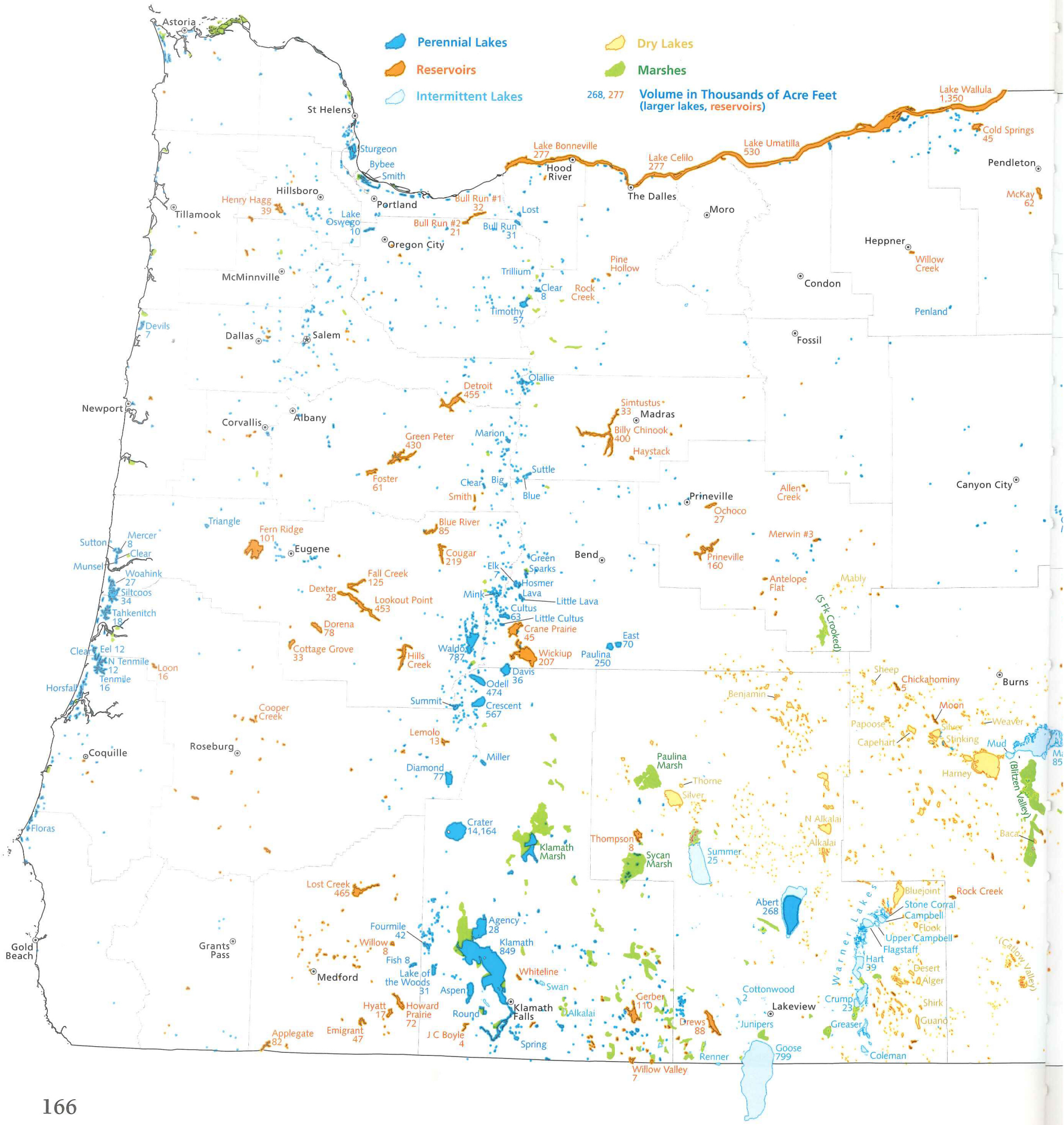
Lakes

Natural lakes can be classified as perennial (with water all year long), intermittent (with episodes of drying out entirely) or ephemeral, sometimes also called dry (with water only during brief periods after heavy rains or snowmelt). The distinction between intermittent and dry lakes is a matter of degree or frequency. On the map below, most of the smaller lakes of southeastern Oregon are shown as dry. All the lakes of this area are small successors of the much larger lakes of 10,000 to 20,000 years ago (see pages 132–133).

Oregon's coastal lakes are the product of sand dunes blocking small streams; water moving to the ocean is filtered through the sand. The many very small inland lakes of the Willamette Valley and the surviving large lakes on the Lower Columbia are remnants of old river channels. These lakes were much more numerous before nineteenth-century settlement and drainage.

High Cascade lakes are created and sustained by a combination of snowmelt, natural volcanic dams and porous or fractured rock. Occupying the caldera of Mount Mazama, Crater Lake, with a depth of 1,932 feet, is the deepest lake in North America. Paulina and East Lakes are less spectacular examples of caldera lakes. Crater Lake contains by far the largest volume of water of any Oregon lake, but the largest surface areas belong to the shallow lakes in the southeast. Klamath Lake is unique among these in being perennial and in being fed by Cascade snowmelt and drained by a large river. The other large lakes southeast of the Cascades occupy sumps (lowest part of