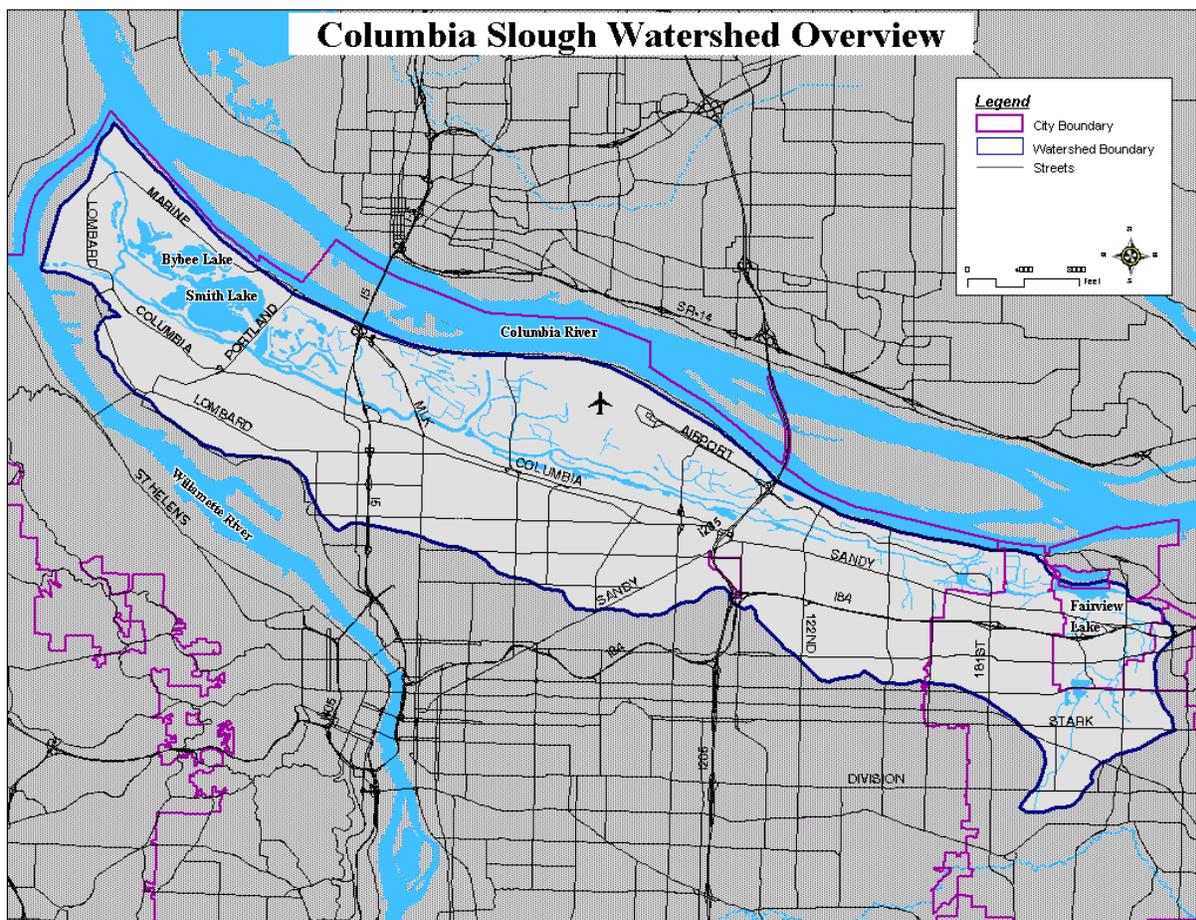


## CHAPTER 2

# Watershed Overview

The Columbia Slough Watershed is located in north and northeast Portland, just south of the Columbia River, and drains approximately 32,700 acres of land (Figure 2-1). Portland's city limits end at approximately NE 185th Avenue on the east, but the watershed also includes Fairview Lake and Fairview Creek, and portions of Troutdale, Fairview, Gresham, Maywood Park, Wood Village, and Multnomah County.

**Figure 2-1: Columbia Slough Watershed Overview**



The watershed once contained a system of side channels, lakes, and wetlands that covered the floodplain of the Columbia River between the mouths of the Willamette and Sandy Rivers. High water, known as freshets, seasonally inundated the floodplain, cutting new channels and depositing sediment. Native Americans used these waterways and the uplands for fishing, hunting, and gathering food.

Over the years, the watershed and waterway have been drastically altered to accommodate industry and agriculture. Beginning in 1918, levees were built to keep out Columbia River flows and provide flood protection. Wetlands and side channels were drained and filled to allow for development. The waterway was channelized, and dozens of streams were filled or diverted to underground pipes. This resulted in a massive loss of habitat, flood storage capacity, and ability to filter sediments and pollutants.

Today, the Columbia Slough comprises a 19-mile main channel that begins at Fairview Lake and meanders west to Kelley Point Park where it empties into the Willamette River (see Figure 2-1). There are also approximately 30 miles of secondary waterways and other remaining major surface water features, such as Fairview Creek, Fairview Lake, and Smith and Bybee Lakes. A portion of the waterway has piped surface water, dikes and levees, and a system of pumps that provide hydrologic management and flood control. The Lower Slough is dominated by tidal influences. The watershed serves industrial and commercial enterprises; is home to thousands of Portland residents; and provides significant habitat.