

NPS-RTCA

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program



# PUBLIC ACCESS & RECREATION PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY FORESTS

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

RIVERS, TRAILS AND CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (NPS-RTCA)

NORTHWEST COMMUNITY FOREST COALITION

AUGUST 15, 2023





## WHAT WE WILL SHARE

- ❖ Overview of NPS-RTCA program
- ❖ Public access & recreation planning typical process steps and key considerations
- ❖ Case Study: Butte Falls Community Forest, Oregon





# FOUNDATION OF THE NPS-RTCA PROGRAM

## National Park Service Mission

The **National Park Service** preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

← This is what most people think of when they hear "National Park Service"...

The Park Service **cooperates with partners** to extend the benefits of **natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation** throughout the nation and the world.

← The National Park Service is more than national parks! This is where RTCA fits...

# OUR IMPACT | 35 YEARS OF COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

NPS-RTCA

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program



As of 2021...



**24,000**  
Partners



**6,925**  
Projects



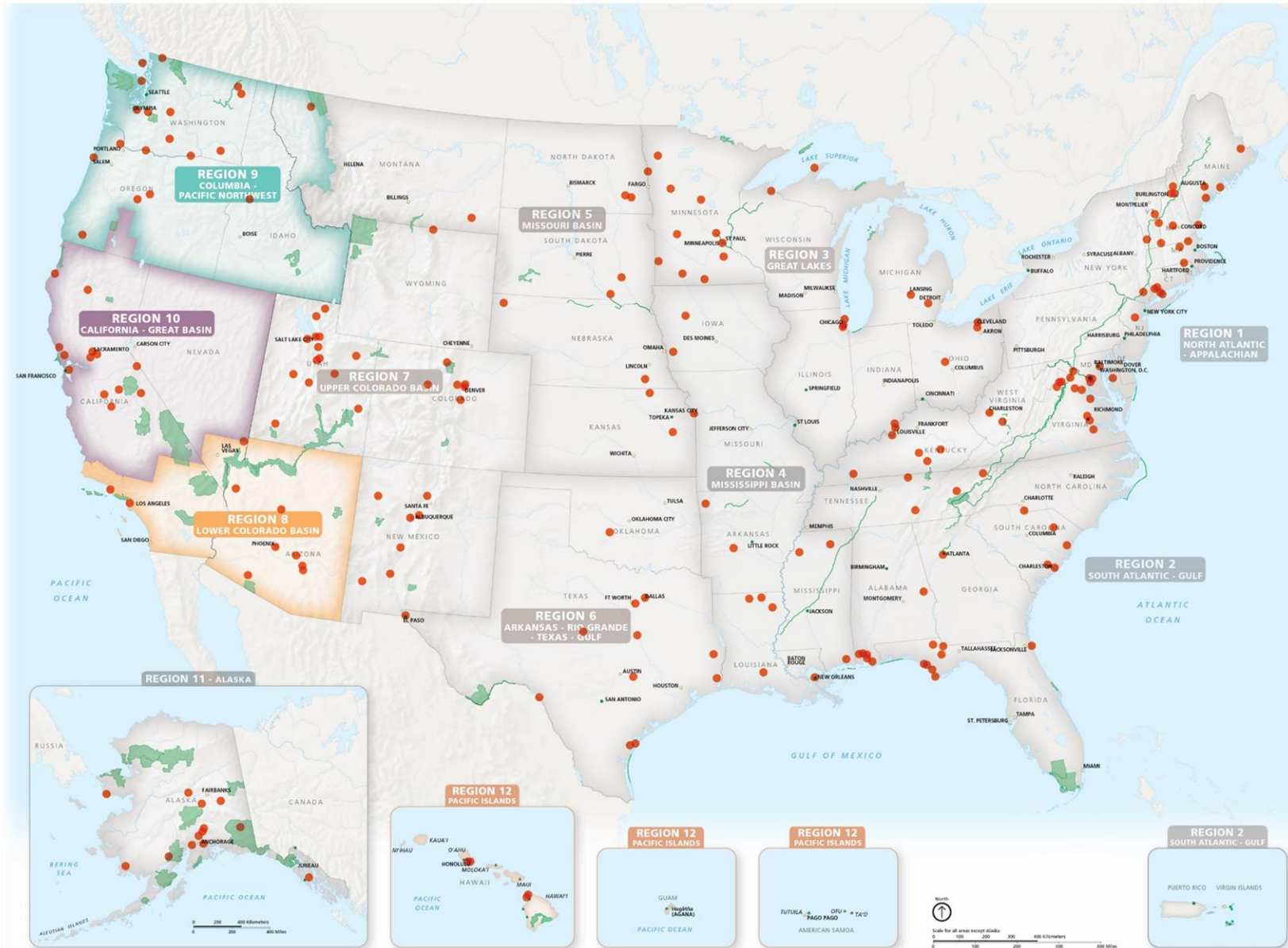
**60** MILLION  
People



**21** NEW  
Non-profits



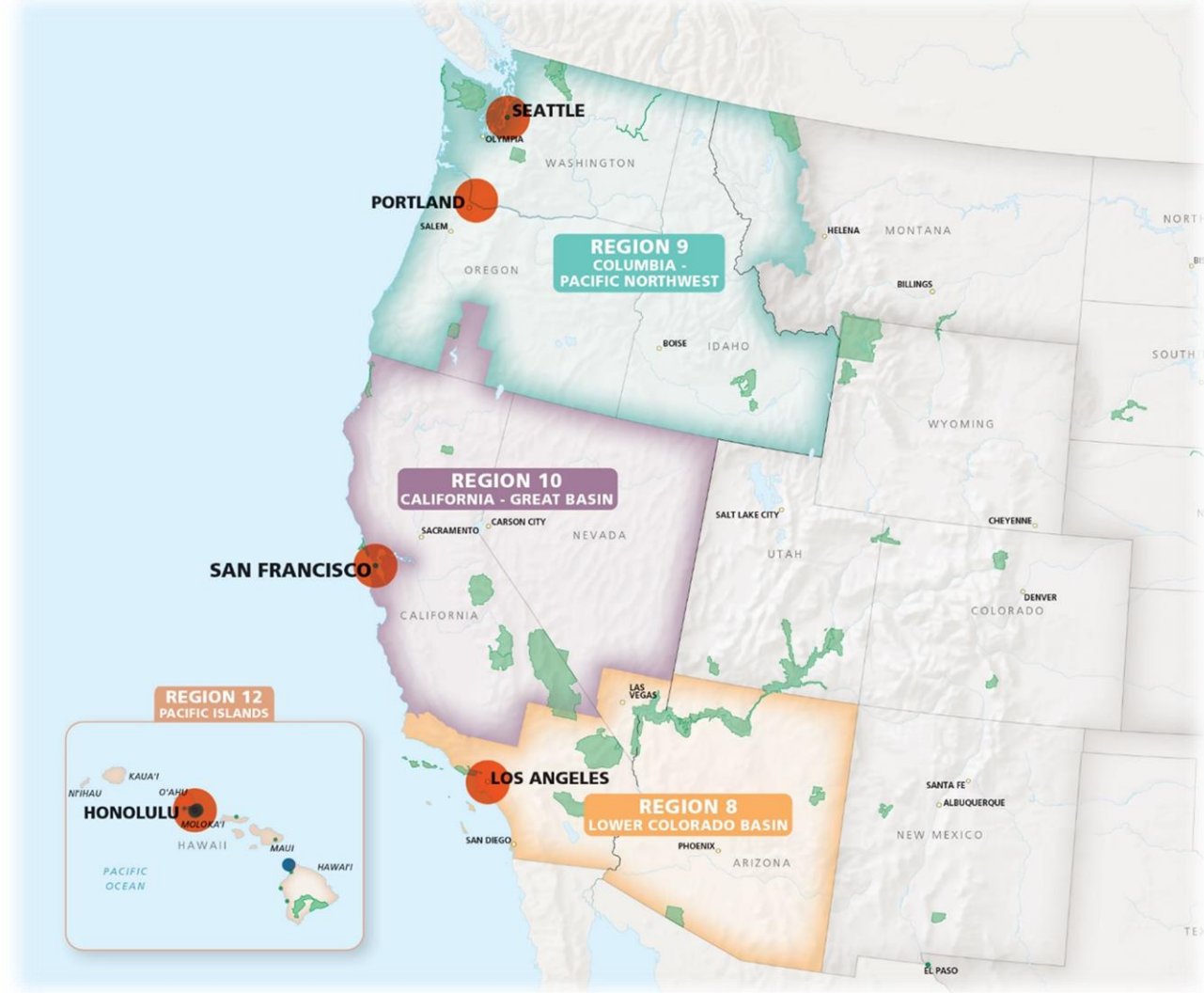
**Recent Projects**  
(~400)





## NPS-RTCA | PACIFIC WEST REGION STAFF

- Seattle (2 staff)
- Portland (2 staff)
- San Francisco (3 staff)
- Los Angeles (3 staff)
- Honolulu (1 staff)





## HOW WE WORK

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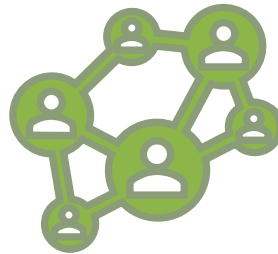
**Collaboration and  
Shared Investment**



**By Invitation**



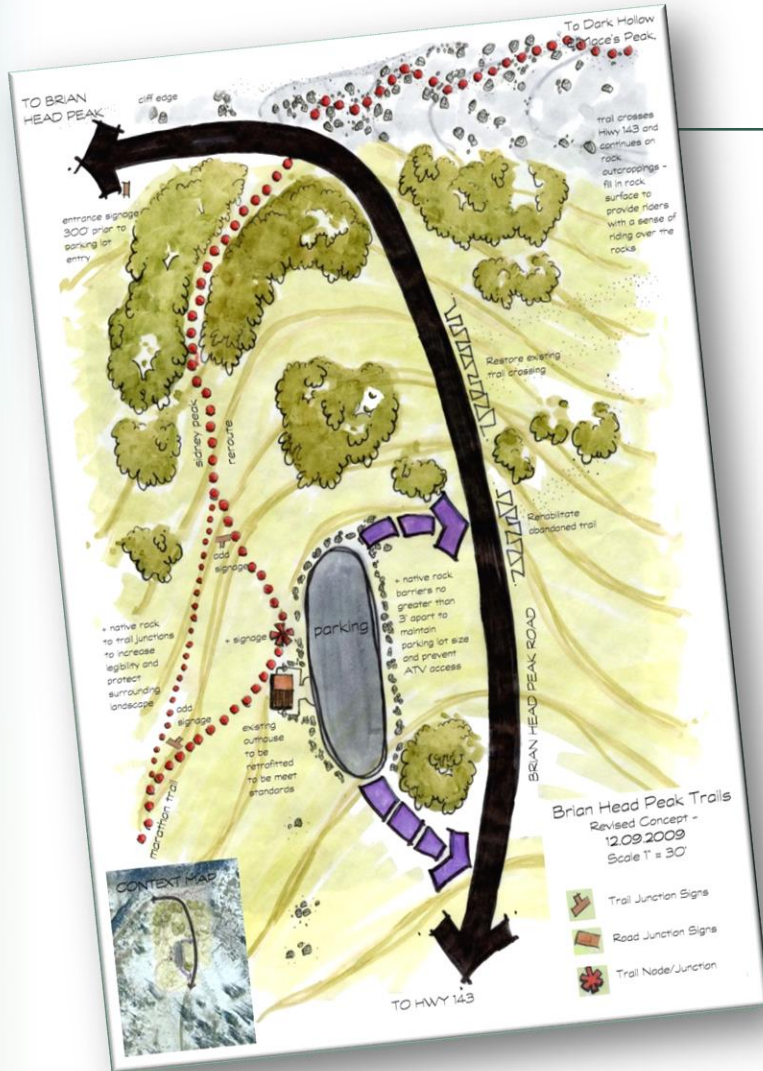
**Assistance Tailored to  
Each Project**



**Community Engagement and  
Inclusion**



**Lasting, Tangible  
Outcomes**



## OUR ASSISTANCE IS TAILORED

- ❖ Identifying vision and goals
- ❖ Convening partners and building teams
- ❖ Project and meeting facilitation
- ❖ Community engagement and outreach
- ❖ Developing effective organizations
- ❖ Inventory and mapping of community resources
- ❖ Trail, greenway, open space, and land use planning
- ❖ Developing concept designs and plans
- ❖ Identifying funding and support



## WHY PLAN?



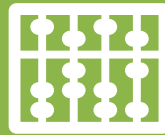
Provides a  
road map



Engagement &  
Stewardship



Transparency



Accountability



It's often  
required





## ➔ WHAT'S YOUR STARTING POINT?

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*Understanding the planning foundation/ framework is critical to building a plan for public access/recreation*

- What is the purpose of the community forest and has a community-driven vision been articulated?
- Are there existing plans or an existing framework?
- Will public access and recreation be planned alongside other forest management issues/goals or as a standalone topic and if the latter, how will these be sequenced?
- What are any requirements/ sideboards for community forest management (i.e. planning, regulatory, funding, etc.)



## PLAN TO PLAN

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1. Assemble a team and assess capacity – identify strategies for filling any capacity gaps
2. Develop a work plan (purpose of planning effort, outline of process steps, tasks, work products, timeline, resources needed, etc.)
3. Identify stakeholders and communities to engage in the process – understand their interests, who will be affected, roles in the process
4. Develop a stakeholder/community engagement strategy that is integrated into planning steps throughout process
5. Identify level of controversy and how to manage



# A TYPICAL PLANNING PROCESS ANSWERS FOUR QUESTIONS...





# 1

## WHERE ARE WE NOW AND HOW DID WE GET HERE

**Planning Framework**

- What are relevant existing plans, policies, regulations, etc.
- What history and background is useful and provides insights

**Baseline information**

- What types of information are going to be needed (what questions need to be answered?)
- What information is not available but is needed? Can we get it?

**Key Issues**

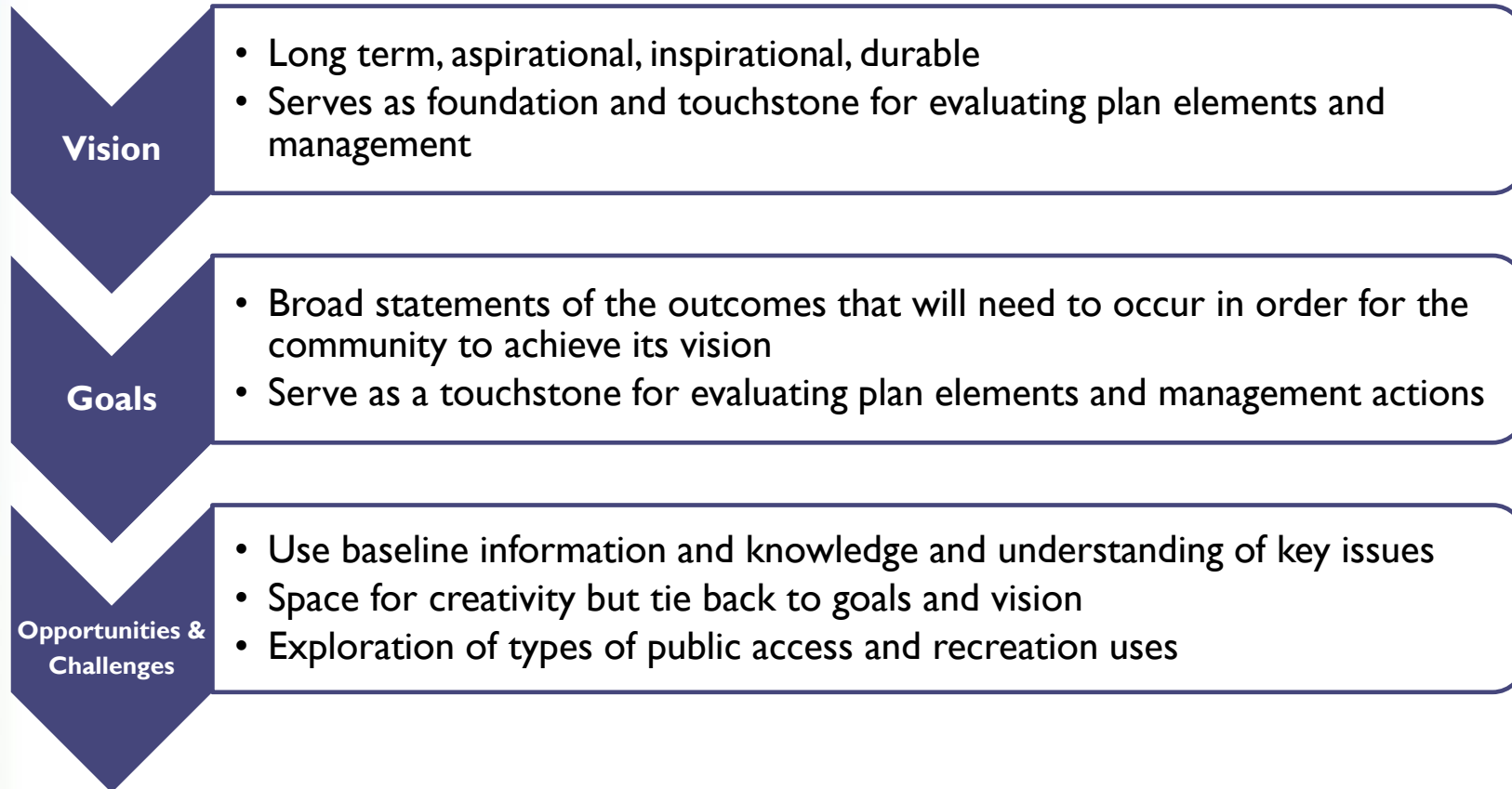
- What are the key issues associated with planning for public access and recreation?
- What questions do we have about these key issues and what information do we need to understand these issues?





## 2

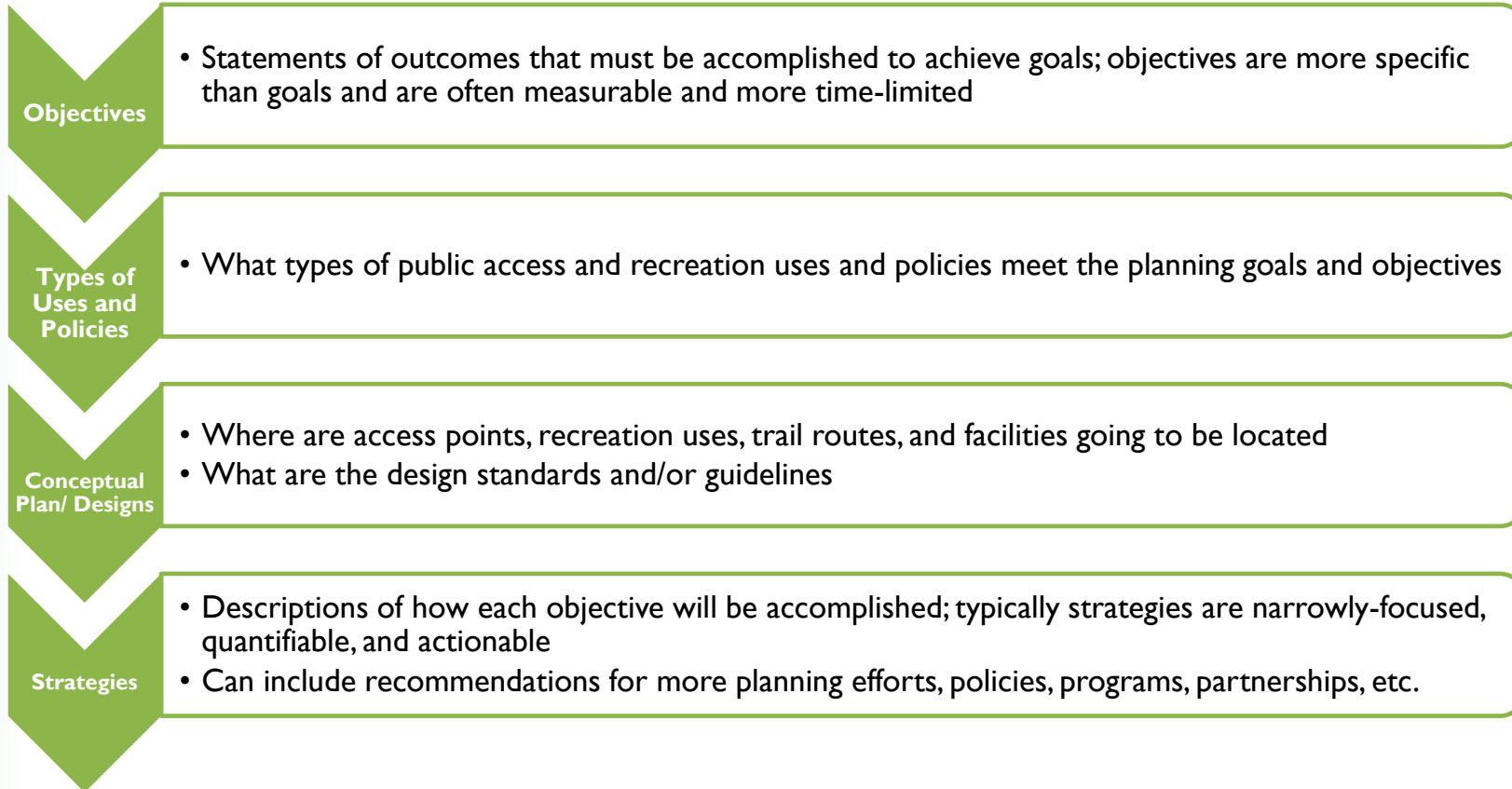
# WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO





## 3

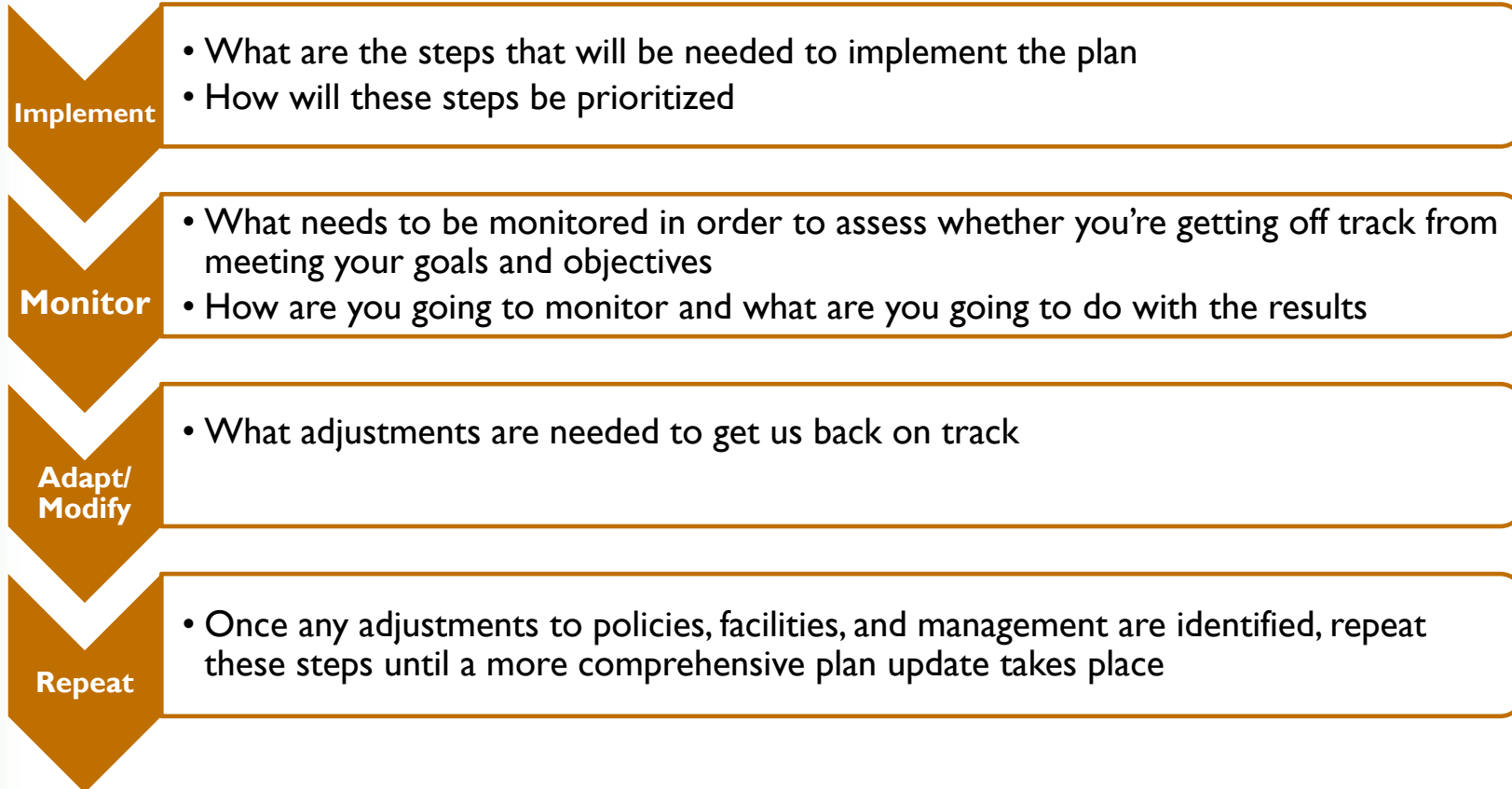
# HOW DO WE GET THERE





4

# HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN WE'VE ARRIVED & WHAT'S NEXT





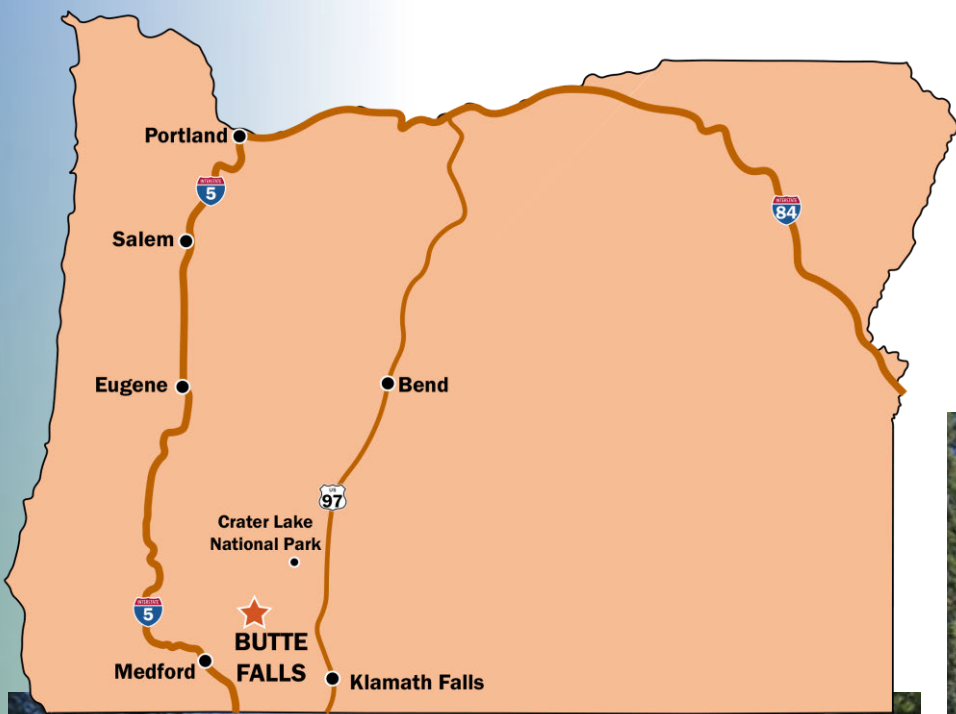
## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

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- Remember to think about different geographic scales and areas/connections beyond your boundary
- Identify a planning time horizon but treat the plan as a living document – if changes are needed, keep in mind the planning foundation, vision, goals as touchstones
- Organizational capacity is key – be realistic but aspirational; capacity building can be part of the plan
- Stick to the plan but be strategic and open to opportunities (and revisit the plan to adapt as needed)
- Don't underestimate the power and importance of celebration at milestones – don't wait until the project is "done" to celebrate



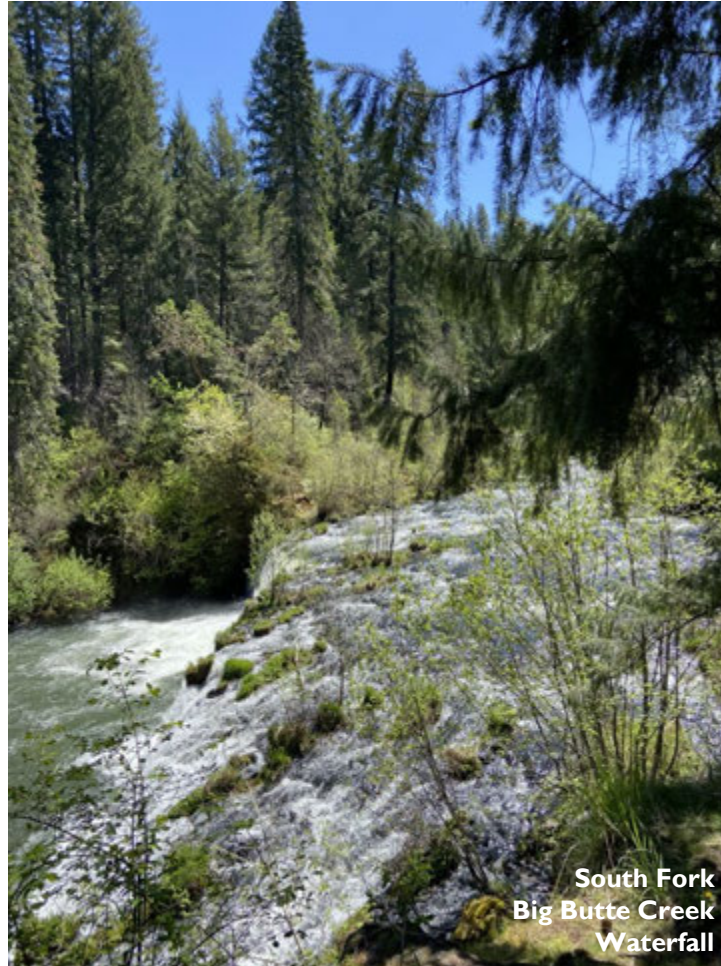




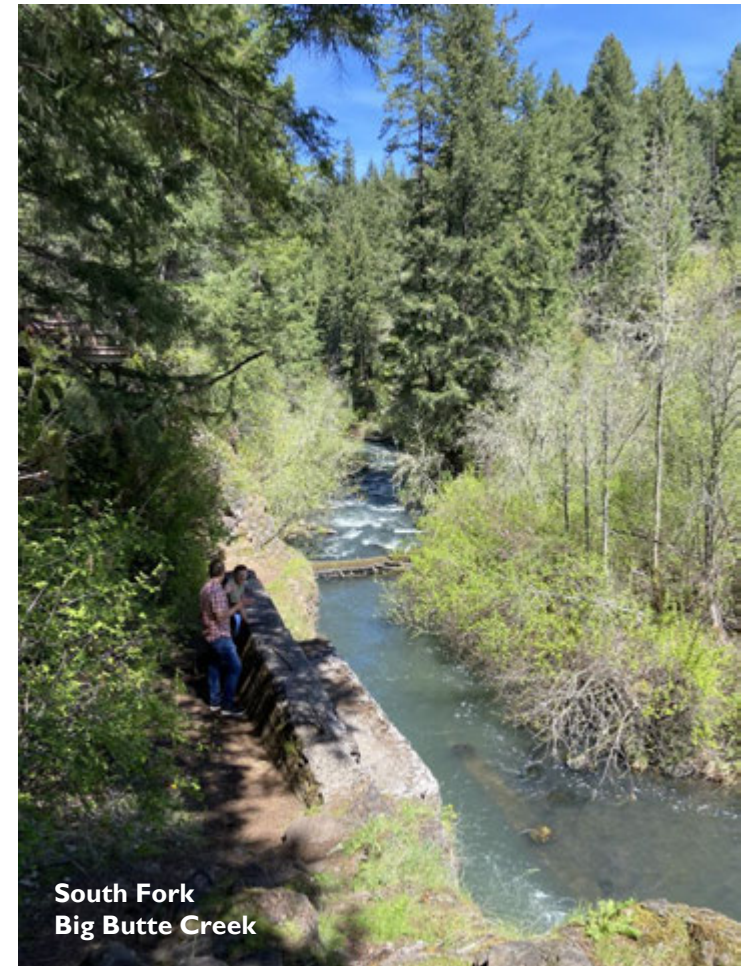
# BUTTE FALLS COMMUNITY FOREST (OREGON)



Butte Falls  
Community Forest



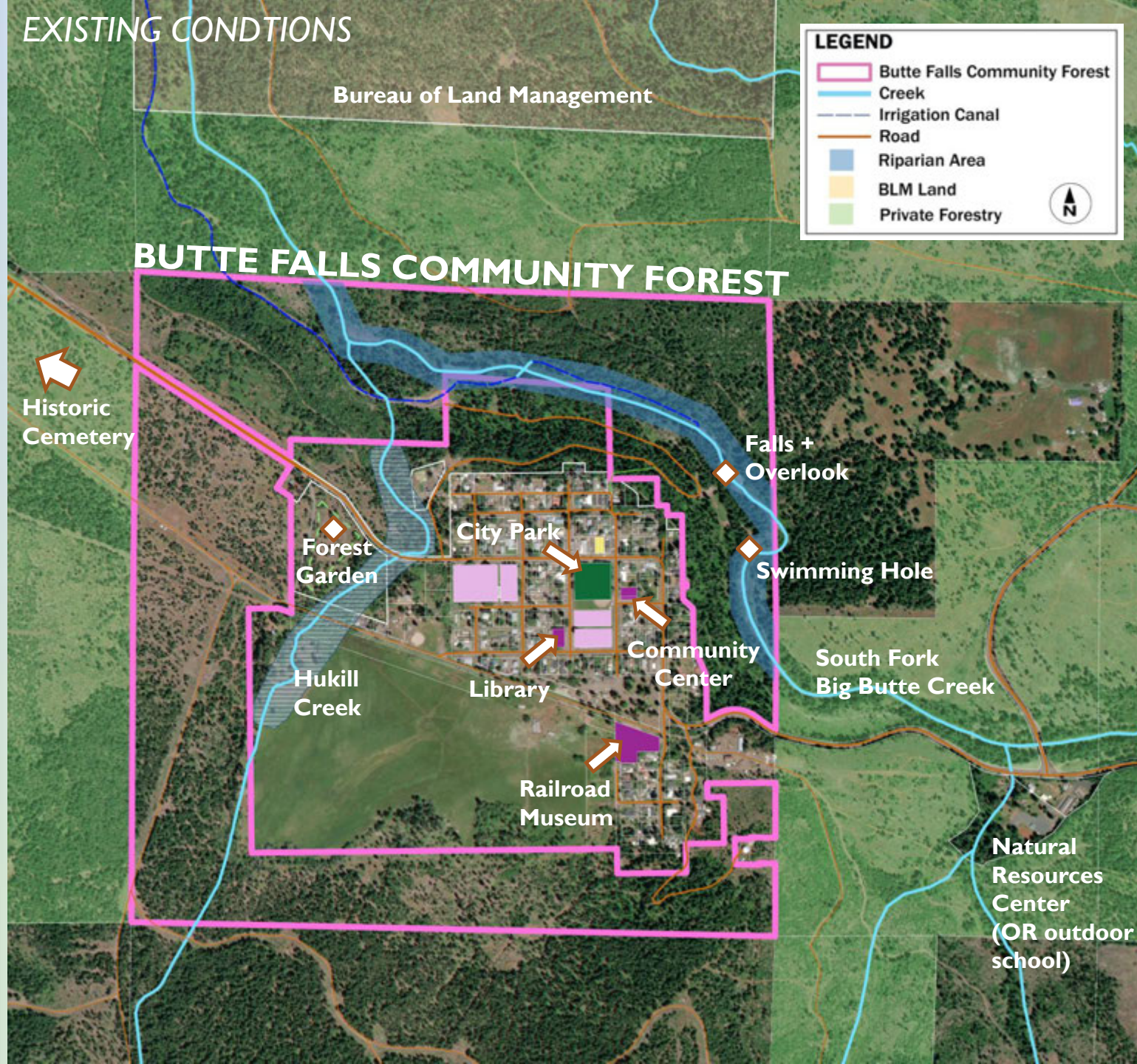
South Fork  
Big Butte Creek  
Waterfall



South Fork  
Big Butte Creek



EXISTING CONDITIONS



# BUTTE FALLS COMMUNITY FOREST

(460 acres)

### Butte Falls Vision

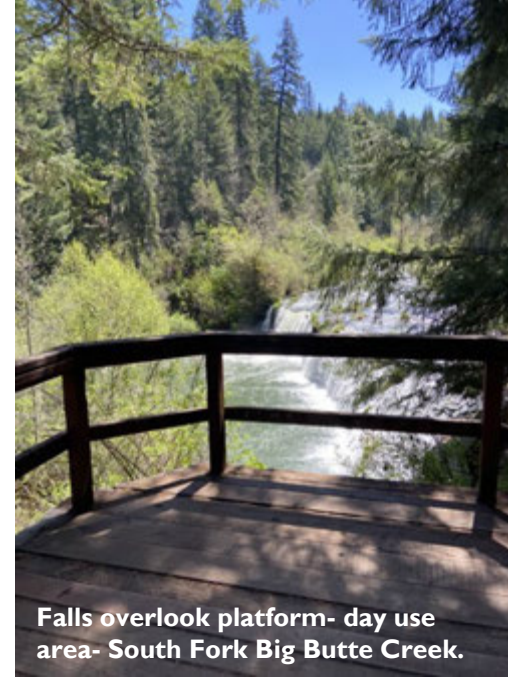
- Protect themselves from re-occurring catastrophic wildfires.
- Protect their biggest asset- the forest!
- Provide close to home recreation for all.
- Enhance economics through recreation and forest resiliency.
- Educate visitors.
- Legacy development to support youth.

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Community led forest tour.



Falls overlook platform- day use area- South Fork Big Butte Creek.

# PARTNERSHIPS + PLANNING

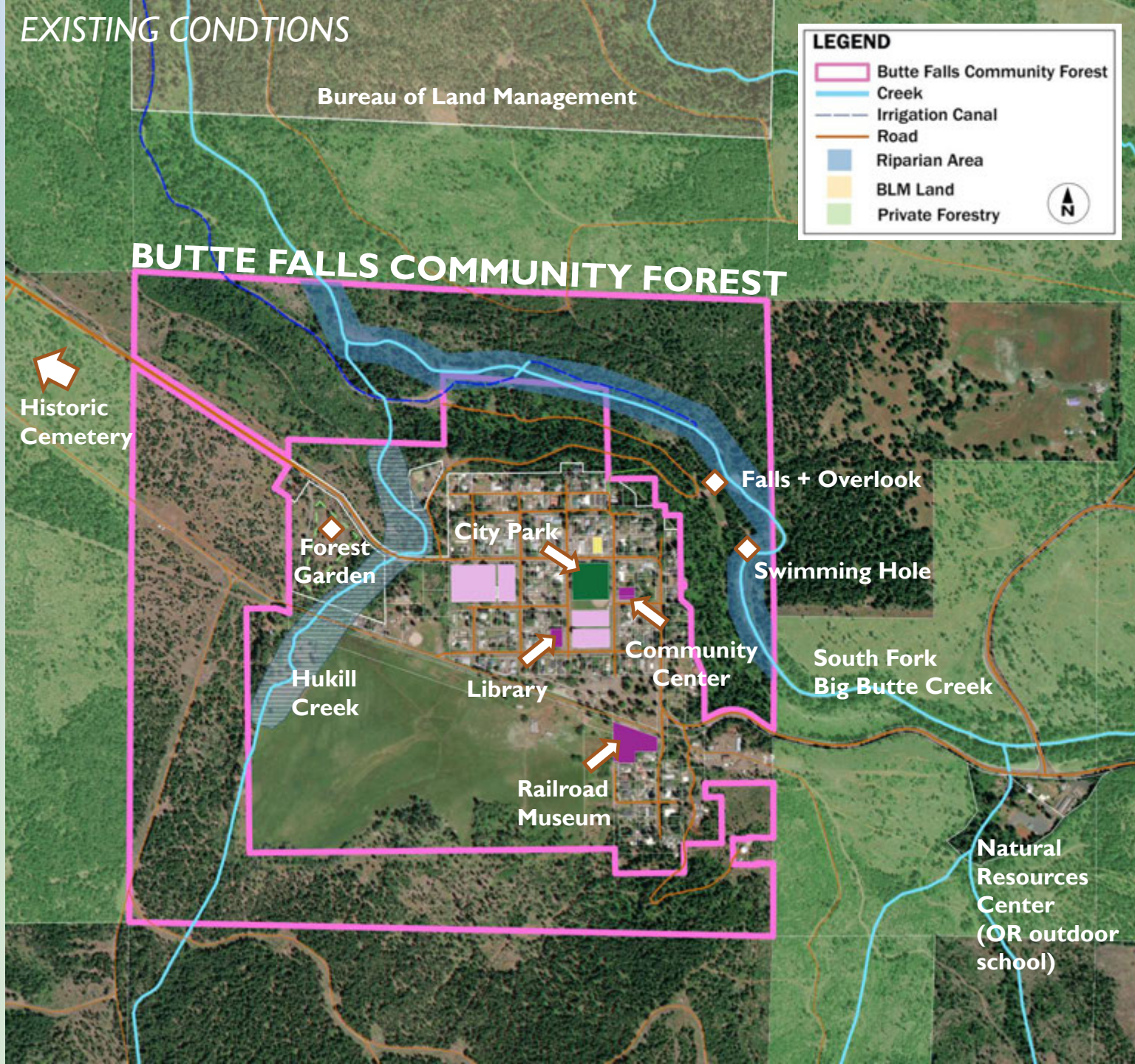
- Recreation Team
- Forest Management Team
- Economic Development Team
- Forest Chats (Community Outreach Forum)



Current Falls and overlook day use area.



EXISTING CONDITIONS



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Community Workshop Outcomes

- Recreation and Trails Concept
- Falls Day Use Design Concept
- Placemaking, Education, Interpretation Concept

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# COMMUNITY WORKSHOP







## DRAFT CONCEPT



### LEGEND

- ① BUTTE FALLS DAY USE OVERLOOK
- ② 8' WIDE ASPHALT PATH TO OVERLOOK
- ③ BUTTE FALLS
- ④ 3' WIDE WOODCHIP TRAIL NETWORK TO BUTTE FALLS
- ⑤ OVERLOOK TRAIL HEAD WITH BENCH AND INTERPRETATIVE SIGN
- ⑥ MILL BOILER RUINS
- ⑦ BOILER RUINS PLAZA WITH BENCH AND INTERPRETATIVE SIGN
- ⑧ FLOWER MEADOW- MUSIC EVENT OR WEDDING SEATING
- ⑨ GAZEBO - SHELTER FOR PICNICS, LARGE GATHERINGS, WEDDINGS OR MUSIC EVENTS
- ⑩ RESTROOM WITH DRINKING FOUNTAIN AND TRASH RECEPTACLE
- ⑪ ENTRY PLAZA WITH BENCHES, TRASH RECEPTACLES AND SPACE FOR ART TENTS OR FOOD CARTS
- ⑫ 6' WIDE WOODCHIP MULTI-USE TRAIL
- ⑬ GRAVEL MAINTENANCE PATH
- ⑭ ASPHALT PARKING LOT 11 SPACES WITH WHEEL STOPS AND A 5' WIDE CONCRETE SIDEWALK
- ⑮ ACCESSIBLE PARKING SPACE WITH CONCRETE ACCESS RAMP AND SIGNAGE
- ⑯ TRASH ENCLOSURE
- ⑰ BIKE SLOW PEDESTRIAN CROSSING SIGNAGE
- ⑱ PICNIC AREA WITH PICNIC TABLE AND GRILL
- ⑲ BIRD NESTING BOXES AND BENCH FOR VIEWING
- ⑳ WOODCHIP PATH TO SWIMMING HOLE
- ㉑ GRAVEL PATH WALKING LOOP AND PATH TO PICNIC SITES
- ㉒ ORNAMENTAL FENCE TO DEFINE SAFETY ZONES FOR VISITORS TO THE FALLS

# FALLS DAY USE DESIGN CONCEPT



Group Tour at Falls Day Use Area



FOREST

SEATWALL

ADA PATH TO OVERLOOK

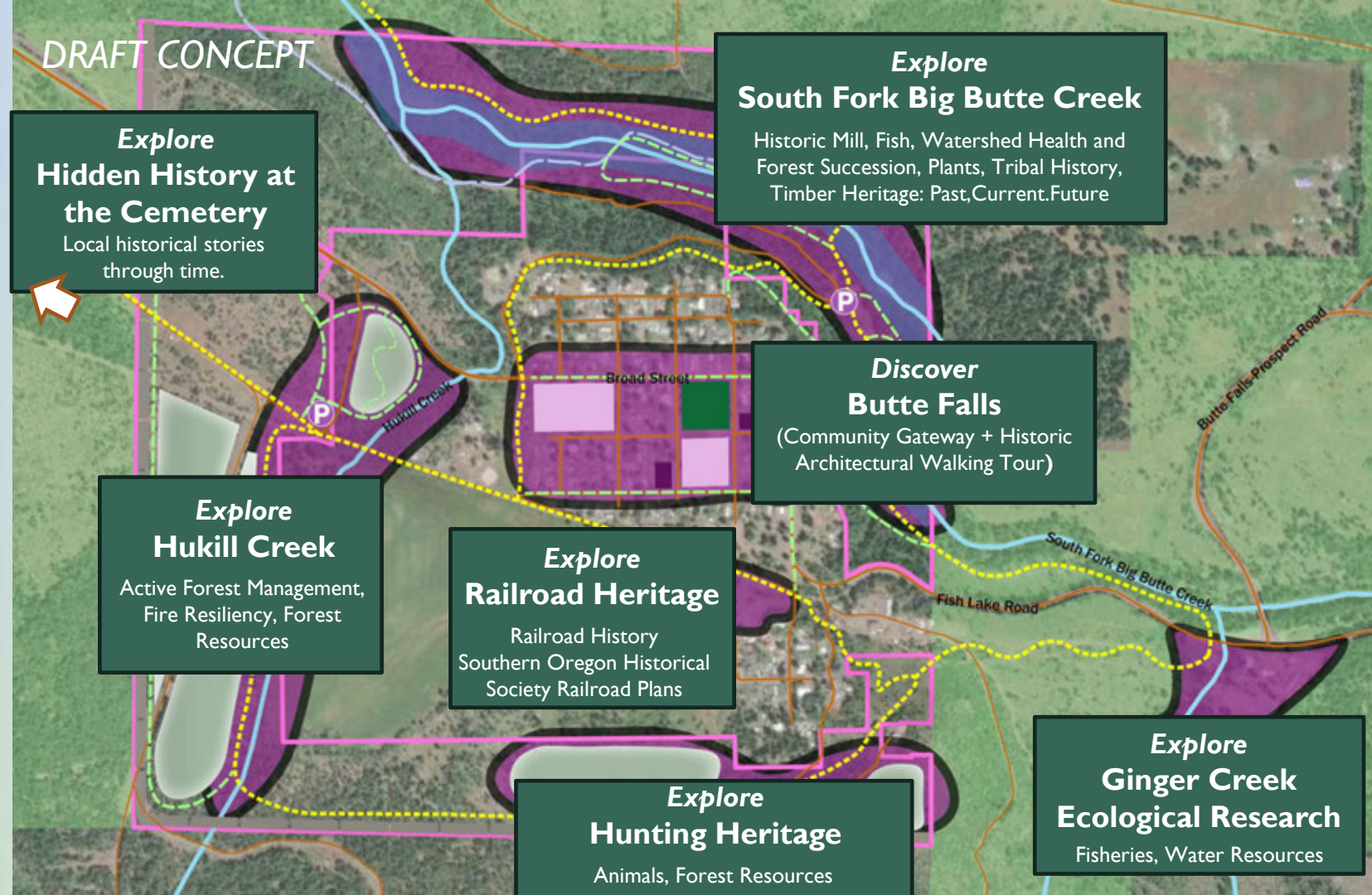
ENTRY PLAZA

PATH

LAWN

GAZEBO

MEADOW



DRAFT CONCEPT

**Explore Hidden History at the Cemetery**  
Local historical stories through time.

**Explore South Fork Big Butte Creek**  
Historic Mill, Fish, Watershed Health and Forest Succession, Plants, Tribal History, Timber Heritage: Past, Current, Future

**Discover Butte Falls**  
(Community Gateway + Historic Architectural Walking Tour)

**Explore Hukill Creek**  
Active Forest Management, Fire Resiliency, Forest Resources

**Explore Railroad Heritage**  
Railroad History  
Southern Oregon Historical Society Railroad Plans

**Explore Hunting Heritage**  
Animals, Forest Resources

**Explore Ginger Creek Ecological Research**  
Fisheries, Water Resources

# PLACEMAKING, EDUCATION, INTERPRETATION CONCEPT

## DISCOVER BUTTE FALLS

Exploration Hubs that speak to one another and speak to individual places within the forest.

Informs

- Interpretive Stories
- Materials, Colors, Shapes, Forms, Language, Symbols, etc.
- Community-Wide Programming

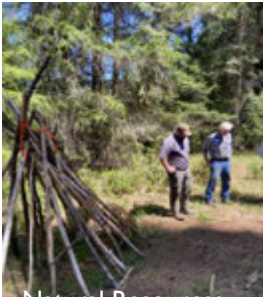
Iconic Community Forms as Trailheads/Hubs



Iconic Butte Falls Entry Sign



Community Forest



Natural Resources Center





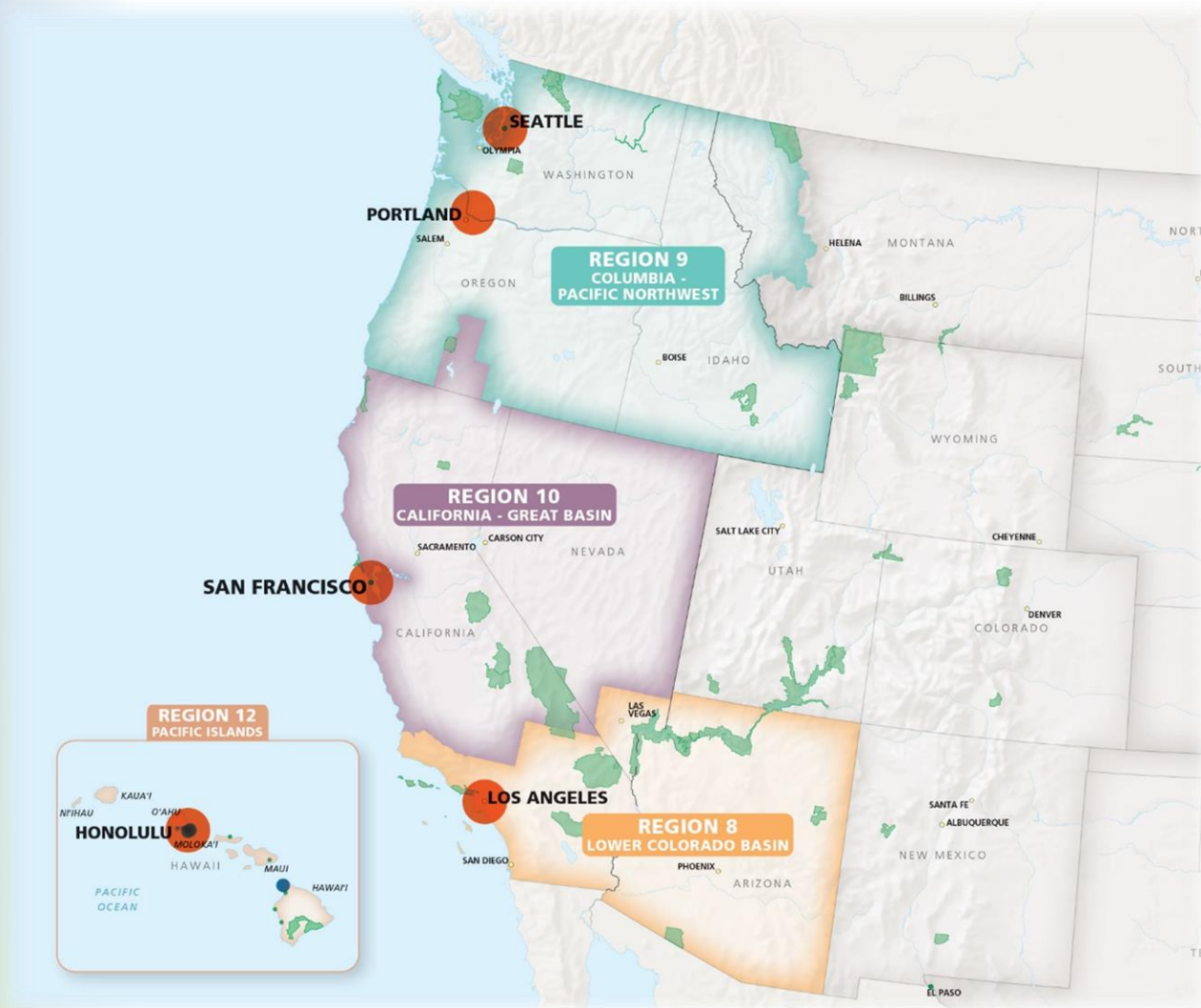
Community Forest Group Tour

## NEXT STEPS



Natural Resources Center Group Tour





## Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program

National Park Service  
Pacific West Region  
[www.nps.gov/rtca](http://www.nps.gov/rtca)

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