

Priority Turtle Conservation Area: Sauvie Island



Location: 10 miles NW of downtown Portland, off US Highway 30. Multnomah Channel splits off from the Willamette River at the island's southern tip and the confluence of the Willamette and the Columbia is about approximately 3 miles downstream from the tip. The northern tip is at Columbia River Mile 101.5.

Ownership: ODFW, METRO, OSP, multiple private landowners. Sauvie Island Drainage Improvement company holds easements along dikes and canals.

Site Description: This 24,000 acre, 15-mile long, and 4.5-mile wide island was historically covered with spring floodwater until the land was diked in the 1940s. Dozens of lakes and permanent and seasonal wetlands remain. Drainage canals on the island serve as wildlife corridors for turtles and other species. 2/3rds of the island is in public ownership, most notably ODFW's 11,543-acre Sauvie Island Wildlife Management Area. Dozens of wetland projects have occurred in many places on the island, but not specifically with turtles in mind.

Turtle Significance: Turtle surveys were conducted on the island in 2008 and 2012. Numerous Western painted turtles reside on the island. Northwestern pond turtles were present historically, but this species hasn't been seen on the island since 2008.

Current Threats to the Population:

- Reed canary grass along drainage canals and pond edges make nesting and movement difficult.
- Several stretches of Sauvie Island Road along Multnomah Channel are high-risk areas for turtles and other wildlife being hit by vehicular traffic.
- Periodic dredging of drainage canals can disturb turtles and their habitats.
- Agricultural chemical run-off into canals may be toxic to turtles and other wildlife.
- The island has more than a million recreational visitors each year. Disturbance by people may interfere with basking, nesting and movement.

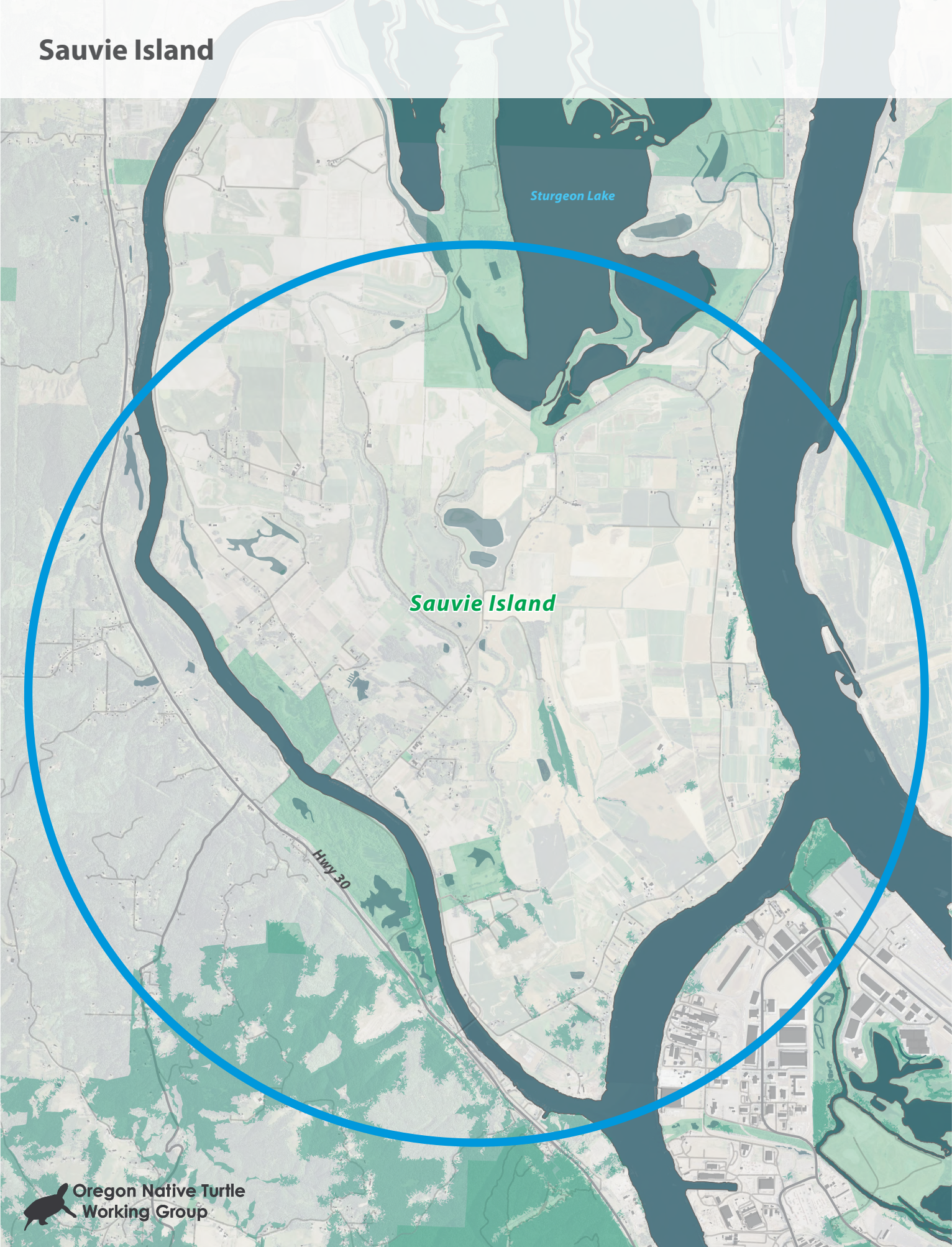
Opportunities for Conservation :

- 15 temporary basking rafts were placed on some canals and ponds in 2013 and 2014 and repairs were done on them in summer 2016. More could be placed.
- Nesting habitat enhancements are being considered at multiple locations.
- Canals provide habitat and serve as wildlife corridors. Steep banks of canals could be modified to provide better connectivity with ponds and wetlands and access to nesting habitat.
- Invasive plant control is ongoing by multiple agencies and by private landowners.
- West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District has done riparian plantings along sections of the canals, but care needs to be taken to not shade out turtle basking areas.
- Landowner education is ongoing. Many landowners are motivated to help.

Active Conservation Partners:

- Sauvie Island Conservation Partnership:
<http://sauvieisland.org/the-island-community/organizations/sauvie-island-habitat-partnership-sihab/>
- West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District: www.wmswcd.org
- ODFW: www.dfw.state.or.us

Sauvie Island



Sturgeon Lake

Sauvie Island

Hwy 30

