
Significant natural/historical/geologic feature		
Existing public space/access/use		

APPENDIX B: DATA SOURCES

Base Maps (General)	Digital Elevation Model (DEM), Roads, Lakes, Streams, Cities, County Boundaries, Tax Lots
	Jackson County Smartmap: http://www.smartmap.org/portal/ (10/2010)
	Josephine County Online: http://www.co.josephine.or.us/page.asp?navid=124 (10/2010)
	DEM: Oregon Geospatial Enterprise Office: http://gis.oregon.gov/DAS/EISPD/GEO/data/dems.shtml (8/2010)
Agricultural Lands	Soil Classes
	Oregon Soil Survey Reports and Data. Source: NRCS, 1:24,000. Accessed: Oregon Geospatial Enterprise Office (7/2010)
Locator: SOLC Service Area	County and Watershed Boundaries
	2007 County Boundaries. Source: BLM - 1:24,000. Accessed: Oregon Geospatial Enterprise Office (8/2010)
	HUC 4 and 5 Watersheds Oregon Bureau Land Management (2006)
Rogue Basin Watersheds	Rogue and Klamath Watershed Boundaries
	HUC 4 and 5 Watersheds. Oregon Bureau of Land Management (2006)
Rogue Basin Watershed Councils	Watershed Council Boundaries
	Statewide Watershed Council Boundaries. 2009. Source: OWEB. Accessed: Oregon Geospatial Enterprise Office (8/2010)
Protected Lands	Federal, State and Other Governement Lands; Conservation Easements and Other Protected Private Lands
	Oregon Watershed Education Board 2011; The Nature Conservancy of Oregon 2011; Pacific Forest
	Trust 2011; Southern Oregon Land Conservancy 2011; Taxlot data 2011 Jackson and Josephine county GIS
Riparian, Wetlands, Vernal Pools	Riparian, Wetlands, Vernal Pools, Riparian Vegetation
	Jackson County Smartmap: http://www.smartmap.org/portal/ (10/2010)
	Josephine County Online: http://www.co.josephine.or.us/page.asp?navid=124 (4/2010)
	Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center & The Wetlands Conservancy. Accessed: Oregon Geospatial Enterprise Office (8/2010)
Fish-bearing Streams	Fish-Bearing Streams
	Jackson County and Josephoine County GIS - original source Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife
Oak, Chaparral, Grassland	Oak Woodland, Chaparral, and Grassland Vegetation Data
	Oregon Ecological Systems Version 1 2008, ORNHIC & Forest Science Lab, Oregon State University:\\FALCO\onhp\ecolsys\orveg08\orveg_08
Ultramafic Geology	Darlingtonia Fens, Jeffrey Pine Forests and Ultramafic Geology
	Klamath Mountain Ecoregional Conservation Assesment. 2003. The Nature Conservancy of Oregon
	Serpentine Geology in Klamath-Siskiyou Study Area. 1999. Conservation Biology Institute
Older Forests	Forests
	LEMMA Species-size (sppsz) model updated 3/3/10 Modeling regions 224 and 227 http://www.fsl.orst.edu/lemma/
Urban Parks and Greenways	City, State and County Parks, Greenways, Open Spaces
	State Parks 2010. Source: Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, 1:24,000. Accessed: Oregon Geospatial Enterprise Office (1/2006)
	Jackson County Smartmap: http://www.smartmap.org/portal/ (10/2010)
	Josephine County Online: http://www.co.josephine.or.us/page.asp?navid=124 (10/2010)
	Local Parks: Josephine County GIS (emailed 3/11/10)
Viewsheds	Digital Elevation Model: (DEM was used to calculate viewsheds)
	DEM: Oregon Geospatial Enterprise Office: http://gis.oregon.gov/DAS/EISPD/GEO/data/dems.shtml (8/2010)

Cartographers: Jon Anderson, Dominic DiPaolo, Peter Hille, and Kristi Mergenthaler. Special thanks to the ESRI Conservation Program.

APPENDIX C:

Southern Oregon Land Conservancy

BOARD, STAFF AND TRUSTEE COUNCIL

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Executive Director

Leslie van Gelder
Office Manager

Alex Liston Dykema
Attorney

Michael Stringer
Development Director

Kristi Mergenthaler
Land Steward

Craig Harper
Conservation Project Manager

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