



Metro



A camper walks through the Ancient Forest in Oxbow Regional Park during the summer 2018 session of Camp ELSO, an environmental education nonprofit that works primarily with children of color, .

**PARKS AND NATURE
RACIAL EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ACTION PLAN
2018-2022 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Creating an equitable parks and nature system

Metro's parks and nature mission is to protect clean water, restore fish and wildlife habitat and provide opportunities for people to experience nature close to home. Thanks to two decades of voter investments, Metro manages more than 17,000 acres of parks, trails and natural areas across every community in greater Portland – from Chehalem Ridge on the west to the Sandy River Gorge on the east, from Blue Lake and Smith and Bybee Wetlands on the north to Graham Oaks on the south.

The Parks and Nature Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan brings together parks and nature's mission with Metro's commitments to improve racial equity in the region. The document sets down dozens of specific actions parks and nature will undertake over the next five years to increase racial equity, diversity and inclusion in its work and at its sites.

These actions strive to make sure people of color feel safe and welcome when they visit Metro parks and natural areas. Others will create job training and mentoring for people of color so parks and nature's workforce looks more like the people it serves. Several actions build on past work to serve greater Portland's Native American community and their use of cultural resources on Metro properties.

Throughout the plan, the actions build the systems and the culture required to make racial equity how parks and nature fulfills its mission.

Download the parks and nature action plan: oregonmetro.gov/equity

Metro recognizes racial equity as the backbone of good governance to ensure the success of everyone

Metro acknowledges that people of color across the region experience the most disparate outcomes in nearly every category of social well-being including housing, transportation, access to nature, education and health. Metro has identified racial equity as its strategic direction to eliminate the disparities that people of color experience (regardless of race or background) especially in areas related to Metro's policies, programs, services and destinations. Focusing on racial equity will result in all people in the region having the opportunity to thrive in all aspects of social well-being.

The Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion directs all Metro departments to develop equity action plans to achieve Metro's five strategic goals through the department's programs, services,

projects and plans. Parks and nature's plan illustrates the department's commitment to Metro's racial equity strategy through actions that make racial equity how the department does business.



Parks and nature director Jon Blasher with staff.

Five strategic goals to achieve an equitable and prosperous region

The Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion identifies five long-term goals to direct Metro in creating specific objectives, actions and measures of evaluation and accountability as the agency works to help greater Portland reach an equitable and prosperous future.

Goal A

Metro convenes and supports regional partners to advance racial equity.

Goal B

Metro meaningfully engages communities of color.

Goal C

Metro hires, trains and promotes a racially diverse workforce.

Goal D

Metro creates safe and welcoming services, programs and destinations.

Goal E

Metro's resource allocation advances racial equity.

Desired outcomes and 12 objectives

Economic equity: Communities of color prosper economically from the business of parks and nature in greater Portland.

Environmental equity: Communities of color in greater Portland enjoy the benefits of conserving land, air and water and equitable access to safe and welcoming parks, trails and natural areas.

Cultural equity: People of all cultures, races and traditions connect with nature and with one another in the region's parks and nature system.

Goal A objectives

- Contribute to increasing the diversity of people and perspectives in the conservation movement
- Plan the regional system of parks, trails and natural areas with a racial equity lens

Goal B objectives

- Strengthen internal communications, transparency and accountability
- Meaningfully engage communities of color in policy and investment decisions
- Honor Indigenous and community connections to land

Goal C objectives

- Invest in continuing education and inclusive staff culture

- Build career pathways for youth and communities of color

Goal D objectives

- Deliver relevant and inclusive programs and services for people of color
- Manage and operate a safe and inclusive system of parks, natural areas and trails

Goal E objectives

- Build department capacity for equitable community engagement and partnerships
- Remove barriers for people of color in contracting and grant programs
- Equitably plan for and invest in Metro's and the region's system of parks, natural areas and trails

The power of partnerships

From designing parks to teaching youngsters to fish to restoring habitat through traditional ecological knowledge, partnerships with organizations led by people of color have become important for many parks and nature projects. The racial equity action plan calls for even greater use of partnerships, moving from discrete projects to institutionalizing partnerships as the norm for parks and nature.

Partnerships with community organizations have been key to parks and nature developing the knowledge, systems and capabilities it needs to implement this plan. As a government committed to advancing racial equity, it is important to listen to the diverse needs of our communities and create opportunities for community voices to drive parks and nature's work.

Whether a partnership removes barriers to accessing decision makers or develops programs that reflect a specific community or cocreates policies, programs and processes that improve racial equity, a broad spectrum of partnerships allows for an exchange of knowledge and builds access and understanding for community and staff alike.

It's important work that we have to take on individually and collectively.

What gets me excited is seeing the small successes people have... People see that this isn't some big magical or mystical work.

It's about treating people with respect and integrity and acknowledging and addressing historic wrongs.

– Jonathan Blasher,
parks and nature director



A staff-led plan

More than 30 staff members from across parks and nature came together to create this plan. These staff members led their work teams in discussions and reviews of the plan throughout the process.

The plan relies on staff's clear understanding of the parameters and possibilities of their jobs and community members' clear demands for what racial equity, diversity and inclusion look like. It lays out the specific actions needed to build the systems, the culture and the accountability required to establish institutional racial equity in parks and nature.

The vast majority of the plan's actions came from people of color in the region and from the department's staff – the people the plan is made to benefit and those who will implement it.

A living plan

This plan is a living document. Throughout its five years, the plan will be reviewed, adjusted and improved regularly in partnership with community members. New opportunities will appear and new directions will need to be taken, and the plan is built to make those changes.

Madelyn Joe runs the trails at Mount Talbert Nature Park.



During a picnic at Oxbow Regional Park cohosted by the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization and Metro, a young visitor gives Metro nature educator Renee Robinson a high five.

Change is already underway

Even as the action plan was being created, parks and nature staff continued and started projects that placed racial equity front and center. The examples and lesson from these projects influenced and became part of the racial equity plan.

Here are examples from the past few years:

- In collaboration with greater Portland's Native American community, Metro developed a culturally appropriate process for Native Americans to access land for cultural events, culturally significant plant material harvesting or ceremony space.
- Nature in Neighborhoods grants redesigned its criteria for 2018 to reflect the action plan's three racial equity outcomes: economic, environmental and cultural equity. Staff provided examples to applicants from past grants that met the criteria and worked with the review committee to use racial equity as it evaluated grants.
- Parks and nature changed its contracting practices so that it hired more minority-owned businesses for nature restoration projects.
- The Connect with Nature program created a model of partnering with community organizations to plan future parks that better serve people of color.

Hello, we're Metro.

Metro brings people together to shape the future of greater Portland and provides places, services and tools that work best at a regional scale. Led by an elected council, this unique government gives Oregonians a voice in their community.

Parks and nature

Metro protects clean water, restores fish and wildlife habitat, and connects people to nature across 17,000 acres of parks, trails and natural areas – and the Oregon Zoo.

Land and transportation

Metro plans for new homes, jobs, transportation options and access to local businesses and parks.

Garbage and recycling

Metro manages the garbage and recycling system and is a resource for information about safe disposal and ways to reduce waste.

Arts and events

Metro runs the Oregon Convention Center, Portland Expo Center and Portland's Centers for the Arts.



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Questions

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