



**PADDLING WITH WILLAMETTE RIVERKEEPER  
8 MILES DOWNSTREAM FROM EUGENE**

PHOTO COURTESY TRAVIS WILLIAMS, WILLAMETTE RIVERKEEPER

## WATER VIEWS

“People care more about something they have access to,” Krueger says. In order for people to comprehend how much we affect the river and how important the river is to us, they need to do more than just drive over it on their way south from Portland. “I don’t know how many times the word microbrew came up,” Krueger says of conversations on how to best use the river and potential riverfront sites.

Eugene has the 27-acre EWEB site to look to as it tries to balance open space, river values and development. The site has been used for storage and operations since the 1950s, but EWEB has been moving that over to a new location on Roosevelt. “It’s been pretty heavily used,” Robertson says. A portion of the site was home to a coal gasification plant that dates back to the ’20s and ’30s,

before EWEB owned the property. “There is some soil contamination there that if that portion of the site were to be developed would have to be dealt with,” Robertson says. He says the previous owners would be responsible for the vast majority of the clean-up costs.

For industrial properties such as EWEB, or heavily used commercial properties such as the ones along the river in Glenwood that are undergoing a refinement plan process, “Habitat restoration might not be the most bang for the buck,” Krueger says.

Goal 5 planning means that there is to be a 100-foot setback from the top of the bank to where development begins and most private development can’t take place there. Goal 15’s Willamette Greenway means that in some areas there is much more open space along the river.

Williams of Willamette Riverkeeper says he thinks a good riverfront development would have a riparian zone throughout with 30 or 40 feet of willows, more mature stands of cottonwoods, “a basic buffer a great blue heron can duck into when people walk by” and then gaps where people can get down to the river and have a view.

Robertson says that EWEB went through an extensive master plan planning process and that the EWEB site master plan should go before the Eugene City Council and the city’s Planning Commission in early 2013. The “master plan fits what the community wants for this site,” he says, both protecting the riparian area where the land and river come together and allowing people to enjoy the riverfront to create something that is aesthetically pleasing. The plan calls for open space, mixed-use apartments and retail, Robertson says.

In addition for planning for the changing river, part of the challenge lies in putting in infrastructure like roads, cleaning up the coal gasification plant and deciding on what to do with historic buildings like the old EWEB steam plant, which Roberson says has pipes made with asbestos but has been suggested as spot for a brewpub or steam museum. Once the master plan is in place, the site just needs a bunch of people with money to come in, Robertson says, adding, “It’s a pretty prime piece of real estate for someone who believes in communities and rivers.”

Developer Hugh Prichard agrees, “It’s a great opportunity for people to think about what would be most attractive and would what be best for the most people, and those are not necessarily two different things.”

Moll of the McKenzie River Trust waxes a little more philosophical about the river in the face of a changing climate: “The more pertinent question becomes ‘If that is what I believe, then what can be done about it all?’” He says, “I think encouraging people to enjoy, use, see, touch the river gets at that in some ways — encouraging self-interest and satisfaction in the immediate time frame and then appealing to a sense of legacy — that this is what we want our grandchildren’s grandchildren to have access to in the future as well.” ■

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