



Geographical Demarcation of a South Willamette Valley Planning Region

Study Overview

The Prout Institute (PI) wishes to demarcate the geographic range to be included in its South Willamette Valley Relocalized Economy Plan. In demarcating the area of inclusion, the following main factors need to be considered:

- those factors, such as watershed boundaries, that make for a coherent planning unit
- the purpose of the Relocalized Economy Plan,
- the South Willamette Valley's interface with neighboring subregions, and
- pragmatic start-up concerns.

Analysis of Options

Several approaches to defining the boundaries of the South Willamette Valley (SWV) planning district can be taken. These are given below, with the advantages and disadvantages to each approach identified.

Option 1: Conform to the political boundaries of Lane County

Lane County's boundary closely approximates the area of the South Willamette Valley, particularly on the south and east, and somewhat, on the north sides. The Lane County boundary might therefore be a viable way to define the SWV boundary.

Advantage:

- would facilitate any dealings and relationships with county administrative bodies

Disadvantages:

- may include communities that do not see themselves as part of the SWV
- may establish boundaries that do not work well for efficient planning within the SWV, or for areas outside the SWV

Option 2: Allow potential participants to self-identify

Rather than having the PI relocalized economy planning group determine the

coalition's geographical boundaries, it could be left to those invited to participate to decide whether their communities are within the SWV subregion.

Advantage:

- for the coalition to function efficiently in advancing its objectives, constituent communities must identify with the sub-bioregion with which they are affiliated

Disadvantages:

- people may decide to affiliate with the SWV subregion on the basis of factors that are not pertinent to efficient sub-regional planning
- there may be diverse views within outlying communities as to the subregional planning unit with which they should affiliate

Option 3: Use watershed boundaries

As depicted in a Eugene Permaculture Guild newsletter, the five tributaries of the lower Willamette come together in the South Willamette Valley - much like fingers of a hand - to form the main trunk line of the Willamette. The combination of their respective watersheds closely approximates the area of the South Willamette Valley.

Advantage:

- watersheds are a particularly useful factor to consider in demarcating a sub-regional planning unit as they are closely connected with important aspects of economic development (irrigation, hydro power, flood control, road corridors, etc.)

Disadvantage:

- in the northern, and somewhat in the eastern, parts of the SWV, use of watersheds to demarcate boundaries becomes problematic: in the north this is because the Willamette watershed is too large to be useful, and in the east because there are areas of the west flowing coast river watersheds that should arguably be connected to the SWV (eg, the Siuslaw in the Lorane area)

Option 4: Maximize the resource base contained within the SWV domain

To meet the objective of making the SWV maximally self-reliant, boundaries could be set so as to establish access to as many and as diverse a base of resources as possible. This would create a strong logic to include in the SWV areas of the Coast Range and the Coast that are contiguous to the Valley watersheds.

Advantage:

- SWV would have within its area of operation a wider resource base with which to attain greater self-reliance

Disadvantages:

- neighboring jurisdictions would be deprived of access to resources that may

have strengthened their economic base

- having an increased resource base within the SWV's jurisdiction may not translate into increased efficiency of planning and use of this resource base; it may work better for neighboring jurisdictions to plan for the use and development of these resources

Option 5: Apply a basket of factors best suited to economic planning in the SWV.

In this approach, no one strategy would be privileged, but all would be weighted in a balanced manner.

Advantage:

- a proper balance of relevant considerations could best optimize the SWV's relocation plan's overall planning objectives

Disadvantages:

- there may be particular objectives that do not get optimized (eg, aligning the SWV's boundaries with political boundaries)

- as with any of the approaches to boundary demarcation, there may be an initial feeling of exclusion or lack of flexibility that may affect people in some outlying areas

Recommendations

1. The SWV subregion should not be demarcated in a way that creates impediments to efficient economic planning in neighboring subregions.

2. The primary initial purpose (as opposed to long range objective) may be more concerned with working effectively with the community of people who identify with the objective of creating a relocated economy. This approach would argue for flexibility and use of provisional boundaries to establishing SWV's area of operation.

3. The PI need not select only one approach to defining its planning project's boundaries; it might combine two or more factors. If several factors are used, some factors may be given more weight, or one approach applied in certain areas and another in other areas.

3. The PI relocated planning group must give consideration to the wishes and needs of neighboring subregions. Eventually, this would involve engaging in a collaborative boundary decision making process.

4. In implementing the above criteria the following planning boundaries for the SWV are recommended:

- West: Lane County west boundary / Cascade Range crest
- South: Lane County south boundary to a point south of the confluence of the

Siuslaw River and the Wildcat Creek (optional: extend boundary south to include Drain)

- East: north from Siuslaw-Wildcat confluence to the north Lane County line
- North: north Lane County boundary, starting from the northeast point identified above, and adjusting the county line to include Harrisburg and the Coburg Hills (optional: extend the boundary a bit north to include Monroe, Alpine and the lower Long Tom River)

Addendum

The above discussion makes reference to efficient planning of decentralized, sustainable development. Five factors are particularly important to consider in decentralized economic planning. These are described briefly below.

- 1. Cost of production.** Production costs (including externalized costs) should not exceed the market value of the products being produced.
- 2. Purchasing capacity.** Local economic planning should aim to increase the purchasing capacity of people in the local area.
- 3. Productivity.** The local economy should be organized so as to as to have capacity for ongoing increase in productivity. Developmental funds should not go toward uses that do not efficiently increase productive capacity.
- 4. Collective necessity.** Developmental planning should be developed in consideration of the present and projected needs of the local people
- 5. Sustainability.** Economic activities should not deplete the local resource base.

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