Winter 2022

Metro

# Chehalem Ridge Nature Park

## Open now! | ¡Abierto!

### What's inside



oregonmetro.gov

Metro | Our Big Backyard Parks and nature news and events

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If you picnic at Blue Lake or take your kids to the Oregon Zoo, enjoy symphonies at the Schnitz or auto shows at the convention center, put out your trash or drive your car – we've already crossed paths.

**So, hello. We're Metro – nice to meet you.**

In a metropolitan area as big as Portland, we can do a lot of things better together. Join us to help the region prepare for a happy, healthy future.



Metro

**If you have a disability and need accommodations,** call 503-220-2781, or call Metro's TDD line at 503-797-1804. If you require a sign language interpreter, call at least 48 hours in advance. Activities marked with this symbol are wheelchair accessible:

**Bus and MAX information**
503-238-RIDE (7433) or trimet.org

**Stay in touch with news, stories and things to do.**
oregonmetro.gov/parksandnaturenews
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**Pets policy**
To protect plants, wildlife and people, Metro does not allow pets at most regional parks and natural areas. Pets can damage sensitive habitat and threaten wildlife the region has worked to protect. In natural areas where pets are not allowed, people see more wildlife and get closer to it. Seeing-eye dogs or other service animals are allowed. Please bring cleanup materials.


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# Share your nature and win!

**Winner: Hallie Madenski**

Along the Wapato Greenway Loop on Sauvie Island, I looked to my right, not far from the entrance of the trail, and saw this beauty sunbathing on top of a rose cane several feet off the ground, completely unfazed by my presence. I've seen many snakes around Portland, but this felt like a rare and special moment.

**Finalist: Elizabeth LaMay, Hillsboro**

For one week in May, a baby great horned owl, too young to fly over our fence, would explore our backyard after dark. One evening, I heard a metallic clattering sound, so I turned on the porch light to find the owl looking at me from this perch!

**Finalist: Jewel Shell, Portland**

It is that time of year again where the wild things are stashing their grinds for cold times. These Steller's jays made a rare stop by my house on Crystal Springs for some raw peanuts to store.

## Submit your photo

Win an annual parking pass, a full-day picnic shelter reservation at Graham Oaks or Scouters Mountain nature parks, a tennis court session, or a round of golf for four people including cart at Glendoveer Golf and Tennis Center.

To enter, submit a photo taken at a park or natural area in greater Portland – your friends and family, a view of wildlife or a sunset, for example. Include a 50-word description of your experience. Where were you? What were you doing? What captured your attention?

The winner will appear in this space. By submitting a photo, you consent to Metro's future use and publication of your photo. Send your photo and description by Feb. 15 to: **ourbigbackyard@oregonmetro.gov**

**Like what you see?**

Sign up for the print edition of the quarterly magazine, change your address or save paper by switching to a digital subscription. Email *ourbigbackyard@oregonmetro.gov* or call 503-797-1545.

**On the cover:** Sisters ponder an insect perched on white yarrow blooms at Chehalem Ridge Nature Park. *Photo by Cory Eldridge*

# Creating healthy habitats and reducing wildfire risk at Graham Oaks

*Funded by the voter-approved parks and natural areas levy, work to reduce wildfire fuel goes hand-in-hand with restoring habitat and providing opportunities to connect with nature.*

**Story by Katie Hentges**

Fire, particularly fires started by people, have shaped the Willamette Valley's ecosystems since time immemorial. Indigenous people in the region use fire to cultivate and harvest first foods like acorns, tarweed seeds and many others. The regular fires helped create the oak woodlands and savannas that covered the region when white colonists began arriving.

Those people-lit fires along with lightning-created fires also played a role in reducing fuel buildup like dead grass, plants and trees, a benefit that has become more evident as massive wildfires become ever more common.

At Graham Oaks Nature Park in Wilsonville, staff are "trying to make up for the absence of fire on the landscape," says Andrea Berkley, a natural resources scientist at Metro.

Metro acquired the area that is now Graham Oaks Nature Park in 2001 using funds from a voter-approved bond measure. At that time, it was mostly farmland. Before that, the area contained a diversity of habitats – particularly Oregon white oak savanna – that relied on the presence of fire to thrive.

Over the years, Metro staff have been restoring and managing the landscape, both to create healthier habitats and to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. At a few other natural areas in the region, Metro has used controlled fires, called prescribed burns, as part of the restoration toolkit. But because of the neighborhoods nearby, prescribed burns aren't a preferred option at Graham Oaks.

"Fire is a management tool," says Berkley. "There are times when we use fires to manage prairies and savannas, but at this site we look to other tools in our toolbox."

Instead, staff are removing invasive species, like Himalayan blackberry, that provide quick fuel for fires, and planting native trees, grasses and flowers in their place.

"We have a lot of different techniques to reduce fuels like grass," says Adam Stellmacher, a lead natural resource specialist at Metro. His team partners with Berkley to care for the park's landscape. "We've hired farmers to cut, bale and remove hay in the open savanna areas between planted trees and pathways, which reduces fuels and thatch on the site and allows flowers to grow."

And, although it may seem counterintuitive, staff are cutting down trees in strategic locations to help improve habitat health in addition to reducing the amount of fuel available if there were a wildfire. This includes creating fuel breaks near homes and thinning past plantings that have become overly dense.

Trees that were planted 15 years ago are now "20 feet tall and crowding each other, which will lead to many dead trees. If they're thinned now, they'll be healthier, more resilient to climate change, and more resistant to pests and disease," says Berkley.

Thinning out trees also provides space for a diversity of habitats. For example, despite their beauty and iconic status, too many Douglas firs can be too much of a good thing. They grow quickly, and in the absence of wildfire or active management, they crowd out the light that forest floor shrubs and flowers, or slower-growing Oregon white oaks, need to survive.

"We've thinned Douglas fir to preserve mature and seedling oak trees, which are shade intolerant. This work was done using chainsaws, but would have happened here historically using fire," says Berkley.

Oregon white oaks, which are significantly reduced from their historic numbers in the Willamette Valley, are an important part of a fire-resilient and ecologically diverse landscape. With deep root structures and thick bark, they're resistant to wildfire. When they are killed by fire they often re-sprout, and first form a shrub, but eventually return to tree form, providing important habitat for a number of species. The gaps between trees in oak savannas – habitats with prairie between widely spaced oaks– help provide a natural fire break, especially when those areas are managed to reduce fuel.

"We're making sure that fire burns in a mosaic where there are openings like meadows or areas that have been managed before. If there's a fire, it won't be carried to its most extreme," says Stellmacher.

All of this work is possible because voters in the greater Portland area have made investments to protect clean water, restore fish and wildlife habitat and provide opportunities for people to experience nature close to home.

# Get involved: classes and events

**MON. JAN. 17**

### Dr Martin Luther King Jr Service Day

In honor of Dr Martin Luther King's birthday, Metro will host a stewardship event at Smith and Bybee Wetlands. Participants will plant native plants and lay mulch.

Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area
5300 N Marine Dr, Portland
10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Free. All ages.
Registration required

**SAT. JAN. 25**

### Amphibian egg mass survey training

Wade into urban wetlands to find and count eggs laid by local frogs and salamanders. It helps track amphibian population health, which in turn indicates habitat health in and out of wetlands. Metro partners with the Wetlands Conservancy and other organizations around the region on this volunteer-powered monitoring. After the two-hour training, volunteers can sign up for counts across the region from February to April.

To learn more and sign up, email Katy Weil, katy.weil@oregonmetro.gov

10 a.m. to noon
Online
Registration required

**SAT. FEB. 12**

### February planting at Oxbow

This Valentine's Day weekend, show your love for the land by planting native plants at Oxbow Regional Park.

Oxbow Regional Park
3010 SE Oxbow Parkway, Gresham
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Free. All ages
Registration required

## Free Parking Days

Get out and explore nature!

Enjoy free parking at Oxbow and Blue Lake Regional parks, Broughton Beach, chinook Landing Marine Park, and M. James Gleason Memorial Boat ramp on Jan. 1, 17, 20; Feb. 17 and 21; March 17; April 21; May 19; June 16, 19; July 15; Aug. 18; Sept. 15; Oct. 10, 20; Nov. 11, 17 and 25; and Dec. 15.

Parking at all other Metro parks and boat ramps is free year-round.

# Now open

## DISCOVER CHEHALEM RIDGE NATURE PARK

# Está abierto

## DESCUBRA CHEHALEM RIDGE NATURE PARK

## The park offers 10 miles of trails, including 3 miles for all ages and abilities

After 14 years of restoration and five years of planning the park with community members, Chehalem Ridge Nature Park's gates are open.

At 1,260 acres, Chehalem Ridge is Metro's second biggest park, bigger even than Oxbow Regional Park. Picnic shelters and tables, along with a grass field, provide a jump-off point to the park.

Ten trails stretch 10 miles, offering out-and-back hikes and bike and horseback rides as long as 8 miles and loops as short as one.

The restoration isn't done. When Metro purchased the property, it had been a commercial timber farm. On each visit, you can see the park transforming from a dense monoculture of Douglas fir to a dynamic series of habitats rich with plants and animals.

Chehalem Ridge Nature Park exists thanks to voters investing in nature. Voters said yes to parks and nature bond measures that allowed Metro to purchase much of the park in 2010 and begin restoring the land, and then building the park.

Come see your new park! It's waiting for you.

Learn more: **oregonmetro.gov/chehalemridge**

## El parque ofrece 10 millas de senderos que incluyen 3 millas para todas las edades y capacidades

Después de 14 años de restauración y cinco años de planificar el parque con los miembros de la comunidad, las puertas de Chehalem Ridge Nature Park están abiertas.

Con 1,260 acres, Chehalem es el segundo parque más grande de Metro, más grande incluso que Oxbow Regional Park. Los refugios para picnics y las mesas y una explanada de césped ofrecen un punto de entrada al parque.

Diez senderos son 10 millas de largo, ofreciendo caminatas de ida y vuelta y paseos a caballo o en bicicleta de hasta 8 millas, y vueltas tan cortas como de una milla.

La restauración de Chehalem no ha terminado. Cuando Metro compró la propiedad, había sido una maderera comercial. Con cada visita puede ver cómo el parque se transforma de un denso monocultivo de abetos Douglas a una serie de hábitats dinámicos, ricos en plantas y animales.

Chehalem Ridge Nature Park existe gracias a los votantes que han invertido en la naturaleza. Los votantes aprobaron los bonos de parques y naturaleza que permitieron que Metro comprase gran parte del parque en 2010 y comenzara la rehabilitación de la tierra y después, la construcción del parque.

¡Venga a visitar su nuevo parque! Lo esperamos en Washington County.

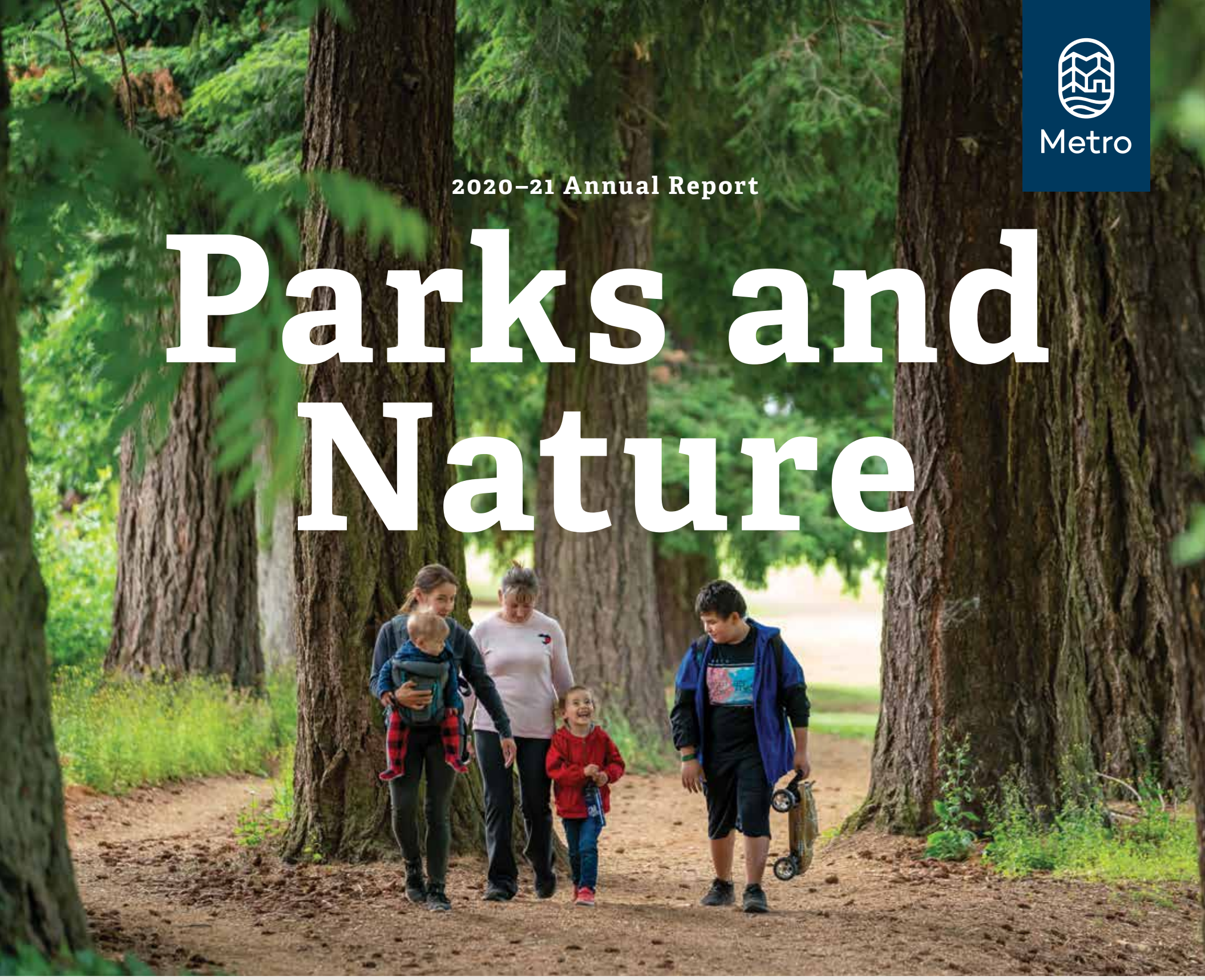
Obtenga más información en **oregonmetro.gov/chehalemridge**


Chehalem Ridge

Metro

2020–21 Annual Report

# Parks and Nature



## Metro's unique parks and nature system creates connections to nature close to home

Since Metro's parks and natural areas program began in the 1990s, no other year than the last one has better shown why it's so critical voters have called on Metro to protect clean water, restore fish and wildlife habitat and provide access to nature for communities across the region.

Late summer 2020 brought devastating wildfires, and then early summer 2021 held record-shattering high temperatures that killed nearly 100 people in Oregon. Extremely hot weather strains habitats, putting trees at risk of dying from heat stress, which in turn exposes other plants and animals to more risk from heat and catastrophic fires. Metro's conservation work helps strengthen natural areas to better withstand hotter temperatures and keep streams and rivers cool to protect salmon, lamprey, other native fish – and people.

Metro's parks have always been a refuge to people seeking the physical, mental and spiritual boosts offered by spending time in the outdoors. That's only more true during this long pandemic. Whether it's hiking Mount Talbert Nature Park, swimming at Broughton Beach, admiring prairies of wildflowers at Cooper Mountain Nature Park, trying out disc golf at Blue Lake Regional Park, or sitting at a picnic bench at Orenco Woods Nature Park, Metro's parks provide a place nearby to drink in nature in any way a person wants.

All of this is possible thanks to voter investments. Voters renewed a local-option levy that pays for restoration, maintenance and operations at Metro's parks and natural areas through June 2023. And in 2019, voters approved a $475 million bond measure to fund capital investments at parks and natural areas.

The bond measure supports land purchase and restoration, Metro park improvements, Nature in Neighborhoods capital grants, local parks and nature projects, walking and biking trails and large-scale community projects.

In July 2020, Metro Council signed off on a bond framework – a road map for developing the six programs in the 2019 parks and nature bond measure. Since then, Metro has worked with community members, partner organizations, local park providers and others to implement the bond measure to achieve regional goals for clean water, habitat protection, climate resilience, access to nature, racial equity and community engagement.

The work is guided by the Parks and Nature System Plan, a long-term strategic plan and framework, and the Parks and Nature Department's Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. The action plan, completed in late 2018, comprises more than 80 actions aimed at improving economic, environmental and cultural equity. These actions focus on connecting communities of color to resources; providing more equitable access to safe, welcoming parks, trails and natural areas; and helping people of color connect with nature and one another in the region's parks and nature system.

During the past year, Metro has continued to purchase land to steward as natural areas, it launched a new local share program that funds capital projects that matter to local communities, it put the finishing touches on two nature parks – Newell Creek Canyon and Chehalem Ridge – and, because of voters investing in nature and the future of this region, even more is on the way.

Get the whole report online with more photos, stories and details at **oregonmetro.gov/parksandnature2021**

# Connecting people with nature

New parks provide more opportunities for people to connect with nature close to home. Throughout the 2020-2021 fiscal year, Metro built two new parks that opened in late 2021: Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park in Oregon City and Chehalem Ridge Nature Park, just south of Forest Grove.

In addition to new destinations like Newell Creek Canyon and Chehalem Ridge, Metro continues to make improvements at its 19 current parks and boat ramps. Park improvement projects aim to upgrade aging facilities, improve sustainability features and enhance safety and security, as was the case with this year's project to build new docks and a gangway at Chinook Landing Marine Park.


As of June 2021. Chehalem Ridge and Newell Creek Canyon nature parks are now open.

## Restoring and maintaining natural areas

Protecting clean water and restoring fish and wildlife habitat remain at the core of Metro's parks and nature mission.

Restoration and maintenance work includes controlling weeds, planting native trees and shrubs, removing unnecessary or harmful culverts and roads, maintaining existing roads and infrastructure, decommissioning unauthorized trails, improving connections between streams and wetlands, and strengthening habitat for fish and wildlife.

After Metro acquires a property, a stabilization plan is drawn up. Stabilization is like the renovation process for a fixer-upper home: it's a lot of big projects to create a livable habitat.

Invasive weeds start getting treated, and dilapidated buildings, septic systems and other structures are removed. This initial work is paid for with money from the 2006 and 2019 natural areas bond measures.

### Habitat restoration

**FY 2021**

**128**
Habitat and water improvement projects

**3,867**
Acres with restoration projects underway

### Plantings and weed control

**FY 2021**

**20**
Planting projects

**79**
Weed treatments

# Making good on equity promises

For Metro, achieving racial equity in greater Portland means that race would no longer be a reliable way to predict a person's life outcomes on measurements like education level, health or wealth, which are currently very closely related to race. In the process of creating racial equity, every group and community in greater Portland would see its well-being improve.

This means making sure people of color feel welcome and safe when they visit Metro destinations. It means creating job training and mentoring for people of color so the department's workforce looks like the people it serves, which isn't true now. It means Indigenous people, both those with close historical and cultural ties to the region and those with tribal roots in other parts of the country, will have more meaningful and easier access to cultural resources on properties that Metro protects and manages, all of which are on land ceded by regional tribes in the early years of colonization. It means contracting with more certified minority-owned, women-owned and emerging small businesses.

It also means involving community members of color in decision-making processes. In 2020 and throughout 2021, Metro worked closely with members of the region's Indigenous community

**Caption:** The community-based organization Latino Outdoors hosted a day in the woods at Oxbow Regional Park. The event, which included guided tours led by Metro nature educators, was supported by a grant through the Community Partnership program. The program works with community organizations big and small to build community and connect people of color to nature at Metro's and other parks.

to change how it assesses and prioritizes land acquisitions. The trails program, which guides the distribution of $40 million to close gaps in the regional trail system, hosted more than 100 people of color to hear what they value in the trail system and how they want projects prioritized.

In the face of the COVID pandemic, Metro's community partnerships program acted quickly to create a capacity-building sponsorship program to support community organizations that are run by and work for communities of color. More than $180,000 went to 36 organizations that had to expand their work to meet the needs of community members navigating COVID. Nearly $50,000 in sponsorships supported community organizations to hold events and activities in nature over the past year.

## Honoring those at Block 14

After many years of planning and collaboration with partner groups, the project to create a cultural heritage garden at Lone Fir Cemetery's Block 14 is underway.

With input from community members, the Lone Fir Cemetery Foundation, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association and the Mental Health Association of Portland, Metro has dedicated $4 million to the project from the Metro park improvements program area of the 2019 parks and nature bond measure.

Currently, Block 14 is an empty lot in the southwest corner of the tree-filled Lone Fir Cemetery. But from 1891 to 1928, more than 1,131 Chinese people were buried there. Even earlier, it is believed that more than 200 patients of the Oregon Hospital for the Insane, the state's first psychiatric hospital, were laid to rest in various areas of Lone Fir Cemetery, including the eastern part of Block 14. Many of their names and stories have been lost to memory, but community members hope the cultural heritage garden will be a place to honor their stories.

"There's so much history that's left to be told," said Marcus Lee, a member of the board of directors of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. "This is a great way to be able to share one part of that, one chapter of that history."

## Investing in community

Community investments support a variety of projects: community stewardship and restoration, nature education, outdoor experiences, land acquisition, capital improvements, visitor amenities and more. Altogether over the last 25 years, the public – through Metro – has invested nearly $100 million to support a broad range of community nature projects across the region, helping to preserve land, restore habitat, expand access and more.

Since 1995, each of the natural areas and parks bonds have included a "local share" program that supports local park providers with parks and restoration projects that matter to their communities. Throughout 2020, the $92 million local share program was redeveloped to include the new bond measure's focus on racial equity and meaningful community engagement. The program launched in spring of 2021, ready to receive proposals from local park providers. Every month, Metro hosts a roundtable with the cities and parks districts that receive local share funds to discuss how to create projects that advance racial equity and are informed by meaningful engagement with community members.

Work began in fall 2020 to develop the $40 million capital grants program in the 2019 parks and nature bond measure. The bond includes a pilot grant program of $4 million that will be designed by community members and award grants through a participatory process. It's a new way of distributing grants that puts more decisions into the hands of the community.

In July 2020, the Metro Council awarded 12 grants totaling $700,000 for projects designed to increase racial equity and climate resilience in greater Portland by connecting people of color to nature.

These grants include a project that brings together Indigenous students and teachers at the Sandy River, another that provides year-round, culturally specific environmental science education, and a career mentorship program that offers youth with low incomes opportunities to learn about natural resource management as they restore local habitats. The grants are funded by the parks and natural areas levy renewal.

Racial equity criteria have guided the grant program since 2018. "One of Metro's roles in the region is to be a convener," said Crista Gardner, who was the program manager of Metro's Nature in Neighborhood community grants. "Our nonprofit partners are coming together through these grant dollars, each bringing their particular skills, knowledge and abilities to the program."

# Promises made, promises kept

Metro's system of parks, trails, natural areas and historic cemeteries is the result of a more than a quarter century of commitment, action and investment by the region.

It exists because of voter support for three bond measures and two levies.

Spending from the 2006 natural areas bond measure is winding down, and voters in November 2019 approved a new $475 million bond measure to continue investments to protect land, improve parks and natural areas and support community projects. Work continues to further develop and implement the six program areas in the 2019 bond measure.

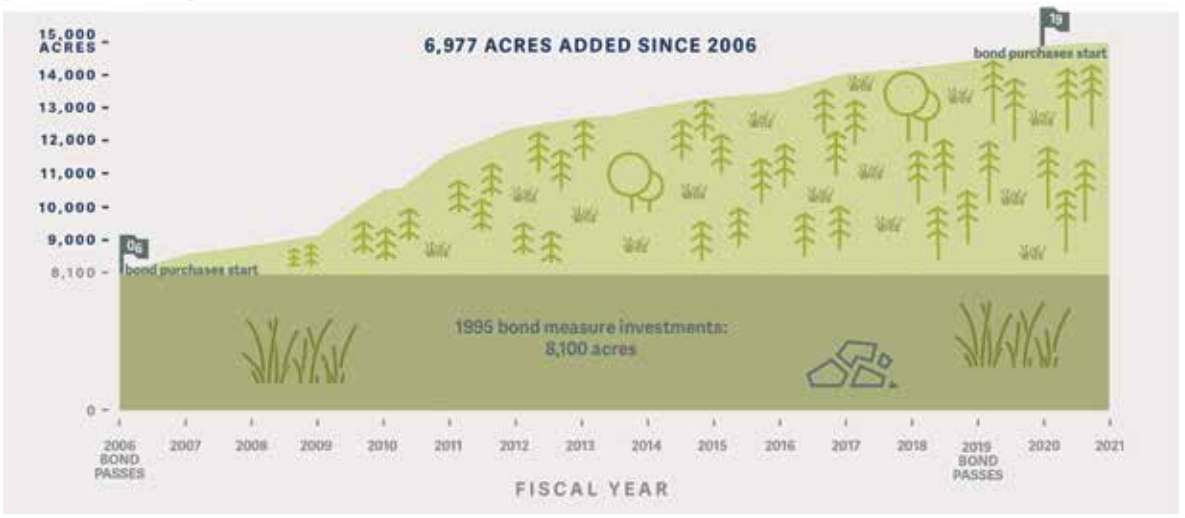
In late 2020, the Natural Areas and Capital Program Performance Oversight Committee wrapped up its duties on the 2006 natural areas bond measure. To continue the critical work of community oversight of Metro's work, the Metro Council appointed a new committee that provides an independent review of the 2019 parks and nature bond measure and the capital program in the levy renewal.

The Metro Council placed a high priority on creating a committee that reflected the diversity of greater Portland as well as formal expertise and expertise from lived experiences.

The work continues. Stay tuned for next year's annual report to track how your tax dollars are spent to improve parks and nature throughout the region.

**Metro Council, clockwise from top left:** Metro Council President Lynn Peterson, Councilors Shirley Craddick, Juan Carlos González, Gerritt Rosenthal, Christine Lewis and Mary Nolan.

## Land acquisition with 2006 and 2019 bond measure
**(CUMULATIVE)**




Thanks to voters, Metro has been able to protect important areas of remaining native prairies, forests, 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 bike commuters, hikers and joggers. Some natural areas will become future nature parks that provide growing communities with access to nature.

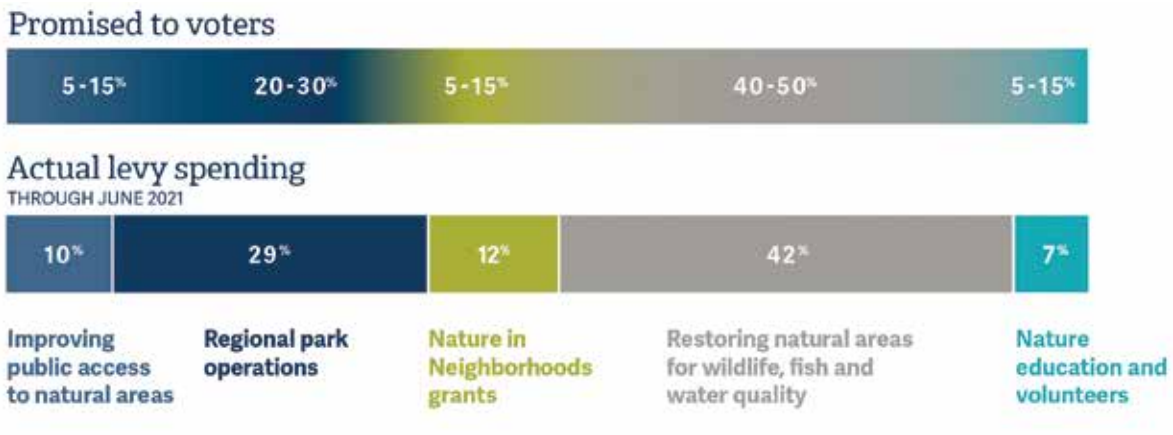
2021 was the first fiscal year money from the 2019 parks and nature bond measure was used to purchase land as part of the protect and restore nature bond program. This program continues the work of the 2006 bond measure, which acquired and protected more than 6,876 acres – significantly surpassing the original goal of about 4,000 acres. Over the past year, Metro has added 101 of acres to its portfolio of natural areas.

## Parks and Nature spending*

| | General fund | 2018 parks and natural areas levy | 2006 natural areas bond | 2019 parks and nature bond | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Restoration/maintenance of parks and natural areas | $414,624 | $4,765,932 | $0 | $0 | $5,180,556 |
| Access to nature | $0 | $636,339 | $2,845,715 | $3,295,702 | $6,777,756 |
| Park improvements and operations | $1,721,290 | $2,697,410 | $0 | $256,836 | $4,675,536 |
| Cemeteries | $854,019 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $854,019 |
| Nature education and volunteer programs | $0 | $662,799 | $0 | $0 | $662,799 |
| Community investments | $0 | $1,133,253 | $1,245,626 | $406,100 | $2,784,979 |
| Land acquisition and associated costs/stabilization | $0 | $0 | $935,341 | $1,870,957 | $2,806,298 |
| Administration** | $2,168,393 | $4,609,863 | $1,327,969 | $1,573,850 | $9,680,075 |
| **Total** | $5,158,326 | $ 14,505,596 | $6,354,651 | $7,403,445 | $33,422,018 |

* 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.

## 2021 parks and natural areas levy




To learn more about voter funding and to read the latest report from an independent oversight committee, visit **oregonmetro.gov/nature**
To receive updates about Parks and Nature news, fun nature classes, volunteer opportunities and events, visit **oregonmetro.gov/parksandnaturenews**

Metro

*Printed on recycled-content paper 22018*

# Field guide

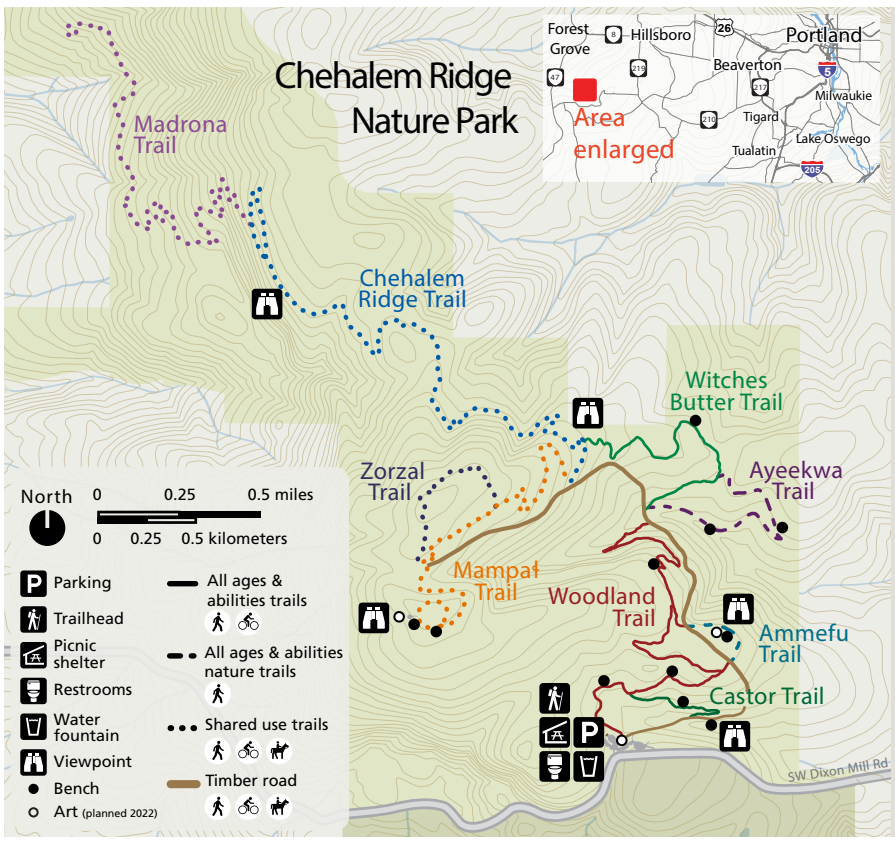
## CHEHALEM RIDGE NATURE PARK

**Story by Kate Holleran**

Beginning your journey at the Chehalem Ridge Nature Park trailhead, you will pass old oaks, whose acorns feed people and wildlife alike, and come to a shrubby clearing with volcanoes to view. Continuing on to the high point of the park via the Mampa‡ Trail, the screen of young Douglas fir trees falls away to reveal a panoramic view of the Tualatin Valley and Coast Range. On almost any but the rainiest day, the highest viewpoint in the park provides opportunities to see wildflowers, listen to birds or simply sit and appreciate the land still known as the Outside Place by the Atfalati people, also known as the Tualatin Kalapuya.

Chehalem Ridge itself was formed millions of years ago as extreme pressure from the colliding tectonic Pacific and North American plates on what is now the Pacific coastline pushed, buckled and tilted the basalt ridge. As you follow the Chehalem Ridge trail, you'll notice a more steeply sloping west side with shallower soils and more exposed rock, and a gentler east side with deeper soils formed from thousands of years of wind-deposited silt soil.

The Chehalem Ridge trail takes you to the Madrona Trail and some of the most diverse habitats in the park. Oregon white oaks and Pacific madrone trees are common here, as are large patches of shrubby habitat that are a magnet for dozens of bird species, as well as coyotes, black-tailed deer, alligator lizards and, uncommonly seen, bobcats.




### Chehalem Ridge Nature Park

**ADDRESS**
38263 SW Dixon Mill Road,Gaston

**GETTING THERE**
From Forest Grove, head south on Highway 47. In Gaston, turn left onto SW Gaston Road. Turn left onto SW Hardebeck then right onto SW Dixon Mill Road. Stay on SW Dixon Mill Road for approximately 2.5 miles.
From Cornelius, travel south on South 10th Avenue, which becomes SW Golf Course Road. Continue south on SW Golf Course Road to a T-intersection on SW Tongue Lane. Turn right onto SW Tongue Lane, then left onto SW Iowa Hill Road. Turn right onto SW Dixon Mill Road.

From the east, take Highway 219 to SW Unger Road. Travel west on SW Unger Road until SW Dixon Mill Road. Turn left on SW Dixon Mill Road.

**AMENITIES**
Picnic tables, restrooms, parking, equestrian loading.

Most of the 1,260-acre Chehalem Ridge was a commercial tree farm until 2005. With voter-supported funding and encouragement, Metro acquired the land and began nudging it toward a more diverse forest to create room for other plants to thrive. Hikers, bikers and equestrians moving along the trails might notice stumps covered in fir cones collected by Douglas squirrels; piles of logs that shelter small animals and their food, insects and mushrooms; openings filled with shrubs and, in the spring, singing songbirds.

For thousands of years this place was periodically burned by Indigenous people to encourage the production of food and other supplies. The fires were halted when colonization of the valley occurred, and over time Douglas fir trees dominated the more open oak, madrone and fir forests. Metro will continue to thin, control invasive species and improve water protections to create a place that allows plants, animals and people to thrive.

**oregonmetro.gov/chehalemridge**

### Be on the lookout!


BOBCAT


PACIFIC MADRONE


WITCH'S BUTTER

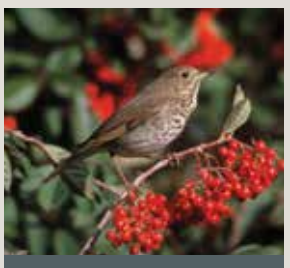

HERMIT THRUSH

Photo credits: Hermit thrush, USFWS; Pacific madrone, BLM; Witch's butter, Don Boucher (iNaturalist CC).

### Season by season

**WINTER:** Winter is the water season at Chehalem Ridge. In heavy winter rains, many small ephemeral streams collect rain and runoff and filter it as the water moves off the ridge and down to the Tualatin River. From the observation point at the highest part of the ridge, watch as the Wapato Lake basin in the Tualatin Valley fills up once again, repeating a pattern that has happened for thousands of years.

**SPRING:** In springtime, the quiet of winter gives way to a symphony of bird sounds as neo-tropical migratory birds return to breed and raise young. Resident species are also active during this season. Listen for the distinctive drumming of the male ruffed grouse, whose rapid wing movement creates the sound.

**SUMMER:** Chehalem Ridge sits at the north end of the Willamette Valley and experiences drier conditions than the Coast range to the west and the Cascade Range to the east. Visitors might notice western red cedars that are declining or even dying due to the hotter, longer summers climate change is bringing to our region. Western red cedars are an important species for wildlife, watershed health and Indigenous cultural practices. Hopefully they will persist at Chehalem Ridge in the cooler, moist riparian areas.

**FALL:** As the days shorten and the weather turns cool, animals begin to prepare for the changing seasons. In early fall, listen for the soft sound of fir cones clipped by Douglas squirrels falling to the forest floor. There, the squirrels feast on seeds and carry the cones away to a midden or cache, storing protein-rich food for the coming winter.

# Ni’hoosdzáán baa’áhwiilyą́ ągo nát’ą́ą́’ nihaa’ánáhály´

# When we take care of the earth, mutually she takes care of us

**Story by Allison Rose**

**Photography by Evan Benally Atwood**

## Connection to place, self, and love in an unfamiliar territory far from ancestral homelands.

I woke up yesterday morning and I thought of the sunrise. The clock beside me said 6:30, and I dragged myself out of bed to get dressed. After assembling some cold weather gear, I grabbed my cornmeal and stepped outside.

This morning’s offering spot was in the small green patch next to some dull apartment buildings. Turning myself to the East, I greeted the dawn and started my prayer. Throughout my prayer, oddities occurred around me that weren’t unusual for my environment, but unusual for me. Prying eyes appeared in the curtains of the apartment building across from me, car engines revved on the street close by, and wafts of bacon and oil from a nearby breakfast spot were caught in the breeze. My senses became overwhelmed and my words inaudible. I sprinkled my offering of white cornmeal and hurried back inside, avoiding neighbors on my way back into the small studio.

Throughout the rest of the morning, the pink apartment building I faced during my prayer was engrained in the depths of my corneas. I wanted to cry because during my prayer I couldn’t even see the horizon; I couldn’t see the portal to those who watch over me, and I couldn’t see them beyond the concrete anyways because of all these trees. While there are tall trees like Ńdíshchíí’ (Ponderosa pine) back home, I can usually see past them because they’re spread farther apart than the trees up here. Landscapes glisten and hills roll down into a flat desert, but up here the hills keep rolling and rolling, and trees loom taller and taller.

The forests here are unfamiliar and they tower over everything, and their branches are so long they feel like they’re trying to grab me. In these moments, I feel disconnected and lost; I’m away from everything that I know and feel comfortable with, and these spruce and cedar trees are a grim reminder of that. My sense of place is skewed here, and I’m so desperate to feel like I belong. I nitpick the differences when I travel back and forth between the Southwest and Pacific Northwest, scanning for similarities in warmth, joy, community, and comfort. Searching for landscapes that look like me, people that look like me, and climate that looks like me.

While I’ve searched for similarities, the differences are stark. I grew up in Phoenix and spent my summers on the reservation with my grandmother, and the communities I lived in were primarily Indigenous and Latinx, maybe a couple of white families here and there. On the weekends, I would listen to my mother speak to her siblings in our Native tongue, and it was a language that felt comforting and most familiar to me; she often spoke to my brother and me in this language, it was how she showed us love. The same can be said for my grandmother, my aunties, my uncles, etc.

## Community voices

Metro occasionally contracts with community members to write about newsworthy topics from their perspective as a member of a historically marginalized community, such as people of color, immigrants and refugees, low-income residents and people of varying abilities. These pieces are intended to provide important points of view and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Metro or the Metro Council.

Allison (Al) is Diné (Navajo), born for the Karuk peoples. They currently reside on unceded Chinuk lands, and they work to integrate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in climate policies and discussions.

Evan is a freelance creative director currently working on a couple documentaries, one is Waveguides, about Indigenous women musicians, and the other on queer Indigenous joy.

**Clockwise from left, opposite page:** The author, Allison Rose, at Quamash Prairie Natural Area in Washington County and Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge in Portland. Landscapes in the Navajo Nation.

Moving to St. Helens when I was nine years old was shocking. The green hills don't resemble my physical features, I'm the only Brown person in most spaces I enter, and the climate resembles my tears from being so far from my lands and people. There weren't any other languages spoken other than English, and since my mother was no longer close to our family or our home, our Native tongue slipped away. English became our default, and while the love she gave us was still there, it felt like something else was missing for her too.

So-called Oregon is not my home, no matter how many years I've spent twiddling my thumbs in the cold rain. The ground is mushy and wet beneath my boots, and the air feels crisp and wet against my face. I find myself bitter about the cold, wet and cloudy weather for most of the year, and I dread leaving the house in a raincoat. For a while, I resented this place for its cloudy weather and unceasing white supremacy, but as I've grown older, I have begun to grow a sense of familiarity and fondness for this wet green valley (I still hate how white it is here, though). While these lands may not be my own traditional homelands, they are the traditional homelands for other Native peoples.

I love my homelands unconditionally and I love my homelands with my mind, body, and spirit. I feel my thoughts in the plants that grow in different regions of Dinétah; I see myself in red and brown sands in the hills behind my grandmother's house; I feel my spirit when Cheii or Na'asho'ii Dich'izhii (horned toad) visits me in my mother's garden. The way I feel deeply for my homelands can be said for the Indigenous peoples here and everywhere else.

Nothing can describe what if feels like to be enriched both spiritually and culturally to a physical place. It feels like sheepherding on a hot July afternoon, scrambling over hills of sand so thick you can hardly move; it smells like fresh rain on limestone and juniper trees; it looks like sunrays reaching out over the horizon when it rises and sets, almost like laser targets. The stories I've been taught, the reciprocal relationships passed down to me, and the ongoing work in Dinétah is a huge part of myself. These feelings are me loving myself, loving being myself. When I take care of the land, I take care of myself.

It took me a long time to come to this understanding: to comprehend the teachings passed on to me from my mother, my grandmother, my great grandmother, and all my ancestors before them. However, I think most importantly, it was Pacific Northwest lands and its Native ancestors, that helped contextualize these teachings.

There's one day in the spring of 2019 where I felt the cosmos align, or rather, I felt like I finally understood everything that my mother drilled into my head growing up. It was a beautiful spring day that graced us between weeks of downpouring rain, and my PSU class was going on a field trip to Quamash Prairie. Pocketed among trees, Quamash Prairie is open and grassy, and it's where camas has been returned with many other plant relatives who've been waiting for a resurgence in tending hands.

We joined Indigenous community members and Metro staff to learn about the land and what work was being done, harvest camas, and be in community with one another. I remember kneeling into the grass, gently digging for camas bulbs to harvest and replant. Around me I could hear my friend and her sister yelling each time they accidentally broke a camas bulb, wind swaying the grasses around me like they were dancing with joy, people talking and laughing with one another while they harvested, and I finally felt what I had been longing for: a loving feeling for myself, my communities, and the land.

Back home, the ground is hard and dry beneath my boots, the air feels hot and dry against my face. I find myself happy to be in warm, dry, and sunny weather for most of the year. I love waking up to watch the sunrise over the mountains, I love the smell after it rains, I love sitting under the juniper trees with my mother and grandmother on hot days, I love the cracking of thunder during monsoon season, I love the flutters of corn leaves in the wind, I love the sounds of sheep hammering their feet on their way to fresh water, and I love the smell of coffee and the sound of KTNN at six in the morning.

Connection to place is intimate and vulnerable. The Southwest is my home, and it cradles my heart because it created my heart. But right now, I'm up North and instead of hating and fearing this place, I want to grow and love this place because it'll help me connect with this land just a little more. After all, this is all Nahasdzaan Shimá. And so, I declare my love: I love the smell of sweetness in the cedar trees, I love the misting of cold morning fog, I love the changing colors of leaves in the fall, I love the sound of snow in the winter, I love the way the sun comes out of the clouds in the spring expecting applause, and I love how the Pacific Northwest has me yearn for home.

## Winter ZZZ's

Big bears and teeny chipmunks are our best known hibernators, but lots of other animals curl up tight for the cold months.

**Yellow-faced bumblebee**

Many bees hibernate, making their winter homes under fallen leaves, inside woody plant stems, and, like many bumblebees, in the ground. Yellow-faced bumblebee queens spend their first summer getting fat and healthy on nectar and pollen at their mom's nest before going underground for the winter. The next spring, they emerge to make their own colonies.

**Townsend's big-eared bat**

These medium-sized bats don't travel much, so they like to roost and hibernate in the same place. They gather in communities that can be a handful or hundreds strong. They curl up their namesake ears into coiled ram's horns, and they puff out their fur to hold in heat.

**Western pond turtles**

Reptiles don't hibernate; they brumate. Pond turtles bury themselves into mud or soil, where they can stay warmer. It's not a true hibernation, because on warm winter days the cold-blooded turtles may heat up enough to get a snack and drink before going back to brumation.

**Northern flying squirrel**

These adorable arboreal gliders don't technically hibernate, but hey, they don't "fly" either. When it gets real cold, groups of flying squirrels cuddle up in a woodpecker-made hole and go into an energy-saving state called torpor, a sort of hibernation-lite nap.



# Exit interview: Kate Holleran

**Story by Cory Eldridge**

It was perfect, accidental timing that after 14 years working as a natural resource scientist at Metro, Kate Holleran's last contribution to Our Big Backyard was for the edition announcing Chehalem Ridge Nature Park was open. From nearly the day Metro purchased the 1,200-acre tree farm in Washington County, Holleran led the work to transform a monoculture into a thriving, resilient network of forests, savannahs and wetlands.

Holleran has been Our Big Backyard's unofficial columnist, taking readers with her to natural areas across the region, showing how a natural resource scientist looks at a landscape. Ever a teacher, Holleran is also a student, and over the past several years she's shifted her views on human interactions with nature, who is an expert on plants and animals, and what her role is in helping create a more diverse conservation profession.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**What's the biggest highlight of your work at Metro?**

I have to start with Chehalem. When we became the stewards for that piece of land, it had all the simplicity you associate with a tree farm. For decades it had been either in agriculture that you associate with single crops, or it was covered almost entirely in Douglas fir. Over the years, primarily through forest thinning, we were able to increase the numbers and kinds of native plants in the understory. All of that resulted in a wider variety of wildlife using the site. Plus we know that keeping the forest healthy is good for water quality, too. It's exciting and humbling to watch those changes happen.

Another reflection I have about the last 14 years, is how important helping people connect to the land is for our well-being. Honestly, I was one of those people who said, people bad; wild good. I was seeing the land through the lens of the damage some humans have done. But I've re-learned through working with community members how important it is for people to be able to connect with nature. People plus the wild doesn't have to result in harm – we can all help take care of the land.

**What sparked that change in you?**

It was really by listening to community members talk about their reverence for and desire to be in nature. I share that value. That caused me to re-think my attitude about bringing people into wild places. These lands that Metro takes care of are the people's lands, and I'm not a gatekeeper protecting the land from everyone else. I can help make the land a little healthier in the short term, and I can help connect people to the land.

**How did all this affect how you approach conservation and stewardship?**

We need all our wisdom to help us take care of the earth. For a long time, the dominant approach has been western science. It hasn't been sufficient because there is so much we still do not understand about our ecosystems. Sometimes it's been wrong, and we've been slow to recognize when it is. I still think science needs to be a foundation of land stewardship, with a big dose of humility. And exploring the intersection of western science, traditional ecological knowledge, and other ways of understanding the land may help us be better stewards.

**How does a place like Metro start that work?**

We need to recruit and hire people of color. The "we" that's doing it probably shouldn't be all the white people in the room. Maybe it should be a stakeholder group that is predominantly people of color. I think it's going to take time and be intentional.

Metro was designed and built by white people, so the lens that we see through is still the dominant culture that excluded a lot of groups from decision making and access. We must examine everything we do.

We know from the history of conservation, the history of national forests and parks, those places were created by removing the original inhabitants of the land and excluding people of color. Moving forward we must find ways to make conservation and land stewardship racially just. The way to do that is to make a lot of space for more voices.

**A lot of white people who value racial equity hear that and think that making space means they should step back and not speak. That's not what you mean, though.**

A white person who is trying to be supportive and just shuts up isn't being intellectually honest. We need to have rigorous conversation about how to protect the earth and restore the landscape. Those conversations can include traditional ecological knowledge, western science, and other frameworks for land stewardship. I bring my experience and my understanding of western science. I can show up, listen first, and I can bring my intellectual contributions to the conversation.

This isn't a conversation only between conservation professionals. We need to support community groups that are focused on uplifting their communities and connecting them to the land. Allow community groups to lead conservation discussions. Will the priorities be the same as mine? Probably not, but inclusion is one of the first steps to equity in the outside.

# Wrapping up the holidays:

## tips for disposing of seasonal waste

**Story by and photography by Faith Cathcart**

The holidays can be a wonderful time – full of sparkling lights, favorite treats and festive gatherings. It's also a time when garbage bins overflow with the remnants of our revelry.

If you're wondering what you can do to cut down on the waste, read these tips or ask Metro at 503-234-3000.

### Some wrapping paper is recyclable – all of it is reusable

- You can recycle wrapping paper at home if it isn't made of foil or covered in glitter. Remove bows and ribbons before recycling.
- You can save your bows, ribbons and wrapping paper to reuse again.
- Next year, cut down on waste by using old maps, reusable gift bags or fabric to wrap gifts.

### Keep Styrofoam and plastic packaging out of the home recycling bin

- You can't recycle Styrofoam at home. But you can drop it off to be recycled at a few specialized locations, call Metro at 503-234-4000 to find recyclers. Otherwise, Styrofoam goes in the trash.
- Packaging peanuts don't belong in the recycling bin either. Check if your local packaging store can use them. If not, they go in the trash.
- Most types of plastic packaging – including film, bubble wrap and pre-formed plastic that encapsulates toys, batteries and electronics – belong in the garbage – even if you see a recycling symbol on them.
- Some grocery stores may collect plastic bags, film and bubble wrap for recycling. Check with stores first.

### Take broken string lights to a facility to be recycled

- String lights of any type don't go in your recycling bin.
- But they can be recycled at a facility. Metal recyclers will separate the valuable copper wire from the plastic. Search oregonmetro.gov/findarecycler for a recycler near you.
- Remove large bulbs before drop-off.
- If you don't take them to a recycler, they go in the garbage.

### Batteries are hazardous – keep them out of garbage and recycling bins

- Consider buying rechargeable batteries for all of those cool electronic toys and gadgets. Today's rechargeable batteries last longer and charge faster than before.
- Most batteries are toxic and flammable. Take them to a hazardous waste facility. Some retail stores may also take them.

### Compost the Christmas tree – with yard debris, through a nonprofit or at a facility

Recycle your Christmas tree in one of three ways: through a local nonprofit, at a garbage and recycling facility or with your regular yard debris pick-up. Rules and fees may differ depending on where you live. For more info, visit **oregonmetro.gov/christmastrees**

- Some nonprofit organizations will pick up your tree for a fee. Nonprofits are a great choice because they help raise money for worthwhile causes.
- You'll need to prep your tree before disposal. Remove lights, tinsel and ornaments. If you are putting it out with your yard debris, larger trees may also need to be cut into half or thirds.
- Holiday wreaths can often be recycled with trees, but check first. Most recyclers ask you to remove all frames and wire.

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# Color and discover!

**Forest edge at Chehalem Ridge Nature Park**

Much of Chehalem Ridge Nature Park was a tree farm for 30 years. Restoring the land includes creating the prairies and open spaces found in healthy forests. The diversity of habitats supports a greater variety of plants and animals. The forest and prairie each support their own specialist species, and there are animals that need both habitats to thrive. Many of the restoration projects created hard lines between habitats. As the forests and prairies get stronger, those lines will soften and blend into one another.

Chehalem Ridge Nature Park is now open. Follow OregonMetro on Instagram and Facebook or visit **oregonmetro.gov/Chehalem** to learn more.


To view this publication online or find out more about Metro, please visit:

**oregonmetro.gov**

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