



600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736

Council work session agenda

Tuesday, July 12, 2022

10:30 AM

<https://zoom.us/j/95889916633> (Webinar

ID: 958 8991 6633)

Call to Order and Roll Call

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Work Session Topics:

10:30 Finalizing Parks and Nature Levy Renewal Framework and
Next Steps

[22-5745](#)

Presenter(s): Jon Blasher (he/him), Metro
Mychal Tetteh (he/him), Metro

Attachments: [Work Session Worksheet](#)
[PN Levy Framework](#)

11:00 Chief Operating Officer Communication

11:05 Councilor Communication

11:10 Adjourn

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**Finalizing Parks and Nature Levy Renewal Framework and Next
Steps**

Work Session Topics

Metro Council Work Session
Tuesday, July 12th, 2022

WORK SESSION WORKSHEET, PARKS AND NATURE LEVY RENEWAL

Date: June 29, 2022

Department: Parks and Nature

Meeting Date: July 12, 2022

Prepared by: Beth Cohen, Parks and Nature
Scotty Ellis, Parks and Nature, Craig Beebe,
Government Affairs and Policy Development

Presenters; Jon Blasher, Director of Parks and Nature; Mychal Tetteh, Parks and Nature Community Services Director

Length: 30 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

A quarter-century of voter investments have allowed Metro – on behalf of the public – to protect clean water, restore fish and wildlife habitat and help communities experience nature close to home.

As greater Portland grapples with hotter summers and extreme weather, Metro's parks and nature local option levy helps build resilience by planting more native trees and shrubs to provide shade, protecting cool rivers and streams, and restoring critical wildlife habitat. Levy funding helps connect people with the benefits of nature by keeping Metro parks safe and accessible for millions of annual visitors, and enables community-led projects that make nature more welcoming for communities of color and families with lower incomes.

Metro's parks and nature levy and bond measures work together. By law, bond measures can only support capital expenditures like land acquisition, park development and major construction. The levy enables Metro to restore, maintain, and operate the parks, trails, natural areas and cemeteries purchased and developed through the bond measures and ensures that these destinations are safe and welcoming for all across our region.

The current levy will expire in June 2023. Renewal by the voters before that date would extend levy funding to June 2028 without raising taxes, ensuring Metro can continue to protect the region's special places for current residents as well as future generations, build climate resilience on a regional scale, advance racial equity throughout its parks and nature portfolio, and connect more people to nature.

At Council's June 14 work session, staff presented a proposed levy renewal framework and plan for outreach to finalize a recommendation for levy renewal in summer 2022.

ACTION REQUESTED

At the July 12 work session, staff will share how recent outreach to local governments, community and conservation leaders, MPAC, and local parks directors has affirmed the recommended levy renewal framework. Staff will seek Council direction to return on July

28 for Council consideration of a final framework and a recommended renewal measure for potential referral to Metro voters on the November 2022 ballot.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

The parks and nature levy is a fundamental part of Metro's efforts to advance racial equity and enhance climate resilience in greater Portland by supporting natural area restoration and maintenance, park operations and community-led programming.

In alignment with previous Council direction, staff are recommending a levy renewal framework that:

- Continues the same rate without raising taxes
- Provides **continuity** with the successes of levy implementation over the last decade, meeting the current operational needs of Metro's parks and nature system
- Increases **adaptability** and responsiveness to advance racial equity and climate resilience
- Ensures **accountability** for specific outcomes to voters and taxpayers, including alignment with the 2019 parks and nature bond

QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL

Does the recommended framework for levy renewal align with Council expectations to continue what works, respond to changing needs, and ensure accountability?

What has Council heard about support for the levy in recent stakeholder conversations?

What other information can staff provide to help Council prepare for potential referral of a levy renewal measure and adoption of a levy renewal framework on July 28?

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Bond and levy maximize impacts to the regional system—The parks and nature bond and levy work together to help Metro care for over 18,000 acres of parks, trails and natural areas that touch each part of the region, keeping Metro's publicly-accessible parks and natural areas safe and welcoming for all, including 19 developed parks, boat launches, historic cemeteries and a golf course. Annually, more than 2.5 million people visit Blue Lake and Oxbow regional parks, Broughton Beach, Chinook Landing, and Mount Talbert, Graham Oaks and Scouters Mountain nature parks.

Metro staff, funded by the levy, help visitors enjoy hiking, bird watching, canoeing, camping, boating, fishing, and family events. The levy funds ongoing maintenance and improvements to restrooms, picnic areas, trails, play areas and other important amenities in these parks are vital to extending the life span of these beloved places while also continuing to make them more welcoming and inclusive for more people.

The numbers of visitors to Metro parks and nature sites will likely grow in coming years with greater Portland's population, as well as the opening of new nature parks, such as

Newell Creek Canyon and Chehalem Ridge nature parks. The levy has been essential to the collaborative planning and opening of these new nature parks (along with any future nature parks) and will be needed to support ongoing operations at both sites. The benefits of the levy reach beyond Metro's system to support sites we co-manage with the region's park providers, like Cooper Mountain with Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District.

Finally, the recommended levy framework aligns desired outcomes with the bond's criteria and evaluation framework, to articulate the combined impacts of bond and levy investments on advancing racial equity and climate resilience and to allow for annual reporting that speaks clearly to bond and levy benefits working in tandem.

Importance to regional climate resilience – The levy funded restoration of Metro's natural areas provides benefits to water, wildlife and people that extend across the region. Every year, the levy supports 80 to 100 distinct restoration projects - planting native trees and shrubs to provide shade, protection of cool rivers and streams on which salmon and other native fish depend and removing invasive species - across the region's wetlands, prairies, savannas, forests and other priority habitats, all of which contribute to climate resilience on a regional scale. Without the levy, the number of active restoration projects that Metro would have the ability to manage would significantly diminish to fewer than ten per year.

Strengthens community relationship with nature – The local option levy is essential to fulfilling Metro's commitment to help people strengthen their relationship to the natural world while fostering the next generation of conservation leaders. The levy funds the critical partnership, education, stewardship and grant programs that offer hands-on experiences and create opportunities for everyone to grow in their understanding of how they can become better stewards of nature. Levy-funded programs directly support people of color and other communities who have experienced historical barriers in strengthening their relationship with nature, which in turn expands our region's collective knowledge by increasing the cultural relevance of restoration activity and learning from communities who have been traditional stewards of nature.

Stakeholder engagement—The recommended levy renewal framework is built upon nearly a decade of community partnerships, engagement and input and has been updated from the current levy framework to address input from more recent efforts, including the extensive engagement that shaped the 2019 parks and nature bond. This spring, the region's park providers, the urban Indigenous community and Metro's Committee on Racial Equity reviewed the draft framework and confirmed it aligns with and meets community need. Presentations and discussions at MPAC and the Metropolitan Mayor's Consortium in June, as well as ongoing conversations with agency, conservation and community partners, have further affirmed support for the levy's work and for a framework that continues what works and allows for responsiveness to changing conditions.

Legal antecedents—In June 2016, the Metro Council approved Resolution No. 16-4690, which referred Measure 26-178 to voters. Measure 26-178 was approved by more than 74% of Metro voters in November 2016, extending levy funding to June 2023.

Anticipated effects—The current levy raises over \$16 million a year based on a rate of 9.6 cents per \$1,000 in assessed home value. For example, the owner of a home with an assessed value at \$250,000 would pay approximately \$25 a year, (For most homeowners in the Metro district, assessed value is considerably lower than market value.) Staff have also confirmed that compression impacts on current levy revenues due to other parks measures in the region have been minimal.

BACKGROUND

The levy was first approved by the voters in 2013 to restore Metro’s natural areas, maintain and operate parks and was renewed in 2016. The levy makes up the majority of the Parks and Nature department’s operating budget, and is essential to the delivery of Parks and Nature services as well as to the stability and financial health of the agency.

Council has provided input to shape the levy framework at several work sessions and in individual staff briefings since spring 2021. A round of public opinion research this past May has affirmed what we’ve heard before, that the region’s voters are broadly willing to continue investing in the kinds of parks and nature benefits that are so essential to making this region livable, even in the face of pessimism about the direction of the region.

In June 2022, Council directed staff to continue refining and conducting outreach around a package for potential renewal and to return in July to share a recommended framework.

Parks and Nature



Metro

2022 Levy renewal framework





Metro's parks and nature local-option levy protects clean water, restores fish and wildlife habitat, and provides access to nature close to home.

No matter where you are in the greater Portland region, nature is never far. Metro cares for more than 18,000 acres of parks, trails and natural areas across greater Portland – from Chehalem Ridge in the west to the Sandy River Gorge in the east, from Blue Lake and Broughton Beach in the north to Graham Oaks and Newell Creek Canyon in the south. This portfolio of land represents both a big opportunity and a big responsibility. For more than a quarter-century, voters have repeatedly asked Metro to protect clean water, restore fish and wildlife habitat and provide opportunities to connect with nature close to home. Voters also trust and expect Metro to wisely care for these special places over the long term, while creating opportunities for people to enjoy them.

Metro's parks and nature work depends on continued voter support for a five-year local-option levy, first approved by voters in 2013. At a rate of 9.6 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value — about \$25 annually for the owner of a home assessed at \$250,000 — the levy is a critical source of ongoing operating funding that complements voter-approved parks and nature bonds, which by

law must focus on capital spending such as land acquisition and major construction projects.

The levy allows Metro to improve water quality, protect culturally significant plant communities, restore and enhance fish and wildlife habitat, control invasive weeds, and plant native trees and shrubs. Levy funding has also made Metro parks and natural areas more safe and welcoming by supporting park operations and improving visitor amenities at popular destinations across greater Portland, planning for public access improvements, expanding community programming, and supporting community-led projects that protect and enhance important habitat, improve water quality and strengthen people's connection to nature close to home.

Current levy funding expires in June 2023. If voters renew the levy for another five years, Metro would continue to preserve the greater Portland region's legacy of natural beauty, clean rivers and access to nature, ensuring that future generations enjoy the same benefits of nature that we do today. Levy renewal would not raise taxes.

Levy program areas

If a five-year levy renewal is approved by voters, costs related to the following programs and activities would be eligible for levy funding beginning in July 2023.

Program area	Program area activities	Annual minimum funding allocation
Habitat restoration and land management	<p>Habitat restoration – Restore fish and wildlife habitat, improve habitat quality for priority species, and improve water quality and quantity at Metro’s parks and natural areas.</p> <p>Natural area management – Manage Metro’s parks and natural areas to maintain ecological health, restore culturally significant plant communities, and reduce the long-term costs of maintenance.</p>	40%
Regional park operations	Support visitor services, maintenance, and amenity improvements at Metro’s parks, trails, natural areas, and cemeteries so that they are welcoming, safe and inclusive, and meet or exceed standards for accessibility.	35%
Community-led investments and education	Co-create culturally specific interpretive programs, materials, and events, and provide resources (financial and programmatic) to support communities in their efforts to strengthen connections with nature. Includes, but not limited to, grant funding for community projects that advance climate resilience and racial equity, and culturally relevant nature education opportunities.	15%

Accountability and impact analysis

The program allocations reflect regional priorities and ensure transparency and accountability to taxpayers. These allocations form the foundation of the annual operations budgets for the Parks and Nature department that Council considers and adopts each year as part of the Metro budget process.

The Parks and Nature Annual Report shares with the public how levy spending compares to the allocations in the levy framework. An annual financial audit that covers the local-option levy

expenditures will be conducted by an independent public accounting firm, and the results published on the Metro website.

The Natural Areas and Capital Program Performance Oversight Committee will also review progress in the implementation of any levy-funded capital projects. This committee provides the Metro Council and the people of the region with an independent review of Metro’s bond- and levy-funded capital projects and provides an annual report to the Metro Council.

Desired levy outcomes

The parks and nature levy is a fundamental part of Metro's proactive efforts to advance racial equity and enhance climate resilience in greater Portland.

Based on community and partner engagement and input from stakeholders, the following desired outcomes articulate the long-lasting impacts that levy investments will have and will act as prioritization guidance, ensuring that racial equity and climate resilience remain core values of levy investments.

These desired outcomes are also coordinated with the outcomes established within the 2019 parks and nature bond measure, as the levy is instrumental to operate and maintain bond-funded investments in parks, trails and natural areas. This alignment is essential to ensure that the bond measure and the levy work together to protect clean water, restore fish and wildlife habitat and connect people with nature close to home.

Habitat: Improve habitat and habitat connectivity for plants, fish, and wildlife at Metro's parks and natural areas.

An objective of the levy is to ensure that priority habitat for plants and animals (as identified by Indigenous communities, tribes and regional conservation strategies) is restored and protected, and invasive plant species are removed. This results in the outcomes of new anchor sites and improved habitat connectivity for native plants, fish, and wildlife, all of which contribute to climate resilience on a site and regional scale.

Water quality: Improve hydrologic function, and water quality and water quantity at Metro's parks and natural areas.

An objective of the levy is to ensure that priority habitat for plants and animals (as identified by Indigenous communities, tribes and regional conservation strategies) is restored and protected, and invasive plant species are removed. This results in the outcomes of improved water quality and quantity - meaning reduction of negative impacts of flooding, improved floodplain connectivity, increased late-season flow, healthier water temperatures, all of which contribute to climate resilience on a site and regional scale.



Resilience: Execute land management plans at Metro's parks and natural areas to reduce risk from extreme weather.

An objective of the levy is to ensure that land management plans are implemented at Metro's parks and natural areas. This results in the outcome of more resilient habitat for plants, fish and wildlife to the effects of extreme weather.

Climate leadership: Collaborate with local, state, federal, tribal and nonprofit partners to plan for and make strategic decisions related to conservation priorities across the region for broader, more effective action for climate adaptation and resilience.

An objective of the levy is to ensure that Metro serves as a convener and an anchor organization for complex restoration and climate resilience projects involving multiple partners. This results in the outcomes of implementation of regionally significant projects, the development and strengthening of region-wide strategies for climate resilience, and supporting conservation investments made by partners.

Native plants: Protect and restore culturally significant native plants in partnership with tribal nations and greater Portland's Indigenous community.

An objective of the levy is to ensure that culturally significant and keystone native plants, as identified by tribal nations and Indigenous communities, are restored and protected and cared for collaboratively. This results in the outcomes of new anchor sites and improved habitat connectivity for native plants, fish and wildlife, all of which contribute to climate resilience on a site and regional scale.

Accessibility: Improve the accessibility of Metro destinations for people of all ages and abilities.

An objective of the levy is to ensure that Metro visitors of all ages and abilities continue to have their immediate needs met through well-maintained and accessible amenities and signage (e.g. restrooms, areas for picnics, clear wayfinding). This results in the outcome of more universally designed, sensory-rich environments where visitors can physically, socially and emotionally connect with nature at parks, boat ramps, trails and cemeteries.

Inclusion: Ensure that Metro visitors of all backgrounds can access a variety of nature experiences to strengthen their relationship to the natural world.

An objective of the levy is to ensure that the amenities (e.g. park recreation types, signage, interpretation, access points, art), services and programming at Metro destinations enable all visitors to enhance their relationship with nature in a personalized way and enjoy the full benefits of nature. This results in the outcomes of increased community health and wellbeing, sense of belonging, and stewardship at Metro sites.

Workforce equity: Increase the prosperity of historically marginalized workers and communities through levy investments.

An objective of the levy is to ensure that historically marginalized members of the workforce experience more opportunities to enter and build careers at all levels in the parks and natural area industry. This results in the outcomes of increased prosperity for historically marginalized workers and greater representation within the workforce.

Contractor equity: Build capacity and experience of historically marginalized contractors through projects at/with Metro.

An objective of the levy is to ensure that Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID) certified businesses experience more opportunities to work with Metro through a streamlined contracting process, and are prioritized in the process of soliciting proposals. This results in the outcome of increased benefits from the economic opportunities of gaining entry to and experience in the parks and natural area industry for historically marginalized communities.



Engagement and accountability: Serve communities through inclusive, transparent and accountable engagement.

An objective of the levy is to ensure that communities know how their guidance was utilized, historically marginalized communities see themselves represented through levy-funded work and know that Metro's engagement practices uplift their expertise and knowledge. This results in the outcomes of levy investments that prioritize the needs of historically marginalized communities, advance racial equity and have broader community impact, help Metro natural spaces and programming become critical community assets and increase community confidence and trust in Metro.

Education: Design collaborative and culturally relevant education that lifts up multiple ways of knowing by centering work with educators from historically marginalized communities.

An objective of the levy is to ensure educators, centering those from historically marginalized communities, actively participate in and are financially supported to develop culturally relevant and participatory education. This results in the outcomes of increased knowledge of the cultural and regional significance of Metro parks and natural areas and of practices to protect and steward regional lands and water, and in creating career pathways for community educators.

Program descriptions

Habitat restoration and land management

At least 40 percent of the proposed levy funding will pay for Metro’s continued work to restore and maintain habitat on land that has been acquired over the course of three decades and through three voter-approved bond measures. These property stewardship activities ensure that Metro’s parks and natural areas foster clean water, healthy fish and wildlife habitat and high-quality opportunities for people to experience nature.

Levy funding will be invested throughout Metro’s portfolio of high-priority habitats (wetlands, prairies, savannas, rivers and forests) and projects informed by science and engagement with stakeholders and community members.

Levy-funded restoration and management projects will be prioritized based on their clear contribution to the protection of water quality and species or habitats identified in federal, state or regional conservation plans, including The Intertwine Alliance’s Regional Conservation Strategy for the Greater Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Area and the Oregon State Conservation Strategy, which

document and offer guidance for the region’s highest value habitat areas. If approved, the levy would fund three main types of restoration and land management activities:

Habitat restoration projects

The levy will fund restoration of fish and wildlife habitat at Metro’s sites to significantly improve quality and function, such as improved wildlife connections and hydrologic function of rivers and streams, which are key contributors to building healthy habitat and resilience to climate change. Large-scale projects will typically involve one or more complex actions, such as reconnecting floodplains to rivers, constructing or removing structures that direct hydrology, planting or thinning large tracts of forest or establish prairie and savanna habitat to develop healthy, functional native plant communities. Metro also conducts many small-scale projects, such as removing noxious and invasive weeds to be replaced with native trees and shrubs, or strategically thinning Douglas fir trees that compete for resources with slower-growing Oregon white oaks. Both types of projects can include activities such as replacing or removing failing culverts and modifying or removing roads to prevent erosion from reaching streams and water sources.

LEVY AT WORK

Habitat restoration – Multnomah Channel Marsh

There are roughly a hundred active projects working to protect clean water and restore fish and wildlife habitat across the region at places like Chehalem Ridge Nature Park and Clear Creek and Smith and Bybee Wetlands natural areas.

Metro’s work to improve connectivity between the wetlands at Metro’s Multnomah Channel Marsh, a narrow area of more than 300 acres just across from Sauvie Island, is one example of an active habitat restoration project. Levy funding made it easier for juvenile salmon, steelhead, trout, and lamprey to swim into the marsh, a crucial habitat with abundant food and few predators, improving the health of the fish before their journey to the ocean.



Metro will continue to seek diverse partners in planning and implementing restoration projects and create opportunities for state-certified business enterprises, including minority- and women-owned businesses, to perform work on Metro-owned properties.

Land management

The levy will fund management of Metro sites to maintain ecological health and increase their resilience to extreme weather and other impacts of climate change. Management and maintenance includes suppressing weeds, reestablishing native vegetation, restoring culturally significant native plant communities, identifying and quickly treating threats from invasive species, and protecting infrastructure such as roads, trails, fences and signage. Timely management of Metro parks and natural areas will also reduce long-term costs. In the same way that addressing weed problems early is most efficient, timely action to protect infrastructure prevents sites from deteriorating and extends the useful life of the investments. The levy will ensure that Metro's sites are maintained and operated at their current high quality standard.

Regional conservation leadership

With its unique role in the region, Metro serves as an anchor organization by convening multiple partners and funding sources to undertake complex and critical conservation projects, such as the restoration of River Island Natural Area along the Clackamas River and development of regional data sets that empower better conservation and infrastructure planning. Metro is dedicated to convening and collaboration with local, state, federal, tribal and nonprofit partners to make strategic decisions, in particular those related to climate adaptation and resilience.

Levy funding will enable Metro to continue to serve in this leadership role, ensuring coordination and advancement of regional conservation projects and decisions.



LEVY AT WORK

Land management – Graham Oaks Nature Park

In addition to restoring forests, prairies and rivers, Metro works to maintain healthy habitat by planting native trees and shrubs, thinning overly dense forests, treating invasive weeds, and more. There are often 20 to 50 levy-funded land management projects ongoing at any given time.

At Graham Oaks Nature Park in Wilsonville, the levy enables staff to manage the landscape to create healthier habitats and to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Because of the neighborhoods nearby, a reduction of wildfire risk at Graham Oaks is critical and involves actions such as the removal of invasive species, like Himalayan blackberry, that provide quick fuel for fires, and planting native trees, grasses and flowers in their place. Metro staff also thin trees in strategic locations to help improve habitat health in addition to reducing the amount of fuel available if there were a wildfire. This includes creating fuel breaks near homes and thinning past plantings that have become overly dense. Thinning out trees also provides space for a diversity of habitats. For example, Douglas firs grow quickly, and in the absence of wildfire or active management, they crowd out the light that forest floor shrubs and flowers, or slower growing Oregon white oaks, need to survive.

Regional park operations

Metro's parks and nature destinations offer important access to nature for people and support regionally important habitats. More than 2.5 million visitors enjoy Metro's developed parks each year for walking, hiking, bird watching, canoeing, camping, boating, fishing and picnicking, in addition to family and community events.

At least 35 percent of levy funding will support operations and maintenance to keep Metro's parks and nature destinations safe, welcoming and accessible to all members of our community. Funds from a levy renewal will continue to allow Metro to develop low-impact access to Metro sites, focusing on safety improvements and hiking, cycling and walking opportunities. These access investments support the physical, mental and emotional health and well-being of our community, by enabling people to experience some of the

region's unique habitats, learn more about nature and become better stewards of the environment.

Levy funding will also allow Metro to continue making improvements and investments in operations that help knit together Metro's parks, trails, natural areas and cemeteries into an integrated system that is welcoming, safe and inclusive, and to meet or exceed standards for accessibility. Investments in operations include guest services, park rangers, cemetery services, and park maintenance and repairs on amenities such as picnic areas, signage, restrooms, public art and staff facilities.

Metro will continue to prioritize projects that make parks safe, welcoming, inclusive, and more accessible for visitors, reduce impacts on natural resources and improve the longevity of park infrastructure. Improvements for visitors at Metro's destinations are integrated with Metro's nature programs and restoration projects.



LEVY AT WORK

Regional park operations – Chehalem Ridge Nature Park

More than 2.5 million visitors enjoy Metro's developed parks each year for walking, hiking, canoeing, camping, bird watching, and fishing, in addition to family and community events. The levy allows Metro to operate, maintain, and upgrade Metro sites so that they are safe, welcoming and inclusive.

Chehalem Ridge Nature Park in Gaston near Forest Grove is an example of the parks and nature bond and levy working together to create more inclusive Metro sites close to home. Bond funding allowed Metro to begin acquiring and restoring this former timber farm. After almost a decade of methodical forest restoration at Chehalem Ridge, it was time to plan the park's amenities. The levy funded the extensive community planning process for the park, including a partnership with Centro Cultural de Washington County to engage the county's growing Latine community. As a result, inclusive amenities like space for family gatherings and trails wide enough for groups with a gentle grade suitable for kids and aging adults, art reflective of the community, and signs in multiple languages, are reflected in the final park construction.



LEVY AT WORK

Regional conservation leadership – River Island Natural Area

The levy allows Metro to commit staff and funding in order to serve in a critical anchor organization role for the region. In this role, Metro convenes and coordinates regional partners and multiple funding sources to tackle large-scale conservation projects.

The multi-year, large-scale restoration effort at River Island is an example of the important regional role Metro plays. River Island is a 240-acre natural area that includes wetlands, oak savanna, and upland and riparian forests, where decades of gravel mining and a major flood

in 1996 changed the course of the Clackamas River and damaged habitat for multiple species, including endangered salmon and steelhead.

Metro convened neighbors, technical experts, the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde and others to craft a restoration plan for River Island. Metro also connected to the project, coordinated work, and brought together funding from multiple partners including the Clackamas River Basin Council, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service, and Portland General Electric. This multi-partner conservation effort was possible due to levy funding, and now River Island is returning to a natural, wilder existence and helping to improve water quality in a river that provides drinking water to nearly 400,000 people.



Community-led investments and education

Metro is committed to furthering people's relationship with nature, whether that means a family becoming a regular at a Metro nature park, an elementary school class stewarding a local natural area, a group of youth leaders co-creating culturally relevant nature education, or a community group creating a project that helps meet a need to better connect people with nature.

At least 15 percent of levy funding will continue to support community-led partnerships, education and stewardship programs to offer hands-on experiences that allow people to strengthen their relationship to the natural world while also fostering the next generation of leaders. These programs are a critical portion of the region's conservation efforts because

they create opportunities for everyone to grow their understanding of how to become better stewards of nature. They also increase the region's collective knowledge, whether that is by increasing the cultural relevance of restoration activity, accurately sharing the natural and cultural history of a natural area, or learning from people who have been stewards of nature since time immemorial.

These programs aim to work with communities to understand what resources can best support their relationship with nature, which may look different for various partners. People connect with nature in different ways and experience different barriers and opportunities to that connection. Through community-led programming, meaningful engagement and partnerships, these programs will directly support people of color and other marginalized communities.



LEVY AT WORK

Community-led investments and education – Nature in Neighborhoods grants (Ecology education in North Clackamas and Depave the Centennial School District)

Ecology education, scholarships for nature-focused camps, and urban forestry job training programs are just some of the projects that have received levy-funded Nature in Neighborhoods grants from Metro. These grants work to support and create partnerships in local communities that improve water quality, restore fish and wildlife habitat and connect people with nature.

In 2018, the North Clackamas School District was awarded a \$57,700 grant for a two-year ecology education program. This program supported 1,200 third- through fifth-grade students and 40 teachers each year at five Title I elementary schools in the district by providing every classroom with four ecology lessons and a service-learning field trip each year.

In 2019, a \$42,000 grant was awarded to Depave, an organization that empowers disenfranchised communities to overcome social and environmental injustices and adapt to climate change through urban re-greening. The grant is funding the development of new green playspaces within three Centennial School District elementary schools located within park-deficient outer southeast Portland. With the support of parents, teachers, and students, the funding is helping to create approximately 1,000 square feet of new greenspaces with more than 800 native plants, nature play and on-site stormwater elements. One of these projects is the Powell Butte Elementary nature playground that opened in June of 2022.

Metro staff and partners will use levy funding to continue investing in efforts to engage both new and returning visitors to Metro’s destinations and ensure that all visitors have the opportunity to learn and share about a site’s history, restoration activities, and regional and cultural significance. These efforts include the development of a diverse set of culturally specific interpretive programs, materials, events, and resources to support communities in their effort to further their connection with nature, such as grant funding for community projects that advance climate resilience and racial equity, nature education opportunities and student field trips.

Levy funding will also continue fostering deep partnerships between Metro staff and community leaders to strengthen connections between their communities and Metro parks and natural areas. These partnerships are critically important to foster trust and create opportunities for Metro staff to learn from community partners, integrating lessons learned into Metro’s programs, staff training and services. This reciprocal learning relationship with community will strengthen programs and materials and improve and increase the collective resources that Metro can provide for everyone to become better stewards of nature.



LEVY AT WORK

Community-led investments and education – Nature education and stewardship

The levy enables Metro to offer tailored nature education and stewardship activities that include school field trips, nature walks, guided tours, scavenger hunts and volunteer opportunities, with a focus on serving people of color, low-income communities, people with disabilities and other underserved groups.

It also allows for Metro to support community organizations big and small to build community and connect people of color with nature at Metro’s parks and natural areas. These levy funded community partnerships help to organize community events, implement nature programming activities, connect communities with park planners and decision makers, explore nature-based career pathways, and offer other activities that build racial equity, diversity and inclusion in the region.

The levy supported a recent partnership with the Beaverton Black Parent Union, a volunteer-led collective of families with Black children organized to create community, advocate for culturally relevant resources, and ultimately support the success and well-being of children and families in Beaverton. In this partnership, Metro provided sponsorship funding to assist in their effort to organize the second series of Sunday Soul Strolls, designating a local park and time frame on Sunday afternoons for Black youth and families in Beaverton to walk, run, cycle, skate, or just whatever exercise they prefer – as a way to build community connectedness, awareness of local greenspaces, and reaffirm community presence in the City of Beaverton.

In a metropolitan area as big as Portland, we do a lot of things better together – like creating a unique park system with nature at its heart. Voter investments allow Metro to protect 17,000 acres of parks, trails and natural areas, from the Chehalem Mountains on the west to the Sandy River Gorge on the east.

Count on Metro for clean water, healthy fish and wildlife habitat, and opportunities to connect with nature close to home.

Know before you go: Visit oregonmetro.gov/parks for updates on new amenities and potential closures.



Metro

Arts and events
Garbage and recycling
Land and transportation
Oregon Zoo
Parks and nature

oregonmetro.gov

Materials following this page were distributed at the meeting.



Metro

Parks and Nature local-option levy

July 12, 2022

Outcomes for today

1. Share recent touchpoints with stakeholders and what we've heard
2. Direction to staff about returning to the Metro Council with a Parks and Nature levy renewal resolution



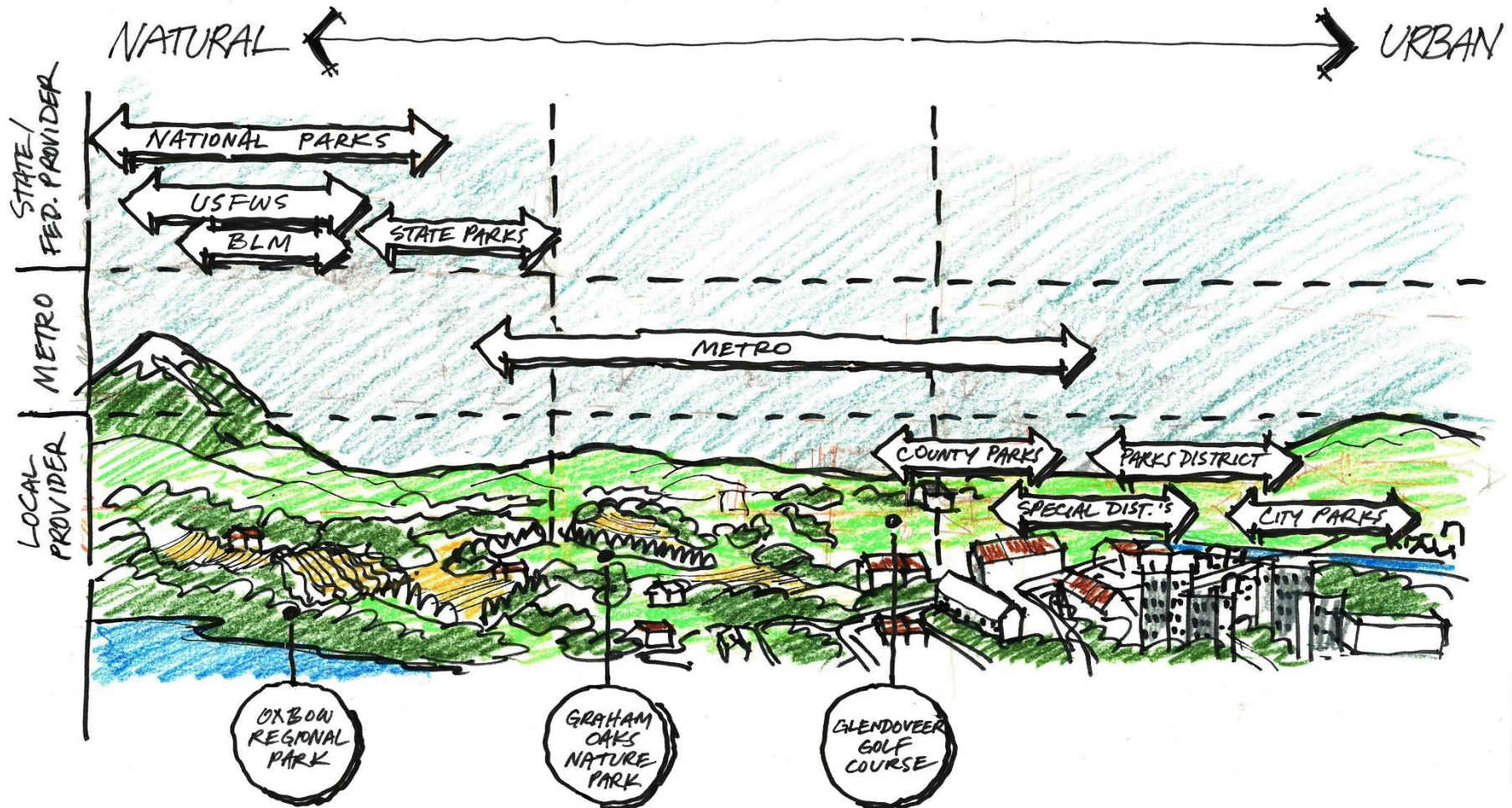
Metro



Metro Parks and Nature's role in the region



Metro



Bond and Levy working together for nature and people



Metro



Voter support for nature benefits



Metro

In 2013, voters across greater Portland approved a 5-year levy to care for and operate healthy, safe regional parks, trails and natural areas.

In 2016, over 74% of regional voters supported a 5-year extension.

The levy is now set to expire in June 2023.



Levy advances climate resilience and racial equity



Metro

The work supported by the levy and bond are foundational to Metro's success.



Safe and welcoming spaces, climate resilience and community projects



Council direction: June 14 work session



Metro

- Continue to share and retrieve feedback on levy renewal:
 - Local Jurisdictions
 - Park providers
 - Conservation partners
 - Community partners
 - Metro committees
(Metropolitan Policy Advisory Committee & Committee on Racial Equity)
- Continue to share levy impacts with general public



Stakeholder touchpoints



Metro

- Friends of Trees
- Gresham Parks and Recreation
- Metro Committee on Racial Equity
- NW Trail Alliance
- Metropolitan Mayors Consortium
- Wilsonville Parks and Recreation
- City of Tigard
- Lake Oswego Parks and Recreation
- Portland Parks and Recreation
- Native American Community Advisory Council
- Urban Greenspaces Institute
- Wisdom of the Elders
- The Intertwine Alliance
- East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District
- Blueprint Foundation
- City of Gresham
- Tualatin Hills Parks and Recreation District board
- Tigard Parks and Recreation
- Tualatin Hills Parks and Recreation District
- Clackamas River Basin Council
- Portland Indian Leaders Roundtable
- Regional Park Directors
- Happy Valley Parks and Recreation
- West Linn Parks and Recreation
- MPAC
- Oregon City Watershed Council
- Forest Park Conservancy
- Clackamas River Watershed Council

Process and outcomes



Metro



We Are Here

Confirm

- Confirm findings & proposals with key stakeholders
- Conduct public opinion research
- Confirm approach with Council

- Increase public & partner awareness & excitement
- Tell the story of our work
- Return to Council with update on engagement
- Present final renewal package for Council consideration

Deliver

Develop

- Compile community input
- Hear stakeholder guidance on past success & areas for adaptation
- Identify opportunities to strengthen framework

Proposed next steps



Metro

Metro Council meeting

- Formal presentation of levy renewal resolution for Council consideration

Resolution No. 22-5279

- Renewal measure for referral
 - Current tax rate
 - Continue key priorities – clean water, healthy habitat, access to nature
- Final levy renewal framework for implementation if renewal is approved by voters



Discussion



Metro

What additional information or activities can staff provide to help Council prepare for consideration of a levy renewal resolution?

