

Submitted by
Mike Houck
10/28/2015



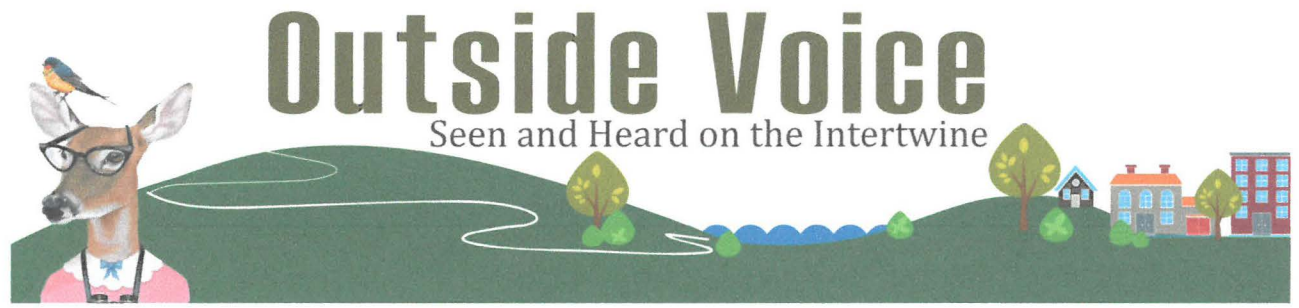
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EXPLORE

...

Reimagining Ross Island

By Tara Wilkinson, October 21 2015

A Twine Wire Feature Story

On Oct. 21, 2015, the Port of Portland donated two wild acres on the northern tip of Ross Island to the City of Portland. The gift marks the latest development in a decades-long movement by partners of The

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- Tree Planting Volunteers Needed at Powell Butte Natural Area (SE Portland) with Friends of Trees!
- Tree Planting Volunteers Needed in East Portland Neighborhoods with Friends of Trees!
- Tree Planting Volunteers Needed at Veteran's Creek (SE Portland) with Friends of Trees!

Intertwine Alliance to rebuild and protect the island, a source of sand and gravel for Portland and the metropolitan region since the 1920s.

Since 2007, the City of Portland has owned 45 acres of Ross Island upstream from the Port's land. Stewardship efforts have



focused on removal of invasive species and collection of information about plant and animal species through "bioblitzes," both of which have been a cooperative effort with the Audubon Society of Portland, Willamette Riverkeeper, Portland Parks and Recreation and many volunteers.

The goal of the Port's donation is to support the city's overall restoration of Ross Island as a significant resource for fish and wildlife habitat.

"Ross Island is an ecological treasure," said Mike Abbaté, director of Portland Parks & Recreation. "The Port property transfer adds one more piece to our restoration vision for the island, and our City's overall park system."

"We are pleased to put this land in the community's hands," said Bill Wyatt, executive director of the Port of Portland. "It's exciting to be part of the broader coalition supporting the restoration of the island."

Covering about 400 acres, Ross Island is actually four islands. Situated one mile south of downtown Portland and in the middle of the Willamette River, Hardtack, East, Toe and Ross islands are bordered on the west by the South Waterfront development and Willamette

- Tree Planting Volunteers Needed at Barrows Meadow (Beaverton) with Friends of Trees!
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- Tree Planting Volunteers Needed at Durham City Park (Durham) with Friends of Trees!

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Recent Blog Posts

Timber army

Bruce Roll | October 20 2015

I'm still in shock after tallying up the Tree for All numbers this year: More two million native plants in the ground in 8 months, wow! When a bunch of Intertwine Alliance partners get fired up, roll up their sleeves, and utter the words "Bring it on," they mean business -- and Mother Nature smiles, knowing that as a result, 100 river

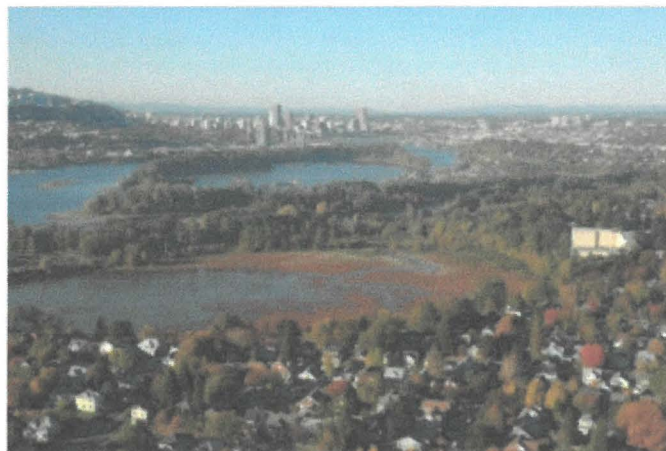


Paddling the Ross Island lagoon. Photo courtesy Mike Houck.

Greenway, and on the east by the 160-acre Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge and scenic Holgate Channel.

With its colorful and often controversial history, the archipelago is a unique mix of industrial and natural habitats.

"It's the city's most iconic scenic landscape," says Mike Houck, executive director of Urban Greenspaces Institute, Intertwine Alliance board member and leading Ross Island conservationist for the past 40 years.



Ross Island with Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge in the foreground and downtown Portland in the background. Photo courtesy Mike Houck.

"The islands, particularly when taken with Holgate Channel and adjacent Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge, are also an invaluable ecological, recreational and historical resource to the metropolitan region."

The Ross Island Sand & Gravel Company mined raw material from the islands starting in 1926 to build nearly half of Portland's buildings, along with its sidewalks, bridges, highways, driveways and homes.

miles have been restored in the Tualatin River watershed in the past decade.

Pass or fail?

By Sara Culp | October 5 2015

Taking reams of complicated scientific data and rolling it into at-a-glance grades for local watersheds -- that's the job of the City of Portland's new Watershed Report Cards. Read on for where we make the grade, and where we don't.

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Intertwine FM

Hear the latest Intertwine audio story narrated by former NPR host Ketzelt Levine:



A family sticks together

“For more than 80 years,” Houck says, “the islands have contributed to the growth of our city and region. It's time to honor that contribution by permanently protecting and fully restoring this ecological treasure in the heart of the city and, in time, bringing all of the islands into public ownership. By transferring its portion of Ross Island to the city, the Port moves us one step closer to realizing that vision.”



Travis Williams, Mike Houck, Bob Sallinger and landscape architecture student Christina Frank at the Oct. 31, 2007, signing ceremony transferring 45 acres of Ross Island to the city of Portland.

Another long-time Ross Island advocate, Audubon Society of Portland Conservation Director Bob Sallinger, stresses the sensitivity and importance of the island clusters.

“Restoration of a unified Ross Island is a critical piece of

restoring the Lower Willamette River for fish, wildlife and people,” Sallinger said. “This is the most degraded stretch of the entire 187 mile-long Willamette River, but it is slowly returning to health due to removal of contaminants, restoration of the banks, and protection and restoration of critical anchor habitats like Ross Island.”

The Port property, located approximately four miles from its marine terminals and zoned for open space and commercial use, was purchased from Multnomah County in 1947 at a public sale for \$1,362.97. The landmass was originally described as 4.73 acres but is now estimated at 2.19 due to erosion from the Willamette River.

Approachable by boat only, with no bridges reaching it, Ross Island is off limits to public landfall except by volunteer work parties. Portland Parks & Recreation, the Audubon Society of Portland, Willamette Riverkeeper

with The Intertwine.



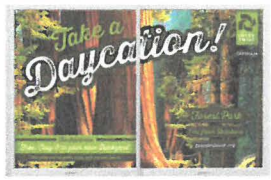
Two sisters share a fascination with critters of The Intertwine.



Rivers with fish lure people with poles from all over the world.



Our Common Ground
Discover The Intertwine



and Urban Greenspaces Institute all host paddle trips around the islands. You can glimpse the archipelago from either side of the Willamette River, from the Willamette Greenway trail to the west or the Springwater on the Willamette recreational trail to the east.



Peregrine falcon spotted from the Ross Island lagoon. Photo courtesy Mike Houck.

Travis Williams, executive director of Willamette Riverkeeper, has been promoting a vision for Ross Island access for 15 years. “At this point,” he said, “Ross Island is managed as a natural area with limited access for volunteer work parties, per the agreement back in 2007 with Dr. Pamplin. It will likely continue to be managed as a natural area of this kind until such time as a new donation of land takes place, the mitigation work is completed, or the City seeks to renegotiate the agreement.

“In our view,” Williams said, “we might be able to be creative over time with access, such as from a floating dock structure in the lagoon or similar low-impact features.”

ROSS ISLAND: A TIMELINE

The Portland metro area rests on traditional village sites of the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla and many other native tribes. These groups created communities and summer encampments along the Columbia and Willamette rivers, and harvested the plentiful resources of the area for thousands of years. Long before it was claimed for the sand and gravel that built Portland, Ross Island, with its prominent position in the Willamette River, most

certainly played a role in Native American life.

With European arrival in the mid-1800s came a homestead, whiskey distillery, public bath house, restaurants and saloons.

Here we focus on the past 100 years, starting with Ross Island's acquisition for industrial use.



View of Ross Island from the west. Photo courtesy Mike Houck.

1926 - Ross Island Sand & Gravel purchases 235 acres from the City of Portland, begins excavating and processing raw aggregate into concrete mix.



Great blue heron colony on the island. Photo courtesy Mike Houck.

1979 - The Audubon Society of Portland testifies before Portland City Council opposing renewed permits for Ross Island Sand & Gravel to continue mining Ross Island and the lagoon. The Society recommends that, short of denying the permit renewal, the company be required

to establish a 350-foot buffer around a 55-nest great blue heron colony on the island. Council approves the permit but also requires the buffer

around the heronry, which is today the large forested bulge into Ross Island lagoon where bald eagles nest. Ross Island Sand & Gravel is ordered to install markers on the inside edge of the lagoon to monitor erosion. City Council also requires that land be restored approximately 400 feet across the lagoon, and that the lagoon itself, which had been dredged to a depth of -130 feet, be filled to its original depth of -20 feet. Unfortunately, no end date was established to ensure the restoration would be completed.

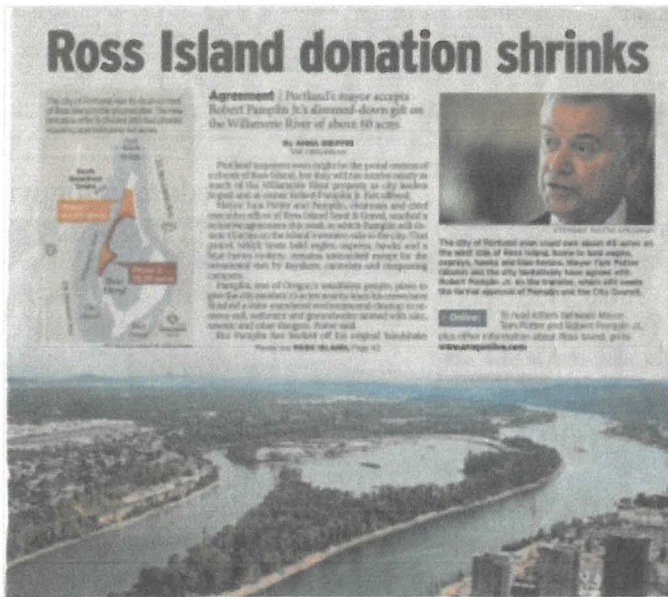
1999 - Officials from Ross Island Sand & Gravel, Portland Mayor Vera Katz and City Commissioner Erik Sten board a tugboat to announce from the lagoon the company's voluntary decision to end mining — no date given — on Ross



Bald eagle. Photo courtesy Mike Houck.

Island. Company President Dr. Bob Pamplin Jr. cites tougher protections for endangered salmon as a factor. Mayor Katz says she hopes Ross Island will become a park or a wildlife refuge. Pamplin promises to donate all of Ross Island, along with a portion of Hardtack Island not occupied with the company's processing plant, to the city as a wildlife refuge.

May 21, 2000 - An *Oregonian* newspaper article questions the plans: "To restore the island the way the 1979 Reclamation Plan will require, the Division of State Lands estimates, 25 million cubic yards of fill would be needed. 'What's the city of Portland? Ten square miles?' asked Paul Cleary, division director: "That's the entire city covered to a depth of 21/2 feet." The story also refers to Ross Island as a "ghost of an island" and a "broken loop of sand."



The Oregonian

2001-2002 - A six-member advisory committee including Metro Councilor David Bragdon; City Commissioner Erik Sten; Ben Meyer of the National Marine Fisheries Service; Ann Hanus, Director of the Oregon Department of State Lands; Jim Rue representing Ross Island Sand &

Gravel; and Urban Greenspaces Institute Executive Director Mike Houck spend 14 months reconsidering the 1979 Reclamation Plan. One of the most significant factors considered, in addition to ecological input from OSU and Portland State University's Dr. Richard B. Forbes, is the fact that the 1979 reclamation plan had no end-date requirement. Based on updated scientific information, the advisory group recommends that most of the lagoon be left at the 130-foot depth; that shallow water, emergent wetland and riparian habitat be created at the south end of the lagoon; and the remnants of Ross Island be shored up through deposition of fill at its base. In addition to Ross Island Sand & Gravel's promise to donate all of Ross Island and a portion of Hardtack Island to the city, the new plan requires reclamation be finished by 2013.

2001 - Mayor Katz refers in her State of the Union address to a new deal with Pamplin for 200 acres of Ross Island. But, according to the *Oregonian*, "the deal foundered over who exactly would should have liability for cleaning it up." A deal for 60 acres is then announced in October — but also fails to materialize.

2004 - Ross Island Sand & Gravel ceases mining operations in response

to the listing of Chinook salmon and steelhead trout as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, resulting in narrow windows during which the company could operate in the river. Its processing plant, however, is still fully active, turning raw material from sources on the Columbia River into finished product. These activities continue today.



Sellwood Bee, November 2006



Houck, Williams and Sallinger stand behind Dr. Pamplin at the October 2007 signing of 45 acres of Ross Island over to the city.

2006 - Willamette Riverkeeper Executive Director Travis Williams, Audubon Society of Portland Conservation Director Bob Sallinger and Urban Greenspaces Institute Executive Director Mike Houck form the Friends of Ross Island to create

a grassroots presence around the islands' restoration.

2007 - Houck, Williams and Sallinger meet with Dr. Pamplin — at Dr. Pamplin's request — to discuss the City-Ross Island Sand & Gravel

agreement. Dr. Pamplin then meets with Mayor Tom Potter and Former Mayor Vera Katz in a signing ceremony followed by formal transfer of 45 acres on Ross Island to Portland Parks and Recreation. This, according to the *Oregonian*, leaves Pamplin still with 350 acres.

2008 - Urban Greenspaces Institute, Willamette Riverkeeper, Audubon Society of Portland, Portland-based landscape architecture firm GreenWorks, and other landscape architects publish



Houck, Pamplin, Williams and Sallinger at the 2007 signing ceremony

Envisioning Ross Island to guide restoration and potential future uses of the islands. “We envision the Ross Island complex as a new kind of urban wildlife refuge, one that hybridizes active industry and dynamic wildlife habitat,” the report says.

2008-2009 - Audubon Society of Portland, Willamette Riverkeeper and Urban Greenspaces Institute team up with dragon boaters, rowers, Alder Creek Kayak Company and many other paddling and human-powered craft advocates to petition the Oregon State Marine Board to establish a “Slow/No Wake” zone on the Holgate Channel and in the Ross Island Lagoon. After many rancorous hearings, the Marine Board establishes a no-wake zone limiting motorized boats to 5 mph or less in the Ross Island lagoon and on the Holgate Channel from its upstream mouth near the Oregon Yacht Club to the mouth of the Ross Island lagoon.

2009 to present - Portland Parks & Recreation and the Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, along with Willamette Riverkeeper

and the Audubon Society of Portland, conduct regular bio-blitzes and restoration work parties.

April 2015 - The Port of Portland donates its holdings to the city as a protected habitat.

VIEW PAST POSTS

News from the Intertwine

New portion of Ross Island donated to the city for restoration

Oct. 21, 2015 | Portland, OR - Today at The Intertwine Alliance Full Summit, the Port of Portland announced the donation of a two-acre parcel on the north end of Ross Island to the City of Portland for restoration as fish and wildlife habitat.

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Help celebrate The Intertwine and share your love of the region's parks and trails by contributing your photos.

If you have any Park, Trail, Adventure or other suggestions or corrections, please **contact us**.

Together we can celebrate, protect and improve The Intertwine.

Submitted by
Mike Houck
10/28/2015



ENVISIONING ROSS ISLAND

Ross, Hardtack, Toe, and East Island sit smack in the middle of the Willamette River, just one mile south of the city's downtown core. Although these islands, (which are colloquially known as Ross Island) once measured a mile and a half long by a quarter mile wide, over 75 years of sand and gravel mining have carved them into a freshwater lagoon encircled by a thin arc of upland forest. After a lifetime of resource extraction, Ross Island is an **ALTERED LANDSCAPE**. Rusted pilings, abandoned machines, and corroded barges are scattered everywhere, and piles of loose sand and rocks line the hulking skeleton of mining equipment. But despite the aggressive digging and the discarded parts, Ross Island teems with wildlife: great blue herons nest on the northern tip; beaver and river otter occupy the edges; deer and raccoons inhabit the upland territory; and juvenile salmon migrate through the eastern river channel. All told, these islands are a complex **CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPE** where multiple histories, industrial activities, and wildlife habitats overlap and intertwine.

Ross Island's proximity to the heart of downtown makes it an even more compelling and important place. Although few Portlanders have actually set foot on it, the island is an **ICON** in our collective consciousness. Somehow we all care about it. Even those of us who don't know much about it, or who only see it for a fleeting moment from the highway, the bridge, or the trail. And though most of it is privately owned, we all sense that it is somehow ours – Portland's own wild island in the midst of its bustling metropolis.

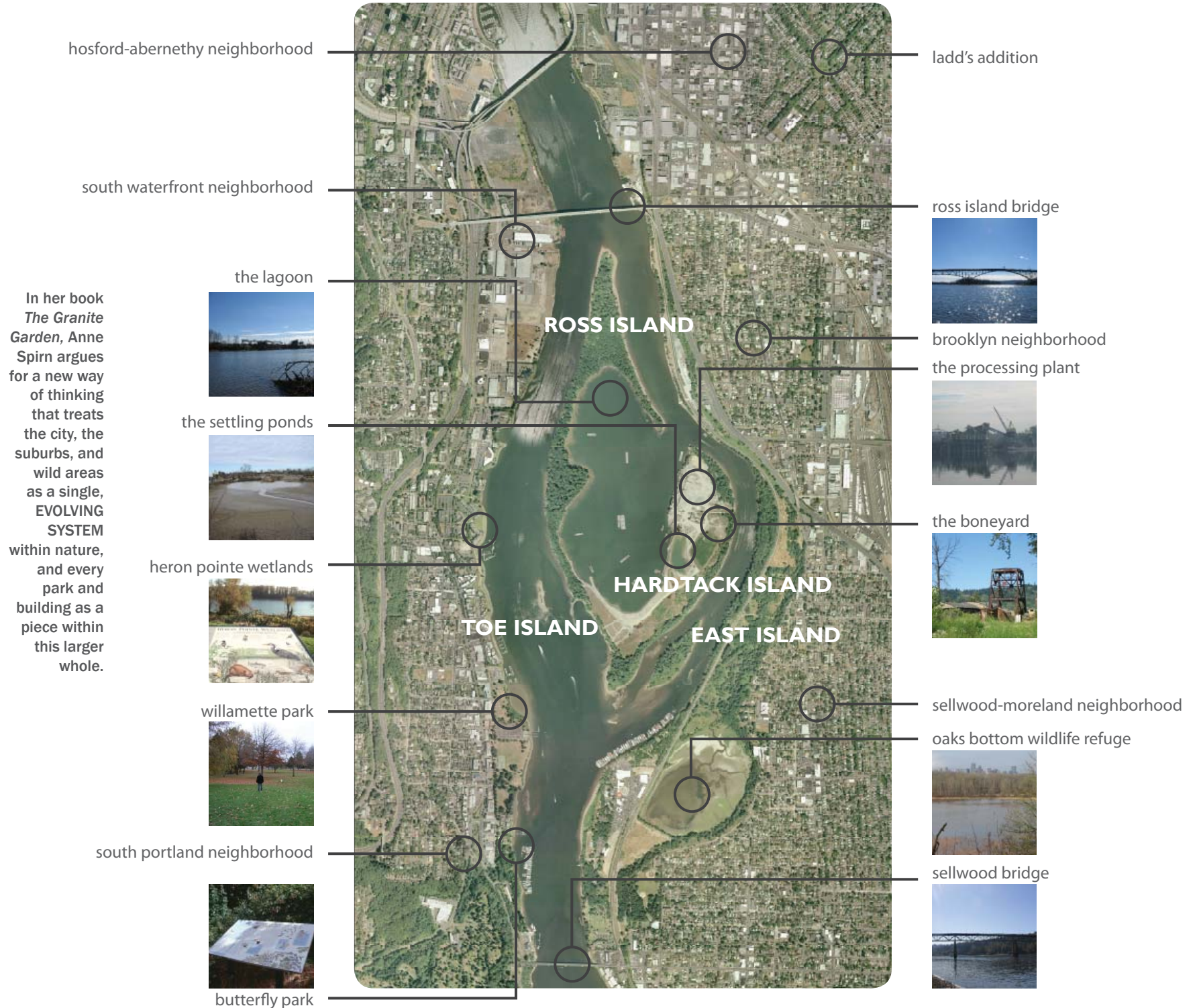
These islands are simply too valuable as habitat to become a 'park' or recreation area, and are too filled with history and memory to become a typical urban wildlife refuge. With this abundant landscape, the question now becomes: **WHAT KIND OF PLACE CAN THIS BE?**

We are the Ross Island Vision Team – a self-appointed, ad hoc group who shares an enthusiasm for Ross Island – and this document offers our vision for its future. Though it is impossible to know the exact shape these islands will take, we hope this document will guide the types of futures that are possible here. Most importantly, we hope that our vision inspires others to see the deep potential in this incredible resource.

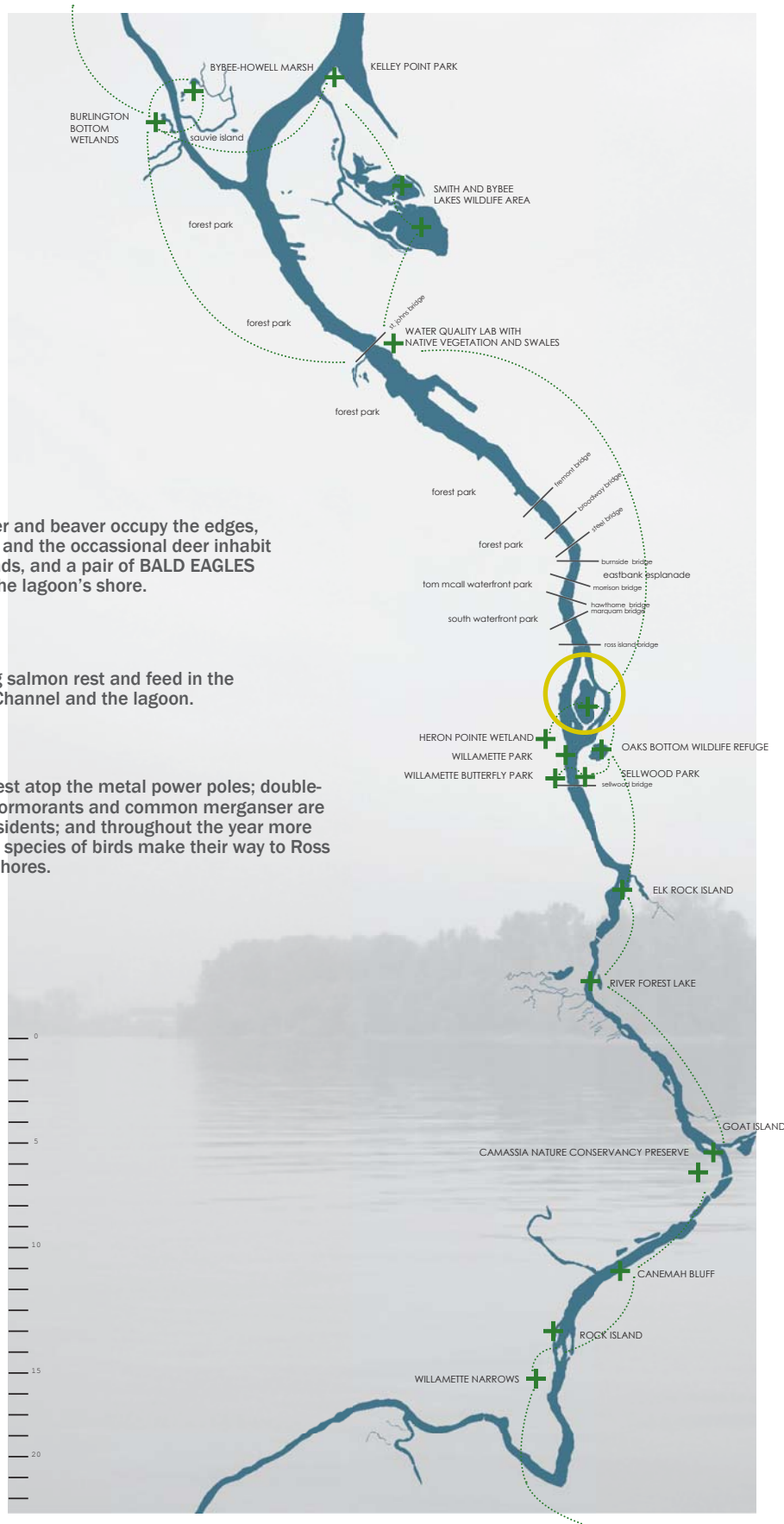
NOW IS THE TIME FOR DREAMING BIG.



Just one mile south of downtown Portland, the Ross Island complex is literally surrounded by the city. Bordered on the west by the South Waterfront development and on the east by the 160-acre Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge, this landscape is A UNIQUE MIX of urban and natural environments.



Ross Island is integrally connected to the landscape around it – the city, the neighborhoods, the parks, and the natural areas – and we must **CONSIDER THE ISLANDS IN THIS CONTEXT.**



River otter and beaver occupy the edges, raccoons and the occasional deer inhabit the uplands, and a pair of **BALD EAGLES** lives on the lagoon's shore.

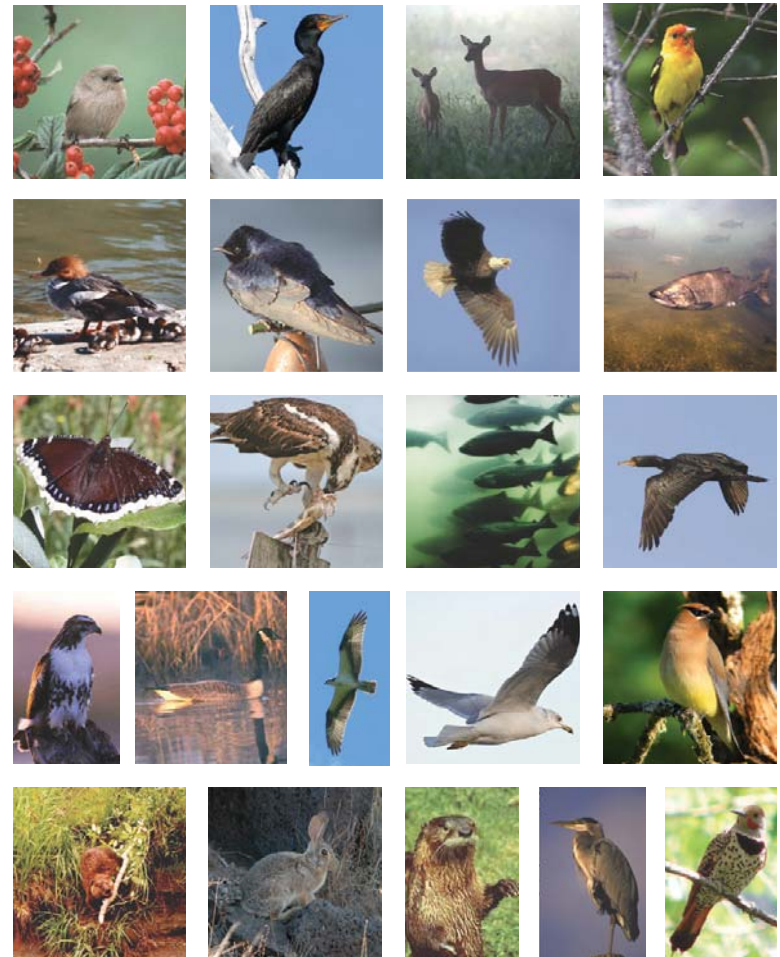
Migrating salmon rest and feed in the Holgate Channel and the lagoon.

Osprey nest atop the metal power poles; double-crested cormorants and common merganser are winter residents; and throughout the year more than 100 species of birds make their way to Ross Island's shores.

Despite over 75 years of constant mining and a boneyard of discarded parts, **THIS ISLAND TEEMS WITH WILDLIFE.**

But in order for these animals to thrive, they must be able to safely travel along migration routes and between shelters, food sources, and nesting sites. This makes the islands a vital **ECOLOGICAL STEPPING STONE** in a connected chain of habitats along the Willamette River, and improving or degrading any one of these habitat 'hot spots' has repercussions far beyond the boundaries of that place.

The Ross Island complex becomes even more critical to migrating fish and wildlife when we realize that Portland's urban waterfront areas have **HARDENED EDGES**, ones that are suitable for commerce but not for habitat. This means that every inch of Ross Island's 6.5-mile long shoreline matters. A lot.

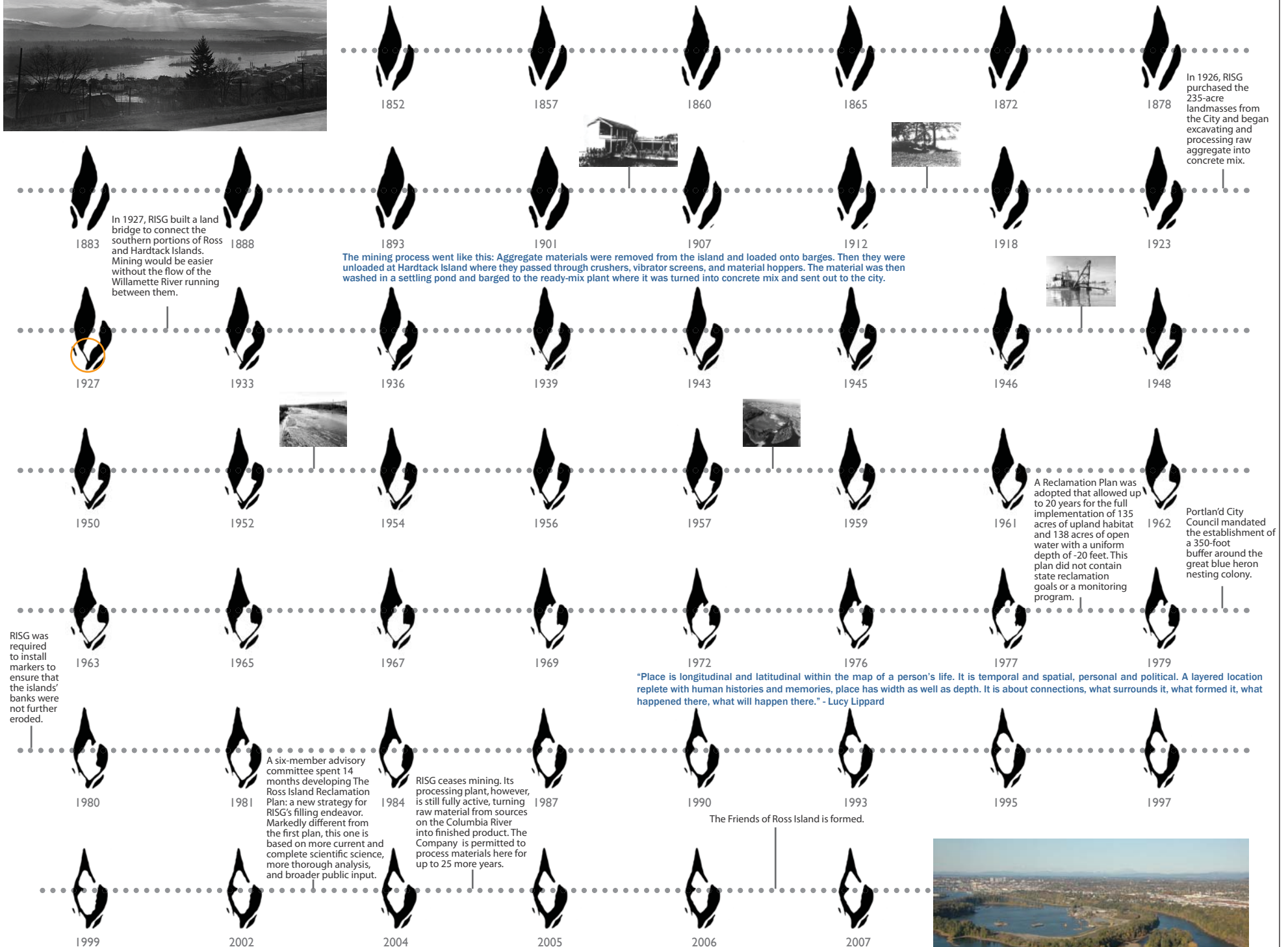


Ross Island is full of stories to tell. In fact, this site is a full-blown commemoration of multiple histories.

Once surrounded by a braided watercourse loaded with sand and gravel brought down from the Cascade Mountains, Ross Island has seen its river get straightened and its uplands get flooded. It has served as a homestead to Sherry Ross, the site of Blue Ruin's whiskey distillery, and a destination for picnickers and frolicking school children. It has housed a dance hall, a public bath, and a string of restaurants and saloons. There was even a bloody murder on its riverbank, and all of this before it was converted into a sand and gravel mine and later valued as an urban wildlife refuge.



"The land we inhabit is an accumulation of past events." - Aaron Betsky



Each landscape has story upon story laid over and running through it; every place has a narrative tale. These memories are what give a site the power of place. And to better understand our place in the physical world, each one of them is worth telling.



* In addition to constructing nearly half of Portland's buildings, the concrete produced from Ross Island's raw material was used to build the city's sidewalks, bridges, highways, driveways, and homes.

This means that for 75 years, Ross Island has been dug out, carved away, stripped, and DISASSEMBLED in order to build the city. But now that the Big Pipe Project is underway, it is city's turn to build the island. Producing, distributing, and receiving, these two are engaged in a rhythm of exchange: a relationship where raw material is shuffled around and cultural values are shifted.

What once came out is now going in. What was once sacrificed is now treasured. What was once taken apart is now RE-ASSEMBLED.

Now that Ross Island Sand and Gravel has ceased mining, *



the company is

bound by a Reclamation Plan to restore large portions of the excavated lagoon and uplands for opti-

mum habitat. In order to comply with this new agreement,



the company must complete all

restoration efforts by 2013.



Because the lagoon is more than 130 acres in size

(and as deep as 125 feet) it will take ten years and approximately 4.5 million cubic yards of clean fill

to create the 118 acres of upland forest, 22 acres of riparian wetlands, and 14 acres of shallow water

habitat that is required. This is enough material to fill Big Pink, Portland's largest skyscraper, 50 times!



4.5 million yd³... fills big pink ... 50 times

Even after this restoration is complete, the islands still face many challenges,

such as pressures from recreational activities,



Willamette River contamination issues,



nearby development pressures,



and other ongoing habitat degradation.

In addition, although the Ross Island Sand and Gravel Company donated 45 of Ross Island's acres to

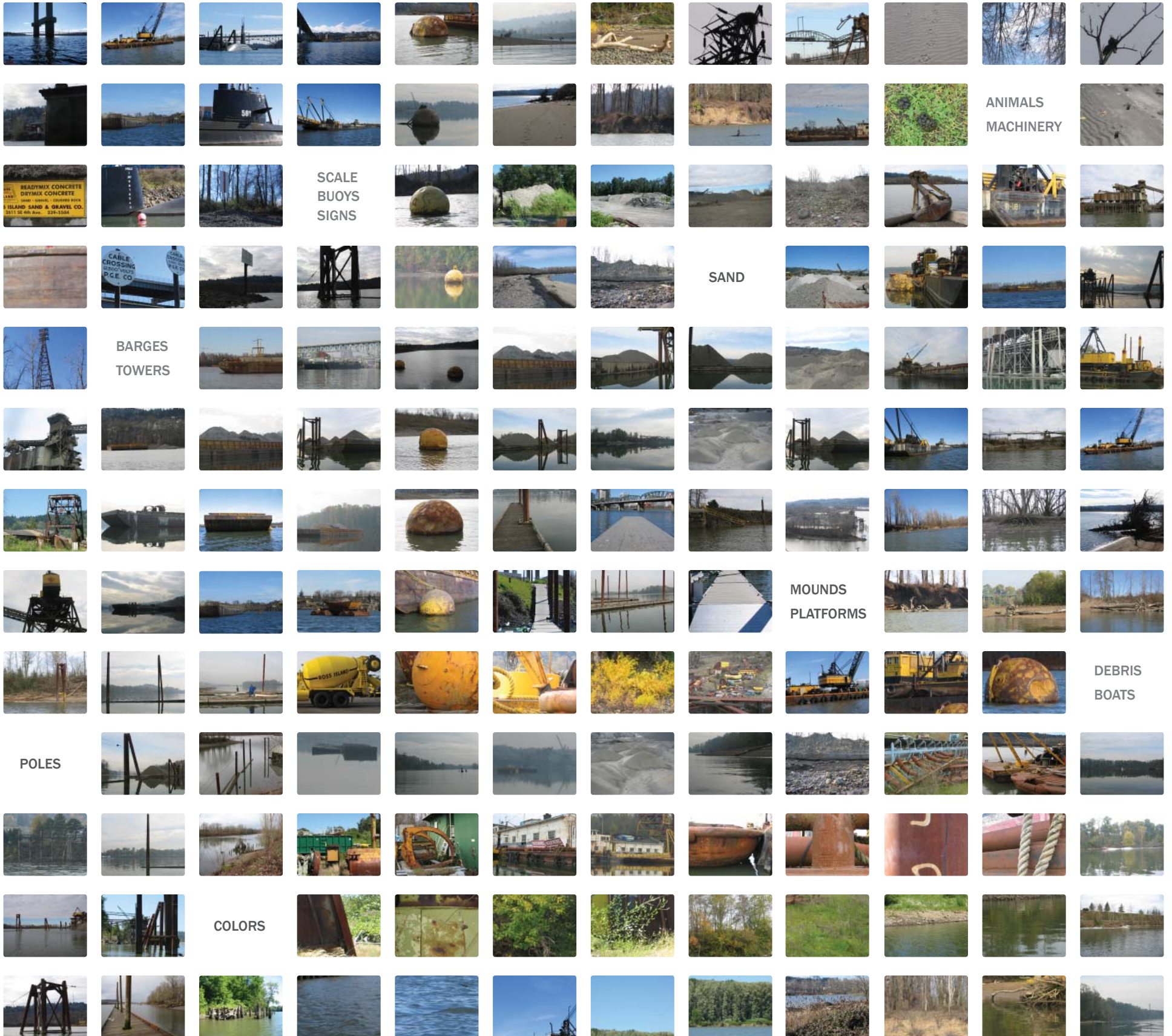
the City in the fall of 2007, what happens to the rest of the islands remains uncertain. And as it stands,

the future of these valuable islands hangs in the balance.



- The Reclamation Plan is designed to accomplish the following goals:
- + establish riparian floodplain conditions along the interior lagoon shoreline
 - + establish an emergent wetland for a wide range of fish and wildlife
 - + provide for diverse aquatic conditions, including a range of lagoon depths
 - + plant and maintain native plant species in upland areas
 - + provide continued protection for the heron rookery and bald eagle nests

Landscape has all the features of language. It contains the equivalent of words and parts of speech – patterns of shape, structure, material, formation, and function. All landscapes are combinations of these. Like the meanings of words, the meanings of landscape elements are only potential until CONTEXT SHAPES THEM. Landscape is scene of life, cultivated construction, carrier of meaning. It is language. – Anne Spirn



The following principles were developed by the Ross Island Vision Team, and we believe that they should guide all future Ross Island restoration, management, and public access decisions:

- 1 First and foremost, restore and manage Ross, Hardtack, East, and Toe Islands to ensure their long term ecological functions.
- 2 Consider the islands in their context: as part of a watershed, part of a wildlife system, and part of a city.
- 3 Nurture a mutually beneficial relationship between humans and the islands that improves ecological values and encourages sensitive interactions.
- 4 Cultivate a stewardship ethic that builds public, private, and community partnerships to support the islands' restoration and ecological health.
- 5 Preserve, reveal, and interpret the islands' natural, cultural, and industrial histories.
- 6 Evoke the island's unique qualities and iconic nature.
- 7 Employ an artistic approach to the islands' restoration and management.
- 8 Establish a long term, phased adaptive management plan for the islands.
- 9 Respect the fact that East, Hardtack, and a portion of Ross Island are in private ownership.



painting of ross island by brian borello, 2003. oil on paper 8" x 11". image courtesy of pulliam-deffenbaugh gallery, portland.

HOW: A PHASED APPROACH

Ross Island is simply too big, its industrial activities too complex, and its reclamation goals too important to be treated with a single intervention at a single time. Rather, the islands require a temporal approach: a sequential method that responds to the Reclamation Plan schedule, the existing and future needs of fish and wildlife species, and the ongoing industrial processing. These phases should be structured by the site's circumstances, and should inform the island's transition from an active processing plant and reclamation site to a new, post-industrial urban landscape.

This approach for establishing healthy, protected animal habitat and inspirational, educational human experiences will help transform the islands into a very urban, very ecological wildlife refuge.

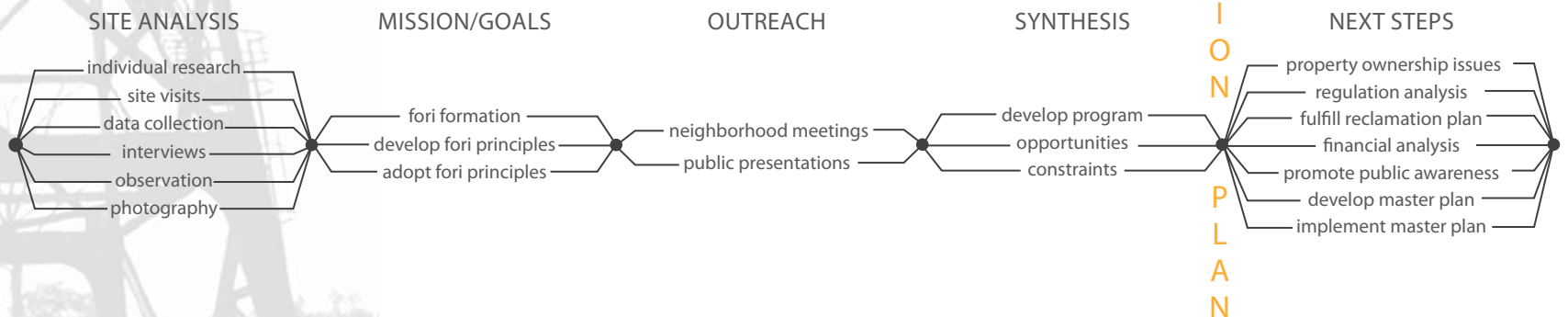
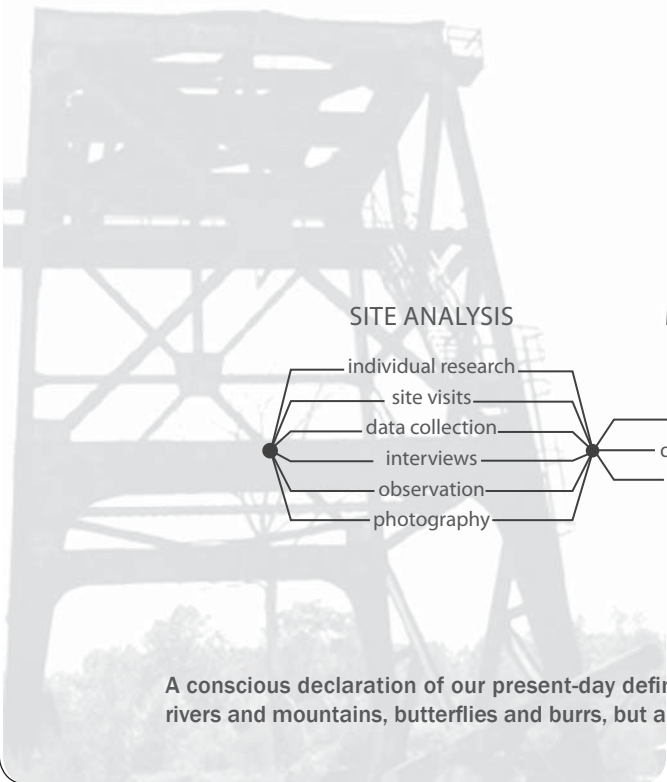
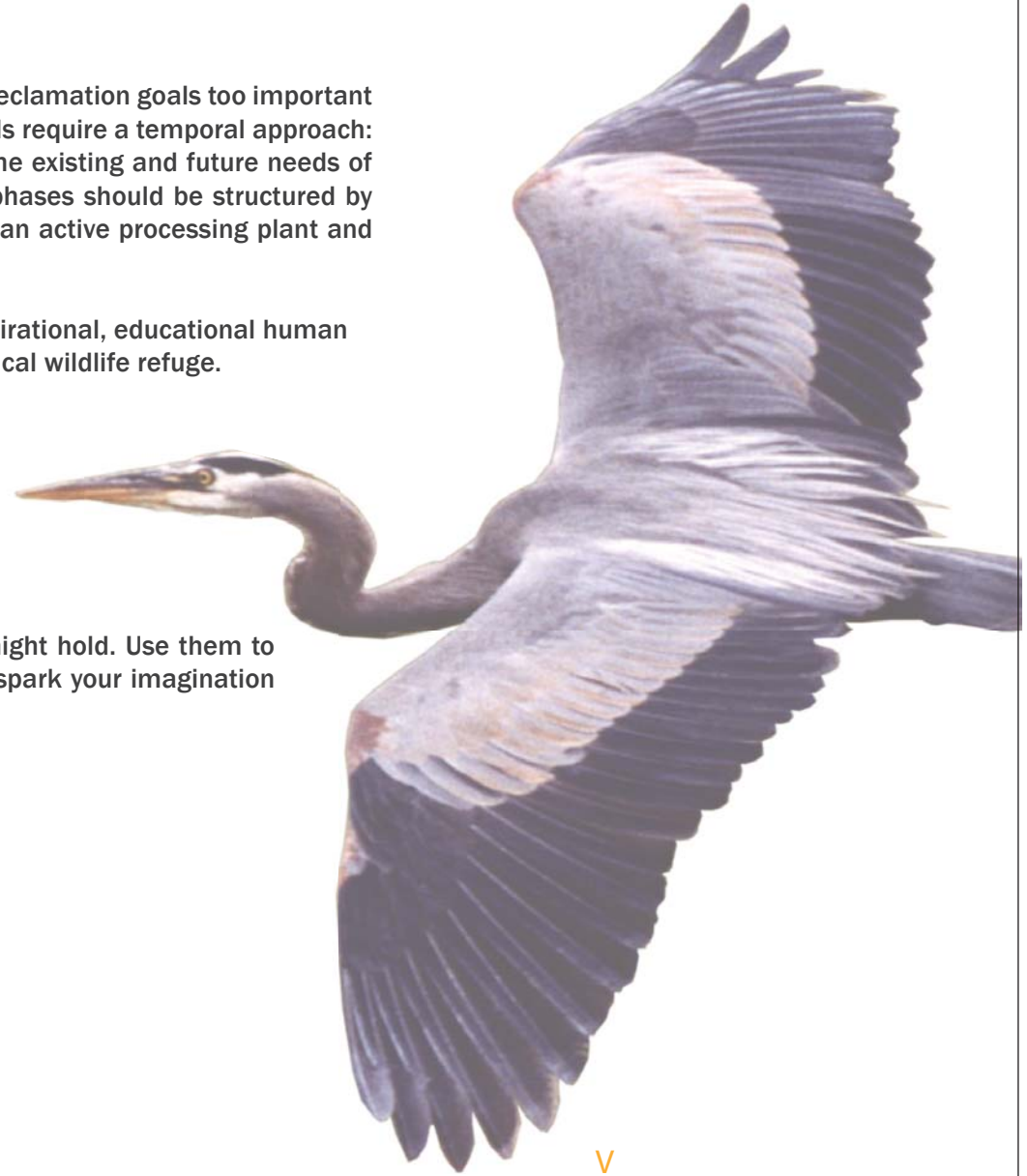
WHERE: PLACES TO EXPERIENCE ROSS ISLAND

- + the surrounding city
- + the surrounding water
- + the islands themselves

WHAT: A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

The following images represent a vision for what Ross Island's future might hold. Use them to look beyond the practical constraints of Ross Island 2007. Use them to spark your imagination for what Ross Island could be in 10, 50, or even 100 years.

- + continued restoration
- + program
- + public art
- + landings
- + markers
- + viewpoints
- + adaptive reuse



A conscious declaration of our present-day definition of nature, a nature which, unlike that of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries includes not only plants and rocks, rivers and mountains, butterflies and burrs, but also humankind, may permit A DESIGN THAT MAKES LIFE POSSIBLE FOR THE WHOLE RANGE OF LIFE FORMS. – Diana Balmori

continued restoration

Even after Ross Island's Reclamation Plan is fulfilled, ongoing restoration will be needed to protect and enhance the islands' valuable habitat.

- + remove invasive species such as ivy and blackberry
- + improve habitat for terrestrial species
- + create nesting boxes for targeted species like wood ducks, purple martins and kestrels
- + remove trash and debris from habitat areas
- + direct human activity away from sensitive ecological areas and important nesting areas
- + control bank erosion
- + perform species diversity monitoring



As important as what happens to the physical land of Ross Island is what happens to the people who experience it.

There are already a number of events that exist on this portion of the river, but the HAPPENINGS imagined in this vision plan are of a different sort. Although there may certainly be occasions when volunteers can pull weeds; people can come to paddle, stargaze, and bird watch; and students come to learn, this plan also encourages people to **MAKE OFFERINGS**: to toss seeds, plant trees, or build cairns. By choosing from a range of raw materials and engaging in a programmatic offering-of-the-day, people can express their feelings of respect and care.

By participating in the restoration of the islands, by celebrating its seasons and cycles and by learning its history and marking the passage of time, we will connect to this place in a deeper, more lasting way. In essence, **WE HEAL AS THE ISLANDS ARE HEALED**. And as we begin to change our relationship with the land, our community's relationship to the land shifts as well. Best of all, this culture of stewardship gets passed on to future generations.

- + plant a willow stake along the wetland cove
- + build a cairn in the mound field
- + toss native plant seeds
- + mark what you saw on the habitat sighting board
- + measure your arm's length against a bird's wingspan
- + go on the visitor's center floating tour
- + ross island paddle trips
- + river walks along the springwater trail

- + spring bird walks
- + a midsummer night's paddle
- + the annual salmon festival
- + willamette river ferry service
- + 'splash day' clean-up events along the willamette river
- + volunteer 'ivy pull' days
- + 'seed the future' native species planting parties
- + 'headwaters to ocean' floating classroom trip

- + the portland paddle
- + the annual portland swim challenge
- + the annual providence bridge pedal
- + the annual great blue heron week events
- + the annual wild in the city outings
- + the procession of the species
- + the dragon boat races
- + kinetic sculpture events



Thousands of Portlanders enjoy the river both in and around Ross Island, and with ongoing development at the South Waterfront, many more are on their way.

Some folks feel that the island should be entirely off limits to humans, that it should be a place for wildlife and wildlife alone. Others think that intimately experiencing a place encourages us to protect it more carefully. This issue of access is still open for discussion. Should there be access at all? And if there should, how? Where? When?

When considering access to the island, the real question becomes: **CAN WE LOVE ROSS ISLAND WITHOUT LOVING IT TO DEATH?**

Can an old barge find new life as a visitor's center, docked at the island and filled with information for paddlers?

Can it help people experience what it feels like to be in a nest?



FLOATING DOCKS are barges or piers that are arranged in the lagoon. Can they be employed as viewing platforms, picnic spots, plant production docks, or floating bird blinds?



markers

Marking is a strategy that can highlight and recall the islands' various features. It can help secure sensitive animal habitats, designate human access points, and relay stories. It can delineate the island's changing edge, can tell us where material is going to and coming from, and can even let others know where we've been.

MARK v. to fix or trace out the bounds or limits of; to set apart by a line or boundary



viewpoints

Ross Island can be enjoyed from a number of different places in and around Portland, and if we are to avoid the impacts from overuse and *loving it to death*, we must take advantage of these less direct ways of experiencing it.



If you climb up the tower that overlooks the boneyard, you get a 360 degree, panoramic view of the entire Ross Island site.

the boneyard

the settling pond

the lagoon

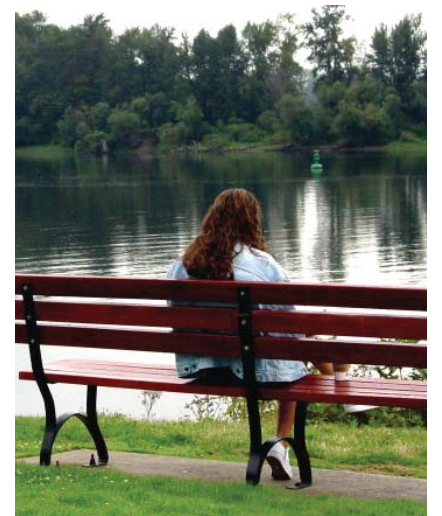
the processing plant

the sand stockpile

deciduous woodland

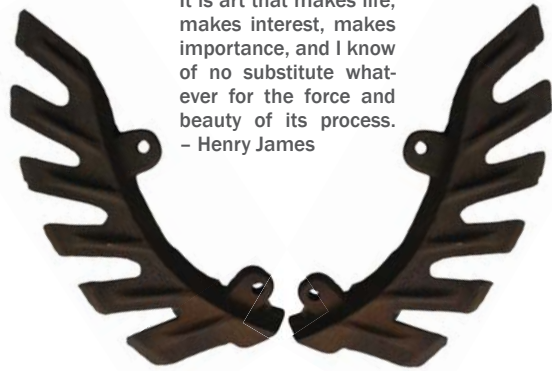


'getting a new perspective': can existing structures can be used to see the island from a bird's eye view?



Art in the landscape can communicate information in ways that a sign or a book cannot. It can give us new perspectives and allow us to experience our environment as we never have before. And it can touch our subconscious with beauty, connecting us with the natural world in profound and lasting ways.

eco-revelatory design n. design with the intent of revealing and interpreting ecological phenomena, processes and relationships



It is art that makes life, makes interest, makes importance, and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process.
- Henry James

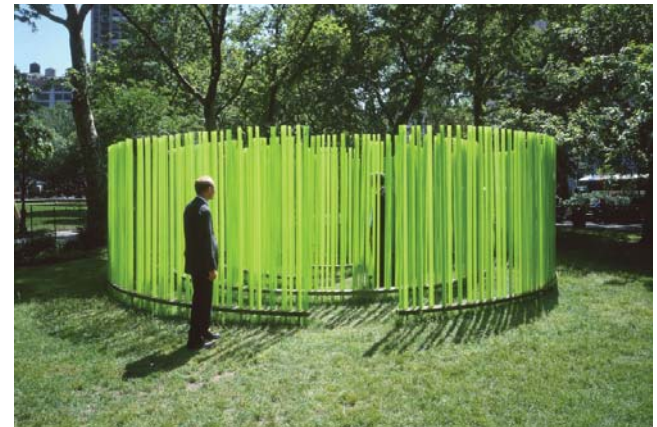
artistic interventions can be on the shore, in the water, or on the islands themselves, can be big and bold, fleeting and



momentary, humble and subtle, can provide habitat for endemic and migratory species, reveal natural processes, illustrate natural history and information about species inhabiting the island, can



tell the story of the islands' cultural history and remind us of how our city was built, can create a buffer or barrier between people and animals, and can celebrate the seasons and the natural world



adaptive reuse

Michael Boland defines adaptive reuse as “a process that changes a disused or ineffective item into a new item that can be used for a different purpose.” Catherine Howett says it is a form of **RECYCLING OR RECONFIGURING** that allows a manufactured site’s “abstract structures to remain and function in new ways.” In either case, on Ross Island this adaptation is already in full swing.

The island is a complex landscape where industrial activities and wildlife habitats **OVERLAP AND INTERTWINE**: osprey live atop the historic power poles; a family of swallows built their nests in the eaves of an abandoned dredge; wintering waterfowl use the rusted barges as a place to perch; and throughout the boneyard, vegetation sprouts from voids in the corroded machinery.

For a place like this, adaptive reuse is an embedded pattern, an already existing language. It reveals the interplay between what once was and what could be, and by acknowledging – and even highlighting – this dynamic, we can **HONOR HISTORY** while supporting a vibrant ecology.



can mining relics be transformed into art pieces, viewing towers, and suitable scaffoldings for animal habitat and vegetation?



We envision the Ross Island complex as **A NEW KIND OF URBAN WILDLIFE REFUGE**: one that hybridizes active industry and dynamic wildlife habitat. One that honors its cultural history and is structured by its pre-existing patterns and materials. One that invites people to participate in its processes, and highlights the exchanges that have long defined its character. One that even goes so far as to heal its altered landscape without erasing the trace of what altered it.

If designed thoughtfully, with bold gestures and fresh ideas, Ross Island can truly be a contemporary, urban ecological park that weaves truth, healing, and discovery into **A FERTILE AND MEANINGFUL PLACE**.

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