



# Chehalem Ridge Nature Park Access Master Plan

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Sam Chase, District 5  
Bob Stacey, District 6

**Auditor**

Brian Evans



## Executive Summary

*Chehalem Ridge Nature Park is poised to become a vital part of the region's conservation strategy and a place for community members to enjoy natural wonder.*

Rising above the Tualatin Valley, this ridgetop forest offers views from the Cascades to the Coast Range. Streams on Chehalem Ridge flow to the Tualatin River, which provides drinking water for hundreds of thousands of people. Located within easy access from Beaverton, Hillsboro, Cornelius and Forest Grove and with links to important habitat areas, the Chehalem Ridge Nature Park will become an important component of a connected regional system of parks, trails and natural areas. Chehalem Ridge already serves as a vital habitat anchor, and it will soon be a place for the public to relax, learn about the environment and take in the stunning views through a network of trails and other visitor amenities. Once developed, it will be the second-largest contiguous nature park within Metro's portfolio. Nowhere else in the greater Portland region can residents be immersed in nature and inspired by sweeping views of both the Coast and the Cascade mountain ranges.

In 1995 and 2006, voters approved bond measures to protect water quality, wildlife habitat and provide opportunities for nature-based recreation across the region. This public investment is responsible for the growth of Metro's portfolio of

## *The goals of the Chehalem Ridge Nature Park Access Master Plan include:*

**Protect significant landscapes**

**Develop and operate a welcoming place**

**Provide diverse and meaningful opportunities**

**Build relationships, awareness and trust**



parks and natural areas, including the protection of the Chehalem Ridge Natural Area. In 2013 and 2016, voters approved five-year local option levies to help care for these lands. As a result, Metro is restoring habitat and expanding opportunities to experience and learn about nature across the region, as well as improving parks for visitors and supporting community-led projects with shared goals. This access master plan is funded by both the 2006 bond and the 2013 levy.

When Metro purchased Chehalem Ridge in 2010, it was a commercial timber farm, proposed for development as rural estate homes. Seven years of work including forest thinning, native plantings, stream restoration and road decommissioning have already helped transition the site towards a healthy, maturing landscape that will remain conserved.

Community participation and ideas have helped create this plan to guide the future of Chehalem Ridge. The nature park planning process began in early 2016. Metro engaged community members, stakeholders and technical experts in assessing opportunities and challenges related to the development of a nature park. A diverse Stakeholder Advisory Committee was established for the project and met three times to share expertise and insights into community needs and desires. Committee meetings, seven community events, conversations with community members and thousands of comments submitted online helped to identify community needs and priorities. This input informed activities to be supported at Chehalem Ridge as well as locations for both public access improvements and protection of undisturbed habitat areas.

Based on this input, the Recommended Plan (Figure ES 1) includes the following elements:

- A multi-use trail as a spine along most of the park's namesake ridge, providing a link to multiple site experiences and maximizing opportunities for views in several directions.
- A range of ways to experience and understand the site, with potential to traverse the length of the site and provide a longer 'out and back' walk, cycle or horse ride, with interpretation throughout.
- Habitat protection and enhancement focused in large, contiguous blocks on the nature park's western slopes, although resource conservation will occur throughout the park.
- Habitat connectivity maintained through corridors to the north, west, south and along riparian corridors flowing east and west from the ridge.
- A celebrated viewpoint from the park's highest point, Iowa Hill, where an old oak tree has stood for decades. A trail connection to Iowa Hill culminates in an overlook, with places to sit and interpretive information to encourage visitors to pause and take in the view.
- A trailhead established off Southwest Dixon Mill Road, which was determined to be the most feasible access location.
- A secondary trailhead in the northern portion of the site as a long-term improvement to facilitate access from urban areas and provide efficient access for maintenance and emergency response.



Figure ES 1: Chehalem Ridge Nature Park Access Plan

The primary trailhead will accommodate approximately 70 - 80 cars and include a bus drop-off for groups and students. A small equestrian trailhead is proposed to be adjacent to vehicle parking. A multi-purpose shelter for general use by groups is included, as are restrooms and a picnic area. In the vicinity of this trailhead, nature play facilities are proposed. Given that the bulk of visitor improvements are concentrated at the south end of the park, a small workshop and fenced yard will facilitate operations and maintenance activities.

Chehalem Ridge Nature Park's 1,230 acres offer countless opportunities to enjoy the sights, sounds and textures of the natural environment. There are a number of places that offer a particularly special or unique experience. When planning the system of future trails, the project team considered how to provide access to as many of these special places as possible while also protecting the natural assets of the site.

*"Restoration work will be ongoing at Chehalem Ridge Nature Park. Active forest management will continue across most of the natural area for decades. Metro will continue to monitor and treat invasive non-native plants and consider other projects to enhance water quality and wildlife habitat."*

*Metro scientist*

*"The more kids we get outdoors in natural places, the better protected those places will be in the long term."*

*"Mientras más niños estén al aire libre en lugares naturales, más protegidos estarán esos lugares a largo plazo."*

Public Comment

## Phasing

After the design and permitting process, construction of the first projects is projected to begin during the summer of 2019. Metro's goal is to open the site to the public in early 2020. Funding is currently set aside to complete an initial first phase project. Depending on costs at the time of construction, the following improvements could comprise a logical Project 1. This would include the following elements (see Figure ES 2):

A trailhead at Southwest Dixon Mill Road

- Passenger vehicle and equestrian parking
- Multi-use shelter and picnic area
- Entry plaza with vault toilets
- Welcome kiosk with map and information signs
- Lawn area for family activities
- Drinking fountain and trash/recycling receptacles

Trails (approximately 3 miles total)

- 1 - 1.5 miles of multi-use trails
- 0.5 miles of nature trails
- A 1 - 1.5 mile subset of all ages and abilities trails
- 1.5 miles of site roadway repurposed for trail use
- Wayfinding and regulatory signs
- Benches and overlooks

Maintenance yard – to support facility operations

Subsequent phases, to be initiated once additional funds are identified, will include an expansion of trailhead features, additional trails, site interpretation, nature-based play opportunities and the secondary trailhead.



Figure ES 2: Proposed Phasing Plan

*Creating this access master plan required the commitment, support and involvement of many people who dedicated time and resources. The project team would like to thank the following individuals for their interest and involvement in developing a vision for Chehalem Ridge Nature Park.*

### **Metro Council**

Tom Hughes, Council President  
Shirley Craddick, Council District 1  
Carlotta Collette, Council District 2  
Craig Dirksen, Council District 3  
Kathryn Harrington, Council District 4  
Sam Chase, Council District 5  
Bob Stacey, Council District 6

### **Stakeholder Advisory Committee**

Jazmine Tellez, Guadalupe Ochoa - Adelante Mujeres  
Larz Stewart - Adventures without Limits  
Tom Gamble - City of Forest Grove, Parks  
Maria Caballero-Rubio, Juan Carlos González - Centro Cultural de Washington County  
Carol Murdock, Laura Porter - Clean Water Services  
Peggy Harris, - Citizen Participation Organization 15  
Dan Eischen - adjacent neighbor and local farmer  
Chuck Fondse - Northwest Trail Alliance  
Shari Woodcock, Dennis Monson - Oregon Equestrian Trails,  
Valley View Riders  
Lisa M. Sardinia, Stacey Halpern - Pacific University  
Aaron Shaw - Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District  
Tom Nygren - Tualatin River Watershed Council  
Jon Pampush - Tualatin River Keepers  
Erin Holmes - U.S. Fish and Wildlife  
Stephen Shane - Washington County, Planning and Development Services