



Metro's parks and natural areas levy

Making a difference in 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.

St. Johns Prairie

(pictured above)

A years-long effort has been underway to transform the 240-acre former St. Johns Landfill into a prairie full of native plants to attract western meadowlarks, streaked horned larks, western painted turtles and other wildlife. The site is part of Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area, one of America's largest urban wetlands.

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Multnomah Channel Marsh



North Tualatin Mountains

Restoration and maintenance

Multnomah Channel Marsh

Metro has been working to improve connectivity between the wetlands at Metro's Multnomah Channel Marsh, a narrow area of more than 300 acres just across from Sauvie Island. This project has made it easier for juvenile salmon, steelhead, trout, and lamprey to swim into the marsh, a crucial habitat with abundant food and few predators, boosting the health of the fish before their journey to the ocean.

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 Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area, Chinook Landing Marine Park and Broughton Beach.

Public access improvements

North Tualatin Mountains

Just north of Forest Park, a collection of four voter-protected properties form the North Tualatin Mountains Natural Area. Metro is actively restoring this former timber land to a diverse native habitat. The levy supported community engagement efforts to develop a master plan for multi-use trails and other visitor amenities to provide future public access.

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.



Oxbow Regional Park

Oxbow Regional Park

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.

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, and nature survival skills with Morrison Family Services, family picnics with Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization and a partnership with Get Hooked to support fishing and water safety for families.

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.

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.

Portland harbor access and cultural ties to the river

A \$30,000 grant to Portland Harbor Community Coalition supported work to connect and re-connect youth and adults to the Portland Harbor through culturally-specific events and outings.