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Metro Regional Parks and Greenspaces  
1998-1999  
1999-2000

Environmental Education Grant Project Update  
May 13, 1999  
Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District

# THE CAMILLE PARK WETLAND PROJECT

In the spring of 1997, McKay Elementary School initiated an Adopt-A-Park project at Camille Park with Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District (THPRD). This association initiated an interest to learn more about this urban wetland and prompted them to plant native flora to enhance the park. The teachers and students expressed a desire in continuing and expanding their connection with this park. As a result of their interest, THPRD applied for an Environmental Education grant through Metro for the 1998-1999 grant cycle to work with both McKay Elementary and Whitford Middle Schools on enhancement projects in Camille Park.

The fourth and fifth graders at McKay have participated in bird, amphibian, vegetation and water quality studies of wetlands within the park. Sixty bird boxes have been built by the students and 25 of them are presently installed in the park. McKay students have been monitoring these boxes for activity. They have also been learning about the difference between a wetland ditch, wetland forest and wetland meadow through their visits to the park.

Eighth graders at Whitford Middle School learned about the importance of the wetland areas of Camille Park through direct observation, field monitoring participation and enhancement efforts. Students learned about wetland plants by utilizing purchased native plant guides to research plants that would be best suited for planting in this wetland. Materials were purchased to construct a partial boardwalk through the wetland area. An Eagle Scout planned and directed the eighth graders in the building of the boardwalk. Whitford eighth graders installed approximately 175 wetland plants next to the boardwalk to enhance the already existing variety of native flora.

Both schools were interested in maintaining the relationship that had been established with THPRD. Staff in the Natural Resources office at THPRD applied for a second grant for the 1999-2000 year grant cycle. Continued funding was awarded to this project which has expanded the scope of the plan.

Sixth graders at McKay Elementary have continued to observe natural occurrences in the park. Each student was assigned a note book to record information such as weather, water quality information, wildlife observed, flora in bloom and bird box activity. A highlight of these observations included the discovery of long toed salamander eggs in the ditch. The students took some back to the classroom to observe the natural process of change and growth. The purchase of native butterfly larvae also enabled them to gain further knowledge about the extraordinary processes in nature as they observed larvae grow and pupate into beautiful adult butterflies. Birdwatching was enhanced through the purchase of binoculars for the students. A field trip to the Portland Audubon Center allowed them to observe wetlands different from Camille Park as well as learn more about the local native flora and fauna. In the spring students selected native flora to be planted around the ditch area and installed 35 native shrubs and herbs along a stretch of the ditch that was void of native vegetation diversity. Their school year ended by holding an open house to display their work and share their knowledge with parents and community members. They will continue to record observations, monitor bird boxes, and install more bird boxes during the fall school year.

Whitford eighth graders were joined this year by the sixth graders at the middle school. Both classes worked together to install approximately 75 wetland plants in and around the

boardwalk area. Additionally, sixth graders removed all blackberry and English ivy within the enhancement area. Eighth graders continued to monitor previously planted plots and also helped plant the ditch area. Students visited a local wetland nature preserve to learn more about wetlands and helped to remove English ivy. During the winter months eighth graders participated in a lichen study to assess air quality. The project was highlighted by a visit to the Canopy Crane Research Station in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. Students learned what it is like to study lichens in the canopy of trees. Eighth graders will continue to monitor plots and re-vegetate Camille Park with native wetland plants. Interpretive signs will be designed by students and displayed in the park. The remainder of the boardwalk will be built when a suitable candidate is chosen to lead the project.

Concerns include the abundance of dandelions invading the enhancement area. They have out competed some of last year's plantings and our survival rate is low. Lack of communication within THPRD maintenance department has allowed our enhancement area to be sprayed with a herbicide around the base of the trees where camas lilies were affected. The maintenance department is developing a plan to replant camas bulbs and seeds to re-vegetated these areas.



# CAMILLE WETLAND PROJECT REPORT (5/14/98)

Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District

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The Natural Resources Office noticed that much of Camille Park has vegetation surviving between clumps of Oregon oak and Oregon ash that is indicative of a wetland prairie community. Camille Park has traditionally been too wet to mow until late spring or early summer and has been considered a "problem" area because of this. The Natural Resources Office proposed that the Park District stop fighting the natural tendencies of this site and work to improve and expand the relic prairie area that remains. Implementing this recommendation would result in a more interesting, educational, and diverse park. The park is adjacent to a middle and elementary school and therefore seemed an ideal site for an environmental education project. The target area in Camille Park is too wet to access without a raised walkway, so part of the project involved building a boardwalk to allow students and park users to view the site without damaging it. Students will survey the target area to find out what is there now and survey the vegetation annually to monitor the success of the establishment of a wet prairie community. Grant funding was awarded in January 1998. The following items have been accomplished:

## January:

- Students at Whitford Middle School were oriented to wetlands in general and specifically to the Camille Wetland Project through a presentation by THPRD staff.
- McKay Elementary students were given a presentation on native birds and birdwatching. They were also given nestbox designs for several species of birds found in Camille Park.

## February:

- Presentation by THPRD staff made to Denney/Whitford Neighborhood Association Committee regarding the Camille Wetland Project.
- McKay students construct 60 (!) song bird nestboxes.
- Plant and bird field guides ordered.

## March:

- Met with Robert Carlton, Eagle Scout candidate, about building the boardwalk through the target area and working with Whitford students.
- Scout organizes several work parties to build 360 feet of boardwalk, including some afternoons working with students.
- Song bird nestboxes are installed at Camille.

## April:

- Carolyn Devine, Education Coordinator at the Berry Botanic Garden, gives presentations to Whitford students on the value of wetlands and native plants and gives students seeds of a native wildflower.
- Whitford students begin collecting data from their plots along the boardwalk.

## May:

- Whitford students visit their plots a second time and choose three wetland plants to install in their plot based on their reading.

## Observations:

The boardwalk has not been a victim of vandalism yet, despite the fact that other areas in the park and the natural area between Whitford and Camille are frequently vandalized. Many things I take for granted that students know are a revelation to them, for example, many students did not realize that the seed heads of dandelions are what the flowers turn into as they mature or that grasses produce flowers. They enjoy photographing their plots and having them pick the plants to put into their plots finally got them to really look at the field guides. The project will continue through another school year and I hope to get additional funding to extend the boardwalk further into the wetland area.