



Metro's parks and natural areas levy

Making a difference in East Multnomah County

Across greater Portland, Metro's parks and natural areas levy protects clean water, restores fish and wildlife habitat and connects people with nature close to home.

Voters first approved the levy in 2013 and then renewed it through June 2023. It raises approximately \$16 million a year and supports restoration and maintenance, park operations, public access improvements, nature education and volunteer programs, and community grants and sponsorships.

Since 2013, the levy has made a significant difference across Metro's 17,000 acres of parks, natural areas and trails – and a number of community nature projects and programs.

Oxbow Regional Park *(pictured above)*

Two nature play areas opened at Oxbow in May 2019, giving kids opportunities to connect with nature on a deeper level. Planners enlisted the help of community organizations and parents of children experiencing disabilities to ensure the popular play areas are inclusive for children of varying abilities.

For more information on voter investments, visit oregonmetro.gov/nature

Follow **oregonmetro**





Restoration and maintenance

East Buttes natural areas

The East Buttes natural areas form large patches of upland forest from Gresham to Happy Valley. Within the East Buttes, red alder trees are experiencing high levels of decline likely exacerbated by unusually hot and dry summers. The levy enabled Metro to conduct forest health assessments in the East Buttes and identify strategies to improve and protect forests, such as planting native trees and shrubs to replace the declining alder canopy.

Diversifying restoration workforce

With the latest round of restoration contracts, Metro worked to make the bureaucratic process of government contracts more accessible to diverse business owners, including people of color, women, veterans and emerging small businesses. The latest process included interviews with potential contractors so people could talk more freely rather than relying on the traditional request-for-proposals process that emphasizes writing skills. The effort supports economic equity for people who plant native trees and shrubs, remove invasive weeds, and help improve water quality and restore habitat.

Park operations

More than 1.7 million visitors enjoy Metro's developed parks each year for walking, hiking, canoeing, camping, bird watching, and fishing, in addition to family and community events. The levy allows Metro to operate, maintain, and upgrade Metro sites so that they are safe, welcoming and inclusive, including at places like Blue Lake and Oxbow regional parks.

Printed on recycled-content paper.

Public access improvements

Gabbert Butte

Natural areas in the East Buttes area protect the headwaters of many tributaries of Johnson Creek. Large tracts of forests preserve core habitat for wildlife. Working with the community, Metro and the City of Gresham developed the Gabbert Butte Nature Park master plan to create more welcoming entrances, visitor amenities and trails.

Nature education and volunteer programs

Metro offers school field trips, drop-in nature activities and volunteer opportunities, with a focus on serving people of color, low-income communities, people with disabilities and other historically marginalized groups. Recent programming has included stewardship programs with Blind Ambition pulling ivy at Glendoveer Golf and Tennis, and educational walks through the ancient forest at Oxbow Regional Park with students from groups like Camp ELSO, which teaches nature-based education and more to Black and Brown youths.

Programming at Blue Lake Regional Park has included land stewardship, medicine making, basket weaving and nature survival skills with Morrison Family Services, family picnics with the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization and a partnership with Get Hooked to support fishing and water safety for children and families.

Partnerships have also included nature walks with Self Enhancement Inc. at Smith & Bybee, supporting Latino Network through stewardship work in Council Creek and programming with Hacienda CDC around pollinators at Howell Park on Sauvie Island.

Community grants and partnerships

Environment 2042 Emerging Leaders (E42EL) Program

A \$60,000 grant supported a leadership development program that identifies and develops 18- to 25-year-olds to build a more diverse, equitable and inclusive environmental movement. It exposes emerging leaders to experiences and coaching that gives new perspectives, including those from rural Oregonians and First Nations.

Depave the Centennial School District

The \$42,000 grant to Depave helped to develop and implement community-led re-greening projects at Title 1 elementary schools in the Centennial School District. Students and visitors now enjoy 10,000 square feet of new greenspaces with 800 native plants, nature play and on-site stormwater management elements.

Restoring public land through Traditional Ecological Knowledge

The \$75,000 grant to Wisdom of Elders created a collaborative approach to improving local habitats. Members of Indigenous groups mentor students from Portland Public Schools in Traditional Ecological Knowledge while meeting the restoration needs of public lands.

Advancing cultural and environmental equity for API Communities

The \$30,000 grant connected Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) members with parks and natural areas and offered leadership development opportunities to advance environmental equity in East Portland neighborhoods. This program also included camping trips – the first camping experience for half of the participating youth and chaperones.