

Rex Burkholder

METRO COUNCIL DISTRICT 5 NEWS



METRO

PEOPLE PLACES
OPEN SPACES

**Rex Burkholder
represents District
5, which includes
Northwest Portland,
North Portland,
Northeast Portland,
downtown Portland,
a portion of
Southwest Portland
and a portion of
Southeast Portland.**



Happy New Year to you and yours!

My resolution is to ensure that Metro becomes the “Sustainability Agency” for the Portland region. This is what voters had in mind in 1992, adopting the Metro Charter that calls for us to “undertake, as its most important service, planning and policy making to preserve and enhance the quality of life and the environment for ourselves and future generations.”

Can't get anymore sustainable than that! So, how have we've done and what can we do better?

In many ways, Metro has fulfilled its Charter challenge. Think of solid waste and recycling. Today, this region has one of the highest recycling rates of any metropolitan area and our unrecycled wastes are buried responsibly in Gilliam County rather than being dumped in a swamp (the old St. Johns Landfill). But, recycling rates are leveling out or even falling and we are throwing away more per capita every year. Countries like Denmark and Germany have strong programs in place that will help them achieve Zero Waste, recycling or re-using almost everything. And they've reduced waste by outlawing plastic bags, require manufacturers to take back everything from worn out cars to computers.

Or think of transportation. We have a great and growing transit system and more and more people are using bicycles to get around. In fact, we are the only large metro area where average driving per person is decreasing. But, with climate change staring us in the face, we need to drastically reduce how much we drive as vehicles cause almost 40 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. We have great examples of neighborhoods in this region where people drive half as much as the average. Places like Southeast Portland. If all our communities were easy and attractive to walk and bike in, we'd be able to meet Oregon's greenhouse gas emission reduction targets—and be healthier and more fit to boot!

Our urban growth boundary has resulted in stable and growing home values, successful farms and nurseries close to their markets, and shorter commuting distances. Living close to shops, jobs and schools saves energy and reduces pollution. Still, compared even to cities like Vancouver, British Columbia, we are very inefficient in our use of land. Too many acres of valuable real estate are covered with parking lots and low value buildings. Being more efficient with land also reduces the need for costly infrastructure like roads, sewers and water lines.

We all care deeply about the nature that surrounds us and have voted repeatedly to fund purchase of natural areas to protect our water and air quality as well as to provide habitat for wildlife. There are more than 20,000 acres under public ownership in this region and more is being protected all the time. Yet, there are still areas without any parks or access to nature. With a million more people expected to be living here in 30 years, ensuring that everyone has easy access to green is ever more critical.

continued

Metro owns and runs the Oregon Zoo, the Expo Center and the Oregon Convention Center (OCC). These bring in hundreds of millions of tourist dollars to our economy every year, providing many jobs in the community as well as at these facilities. Each is run as sustainably as possible with the OCC being one of the few LEED qualified convention centers in the country. But each requires lots of travel that contributes to climate change as well as using lots of energy. We can put solar panels in the parking lot of the Expo and Zoo as well as on the roof of the OCC, hopefully making them energy self-sufficient.

We have a lot of work to do to become a truly sustainable region but we have the help of thousands of interested citizens, engaged and active community leaders and elected officials who are just as concerned about issues like climate change, clean water and healthy communities. I am quite excited to be part of Metro, where many of these efforts come together, and by working together, we have advanced the sustainability of this region over the years.

Best wishes— Rex Burkholder

Metro protects water quality and wildlife habitat in Johnson Creek watershed

The recent acquisition of two important natural areas in the Johnson Creek Watershed illustrates how the Metro Council is meeting its goal of protecting water quality in one of the region's most densely urbanized creeks.

Johnson Creek flows 26 miles from its headwaters near the Sandy River to its confluence with the Willamette River, passing through four cities – Portland, Milwaukie, Gresham and Happy Valley – along the way. Development along the creek and in the watershed has created flooding problems for local residents and water quality problems for native fish and wildlife.

In an effort to improve the area, in December, Metro purchased 53 acres on the north side of the Clatsop Buttes natural area. Metro had previously purchased 49 acres on the lower part of the Buttes, with a portion along Johnson Creek. Those two adjacent acquisitions total more than 100 acres of densely forested hillsides that drain into Johnson Creek and its tributaries, and make the Clatsop Buttes natural area one of only a dozen protected places of this size within the city limits of Portland. Home to a mix of native plants including cedar, maple, Douglas fir, red alder, Oregon grape, huckleberry, elderberry and sword fern, the Clatsop Buttes natural area supports a variety of wildlife including deer, fox, coyote, flicker, pileated woodpecker and other local and migratory birds. This site will be managed by the city of Portland.

In November, further east in the Johnson Creek Watershed, Metro and the city of Gresham made another purchase of almost 20 acres of forested land straddling Johnson Creek adjacent to the Springwater Corridor Trail. The property includes patches of dense forest canopy, important for shading the creek and cooling water temperatures for native fish. The property is home to a variety of native plants and trees including Western red cedar, black cottonwood and Oregon ash. It also provides important songbird and wildlife habitat.

Metro's 2006 Natural Areas bond measure program funds land acquisition and capital improvements that protect water quality and fish and wildlife habitat, enhance trails and wildlife corridors, and provide greater connections to nature in urban areas throughout the greater Portland region. More information can be found online at www.metro-region.org/naturalareas.

Regional Transportation Plan update moves forward

Metro's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the long-term blueprint that guides investments in the region's transportation system for all forms of travel—motor vehicle, transit, bicycle and pedestrian—and the movement of goods and freight. The RTP is updated regularly to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations and to address changing demographic, financial, travel and economic trends.

On Dec. 13, the Metro Council and the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) approved the federal component of the RTP, pending an air-quality analysis.

Taking into consideration projected population and job growth in the region, the air-quality analysis determines whether the region would meet requirements of the Clean Air Act over the long-term if all the projects in the plan were built. To ensure that federal transportation funds coming into the region are not interrupted the federal component of the RTP with the air-quality determination must be approved by JPACT and the Metro Council before the current RTP expires on March 8, 2008.

A report of the air-quality analysis will be published on Metro's web site www.metro-region.org at noon on Jan. 18, kicking off a month-long public review and comment period which will end at noon on Feb. 19. Printed copies can be obtained from the Metro Planning Department. Comments may be submitted by mail to Metro Planning, 600 NE Grand Avenue, Portland, Oregon, 97232; or by email, rtp@metro.dst.or.us.

Although the federal component will still be subject to refinement and public comment in the months ahead, the main focus of the RTP will shift to updating the state component of the plan. The final plan, expected to be completed by fall 2008, will prioritize transportation investments that best support the region's desired economic, environmental, land use and transportation outcomes. The plan will also include funding strategies to support these investments.

Waste transport contract action slated for January

The contract to transport waste from the metro area to the Columbia Ridge Landfill in Gilliam County is up for renewal. Nearly 570,000 tons of solid waste per year is trucked to the landfill. The current contract expires Dec. 31, 2009; the new contract will be in effect for ten years.

In October, Metro staff released a draft request for proposals (RFP) and solicited input from citizens and transportation industry officials. With the Metro Council's direction, staff is drafting the final RFP after receiving input from an outreach campaign that included mailings to more than 800 people and three public meetings, held in Condon, Hood River and in Portland. More than 100 people attended the meetings. In addition, 84 people have responded to a survey that is currently available on the Metro website at www.metro-region.org (search for "waste transport survey").

The Metro Council will examine and evaluate proposals received from potential contractors based on cost effectiveness, environmental impacts, community concerns and impacts, and flexibility, reliability and risk. Citizens who have provided input to date have rated the criteria as "important" or "very important". Another significant finding from outreach campaigns is that citizens rank environmental and community impacts, including jobs, as the most important criteria. In addition, 50 percent of respondents have said they favor truck as the preferred mode of transporting the waste.

Based on input from citizens and industry, the Metro Council has refined and redistributed the criteria evaluation points. Cost is weighed at 45 points, environmental impacts at 20 points, community concerns at 10 points and reliability and risk at 25 points.

A public hearing on the final RFP is scheduled for Jan. 10 in the Council Chamber at the Metro Regional Center, 600 NE Grand Ave. in Portland. During the hearing, the public and industry representatives may suggest additional changes. A final RFP is scheduled for release by the end of January.

Events of note in District 5

For a complete list of events, check out our online calendar, <http://calendar.metro-region.org/>.

Saturday, Jan 5

9:00 am • Arbor Lodge Park work party

Help replace the use of pesticides with people power by weeding at this North Portland park. Snacks, gloves and tools will be provided. Meet at North Bryant Street and Greeley Avenue.

Thursday, January 10

7:00 pm to 9:00 pm • TrackersNW story night

Some people believe an animal tracker only follows footprints on the ground. Tracking can be that, but also much more. Join some of the best tracking instructors in the country for a night of storytelling and learning. Step through the looking glass and see tracking in a way few people do. Suitable for all ages.

Registration and cost: Free. Call for meeting location and directions.

For more information, visit www.trackersnw.com. Sponsored by TrackersNW.

Saturday, Jan 12

10:00 am • Lone Fir historical tour

Enjoy the beauty and tranquility of Metro's Lone Fir Pioneer Cemetery. The tour highlights Portland's founders, early pioneers and nationally renowned figures as well as some beautiful and unusual monument art. Explore 30 acres of mature trees and a very special rose garden. Suitable for all ages. Enter at Southeast 21st Avenue and Morrison Street. Registration and cost: Advance registration is not required. Suggested donation, \$10. For more information, call 503-775-6278.

Lone Fir Cemetery, Southeast 21st Avenue and Morrison Street, Portland

Sponsored by Friends of Lone Fir Cemetery, Metro Regional Parks and Greenspaces Department.

Saturday, Jan 12

10:00 am • The eye of the tracker

A tracker uses all her senses to listen for the most subtle signs and clues. Learn techniques of progressing faster through the hyper-sensory awareness and body awareness of a tracker. \$25. Suitable for ages 14 and older.

Registration and cost: For more information, visit www.trackersnw.com.

Call for meeting location and directions.

Sponsored by TrackersNW

Saturday, Jan 12

10:00 am • Winter birds at Smith and Bybee Wetlands

It's a waterfowl wonderland with thousands of ducks, geese and even swans spending the winter in the area. On a good day, you can see a dozen different species

of waterfowl and other water birds such as grebes, gulls, coots, cormorants and herons. This is also the best time of year to see bald eagles and other birds of prey. Meet naturalist James Davis in the natural area parking lot on North Marine Drive. Bring binoculars or borrow a pair of ours. Suitable for adults and teens. Registration and cost: Free. Advance registration required; call 503-797-1850 option 4.

Sunday, January 20

12:00 pm to 4:00 pm • Midwinter paddle at Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area

Bring your own kayak or canoe and personal flotation device. The new water control structure is helping to restore the natural area to a seasonal wetland; the changes are great for wildlife, but they make paddle conditions difficult to predict. The trip leader will contact participants if it is necessary to cancel the trip due to low water levels. Meet at the parking lot on North Marine Drive.

Registration and cost: Advance registration required; call Troy Clark at 503-249-0482.

Saturday, Jan 26

9:00 am • Fruit tree pruning workshop

Join Portland Parks and Recreation and Portland Community Gardens at Patton Community Garden for a fruit tree pruning class and work party. Bring work gloves and learn hands-on how to properly prune common fruit trees. Free.

Registration and cost: To register, call 503-823-1612.

Call for meeting location and directions.

Sponsored by Portland Parks and Recreation

Saturday, January 26

10:00 am • Winter birds at Smith and Bybee Wetlands

It's a waterfowl wonderland with thousands of ducks, geese and even swans spending the winter in the area. On a good day, you can see a dozen different species of waterfowl and other water birds such as grebes, gulls, coots, cormorants and herons. This is also the best time of year to see bald eagles and other birds of prey. Meet naturalist James Davis in the natural area parking lot on North Marine Drive. Bring binoculars or borrow a pair of ours. Suitable for adults and teens.

Registration and cost: Free. Advance registration required; call 503-797-1850 option 4.

Wednesday, Jan 30

7:00 pm • Raptor identification class

Hawks, eagles and falcons have always fascinated people. Metro naturalist James Davis will discuss how to tell these groups of raptors apart and the key points for identifying the most common species in Oregon. Get ready for great winter raptor watching and be well prepared for the Sauvie Island Raptor Road Trip on Feb. 2. Includes discussion on the natural history the amazing adaptations of these birds for catching and killing their prey. Suitable for adults and teens. Meet in room 370 at Metro Regional Center in Portland.

Registration and cost: Registration and payment of \$10 per person are required in advance; call 503-797-1850 option 4.

About Metro

Clean air and clean water do not stop at city limits or county lines. Neither does the need for jobs, a thriving economy and good transportation choices for people and businesses in our region. Voters have asked Metro to help with the challenges that cross those lines and affect the 25 cities and three counties in the Portland metropolitan area.

A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to protecting open space, caring for parks, planning for the best use of land, managing garbage disposal and increasing recycling. Metro oversees world-class facilities such as the Oregon Zoo, which contributes to conservation and education, and the Oregon Convention Center, which benefits the region's economy.

Your Metro representatives

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