

METRO PARKS AND NATURE 2014-15

ANNUAL REPORT



Building on 25 years of success: Protecting water, habitat, exploration – and planning for more

No matter where one stands in the greater Portland metro region, nature is never far.

With 17,000 acres, Metro manages parks and natural areas across every community in the region – from Chehalem Ridge on the west to the Sandy River Gorge on the east, from Blue Lake and Broughton Beach on the north to Graham Oaks on the south.

In 2015, Metro celebrated its 25th year as a parks provider. Although Metro's portfolio of land represents a big opportunity, it's also a big responsibility.

Voters have trusted Metro to wisely spend the money they've invested through two regional bond measures and a levy – more than \$400 million dollars – to protect and care for these special places while also creating opportunities for people to enjoy them.

Across the region, habitat is healthier, water is cleaner and more fish, wildlife and people are reaping the benefits. None of this work would be possible without voter investments in the 2006

natural areas bond measure and the 2013 parks and natural areas levy.

But a strong plan is needed to continue building a world-class regional Parks and Nature system that will serve the region's residents for another 25 years and beyond. To launch that effort, Metro began working with diverse community members and partners in 2014 to craft a Parks and Nature system plan.

The system plan will play out on the ground in many important ways, determining how Metro operates parks and natural areas, what a park looks and feels like when visitors arrive, which natural areas have top priority for significant visitor improvements – and much more.

Community members, partners and equity advisers are helping to develop strategies that will ensure Metro Parks and Nature serves diverse audiences and needs. By spring 2016, the Metro Council is slated to approve the system plan, laying the foundation for regional Parks and Nature work through the next decade and beyond.

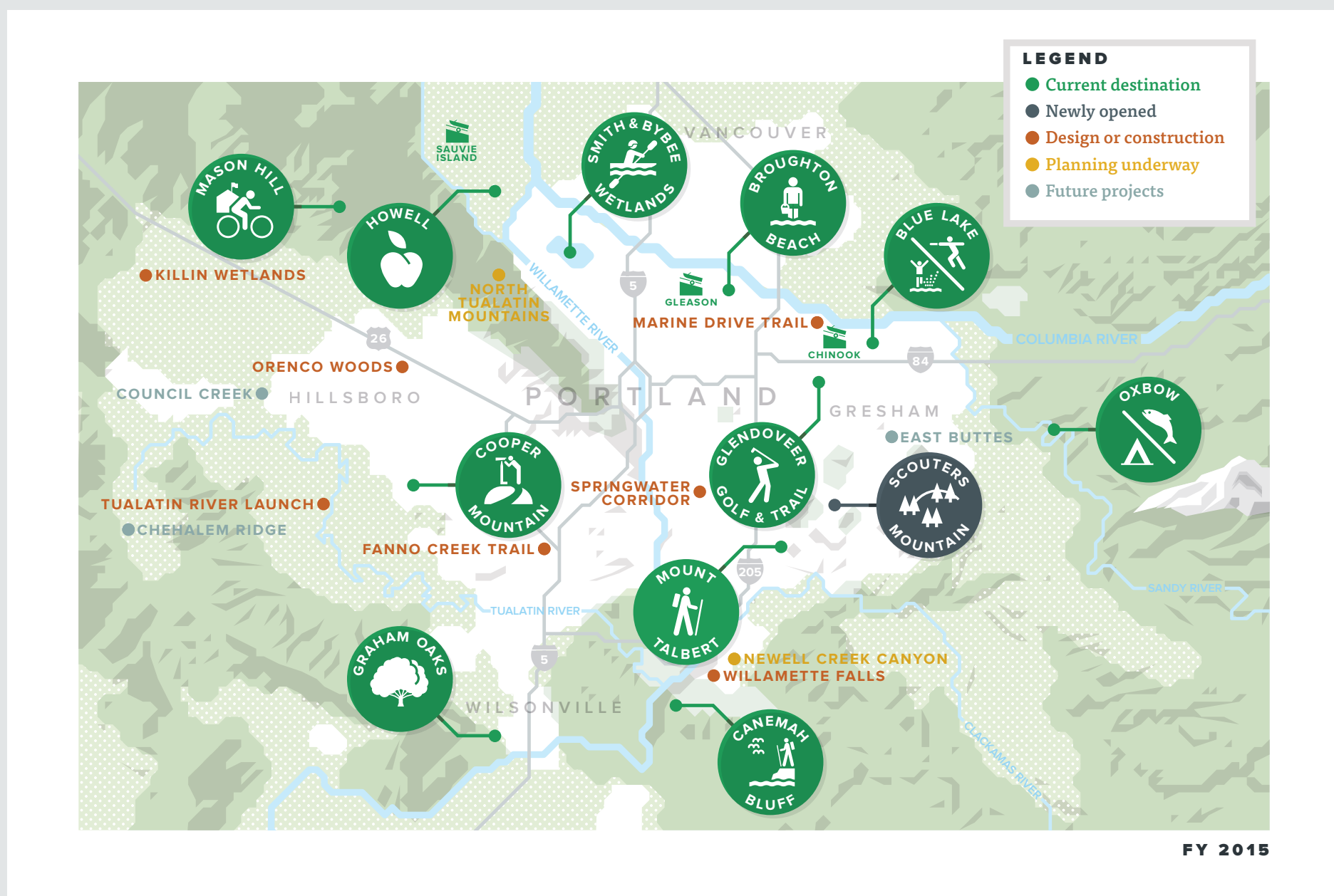
To see the impact of 25 years of voter investments and the exciting possibilities ahead, you have to hear the stories from the people on the ground. Learn more about how your dollars were spent from July 2014 to June 2015 to restore marshes, improve parks, and connect diverse and under-served communities with nature.



ACCESS TO NATURE

Metro aims to provide opportunities for residents to immerse themselves in nature with access to new parks, trails and natural areas. Access to Nature projects focus on safety and low-impact improvements, and opportunities for residents to hike, view wildlife, or enjoy a picnic. The projects

begin with extensive conversations with community members to ensure the projects provide the opportunities they're seeking, while also incorporating habitat restoration and volunteer and conservation education programs.



Habitat, visitor improvements go hand in hand at Killin Wetlands

For years, devoted birders in the Portland metro region have headed to an area about two miles west of Banks in search of the prized American bitterns and soras.

But with no formal public access to Metro's Killin Wetlands Natural Area, birders often park on the side of Northwest Cedar Canyon Road and set up their scopes on the roadway. A project soon entering the design phase aims to improve safety by opening up public access to a portion of the 590-acre site, while also restoring habitat and allowing farming to continue on another portion of the property.

"I'm very excited about the new access," said Stefan Schlick, a Hillsboro resident and a birder involved with the Audubon Society of Portland who helped shape the access project.

Community members and partners attended two open houses in the winter and spring of 2015. Many of the features they requested, such as trails and viewing stations, are included in the access

plan, which is designed to maintain a light touch on the landscape and habitat. The site includes significant wetlands and a very rare example of Willamette Valley scrub-shrub marsh habitat.

The Audubon Society has designated Killin Wetlands as an Important Bird Area. The site also supports an abundance of rare plants and animals, including Geyer willows and the state-sensitive Northern red-legged frog. Beavers, ducks and the occasional elk also call the place home.

Agricultural heritage will remain intact. Part of the site will continue to be farmed, and an old dairy barn will stay. The barn could also qualify to join the Quilt Barn Trail in Washington County with a large, painted quilt block mounted on the side.

Permitting and final design is expected to be complete by the end of 2015, with construction tentatively set for 2016 and 2017 – and a grand opening in 2017.



Killin Wetlands

Park improvements

Even as Metro moves to open new destinations, work is underway to improve the parks and facilities that 1.3 million visitors a year already enjoy. Park improvement projects are aimed at upgrading aging facilities, improving sustainability features, and enhancing safety and security. For instance, a new entryway now greets visitors to Blue Lake Regional Park. Other projects include improved signage, repaired roads, new play areas, building and amenity renovations and more – all the little things that make a visit to a Metro destination more fun, convenient, safe and memorable.

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Communities of color, low-income residents and other underserved groups have long faced barriers to accessing nature. But several innovative programs help underserved communities experience outdoor activities, foster environmental stewardship, nurture career opportunities and create new models for designing parks.

Through Partners in Nature, Metro teams up with community-based organizations such as Self Enhancement, Inc. and the Center for Intercultural Organizing to develop unique programs. In spring 2015, the Latino Greenspaces project launched in partnership with Latino Network and Hacienda Community Development Corporation to introduce youths to outdoor opportunities and careers.

Metro is working with community-based organizations to develop a new approach to designing parks that are welcoming to diverse communities. Metro is contracting with Verde to explore a new model for community groups and landscape architects to jointly develop project proposals.

And Metro is making a concerted effort to ensure restoration and maintenance contractors include as many minority-owned, women-owned and emerging small businesses as possible.

Partnerships connect students and nature

While it may not seem like that big of a deal to go for a walk in the woods, many Portland-area youths never have that opportunity. For them, nature can be an intimidating place, said Jackie Murphy, a career development manager at Self Enhancement, Inc.

She points to a project where middle school students in an SEI program visited Metro's North Abbey Creek Natural Area near Forest Park. The plan was to teach the children how bees help pollinate plants.

But for many of the children, this was primed to be their first exposure to bees that didn't involve a stinger.

"They think bees will attack," Murphy said. "There are some misconceptions of what's out in the environment. It's just not something they see in their day-to-day neighborhood."

A lot of that, Murphy said, is simply because of lack of exposure.

After the SEI program with Metro, students, by a wide margin, said they felt more comfortable in nature. About a third said they'd be interested in

exploring careers tied to natural resources and the environment.

"In natural resource and environmental jobs, a low percentage of people of color are employed in those areas," Murphy said. "With this relationship with Metro, exposing kids early on, they're gaining interest, and we can connect their interest in an area they can explore and pursue into college and a career."



RESTORATION AND MAINTENANCE

About half the money from the 2013 levy is dedicated to protecting water quality, controlling invasive weeds, boosting native plants and animals, and improving habitat for fish and wildlife.

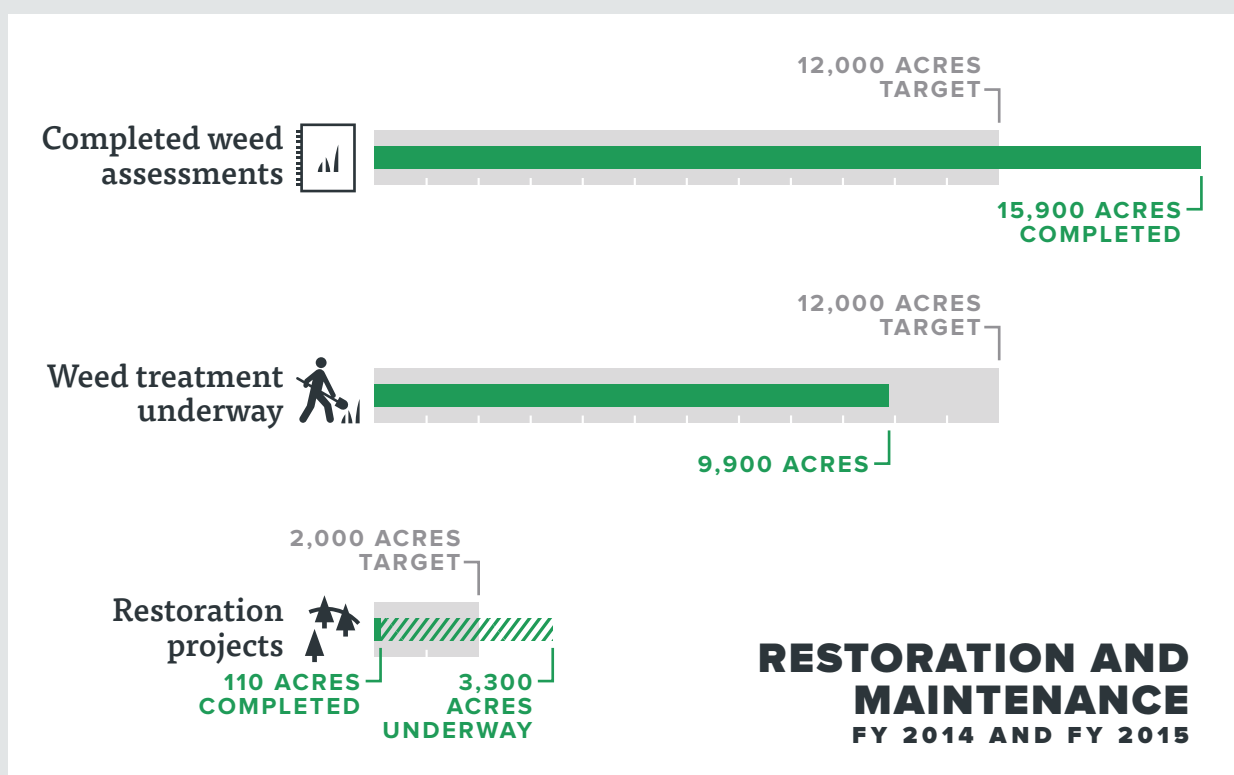
Restoration takes different forms across wetlands, oak prairies and savannas, forests and rivers. It means thinning overcrowded forests to allow sunshine to reach native oaks and madrones. It means treating invasive weeds choking out native

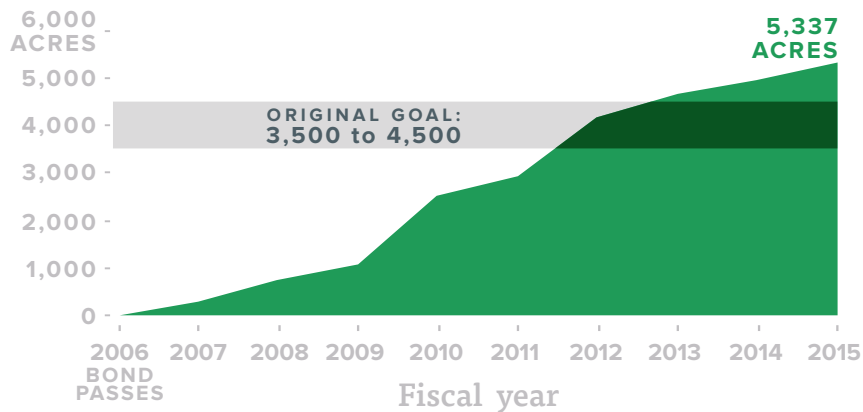
wildflowers. It means creating habitat for endangered fish. It means planting native shrubs and trees that help filter rainwater.

After Metro acquires a property, "stabilization" starts the restoration process by addressing immediate threats such as weeds. Next, a restoration plan helps return a site to its natural, wilder roots – and transition to long-term maintenance.



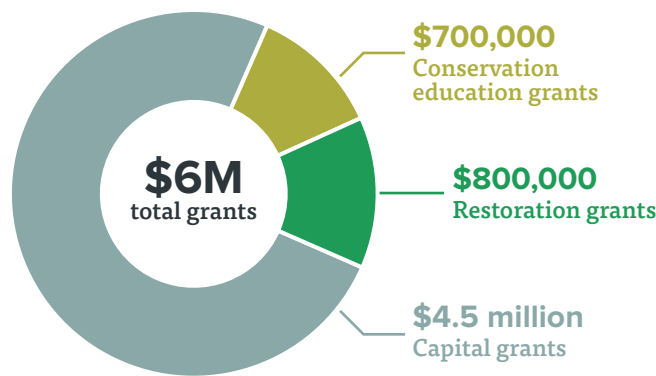
An egret quickly took advantage of waters around a new bridge at Multnomah Channel Marsh a day after construction ended in fall 2014. With help from partners, Metro is restoring native wetlands at the 350-acre natural area across from Sauvie Island and making it easier for juvenile salmon, trout and lamprey to swim into the marsh. Crews breached an earthen berm along the channel and replaced three culverts with a bridge. "What we've done is to try to get water back onto the site," said senior natural resources scientist Curt Zonick, "and then get it moving through the site."





LAND ACQUISITION WITH 2006 BOND MEASURE (CUMULATIVE)

The biggest portion of the 2006 bond measure earmarked \$168 million for land acquisition from willing sellers. More than 5,300 acres have been acquired and protected – significantly surpassing the original goal. Thanks to voters, Metro has been able to conserve some of the last swaths of native prairies, wetlands and other valuable habitat – home to rare plants and endangered or threatened fish and wildlife. Other properties fill key gaps in regional trails, providing connections for commuters, bicyclists and joggers.



NATURE IN NEIGHBORHOODS GRANTS FY 2015

Direct community investments, such as Nature in Neighborhoods grants, are one of the most popular and important parts of the Parks and Nature portfolio. Through the 2006 bond measure and the 2013 levy, three types of grants gave a collective \$6 million boost to innovative projects across the region this year. Partners are restoring salmon habitat, protecting land, improving parks, connecting diverse communities with nature and much more. In 2016, trail grants will be awarded for the first time.

PROMISES MADE, PROMISES KEPT

Thanks to voter investments, the greater Portland metro area can enjoy a world-class regional Parks and Nature system with healthy habitats, clean water, more native wildlife and more opportunities for residents to explore nature.

Although spending from the 2006 bond measure is winding down, some money remains to acquire more special places, pay for locally significant projects and award one last round of Nature in Neighborhoods capital grants.

The next three years of the 2013 levy will build on successes in the first two years and the important work underway now. Native plants will flourish where invasive weeds once grew. More new parks will open while existing parks will see many upgrades. And there will be more opportunities for residents of all backgrounds to connect with nature through classes, events and volunteering.

More work remains. Stay tuned for next year's annual report to learn about the exciting opportunities ahead.



Metro Council at Blue Lake Regional Park, from left: Councilors Bob Stacey, Kathryn Harrington, Carlotta Collette, Shirley Craddick, Craig Dirksen and Sam Chase, Metro Council President Tom Hughes

PARKS AND NATURE SPENDING* FY 2015

	General fund	2013 parks and natural areas levy	2006 natural areas bond	Total
Restoration/maintenance of parks and natural areas	\$1,833,209	\$4,803,483	\$0	\$6,636,692
Access to nature	\$0	\$1,288,909	\$96,612	\$1,385,521
Park improvements and operations	\$6,018,179	\$1,432,336	\$0	\$7,450,515
Conservation education and volunteer programs	\$119,216	\$512,676	\$0	\$631,892
Community investments	\$45,992	\$429,949	\$1,818,752	\$2,294,693
Land acquisition/stabilization	\$0	\$0	\$9,305,952	\$9,305,952
Administration**	\$296,189	\$2,423,550	\$2,585,272	\$5,305,011
Total	\$8,312,785	\$10,890,903	\$13,806,588	\$33,010,276

* Unaudited
** Administration spending includes expenses for department administration and support services, such as the Office of the Metro Attorney, the Data Resource Center and communications.

2013 PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS LEVY

Promised to voters



Actual levy spending THROUGH JUNE 2015



IMPROVING PUBLIC ACCESS TO NATURAL AREAS REGIONAL PARK OPERATIONS NATURE IN NEIGHBORHOODS GRANTS RESTORING NATURAL AREAS FOR WILDLIFE, FISH AND WATER QUALITY CONSERVATION EDUCATION AND VOLUNTEERS

To learn more about voter investments, visit oregonmetro.gov/nature
To receive updates about Parks and Nature news, fun nature classes and events, or to sign up for Our Big Backyard quarterly magazine, visit oregonmetro.gov/parksandnaturenews