



“The call to unimagine the walls between people and nature . . . has been made: We must answer.”



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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 Council President

Lynn Peterson

Metro Councilors

- Shirley Craddick, District 1
- Christine Lewis, District 2
- Gerritt Rosenthal, District 3
- Juan Carlos González, District 4
- Mary Nolan, District 5
- Bob Stacey, District 6

Auditor

Brian Evans



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
- facebook.com/oregonmetro
- twitter.com/oregonmetro
- instagram.com/oregonmetro

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.



Share your nature and win!



Winner: Monet Hampson, Portland

This is one of the first fall leaves I noticed, covered with droplets from a much-needed rain shower. After the stifling smoke of the summer fires, this leaf encapsulated where we had been and the dewy hope of the future.



Finalist: Melissa Walton Hendricks, Portland

On our first morning out of quarantine, we went to A Park where my daughter ran around the field until she was exhausted. We missed that open-air freedom while we were at home!



Finalist: Cheryl Ames, Beaverton

I had rarely seen the elusive green heron before and was thrilled to find it in one of the pools standing on these gnarled roots, perhaps searching for potential prey or just resting in the tranquil, protected setting.

Submit your photo

Win an annual parking pass 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. 23 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.

Continuing conservation in the Sandy River basin

A new 86-acre natural area is Metro’s first land purchase with the voter-approved 2019 parks and natural areas bond measure

Story by Kelsey Wallace



A newly acquired 86-acre property in the Sandy River Basin will protect wildlife habitat, improve landscape connectivity and climate resilience, help provide access for restoration and land management and provide potential opportunities for Indigenous communities to harvest native plants.

The forest southeast of Oxbow Regional Park borders Metro’s 40-acre Kingfisher Natural Area, expanding it to 126 acres and making it easier for scientists and restoration crews to work there. The property includes more than 500 feet of native fish habitat along Trout Creek, which flows into the Sandy River.

“As well as providing regionally important habitat connectivity, an exciting part of this purchase for us is the access it provides for habitat restoration,” said Brian Vaughn, a natural resources scientist at Metro. “We used to have to travel by boat to get to this natural area. Being able to walk or drive in means we can do a lot more in terms of land management.”

Vaughn says the first steps for the property will be assessing and removing invasive species, including blackberries, Scotch broom and false brome. His team will also look at forest management in the area, with special consideration for the wildlife that call it home.

“We know a lot of Roosevelt elk use this area during winter because of its lower elevation,” Vaughn said. “Our goal is to preserve this wildlife connection and help to maintain a safe passage between their winter and summer habitats.”

Once restored, the natural area will improve downstream water conditions for salmon, steelhead and Pacific lamprey. The purchase continues Metro’s focus on connecting existing public lands for water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and protecting scenic values and access to nature for people.

The property cost \$350,000 and was paid for by the parks and nature bond voters approved in 2019. It was the first conservation purchase with money from the 2019 bond. With the purchase Metro is able to protect clean water, fish and wildlife habitat, connect existing public lands and boost climate resilience in the Sandy River watershed, all important goals in the 2019 measure.



Photo: The natural area in the Sandy River Basin provides a home to Roosevelt elk. The bark of the tree above was stripped away by an elk or deer.

Metro protects and restores 2,224 acres of land in the Sandy River Basin, including the 1,000-acre Oxbow Regional Park where visitors can hike, kayak and observe wildlife. Combined with land managed by Metro’s partner organizations, nearly the entire Sandy River Gorge area is now protected, a result of more than half a century of collaboration among private individuals, nonprofit organizations and government agencies.



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, 18 and 21; Feb. 15 and 18; March 18; April 15; May 20; June 19; July 15; Aug. 19; Sept. 16; Oct. 21; Nov. 11, 18 and 25; and Dec. 16.

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

Chinook Landing is closed through Jan. 31 for construction.

Parks and nature bond projects move forward

Story by Cory Eldridge

Metro is working toward the goals of the \$475 million 2019 parks and nature bond measure, which voters overwhelmingly approved to protect clean water, restore fish and wildlife habitat and connect people to nature close to home through new parks, park improvements, trails and other nature-based projects.

Each program funded by the bond requires meaningful community engagement and racial equity, which means prioritizing projects and needs identified by communities of color, Indigenous communities, low-income and other historically marginalized groups. Every project must also promote greater Portland’s climate resilience.

Metro’s work is built on protecting the region’s natural environment, and Metro’s commitments to racial equity and tribal engagement are inseparable from its commitment to nature, restoration, clean water, healthy habitat and climate resilience. The 2019 parks and nature bond is an opportunity to deepen this work.

In the wake of the pandemic, which has caused budget cuts and furloughs and made it impossible to gather community members in person, Metro staff have prioritized the development of projects that invest in the region’s communities and support the values and priorities that community members identified throughout bond development.

Several urgent infrastructure projects at Blue Lake and Oxbow regional parks and Graham Oaks Nature Park are moving forward. These will ensure safety and accessibility at these beloved destinations. They also set up future, community-guided work. Metro is establishing goals to hire certified minority-owned, women-owned and emerging small businesses for this work.

Metro is working with greater Portland’s 27 park providers to distribute \$92 million so they can invest in projects in their communities.

Bond dollars are also going to completing Metro’s newest nature parks: Chehalem Ridge, just outside of Cornelius and Forest Grove, and Newell Creek Canyon, just minutes from downtown Oregon City.

Alongside the purchase of an 86-acre natural area in the Sandy River Basin, Metro’s conservation efforts are focused on working with members of the region’s urban Indigenous community to better support cultural resources and access to them.

Metro staff are developing relationships with the region’s sovereign tribal governments. Metro and the region’s tribes share many conservation goals, like protecting culturally significant plants and animals. Metro has not developed these important governmental relationships in the past, but taking the time to build them will help Metro do better conservation work and support the tribes’ treaty rights.

Stay up-to-date on Metro’s bond work oregonmetro.gov/parksandnaturebond

Serpent sightings

Four snakes to look for in greater Portland.



Common garter snake

Ranging from pencil thin to broom-handle thick, these are greater Portland’s most colorful snakes. Some are red spotted, others have blue highlights, and all have a white-to-lime-green stripe running down their backs.



Northwestern garter snake

A string of a snake, this is the drab cousin of the common garter. It’s a regular resident in cities, found in parks and regularly basks on regional trails. These pipsqueaks mainly eat slugs and worms, but they can even hunt fish.



Ringneck snake

This blue-gray snake sports a distinctive bright red or yellow neck ring that matches its colorful belly. They live in moist microhabitats, like stumps, where they hunt small reptiles and amphibians, as well as slugs, worms and insects.



Rubber boa

These wrinkly, is-that-a-real-snake? snakes are the northern most members of the boa family. Where its massive southern cousins can hunt deer and capybara, rubber boas eat mice and other small rodents. They live in many habitats.

Snakes in the grass equal healthy habitat

Story by Kate Holleran, Metro senior natural resources scientist



The first quick movement over the low grass caught me by surprise. A small snake moved rapidly away from me. Then I saw another. Then another. As I walked up the sunny south-facing slope on a late May morning, it seemed like every footstep generated a fast getaway by another young snake. I spotted a dozen or more over just a short distance.

On that day I was visiting a natural area in the west hills of Portland, walking up an abandoned power line corridor. Metro had recently protected the land with funds from the 2006 natural areas bond measure, and I was exploring the land to get to know it better. There was a mix of forest and shrubby habitat, with scattered logs and branches and thick piles of leaves on the ground. A stream ran along the border and seeped water onto an abandoned access road. The warm south-facing slope brought out the snakes to bask in the sun. I had, to my delight, shown up at the right place to see all these common garter snakes wiggling through the grass.

Snakes play an important role in a healthy ecosystem, though their value is often hidden from us by their low profile on the landscape. Oregon has 15 species of native snakes, and four that are relatively common in Metro natural areas (see sidebar). Among all Oregon snakes, only the western rattlesnake, has venom poisonous to humans. It doesn’t live in greater Portland.

Snakes are both predator and prey. Our local species eat small mammals such as mice, voles, slugs (including the non-native slugs that decimate my garden in the spring), snails, frogs and even fish. The common garter snake can eat rough-skinned newts, whose powerful nerve toxin sickens and kills other predators. Snakes, in turn, are food to other animals. I have often seen birds such as hawks and herons plucking up snakes from grassy fields. Foxes, coyotes and even larger snakes hunt and eat snakes, as do domestic dogs and cats.

Like many people, I always startle a little when I spot a snake as I wander around outside. Then I pause and study their colors. Our local garter snakes can be brightly colored with deep reds, rich creams, even blue and green stripes and spots. The gopher snake’s alternating patterns of tans, browns and blacks help them easily



Top to bottom: A common garter snake coils up by a log. Below, a northwestern garter snake slithers over a fern.

blend into the forest floor. The wrinkly, silky gray rubber boa – a tiny, distant cousin of the boa constrictor – looks like a velvet ribbon.

Equally engaging are some of the science terms for describing the natural history of our snakes. Garter snakes and rubber boas are ovoviviparous: they hold their eggs within their bodies until the eggs hatch, and then mom boots the baby snakes out. Or hibernacula: places where large numbers of snakes will shelter together during the winter. And finally, all of our snakes go into a winter brumation: a period of significantly reduced movement by cold-blooded animals during the cold months.

Much of Metro’s habitat restoration work benefits snakes and other small, less noticeable wildlife such as the Pacific jumping mouse, little brown bat or long-tailed weasel. We provide shelter and food for these little creatures by protecting or adding fallen trees, rock and brush piles, and standing dead trees called snags, and by planting abundant native plants in our natural areas. Making connections between habitat patches helps them move safely to new areas. This restoration work, along with that of many partners, helps ensure that native wildlife can survive and thrive in our urban region.

It is winter now, and many animals are tucked away in hidden places to wait out the cold weather. Many of our snakes are brumating in hibernacula. The woods are quieter these days and I do not expect to see a snake again for a few more months, though I am looking forward to that first springtime startle.

Bare-leaf nature

Story by Cory Eldridge



It’s easy to think that winter is a quiet time for nature. Birdsongs are muted. Few insects buzz about. Mammals, we imagine, are tucked away in their dens. Plants are sleeping, bare of flowers and leaves. At first glance, there’s not much to see.

But winter allows a deeper look at nature, providing a view into places usually hidden



Drey

Drey is the way-too-cool word for squirrel nest. Look into most any tree, and you will find a messy ball of leaves. The leaves look like they got stuck there, but they were gathered up and placed by a local squirrel. Some trees have five or more dreys scattered among big and small branches. Once you spot a drey, you’ll see them everywhere. (Photo: John Hayes, CC)



Sapsucker holes

If you see a grid of small circles punched out of a tree trunk, you’ve seen the work of a sapsucker. In greater Portland it’s most likely a red-breasted sapsucker. The holes are about the size of a straw, and sapsuckers use them to, well, suck sap from the trees. The grid of holes is often large. The grid in this photo, taken at Scouters Mountain Nature Park, was more than five feet tall and at least a foot across.

among all those leaves. You can see farther into the woods, more of the stream bank is visible, and there’s a better chance of seeing wildlife.

The same goes in your neighborhood. The nests, hidey-holes, dinner spots and perches of your local wild neighbors are in view, ready for you to look.



Bushtit nest

Another home that looks like the wind blew it together. Bushtits run in squeaky, drab packs, feeding and living together in squabbling extended families. Their nests are blobs of moss and twigs drooping from branches. Look closely and you’ll see the mousy little birds scurrying about their communal home, dangling and darting like acrobats.



Pacific wren

Heard but rarely seen, the Pacific wren is the forest’s itsy-bitsy songster. The wren’s family name is Troglodytidae, which means ground-dweller, and you’re most likely to see one scampering than flying. In the winter, you have a chance to follow their songs until you can spot them on the forest floor. They’re tiny but brave, and will often happily sing while you watch. (Photo: Karen & Mike, iNaturalist CC)

Feeder flock

One feeder can attract a party of birds



Pine siskin

These rangy finches with speckled chests and slivers of yellow in their wings most love seeds, but they’ll go for suet too. They’re a territorial group, who don’t seem to like anyone much.



Bewick’s wren

That white eyebrow distinguishes this elegant little bird, but so do its scimitar beak and flat, straight tail. A feeder offers one of the few chances to see this bird out of the shadow of shrubs.



Ruby-crowned kinglet

A bouncing ball of a bird, this tiny insect predator keeps his crown under wraps, so look for the white bars on its shoulders and the stripes of gold on its wings and tail.



Bushtits

A bitty gray and drab bird that looks like a ping-pong ball sprouted wings, bushtits mob feeders. They’ll hang from any angle, and may even get themselves stuck inside the crate.

Field guide

SCOUTERS MOUNTAIN NATURE PARK

Story by Alice Froehlich and Diego Gioseffi

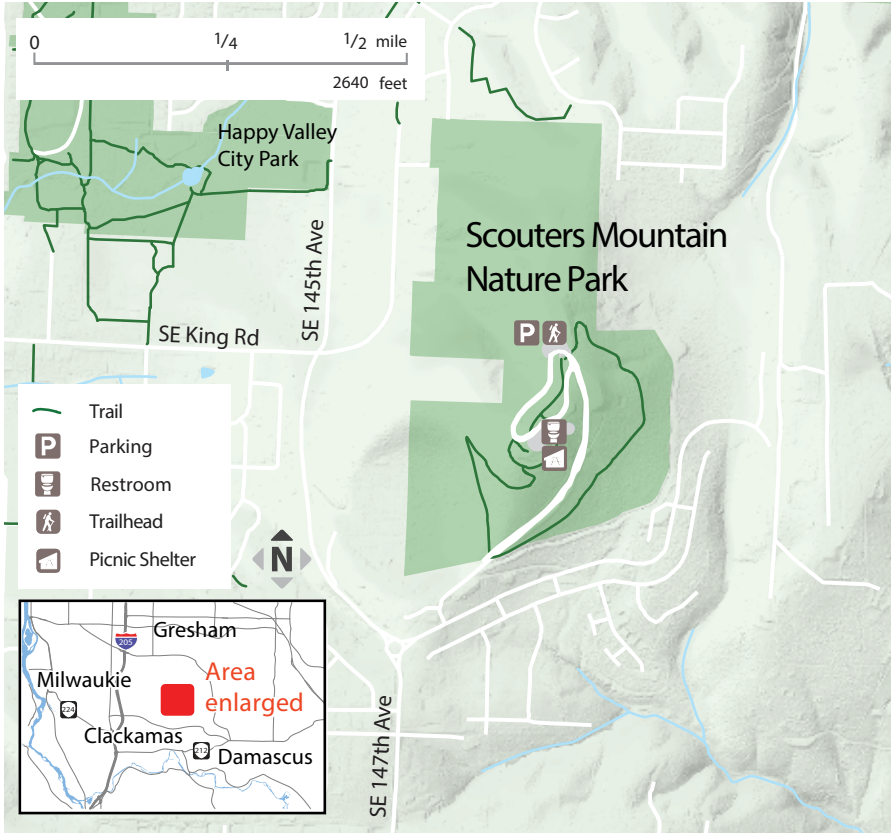
Rising more than 700 feet above Happy Valley, Scouters Mountain gives you an opportunity to stroll under a forest of Douglas fir, big leaf maple and Oregon white oak.

After a relatively easy, few-minute walk from the parking lot, you arrive to the top of this extinct volcanic dome, a perfect area to have a picnic on the open grass or at the comfortable shelter. On a clear day, the stunning view of Mount Hood is one of the best in the region.

As you walk through the easy 1.5 mile twisting trail, take some time to rest on one of the five benches with beautiful miniature botanical art, listen to the birdcalls and take a few healing deep breaths. Many of the huge trees that surround you have been here before the arrival of the first white settlers to this area.

The Clackamas people, the namesake for both the county and the river that crosses it, have lived in this area since time immemorial, and sustained thriving river cultures along the Willamette and in the valleys of the Clackamas and Sandy rivers. Today, descendants of the Clackamas are part of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, a sovereign nation.

Hotter, drier summers have killed many trees at the park, especially red alders, showing



Scouters Mountain Nature Park

ADDRESS
11300 SE 147th Ave., Happy Valley

GETTING THERE
Scouters Mountain is perched at the top of Boy Scouts Lodge Road in Happy Valley, just off SE 145th Avenue.

KNOW WHEN YOU GO
Open sunrise to sunset.
No dogs or alcohol, please.

AMENITIES
Majestic views of Mount Hood. Hiking trails, parking, restrooms and a reservable picnic shelter. (The restrooms and picnic shelter are closed due to the pandemic. Porta-pottie are available.)

oregonmetro.gov/scouters
For more details about all 19 Metro destinations, visit oregonmetro.gov/parks

a visible effect of climate change. Growing urbanization around the park has increased pressure on the wildlife that use Scouters Mountain as a pathway to other forests and natural areas. Metro has removed invasive weeds from the mountain's northern slopes

and planted some 30,000 native trees and shrubs so the forest will continue to thrive for years to come. Restoration efforts have helped create an amazing nature park to explore, as well as habitat for sensitive species such as migratory birds.

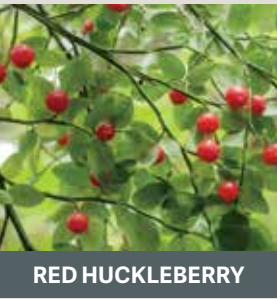
Be on the lookout!



COYOTE



BIG LEAF MAPLE



RED HUCKLEBERRY



ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD

Season by season

SPRING: Spring invites fresh, vibrant green growth in the understory plants; look for blooming trilliums and wood violet flowers. With the warmer weather and longer days, the songbirds return from their winter locations; keep an eye out for warblers and other songbirds eating bugs and foraging in the new tree foliage.

SUMMER: When the Portland area dries out and heats up, the shade of the forest can be a perfect break. With the clear summer days, you can see all the way to the Columbia River and into Washington — truly a breathtaking sight. While you are taking it all in, keep an eye out for nesting birds raising their young.

FALL: The fall rains bring mushrooms, a very important part of a healthy forest. See how many types you can find growing on the forest floor and out of the trunks of trees. As the leaves fall, look for bird nests left over from the summer and check out the snags for evidence of woodpeckers.

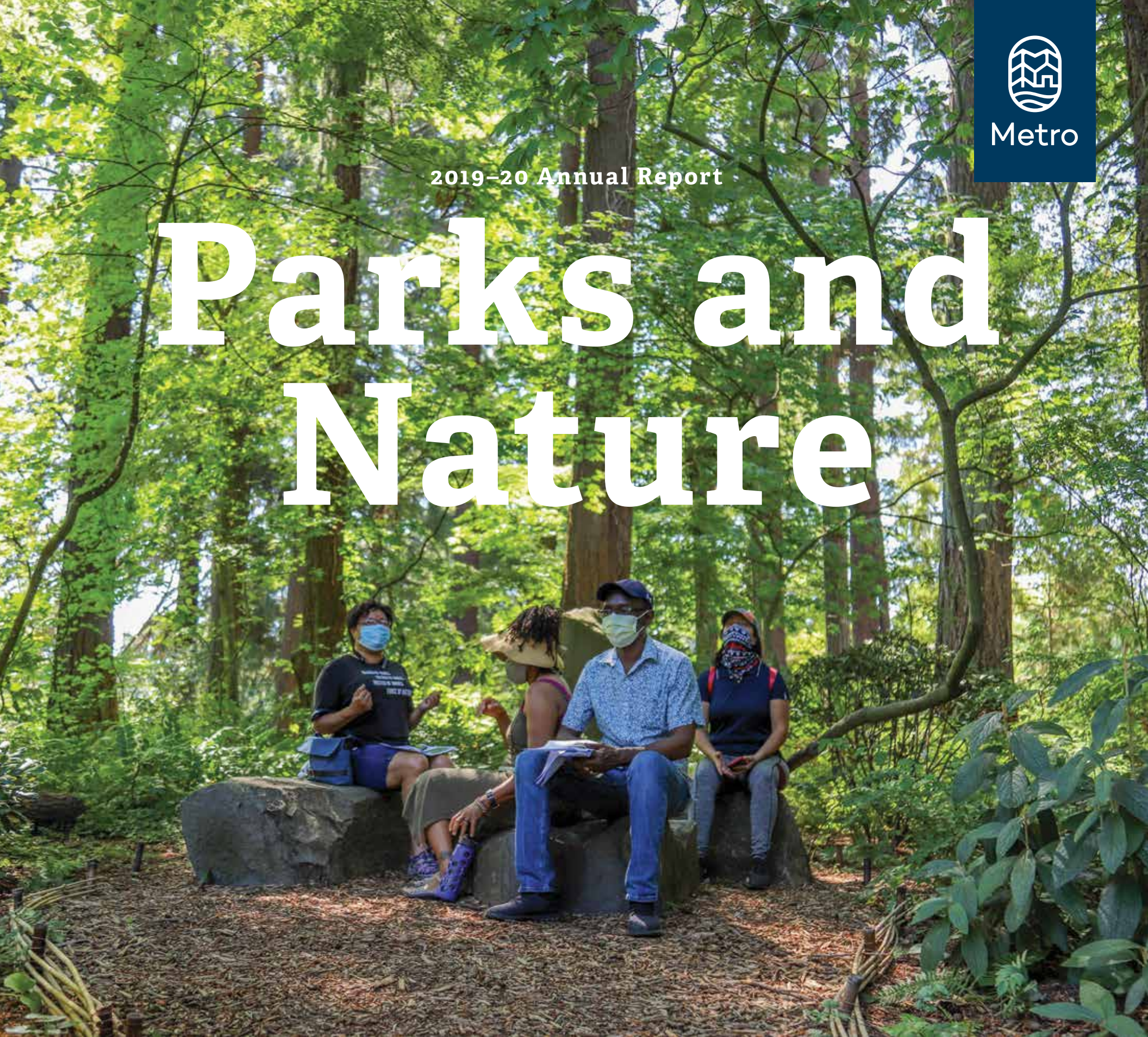
WINTER: In the winter, the fog and mist hang in the tall trees and create a cozy forest feel. Listen for the energetic trill of the Pacific wren, which spends most of its time on the forest floor among the sword ferns. If you're lucky, you can catch a glimpse of this little brown bird hopping about. While your eyes are on the forest floor, don't forget to look for banana slugs and deer tracks.



Metro

2019–20 Annual Report

Parks and Nature



Continued investments strengthen unique parks and nature system in greater Portland

Now more than ever, communities in greater Portland count on parks, trails and natural areas as an integral part of healthy, livable neighborhoods. Since March 2020, COVID-19 has kept people from traveling, gathering in large groups or spending time together indoors, and parks and natural areas close to home provide much-needed spaces to relax and connect. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Metro parks and natural areas have remained open with additional health and safety measures.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the work continues. Parks and nature staff are using virtual tools to connect with community members and develop a work plan to implement the \$475 million bond measure voters passed in November 2019 to protect clean water, restore fish and wildlife habitat and provide access to nature for communities across the region.

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 complex community projects. These projects include an emphasis on advancing racial equity and increasing climate resilience.

Metro will work with community members, partner organizations, local park providers and others to develop a strategy for bond implementation that reflects the bond principles and criteria and achieves regional goals for protecting habitat, 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.

Metro manages more than 17,000 acres of parks, trails, natural areas and historic cemeteries as part of a unique system with nature at its heart. It's possible thanks to voter support for the 1995, 2006 and 2019 bond measures and two levies to help care for the land. Funding from the second levy kicked in July 2018.

The impacts of current investments can be seen on the ground, with cleaner water, healthier habitats and new opportunities to enjoy parks and nature.

Get the whole report online with more photos, stories and details at
oregonmetro.gov/parksandnature2020

More access to nature

New parks provide more opportunities for people to connect with nature close to home. In the past year, construction began at two future nature parks: Chehalem Ridge in western Washington County and Newell Creek Canyon in Oregon City. Both are scheduled to open

in 2021. In July 2019, the Metro Council also approved the master plan for Gabbert Butte, a partnership with the City of Gresham, to create visitor amenities and add trails to the future nature park.



Restoring and maintaining natural areas

Diversifying the region’s restoration workforce has grown increasingly important in recent years as Metro and other organizations in greater Portland invest more in businesses owned by people of color, women and veterans and emerging small businesses. With the latest round of restoration contracts, the Parks and Nature Equity Advisory Committee worked with experts to make the contracts process more accessible to these business owners. The latest contracts process included in-

person interviews with potential contractors so people could talk more freely rather than relying on the traditional request-for-proposals process that emphasizes writing skills. More experienced contractors, like longtime contractor Rosario Franco, were paired with newer, emerging small businesses to provide mentorship. Franco’s crew, pictured here, worked with his crews to plant 175,000 native plants last winter at Multnomah Channel Marsh Natural Area near Sauvie Island.

Habitat restoration

FY 2020



89

Habitat and water improvement projects

2,835

Acres with restoration projects underway

Plantings and weed control

FY 2020



40

Plantings

79

Weed treatments



Education and volunteering

Many people deepen their connection to nature by enjoying a nature education class or participating in a volunteer opportunity. These types of experiences provide guided introductions, group camaraderie and opportunities to learn something new about plants, wildlife, or history in the region’s parks, trails, natural areas and historic cemeteries.

During the COVID-19 crisis, many of these experiences are still available virtually or from

a safe distance. Nature educators have created a suite of activities, including nature education videos and activities that can be done at home or in a local park.

The levy pays for expanded nature education programming, such as virtual field trips, seasonal activity guides and self-guided twilight walks. Volunteers help to restore natural areas, removing invasive weeds, planting native trees and shrubs, picking up litter, cleaning headstones at historic cemeteries and more.

A focus on equity

In fall 2018, Metro released the Parks and Nature Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. The plan brings together Metro’s work to protect clean air and water and connect people to nature with its commitments to improve racial equity in the region. This year, with sustained protests against the violence and racism facing people of color occurring in the greater Portland area and throughout the country, the work to create safe and welcoming destinations is even more urgent.

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 that people of color feel welcome and safe when they visit Metro destinations. It means creating job training and mentoring for people of color so that the department’s workforce looks like the people it serves, which isn’t true now. It means that 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.

Through these and other efforts, Metro hopes that more people of color will gain the benefits of parks and natural areas.



Celebrate together: On a field at Blue Lake Regional Park in fall 2019, the Asian Immigration and Refugee Youth Council hosted its first Asian Autumn Festival to mark two celebrations: Moon Festival, a mid-autumn tradition across much of eastern Asia, and Diwali, a Hindu festival. Although the holidays have their own customs, Youth Programs Coordinator Dan Le says both

have the common theme of light — candles for Diwali and lanterns for Moon Festival — and symbolize different perspectives.

Metro sponsored the community-led activity with its Community Partnerships program.

Investing in community

Community investments support a variety of projects: restoration, nature education, outdoor experiences, land acquisition, capital improvements and visitor amenities to name a few. 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.

In July 2019, Metro Council awarded 15 grants totaling \$800,000 for projects designed to increase racial equity and climate resilience in greater Portland by connecting people of color to nature.

The review committee included local experts in nature education, outdoor experiences, cultural programs, racial equity and related fields. The committee rewarded proposals that leveraged thoughtful, authentic partnerships and collaboration between organizations. Each awarded program has between two and 12 partners, with most bringing together five or six schools, governments, community organizations and conservation nonprofits.



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.

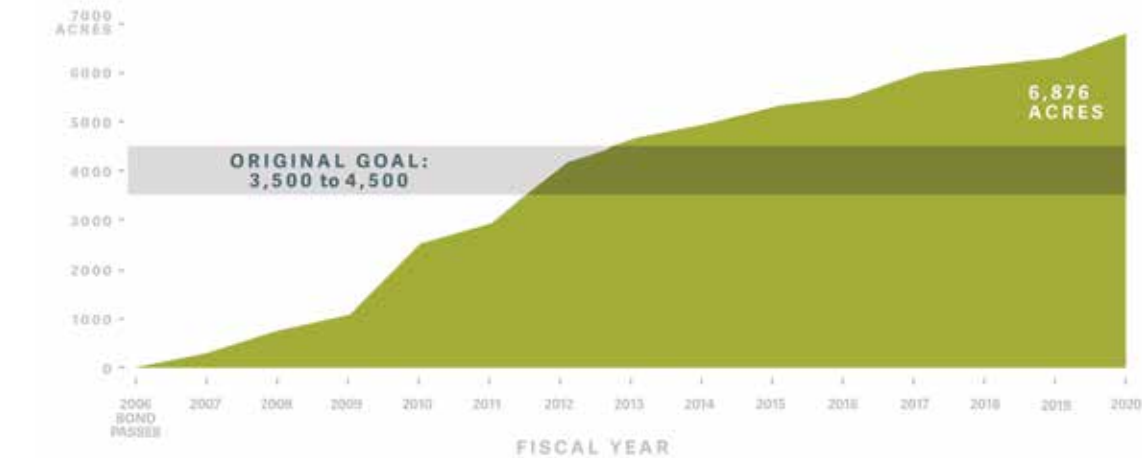
The Natural Areas and Capital Program Performance Oversight Committee continues to provide an independent review of the 2006 natural areas bond measure and, starting July 1, 2018, also provides oversight of the capital program in the levy renewal. That oversight committee is scheduled to meet one final time in late 2020.

The Metro Council is scheduled to appoint a new committee in early 2021 to provide oversight of the 2019 bond measure and the capital expenditures from the levy renewal. The levy, which voters approved for renewal in 2017, provides funding for restoration, maintenance, park operations and opportunities for people to access nature.

This year marked the beginning of the 2019 parks and nature bond. Though most of the bond spending to date has been administrative costs associated with issuing the first round of bonds, community engagement and program development, the coming years will include delivering the capital programs outlined in the bond measure, thanks to voter support.

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.

Land acquisition with 2006 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.

Since acquisitions began with money from the 2006 bond measure, more than 6,876 acres have been acquired and protected – significantly surpassing the original goal of about 4,000 acres.

Parks and Nature spending* FY 2020

	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	\$2,318,585	\$3,260,004	\$0	\$0	\$5,578,589
Access to nature	\$435,519	\$1,643,516	\$2,820,465	\$21,210	\$4,920,710
Park improvements and operations	\$5,112,668	\$2,197,101	\$0	\$221,847	\$7,531,616
Cemeteries	\$853,204	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$853,204
Nature education and volunteer programs	\$96,923	\$694,827	\$0	\$0	\$791,750
Community investments	\$307	\$1,175,776	\$1,722,654	\$42,244	\$2,990,981
Land acquisition and associated costs/stabilization	\$0	\$0	\$4,016,754	\$128,960	\$4,145,714
Administration**	\$3,794,189	\$5,112,163	\$2,363,033	\$812,528	\$12,081,913
Total	\$12,611,395	\$14,083,387	\$10,972,906	\$1,226,789	\$38,894,477

* 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.



2020 parks and natural areas levy

Promised to voters



Actual levy spending THROUGH JUNE 2020





Fires, conservation and climate change

A Metro land manager sees home and work collide during Oregon's worst fire season

Justin! Wake up! I just got a text message asking us to evacuate.

Story and photography by Justin Takkunen, Metro natural areas land manager

My morning started at about 1 a.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 8, with my wife calling me out of bed. Walking into our living room, I saw red and blue lights flashing outside our house. Multiple fire trucks were stopped in front of the house, pausing for a moment to organize and gear up. As some of the trucks drove vanished down the hill below, we followed their path to an orange glow in the sky.

I didn't grab my glasses before I ran out of the house, but I didn't really need them. Our tall Doug firs and all the small trees and shrubs on our property were moving in a way I've never seen. The wind was battering. Branches were thrown from the trees. We had to move to avoid being hit by the debris. We couldn't see flames, but the orange glow covered enough of the skyline that we knew that there was a pretty serious fire somewhere to the northwest of us.

In hindsight, if I had grabbed my glasses, we might have left that night. The fire was much closer than we realized.

We didn't sleep much at all that night as we continued to monitor the orange glow and emergency vehicles. The next day we learned that, only a quarter mile down our road, multiple neighbors had fought the fires bucket-brigade style. A few neighbors whose properties burned did evacuate that night.

The next day was surreal. The fire department patrolled the fire, though they no longer drove with their lights flashing. I decided to go for a quick drive to see what happened the night before. Our internet was down, and cell service is spotty at best on a normal day.

I didn't have to drive far to find out what happened overnight. A group of trees (an invasive species called black locusts that I constantly battle in my work as a land manager, no less) had been uprooted by the winds and

knocked power lines into a dry field, igniting a grass fire that spread into the forest. In that moment, this was all I knew of Oregon's fires: a 10-acre close call down the road.

After returning home, I called into a virtual work meeting. My coworkers told me about the number of fires in Clackamas and Marion counties and the magnitude of them. The next day I was able to get online and view the Clackamas County evacuation map. Our little neighborhood was technically colored red, a level 3 (Go now!) evacuation zone. Our little red polygon was a blip in comparison to what I saw farther east and south of us though. I was thankful that our neighbors and Clackamas Fire were able to stop our small neighborhood fire the first night and next morning. But that camaraderie and bravery would be little against the wall of red heading west.

For the next several days, I can't tell you how many times I refreshed that evacuation map, watching the red areas move farther and farther west. The most alarmed I was during the whole week came when Estacada, Sandy, Canby, Molalla and Oregon City all moved up to level 2 just as other areas moved to level 3. I will never forget the exodus that I witnessed that day. For more than four hours, traffic backed up six miles from I-205 all the way past our house. I questioned if we should be leaving with everyone else, including my folks, who live down the road.

We weren't sitting idle. Our evacuation preparation went from packing medicines, changes of clothes and our hard drives (which we grabbed the first night), to looking through storage and grabbing bins of old photos and sentimental things that couldn't be replaced. We gave each of our three boys a bin and helped them to fill it with what was important to them. It was heartbreaking.

It's a blur now, but two or three days later, the weather improved, things stabilized a bit and there seemed to be more good news than bad. The fires became less and less of a concern for us, although the smoke constantly reminded everyone of what just happened down the road and was still happening east of us.

I won't quickly forget this unprecedented



fire that took so much from many. I feel very thankful for the multiple agencies that fought these fires along with my neighbors down the road! While I was mainly focused on my personal situation, I was and I continue to talk to neighbors of Metro natural areas who would like to talk about healthy forests and their concerns about wildfire.

During a normal year, the idea of a "defensible space" is something I routinely discuss with Metro's neighbors who live where forests and homes meet. Before the fires, I would look at the Douglas firs on my property and think they were far from my house. Now, they feel very close, looming.

We talked about climate change a little more than we have previously when meeting neighbors at their homes that border Metro's natural areas. The conversation often shifts to California's fires where climate change is turning long, intense fire seasons into the norm, and how it is changing things here in Oregon. Most of all we talk about how it seems like as much as was lost and as overrun as much of the state was, many of us, but not all, dodged a bullet in our part of Oregon, and that next time we might not be as lucky.

The fires showed the close link between my work and my home. During work hours, I fret over how to foster healthy forests by removing invasive species and thinning overgrown trees in Metro's natural areas. Now I'm looking at the Douglas firs near my house, knowing even more how they are connected to the forests in the distance.



Who do you imagine in the outdoors?

The way we think about nature makes racial equity, diversity and inclusion harder to achieve in the outdoors.

Story by Alejandra Cortes, Metro nature educator
Photo illustrations by Rayna Cleland

“We need the tonic of wildness ... at the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature.”

– Henry David Thoreau, Walden: Or, Life in the Wood

Henry David Thoreau sought escape from the noise of modernizing life. Using his friend’s cabin in a Massachusetts woods as a gateway, he could leave civilization for a primordial wilderness. From this private space, he admired, consumed and occupied nature, simultaneously lost and found himself in wilderness and, to his transcendently inclined mind, its divinity. Thoreau found freedom from the conflicts of a corrupt society in what he saw as the inherent and separate goodness of pure nature and its unobserved, unpeopled bounty. When in 1854, Thoreau penned the words above, he laid down the most enduring Western idea of nature.

To experience nature as Thoreau describes it is to be the first to encounter, claim and maybe even conquer a mysterious space. To experience nature this way is to be revitalized. The American outdoor

community is built on this relationship to nature. We revel in this mystical adventure, seeking the payoff of exploring new places, ticking off our list of species yet spotted. We go into nature to be restored and renewed, and we also find ourselves tapping into a desire to be the surveyor of the unsurveyed. We want to be explorer mystics.

Thoreau’s nature, for all its beauty and inspiration, is a fantasy. It is as real as Wonderland or Narnia. Or, to be less harsh, it’s just an idea, and it holds all of the experiences, worldviews and prejudices of the people who hold it. Thoreau’s nature – a separate, peopleless place where the individual goes to be remade – has been one of the most powerful ideas in American history, and it has defined how we see nature.

It has also dictated who we imagine belongs in the outdoors and what is the right way to be in nature.



The modern-day nature lover is someone who champions stewardship, conservation and values their access to invigorating outdoor spaces. At first glance, these concepts seem rooted in a desire to protect vulnerable places from human encroachment, preserving nature for the good it does for us and for its inherent value.

This process of defining the boundaries of nature – this is civilization, that is nature; this is a city, that is wilderness – puts a cage around the outdoors, making it accessible only by certain gates and for approved reasons. All of this requires land ownership, land rights and a concept of expertise to determine who should and shouldn't have access. Basically, access assumes inaccessibility. Nature often creates very real barriers to access, but more often these barriers are constructed by us. They are built on foundations laid down centuries ago that established systems of privilege and oppression.

In the years before and following Christopher Columbus' voyage to the Caribbean, a series of papal declarations set the justifications for how Europe's emerging colonial powers could claim and parcel out land that didn't belong to them. The declarations, which developed into the doctrine of discovery, divided the world into a Christian inside that could not be legitimately conquered and a non-Christian outside that was opened to enrich and revitalize those who could "discover" it. The right to claim Indigenous lands and resources was endowed by Christian men and limited to Christian men, and then, after European colonizers began to build a racial hierarchy, to white men.

A linked process was underway within Europe. A centuries-long trend of gating the land was mostly complete. The dwindling woods became game preserves

accessible only to the nobility, and poaching became a crime. In England, Inclosure Acts transformed the countryside from patchworks of commons into unified and agriculturally efficient private holdings. This consolidation underwrote much of the Industrial Revolution, and it impoverished and displaced generations of peasants. Many of them sailed to colonies, filled with hopes and promises that they could do unto the American landscape what had been done to them.

In the young United States of America, the doctrine of discovery joined with the ascendance of private property to catalyze the settler expansion of Manifest Destiny. Land was "discovered" and claimed by the state, through men like Lewis and Clark, and then parceled out to individual white Christian men who would transform it from wilderness to frontier to civilization.

Nature often creates very real barriers to access, but more often these barriers are constructed by us.

But, just as only Christians could discover new lands in the 15th century, only the civilized could civilize land in the 19th. You had to be the right kind of person who did things the right kind of way. This rightness was defined by white supremacy. This justified white settler expansionists to exploit, devastate and attempt the genocide of Indigenous peoples from the land, and to kidnap and enslave African peoples to toil the land but not benefit from it. This notion of racialized civility consigned other races to lesser human status and drew the line between who had access to land.



Through all of this, the connection between nature and people, or at least "civilized" people, loosened and slipped. Nature, wilderness, the outdoors: they became an other place, a separate place.

Where his contemporaries saw a rich land to be exploited (a very positive term at the time), Thoreau saw the great spiritual and intellectual value in nature. Having been separated from nature like most every European, he approached it as a place to cross into and discover. (He also demonstrated this discovery could be one that extracted only experiences, feelings and ideas, and the conquering could be turned inward in a process of self-discovery. But even this gentler approach occurs in the violent wake of colonization and the removal of Indigenous peoples.) Thoreau popularized that nature had value and it could enrich people's lives.

Guided by Thoreau, conservationists like Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir advocated setting aside nature reserves. The two established the poles of our outdoors community, with Muir caring more for the spiritual value of nature as well as its inherent value and Roosevelt seeing a manly playground for his "strenuous life." But both agreed that Indigenous people weren't doing nature correctly and were in the way of people who knew how to do it right. Muir fought for the violent displacement of the few remaining Miwok peoples who lived in the future Yosemite National Park. And they agreed these reserves were not for the benefit of all people. They were for white men, preferably rich ones.

At the same time this "new space" was being set aside for white people, Black, Indigenous and other people of color were being more and more restricted. Black people, who carried and combined many African heritages of connection to land, were locked out of



their nearby natural areas by Jim Crow laws (white people hunted, Black people poached) and evermore terrorizing white supremacy. Indigenous lifeways, which continue to offer innumerable alternatives to Western relationships to nature, were assaulted for generations in an officially supported cultural genocide. This continued, as governmental policy, deep into the 20th century.

The little pockets of nature that were created in cities – parks, swimming pools, beaches – were set for white people to use exclusively, either legally or by placing them inaccessibly far from Black and Brown neighborhoods. When legal segregation and housing discrimination ended and white flight began, suburbs provided white families closer access to once-remote places and simultaneously became a wall further separating people of color from natural spaces. Marketing and imagery of the outdoors, both reflecting and creating its consumer base, was of white explorers and spiritualists trekking into nature, with people of color relegated to roles as primal natives.



Today, the effects of exclusionary policies and designed inaccessibility of outdoor space still linger, but stronger is the institutional disconnect forced upon the millions of descendants of people whose

lives were stolen and exploited on this land. This generational trauma underlays the discomfort and mistrust of the outdoors by many communities of color.

As an outdoor community, we are still in the first generation of attempting to heal these traumas and break down the barriers intentionally placed between Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities and the outdoors. Unfortunately, the toolbox we inherited from Thoreau not only limits us but continues to perpetuate harm.

More and more, we see outdoor-based organizations, which remain overwhelmingly white, promote equity and inclusion initiatives. Most often, these efforts seek to bring people of color, usually children, into the existing programs, activities and mission of the organization. So diversity, equity and inclusion programs focus on providing access through affordable nature experiences, park access and outdoor gear donations.

This generosity seeks to bridge real gaps, but it also reinforces notions of a separate nature, and that a specific group of people hold the right knowledge, the right to the land and the right equipment to access it. It tells people of color that there is a correct way to do nature, and it's not from their communities, when in reality communities of color have deeply rooted relationships with land and waters that endure now and have sustained centuries of healthy ecosystem relationships.

The legacy of naturalist visionaries and colonizers ensure that we view nature as endangered and ultimately as something that is other. Being in nature means wearing the right equipment, having the right permits and holding the right values to ensure that nature remains a pristine wilderness; that it is eternally observable and protected.

The question is who does this model of nature serve and who does it exclude? Historically, this imagined person is a white man. And while who deserves access to nature is now based more on colorblind criteria like temperament and worldview, the people who are most likely to have or be perceived to have these approved qualities are white.

It's only been about 155 years since the abolition of slavery (and the start of ongoing convict lease labor) and just 56 years since the end of the Jim Crow. Tribal termination and the Salmon Wars happened barely a generation ago. Only recently have we seen outdoor-based organizations promote equity and inclusion initiatives. The turnaround between an era of racialized violence and exclusion into a moment swelled with language about equitable land access and visibility in diversity could give you whiplash. It's barely begun.

But it has begun. The call to unimagine the walls between people and the world and to reclaim old, never-gone ways of being with the land has been made: We must answer.



Fix it. Swap it. Share it.

Story and photography by Faith Cathcart

What does a Portland millennial have in common with a Hillsboro dad?

Both are making choices to spend less and share more. As a result, they create less garbage.

And they are not alone. The concept of living lighter – whether to save money or resources – is an idea that continues to grow.

“It’s not really about making this big lifestyle change or becoming a zero waster who only creates one can of garbage in 16 months,” says Kim Waxler, former recycling specialist at Metro. According to Waxler, little shifts in behavior can result in broader impacts.



Swap instead of shop

Amy Phung doesn’t do much clothe shopping anymore. She gets to scratch her fashion itch for free at clothing swaps. She says she loves passing along to others what she no longer wears.

“I don’t really spend a lot of money on clothing that much anymore – because after a while it starts to accumulate and you don’t end up wearing it. I’m turning into a minimalist now. I want less stuff. Less is more.”

Recycle your tree with your curbside yard debris collection service

Residents with yard debris collection programs can recycle their trees at home. Tree preparation requirements and fees vary throughout greater Portland. For details, ask Metro at 503-234-3000, or call your garbage hauler.

oregonmetro.gov/askmetro



Borrow instead of buy

Ethan Corbin has a daughter who’s crazy about science. Checking items out from Hillsboro’s Library of Things lets her explore her interests – like electronics and robotics – at no cost.

“Rather than buying something that you don’t need very often,” Corbin says, “I can come here [to the library] and get something that we share with the rest of the community.”

Repair instead of replace



At a repair café held at the Gresham Regional Library, Lorraine Lynn and her mom Jeanne Johnson hope to fix an inherited lamp that’s a family heirloom. And they agree that their decisions as consumers matter. Both wish that throw-away, short-lived products weren’t the norm.

“There are some really simple ways of looking at how we function as consumers in America,” Waxler says. According to Waxler, it’s up to manufacturers to stop producing things that quickly end up in the trash.

“But as consumers we can still make better choices,” Waxler says.

5 tips for living large without buying more stuff

The internet makes it easy to share with others what you no longer use. Thousands already turn to sites like Rooster.com, Nextdoor.com and Facebook’s Buy Nothing groups where neighbors connect to share resources and skills for free. Here are five additional ways to plug into the sharing economy.

1. Visit a fix-it fair

Repair events are win-win. Volunteers who get a kick out of fixing things – like small appliances, bikes, clothing – get to work on your broken stuff! These popular and free events happen all over. Repair PDX is one online source that keeps a current calendar of repair fairs.

2. Borrow a tool instead of buying it

Don’t want to buy a jigsaw that you plan to use only once? Perhaps a neighbor can help. But if not, check out a tool lending library. It’s easy to become a member at any of these four locations: North Portland Tool Library, Northeast Portland Tool Library, SE Portland Tool Library and Green Lents Community Tool Library.

3. Support a local repair shop

Before you toss that favorite dress with the failing hem, consider mending it. Portland Repair Finder offers a directory of all sorts of repair businesses. From clothes to computers to lawn mowers, repair shops are located throughout greater Portland.

4. Checkout an experience from the library

The Library of Things at the Hillsboro Public Library offers hundreds of items—like bakeware or musical instruments—for checkout. Hillsboro’s collection is the largest in greater Portland, but many libraries are following suit. Check with your local library.

5. Find a swap near you

Could your wardrobe use updating? Someone might be thrilled with what you no longer wear. Resourceful PDX or Swap Positive can point you toward a clothing swap where you can take your old clothes and browse for something new to you.

Color and discover!



Drawing by Zoe Keller

Winter on Sauvie Island

When the cold weather comes, more than 200,000 birds migrate from as far north as the Arctic Circle to Sauvie Island to overwinter. Flocks of thousands of snow geese and other waterfowl will fill whole sections of sky. Sandhill crane clack and dance in the fields as they court and mate. Bald eagles perch in the trees, spying ducks to catch. Shorebirds and little songbirds scurry and flit among the big birds.

Share your coloring creation with Metro! Snap a picture and tag [@OregonMetro](#) on Instagram or Facebook.

