



“Building habitat connectivity is intergenerational work that happens piece by piece.”



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If you picnic at Blue Lake or take your kids to the Oregon Zoo, enjoy symphonies at the Schnitz or auto shows at the convention center, put out your trash or drive your car – we’ve already crossed paths.

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Pets policy

To protect plants, wildlife and people, Metro does not allow pets at most regional parks and natural areas. Pets can damage sensitive habitat and threaten wildlife the region has worked to protect. In natural areas where pets are not allowed, people see more wildlife and get closer to it. Seeing-eye dogs or other service animals are allowed. Please bring cleanup materials.



Share your nature and win!



Winner: Darian Santner

In winter and early spring, I enjoy seeing the diversity of amphibians that we have around the Portland area. One wet day recently I was lucky to see this Oregon slender salamander in a cedar grove in the East Buttes part of the metro area.



Finalist: Sarah Kessler

Coyotes have always held a special place in my heart and this photo was taken in my parents’ backyard in the Bridlemile neighborhood in SW Portland. This coyote was a combination of curious and skittish as I moved slowly closer to get a better shot. Her eyes hold something so lovely and knowing. I am so grateful she let me take her photo and that we could share this moment.



Finalist: Molly Durrett

My nine year old took this picture at his school at the end of the day. We titled it “Somewhere Over the Playground.”

Submit your photo

Win an annual parking pass, a full-day picnic shelter reservation at Graham Oaks or Scouters Mountain nature parks, a tennis court session, or a round of golf for four people including cart at Glendoveer Golf and Tennis Center.

To enter, submit a photo taken at a park or natural area in greater Portland – your friends and family, a view of wildlife or a sunset, for example. Include a 50-word description of your experience. Where were you? What were you doing? What captured your attention?

The winner will appear in this space. By submitting a photo, you consent to Metro’s future use and publication of your photo. Send your photo and description by May 15 to: ourbigbackyard@oregonmetro.gov

Like what you see?

Sign up for the print edition of the quarterly magazine, change your address or save paper by switching to a digital subscription. Email ourbigbackyard@oregonmetro.gov or call 503-797-1545.

On the cover: A deer grazes in the oak savanna at Graham Oaks Nature Park in Wilsonville. The nature park is near a 350-acre stretch of natural areas that help create a wildlife corridor for animals, like deer, to access living space across the region.

Metro hears from Chinese American community members on memorial at Lone Fir Cemetery

Story by Hannah Erickson



Above: A rendering of the Chinese section of Lone Fir cemetery before the plot was built over in the 1950s.

As part of its work to create a cultural heritage and healing garden at what was formerly the Chinese section of Lone Fir Cemetery, Metro hired a research firm to better understand the site’s history. This November, Metro held three information sessions designed to share the research findings with the Chinese American community – and to gather ideas about how to move forward in the project.

“I really appreciate everyone who attended a session and provided feedback,” said regional planner Karen Vitkay, who is managing the project. “Especially given how traumatic some of the findings were, it speaks volumes that some community members came back to attend multiple information sessions so that they could keep discussing the project and its history.”

Lone Fir Cemetery is divided into numbered sections called “blocks.” The area that once held the Chinese cemetery is designated Block 14 and is located at the corner of SE 20th Ave. and SE Morrison St. New research has disproven some long-held beliefs about the block. Some of the findings shared at the information sessions include:

- More than 2,800 people of Chinese descent were buried in Lone Fir Cemetery between 1867 and 1927 – more than twice the previous estimate of 1,300.
- The Chinese section of the cemetery was never owned or managed by a railway company, as had long been common lore.
- For decades, Block 14 was the established Chinese section of the cemetery and included an altar for making offerings to the dead, as well as a “bone house” for preparing and storing the deceased’s bones before shipping them back to their ancestral villages in China – a common cultural practice among Southern Chinese at that time. This lasted until Multnomah County took ownership of Lone Fir in 1928 and began to work toward the removal of the Chinese cemetery.
- In 1947, the county told the Oregon Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) to remove all remaining bodies from the Chinese cemetery so that it could build an office building and parking lot on the land.

That building was later demolished and afterward the property was transferred to Metro and rejoined with Lone Fir Cemetery.

- While most of the bodies in Block 14 were disinterred and sent back to China, about 20 were supposed to be relocated to other parts of Lone Fir.
- Laws and regulations about building over human remains will require Metro to revise an earlier memorial design created in 2008.
- It is unlikely that patients from the Oregon Hospital for the Insane were buried on the edges of Block 14, as was previously believed. Rather, patients were buried throughout the cemetery, but primarily in Block 10, about 200 feet to the north of Block 14.

Metro held three information sessions to share this information with members of the Chinese American community. Metro Councilor Duncan Hwang also attended two of the sessions. More than 25 community members attended at least one of the sessions.

Several participants recommended that the final project include culturally significant trees and other plantings. Additionally, there were many requests for allowing the community to practice customary rituals for honoring the dead, such as burning incense and leaving offerings. Many participants expressed pain at the erasure of their history – as well as a desire to have that history shared in this memorial project.

“The way we can honor our ancestors is by telling their stories,” said one participant. “We came here with a lot of ingenuity and contributed to Oregon history. We need to acknowledge that history and celebrate what we have become.”

The collected feedback will help inform the final design of the project. Metro staff are also interviewing people with lived experience of mental illness and advocates for the mentally ill to get a sense of how to honor the OHI patients buried at the cemetery.

You can follow the progress of this project at oregonmetro.gov/lonefirgarden

Get involved:

Register for events at oregonmetro.gov/guidedactivities 503-220-2782

SAT. APRIL 22

Earth Day BioBlitz: community flora and fauna surveying

Celebrate Earth Day with Metro at Howell Territorial Park! We’ll be using the iNaturalist app to record plants and animals of the park. We may also use the EchoMeter app to look and listen for bats. This real-time data collection helps reveal the story of the space and promotes the continued stewardship of the park.

Howell Territorial Park
5 to 8 pm
Free
Ages: All
Registration required
Difficulty: Easy

SAT. MAY 13

Mother’s Day walk

Join Metro in honoring and celebrating Mother’s Day in the forest! Hike with a naturalist through an old-growth forest located on the Sandy River. Take this time to reflect, listen to the birdsongs and connect while experiencing the fresh forest air.

Oxbow Regional Park
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
\$6/person, fee waivers available. \$5/car, \$7 van/bus.
Ages: All
Registration required
Difficulty: Moderate

SAT. JUNE 10

Turtle talks and plants listen: Litter cleanup and turtle watch

Join Metro to discuss the importance of wetland management, history of this space and current stewardship efforts. Participants will be on the lookout for turtles and other interesting flora and fauna to be logged into the iNaturalist app. We will also walk trails with trash collectors. Bring your phones and cameras to help capture the beauty of site while helping with the restoration of the natural area.

Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area
10 a.m. to noon
Free
Ages: All
Registration required
Difficulty: Easy

WED. JUNE 21

Summer solstice evening walk

Join a nature educator on an evening walk at Blue Lake Regional Park to explore the magical space between day and night on the longest day of the year.

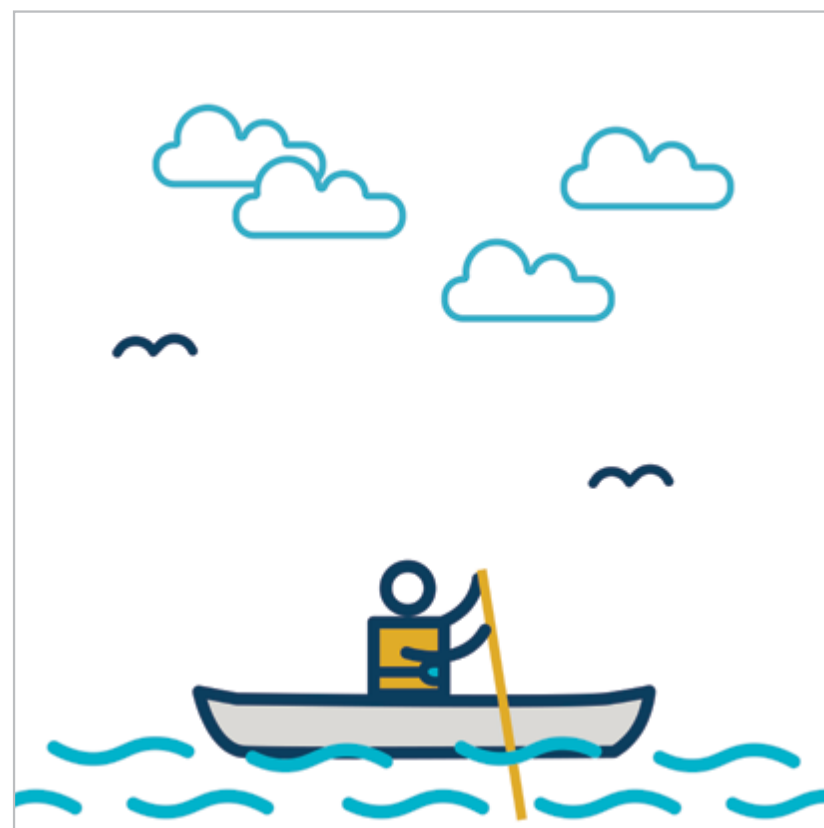
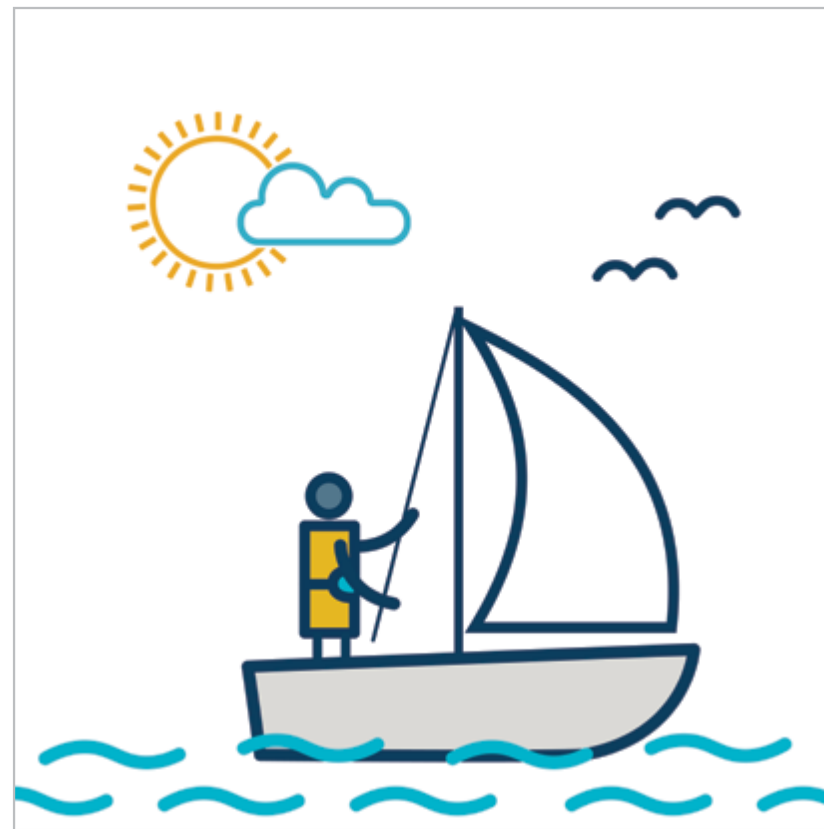
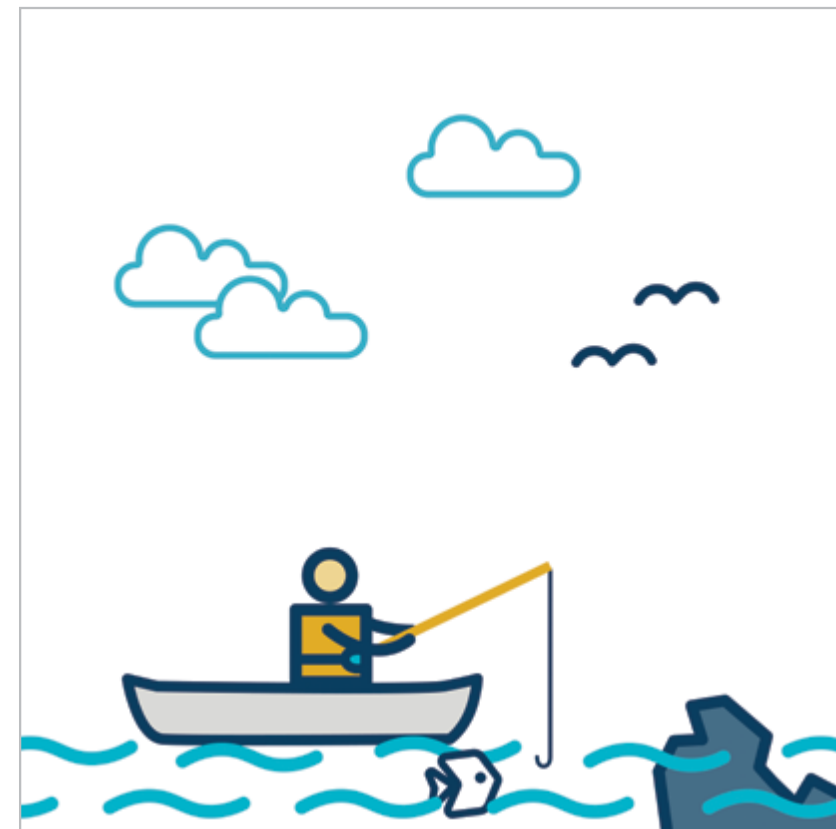
Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park
Ages: All
Registration required
Difficulty: Moderate

Life jackets are for everyone.

Accidents happen in an instant.

Whether fishing, sailing, paddle boarding or canoeing – always wear a life jacket.

oregonmetro.gov/watersafety



Questions?

Contact Metro staff at 503-797-1545.
For updates on Metro parks, visit oregonmetro.gov/parks



Metro launches new, community-led grants program

Story by Cory Eldridge



A new Metro grants pilot program puts community members in the lead to imagine, design and choose parks and nature projects.

The Nature in Neighborhoods community choice grants are a new type of grant program for Metro. For nearly two decades, the Nature in Neighborhoods grants have been among Metro's most popular programs. Three sets of grants support nature education programs, community stewardship and restoration projects, and large projects like park-building, land acquisitions and major habitat restorations.

Each of these grants puts a premium on community involvement and partnerships between community-based organizations, conservation groups and local governments. Historically, these three are the types of organizations that apply for and receive grants. The grants are awarded by the Metro Council based on recommendations from Metro staff and review committees made up of experts in different subject areas.

Most everything about the new community choice grants is different.

First, because this is a pilot program, it's starting small. Up to \$2 million will be awarded for projects with budgets between \$10,000 and \$250,000. The projects must be in Metro Council District 4, which includes all the urban areas in Washington County north of Highway 8 and areas west of Cornelius Pass Road. (Check out the map.)

Next, individual community members can submit their ideas for parks and nature projects. Do you want a walking path in your favorite park? Does an empty lot in your neighborhood have shade trees that could be conserved as a pocket park? Would ADA accessible features make a trail more welcoming? You can pitch that idea.

And it doesn't need to be much more detailed than those examples. Park planners from

Metro and local governments, along with community design advocates, will collaborate with community members to take these ideas and turn them into plans. So don't worry if you or your neighbors have never applied for a grant or planned a park: it's the idea that matters most.

After the ideas are given more details and a few sketches to help others visualize them, the ideas go out for two votes. The community choice grants will be awarded based on, well, the community's choice. The first vote will be by folks living in Council District 4. The finalists will then go to a vote by everyone in greater Portland.

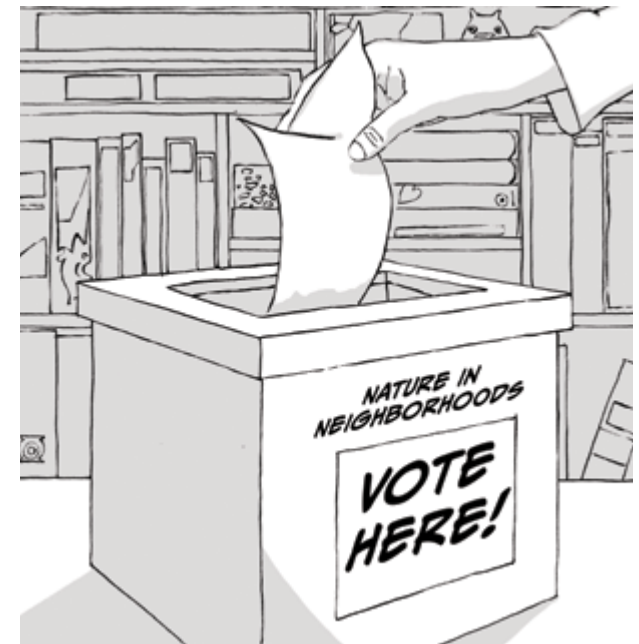
And it's not just for adults. Kids 12-years-old and older can submit ideas and vote on their favorite projects.

Of course, there are rules about what types of projects can receive grants. The funds come from the 2019 parks and nature bond measure, which was overwhelmingly supported by voters. In Oregon, bonds can only pay for projects that result in a physical thing that can be owned by a local government, like a city or a park district. A few examples are a park, or a culvert under a road or a nature playground or a piece of property. These are often called capital assets.

The projects must also meet the criteria voters approved in the bond measure. Key among these are racial equity, community engagement and climate resilience. Eligible grants will fund projects that benefit communities of color, Indigenous communities, people with low incomes and other communities that have been ignored or harmed by governments. Projects that meet the needs of these communities benefit the wider the community too, making a better region for everyone.

You can share your ideas through May 14.

oregonmetro.gov/communitychoice



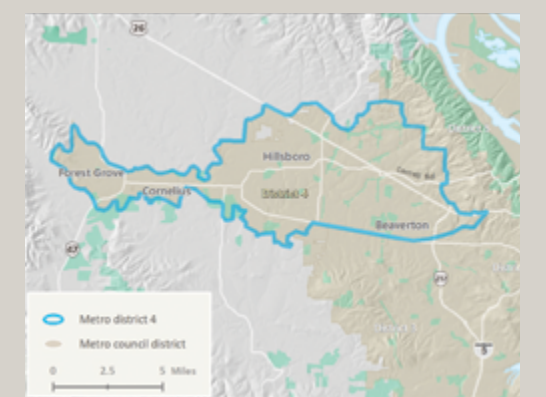
Share your ideas:



Scan the QR code to learn more about the Nature in Neighborhoods community choice grants

Share your ideas through May 14.

Where is District 4



Metro Council District 4 includes Forest Grove, Cornelius, nearly all of Hillsboro, and Beaverton and unincorporated urban areas north of Highway 8.

Missing link: the steady evolution of a wildlife corridor

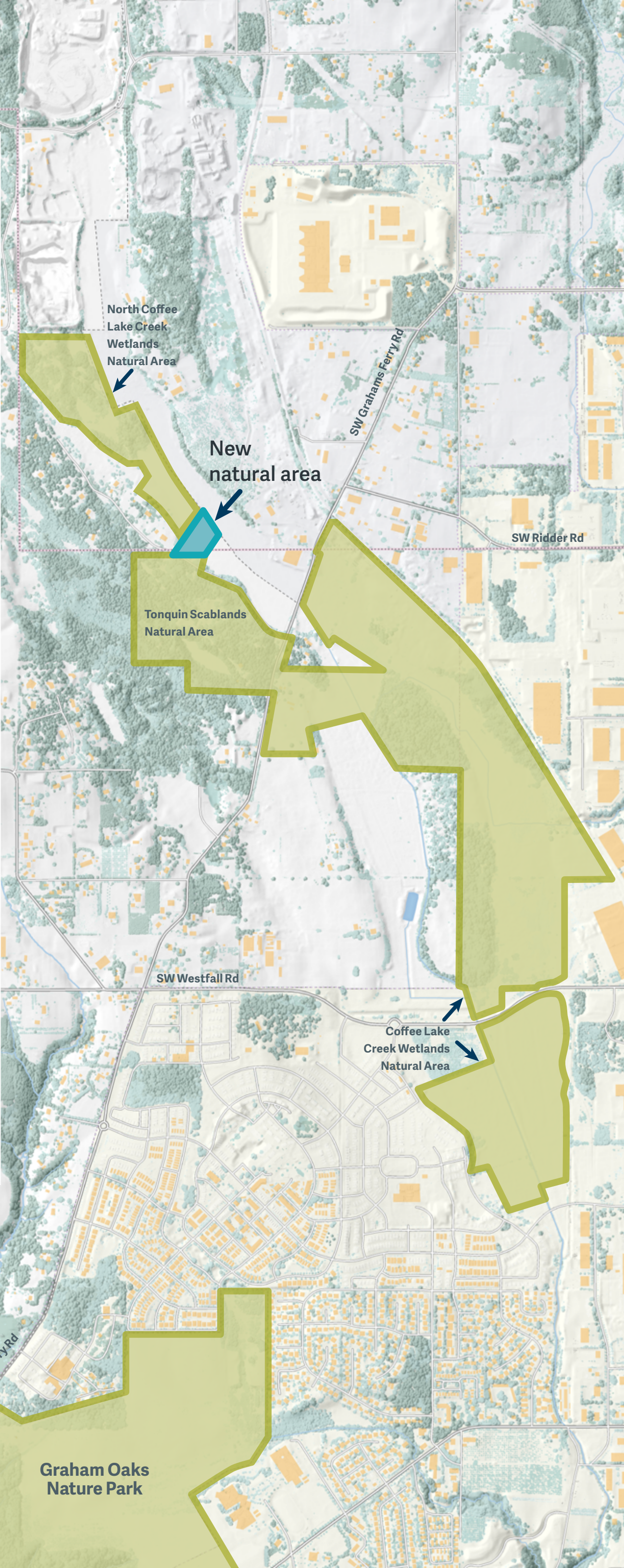
One small property purchase connects more than 350 acres of natural areas into a contiguous wildlife corridor outside of Wilsonville. It took 25 years to piece together.

Story by Rebecca Koffman

Where the edges of Wilsonville, Sherwood and Tualatin overlap, signs of development are everywhere. On SW Grahams Ferry Road, along the urban growth boundary, heavy trucks speed past large industrial buildings, construction sites and warehouses. A sign warning drivers to watch for crossing deer is very close to one pointing the way to nearby Interstate 5. On either side of the road, among the cranes and commercial buildings, are creeks and ponds, oak trees and fir forest. This southwest portion of the region is rich in wildlife and home to imperiled oak woodlands, and rare plants and wildflowers. Its landforms were shaped 15,000 years ago by the scouring waters and whirlpools of the Missoula Floods.

Over the last 25 years, using funds from three bond measures, Metro has made several land purchases in the area with the aim of preserving one of the few viable biodiversity corridors left in the area.

Metro's most recent acquisition is very small: just 3.67 acres. The small plot lies to the west of Grahams Ferry Road, overlooking Coffee Lake and the industrial buildings on the far shore. Canada geese honk as they fly over the water and a frog sings nearby.



This little property is the vital puzzle piece that links up a span of three existing Metro natural areas, says Metro natural resource scientist Andrea Berkley. Together they form a 350-acre protected landscape that includes “two of the most imperiled types of habitat in the Willamette Valley: wetlands and oak upland.”

The new property's impact is disproportionate to its size, says Metro real estate negotiator, Ryan Ruggiero. It connects the North Coffee Lake Creek Wetlands Natural Area to the Tonquin Scablands Natural Area. This means that almost 100 acres of contiguous wildlife habitat and a mile-long stretch of creek are protected in perpetuity. And just across Grahams Ferry Road is Metro's 265-acre Coffee Lake Creek Wetlands. “It’s not common,” Ruggiero says, “that a single acquisition can have such an amplifying effect on habitat connectivity, the way this one does.”

Why are connected stretches of protected land so important? Berkley explains that birds, fish and other animals have lots of challenges that make it hard for them to live and breed. Fences, cars, homes and businesses block free movement for all kinds of wildlife. Invasive plants and dirty water don't provide adequate cover or food sources.

When animals can move freely on large stretches of protected land that has cool, clean water and consistent vegetation communities, she explains, “this makes it possible for them to have larger populations. And if say, a fire or a housing development disrupts one end of their habitat, they have other places to go.”

Climate change has added to these stressors, Berkley adds. More extreme weather and changing climate means “more reasons to move, so it is even more important for the areas we have conserved to be large and connected.”

"It's not common that a single acquisition can have such an amplifying effect on habitat connectivity."

Berkley's work focuses on restoring habitat for fish and wildlife. The new property is right where Coffee Creek becomes a more open lake, she says, perhaps because of beaver activity. “The creek area is more fish focused, but here at this lake portion we are looking at waterfowl, amphibians and possibly even turtles using that water body, so what we do on the adjacent land matters for those creatures.”

According to Berkley, long-toed salamander, northern red-legged frog and Pacific chorus frog all likely use the lake. Amphibians like to lay their eggs attached to vegetation in or very near the water. Right now, she says, that's mostly reed canary grass, a competitive weed that likes wet places but provides poor habitat for amphibians to lay their eggs and poor cover for nesting waterfowl and red-winged blackbirds. “So, we'll replace the reed canary grass with native sedges, rushes, cattails and other plants that provide good cover for birds,” she says.

Berkley is also excited about her work in the southern part of Coffee Lake Creek Wetlands, right on the edge of Wilsonville's Villebois neighborhood. On a recent afternoon, people pushed strollers, walked dogs and jogged along a foot path skirting two new city parks which

overlooks the natural area. Some stopped to gaze over the wide expanse of land.

What they were looking at is, Berkley says, “a less common peat soil wetland.” This matters because peat wetlands do a good job of capturing carbon from the air and holding it if they can function as they are supposed to. If, that is, water covers them and they have healthy vegetation.

Before Metro bought it, the wetland was drained so cattle could graze. Right now, Berkley says, “there's a huge ditch down the center that drains it and it's almost 100% covered with reed canary grass. Our plan is to modify the ditch and allow water to collect in low swales and ponds in a way that doesn't threaten surrounding development.”

The owners "felt that it belonged in our hands given our history of conservation work."

She estimates bulldozers will start moving dirt in a couple of years to remove the ditch and drain tile and build swales and ponds. The reed canary grass will be replaced with native wetland plants.

Jonathan Soll, Metro's science and stewardship division manager, notes that the new acquisition ties together fragmented properties into a connected landscape. “The work of creating these landscape-scale sites and building habitat connectivity over long distances is intergenerational work that happens piece by piece,” he says. “Sometimes there's no progress for a long time while we wait for willing sellers.”

The first purchases in this quilt of properties was Coffee Lake Creek Wetland Natural Area in 1997, when Metro bought four plots. North Coffee Creek Wetland Natural Area began with a purchase in 1998. Purchases were made every couple of years until 2016 when Metro bought Tonquin Scablands Natural Area. Altogether, 15 properties ranging in size from .09 acres to 52 were bought using funds from bond measures passed by voters in in 1995, 2006 and 2019.

The science and real estate teams work together strategically to conserve resource-rich land in large blocks and corridors. The process starts with ecological assessments that point to valuable habitat resources. These connected properties boast creeks, wetlands, Pacific madrone, legacy stands of Oregon white oak, and rare plant communities associated with the unique geology (shallow soils, basalt hummocks, kolk ponds) of the region.

Once priority properties have been identified, Ruggiero and others on the real estate team approach landowners to see if they are willing to sell. “It's very much a long game. We are cultivating relationships with people.. Our goal is to be good ambassadors for Metro, it's always to say, 'We understand you're not ready to sell right now but if and when you are, we hope that we'll be the first people you approach about a potential purchase.’”

The real estate team also closely tracks the market to see if new listings fit conservation priorities. If so, they act quickly.

For this latest acquisition, Ruggiero says, the landowners were looking to sell and were approached by a real estate developer from Florida who made them an offer without

seeing the property. The landowners, aware that Metro owned adjacent property on two sides, reached out. “They felt that it belonged in our hands given our history of conservation work in the area and their support of that,” Ruggiero says. “We dropped everything to pursue this, got permission from the conservation director to match and exceed the offer from the Florida developer, and in the end paid the property appraised at more than what we paid for it.”

Berkley, Ruggiero and Soll all note that Metro's overarching goal is to eventually create a wildlife corridor that links the Willamette River, just south of Graham Oaks Nature Park, to the Tualatin watershed up north in the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge.

There are no plans to develop these areas into new nature parks with public facilities such as parking or restrooms, but Graham Oaks Nature Park and Wilsonville's two new parks offer excellent examples of the types of habitat throughout the corridor, including mature upland forest, oak savanna, wetlands and a creek flowing through it. Eventually the Ice Age Tonquin Trail will run nearby much of the corridor.

Winding through farmland, industrial sites and new neighborhoods, the corridor of natural areas demonstrates the impact of green spaces alongside development. It doesn't have to be an either/or choice, but it does take long-term planning and the ability to act quickly if the region is to both support the housing needs of people and preserve the nature that makes this place so special.

“There's urgency around this work because development continues,” says Soll. “We need to work fast to capture these opportunities while they still exist.” This latest acquisition, he says, creates a core element of connectivity that helps to retain wildlife movement and climate resilience through the Coffee Creek Basin.

“Sometimes the pursuit of these small, inexpensive properties is every bit as important as the million-dollar, shining jewel acquisitions that make big headlines,” Soll says. “This small property of less than five acres can really tie the rest of our work together and increase the value of all the other work we've done.”

North Coffee Lake Creek Wetlands

Size: 3.67 acres

Purchase price: \$110,000

Neat features: It connects three previously fragmented Metro natural areas to form a 2.6-mile conservation corridor filled with upland forest, oak woodlands and prairies, peat wetlands, kolk ponds, basalt hummocks, rare shallow soil plant communities.

Now protected: Clean water for fish and wildlife along 650 feet of Coffee Lake Creek.

Animals: Salmon, steelhead, Pacific lamprey, cutthroat trout, Pacific chorus frogs, northern red-legged frogs, long-toed salamander, redbtail hawks, red-winged blackbirds, waterfowl, beaver, muskrat, deer, small and large mammals.

12 trail grants worth \$20 million awarded across region

The grants focused on supporting projects in racially diverse neighborhoods



Story by Samantha Bakal

A one-time, \$20 million Metro grant program is funding trail projects across the region. The projects range from preliminary planning projects to construction, with numerous projects filling trail gaps or expanding accessibility for current and future residents. The grants program puts strong emphasis on supporting projects that help create greater racial equity in the region.

Creating a grant program leading with racial equity required intentionality, said Metro senior regional planner Robert Spurlock. Metro not only provided information to regional partners highlighting projects that had the potential to advance racial equity but hosted a series of community forums with people of color to learn what projects they’d most like to see in their communities.

“One of the many takeaways from that engagement is it really is important to invest in trails and projects that are in parts of the region where more people of color live,” Spurlock said. “What we heard from the community is that they would rather see a project...within a neighborhood that’s really diverse.”

That legwork, Spurlock said, resulted in applications that not only reflected that exact feedback from community members but went to greater lengths to describe how they plan to engage communities of color going forward in their planning, design and construction phases.

As a new program, Metro created several solutions to ensure projects kept advancing racial equity at their core. Like many other Metro grant programs, the trails grant required local governments to commit money to their proposed projects. The amount of matching funds Metro required was lower for projects in more racially diverse neighborhoods.

In greater Portland, some of the neighborhoods with the greatest diversity are also those with the lowest average incomes. With funding disparities across the region, grant

opportunities like this help local governments complete projects they may not otherwise be able to, Spurlock said.

“Metro is inherently a vehicle for equity because our tax base covers the entire region, but we’re able to distribute the funding to the areas that need it the most,” Spurlock said.

A total of 12 grants were awarded. Here are three projects that received funding.

Forest Grove Loop Trail

The city of Forest Grove is in the planning stage of creating the Forest Grove Loop Trail, a “loop around the city” that will connect two completed trail segments into a single, 13-mile-long route. The trail, formally identified in the city’s 2016 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, will use grant funding to establish the route and identify any barriers to bringing the trail to fruition.

The current segments of the trail – which include the Highway 47, Forest Glen, B Street and Old Town Loop trails – are primarily located on the south and east borders of Forest Grove, said Anne Lane, the city’s parks and nature director. To complete the trail, the city is looking to hire a consultant to engage the community in what they want the trail to look like and how it might best serve them. Lane says that process will consist, at minimum, of in-person interviews, as well as online written surveys.

“We really feel like this creates an excellent opportunity for people in different parts of the community to be able to navigate around town,” Lane said. “It’ll connect or at least bring people close to several different parks and schools, so we’re looking at it as an opportunity for non-motorized movement to those spaces in a safe manner.”

The eventual completion of the Emerald Necklace Trail will also provide an opportunity to connect Forest Grove well beyond its city limits, Lane said. When finished, the Emerald Necklace will intersect with the planned Council Creek Regional Trail, opening an opportunity to safely and easily commute west into Hillsboro.

Clackamas River Trail in Happy Valley

A project in Happy Valley hopes to not only connect its residents to safer and greater nature trails, but to larger water systems, as well.

The Clackamas River Trail, located in Carver to the southeast of Happy Valley, is the only area where the city has access to the Clackamas River, said Chris Randall, Happy Valley’s public works director. With this project, Randall said, the city plans to build a landing where boaters and kayakers can float the Clackamas River alongside a multi-use path and neighborhood park.

The 1,450-foot trail will be built along the frontage of a newly acquired 20-acre site that will serve a growing residential and commercial area in Carver. Randall said the path will veer away from the edge of the river and provide a wildlife buffer for bird-watching and other passive recreation.

The trail area will also connect a Trimet bus line that runs from Carver out to Estacada, providing access along the entire Clackamas River corridor.

Sandy River Greenway in Troutdale

Further north along the Sandy River in Troutdale, the city is building a riverfront path that will connect downtown Troutdale to the 40 Mile Loop, Thousand Acres Natural Area and a major industrial employment area as part of a larger urban redevelopment project.

The 1,500-foot-long pathway will plug into the existing I-84 pedestrian bike path and will follow the Sandy River under the railroad and connect into downtown at the Depot Rail Museum and the new Gateway to the Gorge Visitor Center. The grant funding will also help with the development of a four-acre riverfront park to support future mixed-use development, including an eventual Gorge bike hub.

The project, which will engage minority- and women-owned businesses and local tribes, has been a long time coming, associate planner Melissa Johnston said.

“The Troutdale community has been dreaming of this trail for 15 years,” Johnston said.

The nature park’s backyard

Scouters Mountain Nature Park’s picnic area shows how a few native plants can create habitat for wildlife.



Story by Rebecca Koffman

On a clear day, there’s a spectacular view of Mt. Hood from the picnic shelter at the top of Scouters Mountain Nature Park in Happy Valley. It’s a peaceful place. The pavilion looks out onto lawn as well as flowering plants, shrubs and trees. These low-maintenance, native plants provide food and shelter for birds and insects.

Visitors to the area might notice the rocks with hollows in them to collect rainwater for birds to drink or bathe in. A few logs, decomposing on the ground, feed the soil and provide shelter for beneficial insects and seedlings. All this is intentional. Think of it as gardening for wildlife. The area surrounding the shelter has recently been certified as a backyard habitat at the silver level.

The Backyard Habitat Certification Program, co-managed by Columbia Land Trust and Portland Audubon, operates in Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas and Clark counties to support people in making their communities healthier for people and wildlife. Currently there are more than 10,400 participants and 2,500 acres of land enrolled in the program.

Now, it may seem a nature park wouldn’t need to put in a special effort to support nature. But the lawn and the pavilion, while major attractions to people, are turn-offs to most wildlife. The plantings Metro made for the certification create habitat for more animals. It helps connect the picnic area to the rest of the park.

There are exciting opportunities for transformations like this near Scouters Mountain.

The park is surrounded by housing with new development continuing. A lot of people live nearby. “We want folks to be inspired by what they see at Scouters Mountain and be able to create that in their own gardens” says Gaylen Beatty, special projects manager in Metro Parks and Nature. “We focused in areas around the picnic shelter where neighbors spend lots of time.”

Backyard Habitat certification manager Susie Peterson says, “Scouters Mountain is a great habitat for wildlife, so if folks living around it take some of those habitat elements to an

urban yard scale, it gives wildlife some living space beyond the area of the park.” Yards in the subdivisions around Scouters Mountain, she adds, could become part of wildlife corridors connecting the park to other green spaces. The program lays out ways to make your yard a place where beautiful birds, butterflies and pollinators come for food, rest and shelter.

“You don’t have to know anything about gardening or native plants in order to participate in our program,” says Peterson.

Once you’re enrolled, a habitat expert will do a walkthrough of your yard with you to talk about your goals for your space and check out growing conditions: where there’s sun or shade, where rainwater runs off or collects, which native plants and weeds might already be growing. You’ll get a site report with recommendations in five key areas:

- Planting native plants
- Creating wildlife habitat
- Removing harmful weeds
- Managing rainwater
- Reducing the use of pesticides

You can use the recommendations to work towards certification at the silver, gold or platinum level. You’ll get discounts on native plants, as well as other benefits and incentives, and a wealth of information and resources on how to help birds, native pollinators and plants thrive in and beautify your yard.

The program is not limited to single-family homes and yards. “We have hundreds of churches, schools, businesses, apartment complexes and community gardens in the program,” says Peterson. “People who are interested can also engage in that way.”

When you care for the land by reducing pesticides or replacing harmful weeds with native plants, you improve the soil, water and air. “If you have enough people doing this in their yards,” says Peterson, “it really makes a difference.”

Learn more: backyardhabitats.org

New natural area in Clackamas County



Metro has created a new natural area with the acquisition of 92.38 acres of largely undeveloped land in the Upper Holcomb Creek area of unincorporated Clackamas County, east of Oregon City. The purchase was made possible through funding from the voter-approved 2019 parks and nature bond measure.

In a memorandum sent to Metro Council, Metro conservation program director Dan Moeller wrote that this acquisition was significant not just for its size, but because of its diverse range of habitats and its location in an area that so far has seen little investment in conservation.

“This is a new focus area for Metro in the 2019 bond measure, and with this property as a meaningful starting point, additional conservation investment around it can create a large, regionally significant anchor for the conservation of priority habitat types and their associated species,” Moeller wrote.

Metro officially took possession of the parcel on January 26. Now Parks and Nature staff can begin to plan for the site’s restoration. This plan will include removing some existing structures, replacing invasive weeds with native plants, and improving habitat complexity.

The property allows Metro to take a large step forward in its goal of improving regional water quality, as it contains more than 3,000 feet of seasonal headwater streams that feed into Upper Holcomb Creek, which in turn feeds Newell and Abernethy creeks. Protecting these streams can also help mitigate flooding risks and enhance climate resilience in the watershed.

The property contains a wide variety of habitats including oak savanna, woodland and prairie. As a result, it could serve as a habitat for many kinds of native plants and wildlife. It is also is home to a significant amount of Oregon white oak, a native tree that can provide habitat for many regionally declining species as well as sustenance for mammals like deer and elk.

This is the 12th land acquisition purchased with funding from the 2019 parks and nature bond, creating a total of 478 acres acquired across nine target areas identified by the bond and its refinement plan.

The natural area does not have any trails or access points. If you want to see a similar habitat nearby, head over to Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park in Oregon City.

Field guide

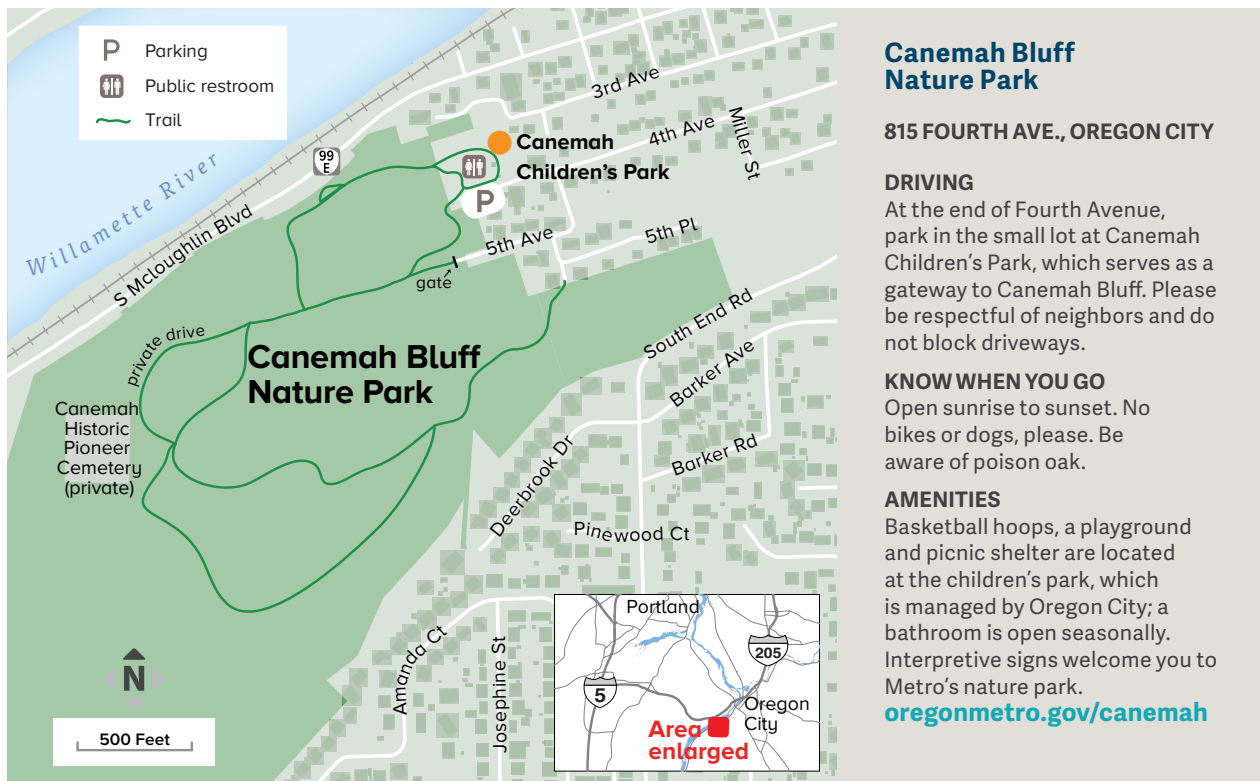
CANEMAH BLUFF NATURE PARK

Canemah Bluff Nature Park greets you with one of the great views of the Willamette River and introduces you to a multitude of habitats that cover the Upper Willamette Valley. And it's all in a small, easy-to-hike park in one of the region's most important historical locations.

From the parking lot, you'll step onto Oregon City's Canemah Neighborhood Children's Park. The little park's overlook shows a mighty sweep of the Willamette River where the stream narrows to run over Willamette Falls, which looks much closer than half a mile away. The area in view has been an important gathering site for Indigenous people since time immemorial. The falls creates a rich fishery for salmon and Pacific lamprey, becoming a key stop during seasonal rounds and sometimes a year-round home.

The area was among the first colonized by European Americans arriving by the Oregon Trail. Canemah Village, the neighborhood surrounding the park, was founded in 1845.

The park's mile-plus of trails start in the children's park. Camas Springs Trail is surrounded by a prairie that during spring is filled with, yes, camas, along with dozens of other wildflower species. Frog Pond Trail offers



an up-close view of a small wetlands. Each trail then enters a wood filled with gnarled Oregon white oaks. It's a wonderful example of what was once one of the region's most common habitats and a key priority for Metro's conservation efforts.

Spectacular species like Pacific madrones and Pacific trillium along with tiny habitats of lichen and moss growing on basalt rocks await along the trails.

Season-by-season highlights

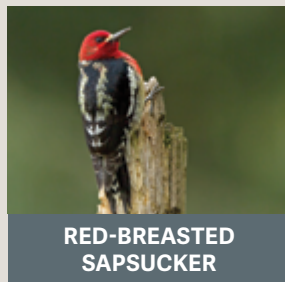
SPRING: Spring brings an abundance of color to the upland prairies. Many native wildflowers bloom from March to May, including common camas, cluster-lillies and white rock larkspur. Warbling vireo and black-headed grosbeaks vocalize along the trail to the cemetery. Turkey vultures can be seen popping up from below the bluff and riding the thermals to higher elevations. Osprey commonly perch in trees along the edge of the bluff, waiting for the right moment to dive into the Willamette River in search of a meal.

SUMMER: Summer heat scorches the open prairie, turning the luscious colors of spring into a parched array of dusty yellows and browns. Madrone flowers that have persisted into early summer buzz with bees and hummingbirds. If you slow your pace and quiet your footsteps, you might see the elusive mountain beaver weaving in and out of the basalt rocks that line the path. The most primitive living rodent – actually more closely related to squirrels – the mountain beaver makes its own hay by methodically collecting plants and letting them dry at the entrance to its elaborate tunnel systems.

FALL: Western gray squirrels and black-tailed deer are just a couple of the creatures that take advantage of Canemah Bluff's mast crop of acorns. Hidden from view much of the year, the fruiting bodies of mushrooms suddenly appear above ground. Look for the other-worldly elfin saddles hidden among the leaf litter. Make your way to the upper trails of the upland conifer forest and search for antler rubs on small, prominent trees. Bucks scent-mark trees in this fashion, announcing their presence to other deer.

WINTER: Take a walk back in time and search for remnants of Oregon's ancient past. The bluffs are formed from Columbia River basalt, most of which flowed from Eastern Oregon 15 to 17 million years ago. More recent Boring lava flows also reached this land, pouring out of shield volcanoes to the east. Several large chunks of this gas-pocked lava can be seen along the trails, most likely broken off in landslides triggered by the Missoula Floods that swept into the Willamette Valley 15,000 to 20,000 years ago. At the overlook in the prairie, check for stunning views of High Cascades volcanoes.

Be on the lookout!



RED-BREASTED SAPSUCKER



COMMON CAMAS AND WHITE FAWN LILY



OREGON SUNSHINE



BRODIAEA LILY

Spring cleaning

WITH LESS TOXIC CLEANERS

Story and infographics by Arashi Young. Photos from Metro and King County Hazardous Waste website

As winter ends and temperatures rise, people engage in the age-old tradition of spring cleaning – it's a time to bring in fresh air and get rid of the gunk that's accumulated over the last few months.

We all want a clean home, but cleaning well doesn't have to mean using the harsh chemicals found in many cleaners. Homemade natural cleaners are safe to use around kids and pets while being just as effective at getting rid of dirt and grime. And some store-bought cleaners are safer to use than others.

Here are some tips for making or buying safer cleaners and disposing of hazardous cleaning supplies.

Making safer cleaners

You can make non-toxic cleaners at home with safer ingredients. These cleaners are better for you and your family, better for the air in your home and better for the environment.

Natural cleaners are safe and easy to make – and more affordable than many store-bought products. All you need to start are ingredients like vegetable oil-based soap and vinegar. Here is a recipe for a basic all-purpose spray cleaner using natural ingredients.

All-purpose spray cleaner

This cleaner is great for countertops and other surfaces, it's tough on dirt and bacteria while being gentle for our health.

- 1/2 cup white distilled vinegar
- 1 teaspoon liquid vegetable oil-based soap
- 1 1/2 cups warm water

Combine ingredients in a spray bottle and shake before use. Add lemon juice, orange peels or essential oils for a fresh scent. If using on windows or mirrors, leave out the liquid soap for a streak-free shine.

You can find more home cleaner recipes and natural cleaning tips at oregonmetro.gov/greencleaners



Buying safer cleaners

When deciding which cleaner to use, look for the signal word on the product label. Signal words help to show the hazards associated with cleaning products and can be used by shoppers to find the least toxic products.

Products labeled, "danger," "poison" and "warning" are hazardous to people, pets or the environment. Products with no signal word or those labeled, "caution" are a safer alternative.

Metro recommends choosing products with the Safer Choice, Green Seal or Ecologo certification, which have been tested and proven to be safer for human health and the environment.

Not all cleaning or disinfecting products are submitted for certification – when in doubt, stick to products with no signal words or those labeled, "caution."

Disposing of cleaners you no longer want

Unused cleaning products should never be disposed of in household garbage, poured down a drain or emptied outdoors. Use them up if you can, otherwise, know where to take them for safe disposal.

Take old cleaning products and other household hazardous waste – like batteries – to a Metro hazardous waste facility or neighborhood collection event. It is free to drop off these materials and helps keep the garbage and recycling system running safely.



Look at the label to choose safer cleaners



Styrofoam recycling correction

In the last issue, the article "Television waste and disposal tips," contained incorrect information about Styrofoam recycling. Metro South transfer station no longer accepts Styrofoam for recycling. We regret this error.

For more information on disposing household hazardous waste, Ask Metro at 503-234-3000 or oregonmetro.gov/askmetro

Color and discover!



Among the flowers at Canemah Bluff

A perfect patch of prairie welcomes visitors to Canemah Bluff Nature Park. It's not big, but it bursts with blooms, bees and butterflies. The camas and meadow checkermallow, the Oregon iris and Oregon sunshine, they'll make you poetic. The wild grasses – junegrass, needlegrass, oatgrass, barley, wild rye – flocked by huge bumblebees and tiny metallic sweat bees may convince you to turn your yard into a prairie. And if you look quick and close, you can see that there's not just one type of sparrow in the field. The little birds are as diverse as the flowers.

Follow OregonMetro on Instagram and Facebook or visit oregonmetro.gov/parks to find out when the park opens.

