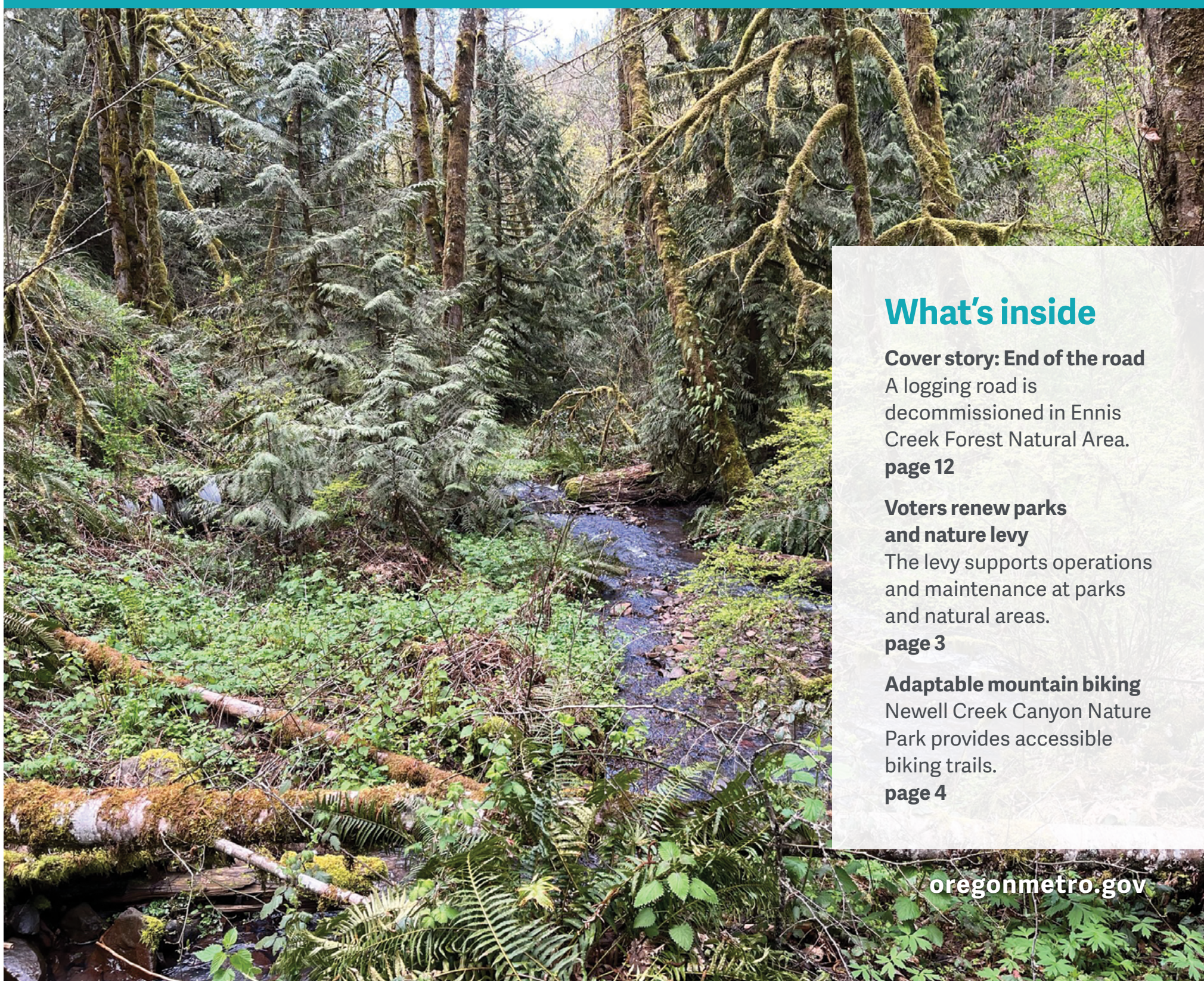
Winter 2023

Metro

“Sometimes you have to do something dramatic to jump-start the healing process.”



What’s inside

Cover story: End of the road
A logging road is decommissioned in Ennis Creek Forest Natural Area.
page 12

Voters renew parks and nature levy
The levy supports operations and maintenance at parks and natural areas.
page 3

Adaptable mountain biking
Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park provides accessible biking trails.
page 4

Metro | Our Big Backyard Parks and nature news and events

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Share your nature 2

Parks and nature news 3

Adaptive mountain biking at Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park 4

2020–2021 Parks and Nature Annual Report 7

New natural area in Washington County 11

End of the Road at Ennis Creek 12

Field guide: Killin Wetlands Nature Park 14

Regional roundup 15

Coloring: Under the ground and fast asleep 16

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.

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Lynn Peterson

Metro Councilors
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Christine Lewis, District 2
Gerritt Rosenthal, District 3
Juan Carlos González, District 4
Mary Nolan, District 5
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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.

Printed on recycled-content paper. 100 percent post-consumer waste. 23001

Share your nature and win!



Winner: Chelsea Schuyler, Vancouver

Just outside Frenchman's Bar near Vancouver, this short-eared owl was on a fence post. It watched as I got my camera, then flew off with its eyes still right on me. What an experience!



Finalist: Tom Spross, Cornelius

At Fernhill Wetlands in Forest Grove, this young green heron had just finished swallowing a small fish when this dragonfly appeared, curious, and flew too close, ending up as dessert.



Finalist: Marshall Miller

In late January as the sun was trying to peek through the trees on Aspen Trail in Forest Park one late morning, it almost looked like a religious experience.

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: Fir Clearing Creek winds through its namesake natural area in Washington County. The new, 39.5-acre natural area was protected thanks to voters investing in the 2019 parks and nature bond measure.

Voters renew Metros parks and nature levy

The levy funds operations and maintenance at parks and restoration efforts at natural areas.
Story by Cory Eldridge. Photography by Fred Joe



In November, voters in greater Portland once again chose to invest in nature, passing Measure 26-225, Metro's five-year local option levy renewal. The approval will continue to fund Metro's efforts to protect water quality, restore habitat and provide safe and welcoming public access to more than 18,000 acres of parks, natural areas, cemeteries and boat ramps. It also funds community-led efforts to connect people with nature through the Nature in Neighborhoods grants program.

Measure 26-225 passed with 73% of voters saying "yes."

Since voters approved Metro's parks and nature bond measure in 1995, they have continued supporting each funding measure for nature Metro has sent their way, including three bond and three levy votes. The wide margin of the vote showed that voters in the region maintain their commitment to parks and nature.

"Despite the challenges facing the region and the country, one thing that always brings people in our region together is nature," said Metro Council President Lynn Peterson. "This result shows that voters know we must support nature as our climate changes."

The levy renewal will not raise tax rates, remaining at the 9.6 cents per $1,000 of assessed property value. For a home assessed at $250,000, that's about $24 a year. Metro expects the levy to raise $19.6 million per year, through June 2028.

Metro Councilor-elect Ashton Simpson pointed to the results as proof that parks are playing an increasingly important role in people's lives.

"Parks were a lifeline for communities during the pandemic," Simpson said. "Places like Blue Lake and Oxbow allowed friends and families to be together during an incredibly trying time. Even before the pandemic, voters loved these places. I'm not surprised they showed their support again."

Simpson will represent communities east of 122nd Avenue out to Troutdale and south to parts of Happy Valley and Damascus.

The levy continues Metro's commitments to create spaces that are safe and welcoming to people of color, members of the disability community, and other people who have often not been well served by parks or been offered equitable opportunities to connect to nature.

The 2019 parks and nature bond and the renewed levy work in tandem. The bond is limited to capital investments, like buying natural areas and building parks. Just last year, Metro opened Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park in Oregon City and Chehalem Ridge Nature Park just south of Forest Grove. The levy, meanwhile, allows Metro to restore the natural areas and run the parks.

"This vote ensures that Metro will be able to maintain its high standards for maintaining and restoring natural areas for another five years," said Bob Sallinger, conservation director for the Audubon Society of Portland. "At a time of such immense challenges, it is great to see how strong the support for protecting and restoring our environment remains, that voters recognize it as an essential part of our communities."

The parks and nature levy provides nearly three-quarters of Metro's operating funds for its 18,000 acres of parks, cemeteries, boat ramps and natural areas. The levy funds rangers to serve park visitors and maintain facilities, supports scientists and land technicians to restore natural areas, and purchases all the materials needed to manage parks and natural areas, from garbage bags and water fountains to oak saplings and shovels.

At least 40% of the levy will go to habitat restoration and land management. A typical project funded by the levy is the winter planting at natural areas. In 2022, restoration crews planted more than 300,000 trees, shrubs and bulbs and spread thousands of pounds of seeds at 18 natural areas.

At least 35% of the funds will go to regional park operations.

Alongside these maintenance and operations funds, at least 15% of levy funds will go to the popular Nature in Neighborhoods grants program. These grants support community-led efforts to connect people with nature.

The grants are awarded each year, alternating yearly between programs that support nature education opportunities and community stewardship and restoration projects. On Oct. 20, the Metro Council awarded Nature in Neighborhoods grants totaling $700,000 to 10 community organizations for nature education programs.

The remaining 10% of funds can be spent across the three program areas (restoration, park operations and grants). This lets Metro be more flexible and efficient in the face of unpredictable needs in its parks and nature operations, such as extreme weather events and unanticipated maintenance challenges.

Get involved:

Register for events at oregonmetro.gov/GuidedActivities

SAT. JAN. 28

Fire-building class at Oxbow Regional Park

In this hands-on class, learn how to build fires safely with modern tools and classic techniques. We'll be using modern approaches rather than primitive fire-building techniques. We will go over basics like using magnesium fire starters, bundling kindling as well as the safety precautions you'll want to take. We will provide all materials needed.

Oxbow Regional Park
3010 SE Oxbow Parkway, Gresham
11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
$6, fee waivers available. Parking, $5.
All ages
Registration required. Difficulty: easy

SAT. MAR. 4

Sedge fest: Planting native grasses at Smith and Bybee

Join us at Smith and Bybee wetlands as we plant native grasses, known as sedges, to support the habitat of our wetland friends. Participants will learn about the importance of sedges, and have the oopportunity to participate in a frog and bird survey in this valuable urban wetland.

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

SAT. MAR. 11

Guided hike at Oxbow Regional Park

Have you ever wanted to walk on the land with a naturalist? Hike with us through an old-growth forest located on the Sandy River. Spring is the perfect time to spot critter tracks on the wet soil, hear birds chirping their love songs and to experience the thickening foliage blanket in the crisp forest air. The hike is moderate, with limited incline and will last around 1.5 hours. We will start by introducing ourselves, learning some brief history of the space and then head out on the trail.

Oxbow Regional Park
3010 SE Oxbow Parkway, Gresham
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
$6, fee waivers available. Parking, $5.
All ages
Registration required. Difficulty: moderate

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. 16 and 19; Feb. 16 and 20; March 16; April 20; May 18; June 15 and 19; July 20; Aug. 17; Sept. 21; Oct. 9 and 19; Nov. 16 and 24; Dec. 15.

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



“The challenge is what makes it fun”

ADAPTIVE MOUNTAIN BIKERS HIT THE TRAILS AT NEWELL CREEK CANYON NATURE PARK

By Jamie Mathis

On a late summer morning, the sun is just starting to heat up the parking lot at Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park as three bicyclists get their gear together to hit the trails.

There are the standards – helmets, bike gloves – and then the bikes themselves, which are anything but standard. The three-wheeled vehicles sit low to the ground. One has a chair-like seat; another has a saddle that tips the rider forward over the front two wheels. These are adaptive mountain bikes (aMTBs), designed to allow people with disabilities to ride on rugged terrain.

“The huge battle is getting trails we can actually ride,” says Kipp Wesslen, who works for Washington County and has quadriplegia. “This is one of the first places that has had some thought around accessibility put into place. There aren’t that many places within easy distance that we can ride, either because of gates, trail width or camber.”

Indeed, until recently even Newell Creek Canyon had a barrier for aMTBs. While the trails had been designed for all-access passage, the gate to the trailhead had been made to have a narrow opening, just enough for an upright bike or baby stroller to pass through – a standard park practice, designed to keep motorized vehicles off the trails. But that opening couldn’t accommodate the much wider wheelbase of aMTBs, which can be upwards of 40 inches.

Max Woodbury, a mapping specialist at Metro who became a quadriplegic in his 20s due to a spinal-cord injury, says that the first time he visited the park, he needed to ask a ranger to unlock the gate in order to start his ride.

“That’s not really accessible,” he noted wryly.

When the park opened, Metro hired a contractor to test the aMTB accessibility of its trails and discovered the issue with the gate. At first, it seemed like it would be a complicated fix requiring a new gate. But park rangers innovated a way to winch the existing gatepost away from the gate, creating a wider opening. Today is the riders’ first time biking the park since the gate has widened – the moment of truth to see if the rangers’ solution has worked.

Once everyone is strapped in and ready to ride, they roll through the gate and pause at the top of the trail. “That’s awesome,” Wesslen notes as each bike cruises easily through.

They start onto the Red Soil Roller Trail, a series of winding switchbacks, which brings smiles to their faces as they prepare for the challenge ahead. Wesslen goes first. His bike allows him to lean forward, with his torso braced by a bucket seat and shin supports.

“You can do a lot of technical stuff on this style aMTB,” says Wesslen. “Anyone riding this has the ability to shift their weight, which makes it better for downhill. It gives you almost the exact same feeling as an upright bike.”

Adaptive bikes aren’t cheap, costing upwards of $8,000 and often closer to $15,000. Thankfully, some nonprofits offer grants to help make equipment more affordable, and the riders say the sport is growing. They generally are able to organize rides at least once a month during good weather.

From left: Kipp Wesslen, Max Woodbury and Loehn Morris head toward the biking trails at Newell Canyon Creek Nature Park. They each ride different types of adaptive mountain bikes, specialized bikes for riders with varying disabilities.



Along with Wesslen and Woodbury, today’s group includes aMTBer Loehn Morris. He follows Wesslen, successfully navigating a steeply pitched turn. He whoops coming out of it and flies off down the trail to give Woodbury space to attempt the switchback.

“I went over on this berm last time,” says Woodbury. Spills are one reason why many aMTBers bring an able-bodied biker with them on rides – today, it’s Jean Perkins, a musician and caregiver to Woodbury. She follows the three aMTBers on her upright bike.

Woodbury pauses and studies the trail, debating how to best enter the turn. After talking through several options, he decides to just go for it and see if he can stay upright this time, saying, “Well, this is what makes it fun. It’s challenging.”











Maple trees shade the trail, an important feature for many adaptive bikers. “Temperature regulation is a huge issue because if you are a full-on quad you don’t sweat,” Wesslen explained. “If you get over-heated you can go into dysreflexia, your blood pressure spikes – it’s bad. You typically don’t sweat below the injury site. Being in shade absolutely helps.”

Adaptive bikers have other unique challenges. After several switchbacks, the riders approach a plank bridge with bumpers that are too close together for them to pass between. Their work-around is straddling the bumper and having an outside wheel on the overage that isn’t more than a couple inches wide. One biker rides his outer wheel up onto the bumper and rolls at a cant across the bridge.

Learn more about how Metro is making its parks and trails more accessible. It goes way beyond pavement.
Oregonmetro.gov/AccessibleNature

Because trails often have hidden hazards like this, aMTB riders take a cautious approach. Before going down a section of trail they don’t know, they queue up and study it piece by piece so they can figure out where the pinch points are, like a steep berm or a rock. Then they decide which moves they need to make the maneuver successful. The goal is to be able to take it at speed on the next lap for the thrill that’s common to all extreme sports.

That’s not always possible. The trails at Newell Creek Canyon are popular enough that a Saturday ride can feel a little like being on the highway at rush hour. As the group lines up to navigate some downhill berms, a biker zooms by them at top speed, creating yet another hazard for them to navigate.

From top: Woodbury follows Morris across a small bridge. Note how Morris' bike must straddle the bridge's cross beam. It's an example of the types of design decisions that make a trail less accessible. Even with this and other obstacles, the three described Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park as one of the most accessible in the region.

Morris reflects on an ideal environment: “I want a trail where my wheels are totally fine the whole time. This is one of the best, most accessible trails close in we have in the area.”

The riders roll back up the hill to the parking lot, using their e-assists to help with the incline. Each can pass through all sections of the trail, gate and parking lot.

The day’s heat is kicking in and it’s time to go home. The riders strip off their gear and load their bikes back into their vehicles. “Let’s get another ride together soon, guys,” says Woodbury, and the others cheerfully agree.

Construction begins at Blue Lake Regional Park

By Hannah Erickson



Summer is usually Blue Lake Regional Park's busiest season, but this fall saw a new level of activity as the construction and demolition phase of park renovations began.

Beginning right after Labor Day, heavy machinery started arriving at and around the park to remove old buildings and begin installing a new water line that will connect the park to Fairview's municipal water system.

"This is an exciting moment for those of us who are working on this project, because it's the point where all the planning we've been doing behind the scenes starts to turn into work that's visible to the public," says capital projects manager Brent Shelby. "Once those bulldozers show up, people know this is really happening."

Renovating a public space with the size and history of Blue Lake Regional Park is no small undertaking. It will take years to complete the work, which is funded by the parks and nature bond measure approved by voters in 2019. Metro is also committed to working with diverse communities around the region to envision how to make the park safe, welcoming and fun for everyone. Outreach to the community about the project is set to begin after these preliminary, foundational tasks are underway.

One project is installing a new water line from NE Interlachen Lane to the park under the north side of NE Blue Lake Road that will provide municipal water service from the City of Fairview to the park. Previously, the park's water came from a well on site, which was difficult to maintain and didn't provide adequate flow. The new water line will keep Metro compliant with local codes and make the park's water supply more reliable and sustainable.

Metro is also demolishing and removing several buildings at the park. These are all structures that are outdated and no longer meet the needs of the park. Buildings being removed include the beach showers, concession stand, Lake House, the boat house, and the park office and garage.

The park's popular fishing pier has also become unsafe. Metro has approved a plan to demolish part of the pier and restore the rest for public use.

Most of the work Metro is doing now is preparing for future improvements to the park. Other parts of it, like creating a new maintenance building that will serve as a hub for Metro's entire park system, may not be something the public has much direct experience with but will allow Metro to better care for all its parks.

Tualatin buys natural area with Metro bond funds

By Samantha Bakall



The City of Tualatin hopes a new natural area will provide future residents and businesses of the 367-acre Basalt Creek expansion with access to the outdoors, create wildlife habitats and bring ecological benefits to the entire area. And they're hoping future residents are the ones who help design the outdoor space.

Basalt Creek Canyon, the natural area within the expansion, is a 6.7-acre property stretching from Boones Ferry Road up and into the eponymous canyon.

Tualatin purchased the property with funds from Metro's 2019 parks and nature bond measure. The bond's local share program provides funding for cities and parks districts in the region to make investments in nature that matter to their local communities. Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District is using its funds on three park projects, while the City of Gresham purchased a forest that community members rallied to protect.

The canyon itself is an ancient geological formation created by volcanoes and is shaded by evergreen trees along the western edge. The natural area will not only provide access to nature, Tualatin parks and nature director Ross Hoover said, but creates an opportunity to connect across the canyon in a way that previously did not exist.

"Part of our duty is to ensure that connectivity, whether as a wildlife corridor or for people to connect and cross through," Hoover said. "Metro local share dollars really provide that opportunity to create lasting and enduring connections."

Just across Boones Ferry Road, a second Metro-supported project is underway.

Three proposed residential developments, including a Community Partners for Affordable Housing complex, will provide the area with hundreds of apartment units, and single- and multi-family homes. Once built, they will be connected to the park by a signaled crosswalk.

Metro is providing funds for the Community Partners for Affordable Housing's Plambeck Gardens project through the affordable housing bond measure, passed by voters in 2018. The development plans to provide 116 affordable housing units. It's one of 35 projects Metro is funding across the region.

While each project has its own goals and timelines, the two project support one another. Planning them together was an opportunity they couldn't pass up, Hoover said.

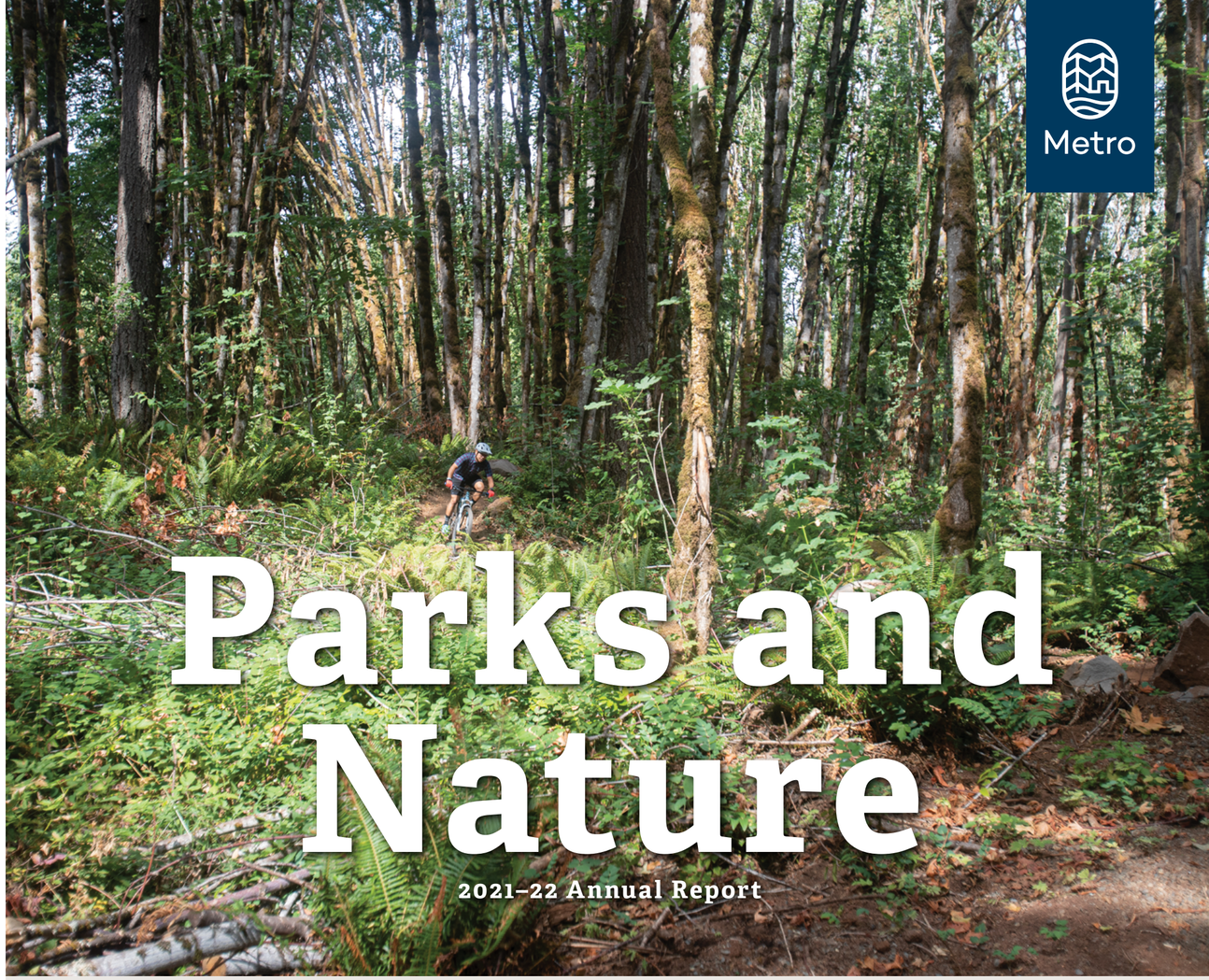
"Within the affordable housing bond goals, individuals and families that reside there need to have access to nature," Hoover said. "Parks and nature goals also identify ensuring that our BIPOC community members and low-income individuals have access to nature. We saw this as a fantastic opportunity for Metro, for the City of Tualatin and our future residents."

Currently, development on the natural area as well as the housing areas has yet to begin, but the city is hoping to use this time to create a process for a meaningful, community-led engagement process that will guide the building processes.

"This is our community's land that we're stewarding for the people of Tualatin," Hoover said. "We're looking forward to the day when we can help facilitate a community conversation about what this future natural area will look like and how our community members will want to use it and interact with it."

As the city pushes out further into previously undeveloped spaces, Hoover said the city is always thinking about providing the best living experience. It's a priority to include natural areas and places to get outside as spaces where health and wellness happen for both future residents and businesses.

"Creating natural spaces like this Metro-funded property creates significant benefits as we think about climate and climate change," Hoover said. "We're creating spaces of refuge for people, we're ensuring that access for all is a top priority, that public spaces are inherently equitable spaces for everyone where everyone feels welcome. And that these are spaces where health and wellness happens."



Metro

Parks and Nature

2021–22 Annual Report

During a challenging year, Metro opened two new nature parks and conserved hundreds of acres of natural areas

Back in 1995, voters had just said yes to a Metro bond that would create a system of greenspaces across greater Portland. The idea was that Metro would purchase properties from willing sellers that held important habitats – like oak forests and savanna, wetlands, prairies – and create natural areas that would protect clean water and support plants and wildlife. Among the first properties Metro bought was a set of parcels in Newell Creek Canyon, a deep, wide ravine that hugs the eastside of Oregon City.

Jump to April 2022, and a crowd of more than 400 cheered on a group of young mountain bikers rolling through a ceremonial ribbon to make the first official bike ride through the trails at Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park.

Since voters approved that first bond, they went on to pass bonds in 2006 and 2019 and a local option levy in 2013, renewing it in 2016 and again in 2022. During this time, Metro bought more properties in Newell Creek Canyon, slowly stitching together about 240 acres of land into a contiguous natural area.

Extensive restoration work removed weeds and strengthened the forest of big-leaf maples and western red cedar.

The bond measures, including the current $475 million bond, allowed Metro to turn the natural area into a nature park with 2.5 miles of hiking trails and 2 miles of dedicated mountain biking trails. Plenty of parking, picnic benches and restrooms welcome visitors. The local option levy pays the operating costs to keep the park tidy and maintain the trails and facilities. The levy also funds ongoing restoration work in the canyon.

"When cutting the ribbon at Newell Creek Canyon, I was reminded it took 30 years from when the first measure passed to where we are today, having gathered enough parcels and then being able to invest in trail access and bike access," Metro Councilor Christine Lewis said. "I want us to keep in mind how long some of this work takes, and we can only achieve it if we have a very clear and well-articulated North Star."

Voters have given Metro that North Star, and then renewed their commitment to creating a parks and nature system that serves everyone in the region. Because of that direction, Metro manages more than 18,000 acres of parks, trails, natural areas and historic cemeteries.

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.

Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park is just one of the projects Metro delivered on in fiscal year 2021-2022. Learn more about how your tax dollars were spent from July 2021 to June 2022.

Get the whole report online with more photos, stories and details at **oregonmetro.gov/parksandnature2022**

Connecting people with nature

Metro opened two new parks during the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park lies in the heart of Oregon City, offering a respite for neighbors and visitors from across greater Portland. Chehalem Ridge Nature Park, just south of Forest Grove, provides more than 10 miles of trails, including three miles of trails for all ages and abilities.

When voters passed the 2019 parks and nature bond, Metro promised to take care of what we already have. Renovation and renewal work at Blue Lake Regional Park moved forward throughout the year, setting the stage for big changes community members will help direct in coming years.


Oxbow Regional Park




Deep Creek meets the Clackamas River at Barton Natural Area

Restoration roadmap

Protecting and restoring land remains at the core of Metro's parks and nature mission, and with direction from the 2019 parks and nature bond, that work is being done with greater input from community members. The bond provides up to $155 million for land for natural areas from willing sellers and for large-scale restoration projects.

As staff developed the road map to guide future purchases, greater Portland's Indigenous community provided foundational insights that shaped the plan. For instance, the road map places greater priority on cultural resources held in natural areas and looks for opportunities to restore streams diverted into pipes. The roadmap was adopted by the Metro Council in spring 2022.

Several properties were purchased with guidance from the roadmap, even as it was being developed, including 52 acres at Killin Wetlands Nature Park and 32 acres at the confluence of the Clackamas River and Deep Creek.

Habitat restoration

FY 2022

126
Habitat and water improvement projects

4,673
Acres with restoration projects underway

Plantings and weed control

FY 2022

51
Planting projects

76
Weed treatments


Blue Lake Regional Park

Ongoing commitment to equity

As a park provider with three boat ramps and multiple parks featuring lakes or rivers, water safety is a priority for Metro. Life jackets are on display and free to borrow at the entrance to Broughton Beach and Blue Lake Regional Park's swim beach. At Oxbow, the easiest way to find a good spot to access the Sandy River is to look for the colorful life jacket stands on the side of the road. These free-to-use life jackets help ensure everyone taking a dip at a Metro park can do so safely.

To make life jacket access equitable, Metro needed to go a step further. Drownings happen disproportionately to people of color. In part, that's because Black and Brown communities have less access to outdoor gear. Over the summer of 2021, Metro purchased 500 life jackets and worked with community organizations to get life jackets to their community members. Building on that success, Metro distributed 3,500 over the 2022 swim season.

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 means working with community organizations to get people of color life jackets.



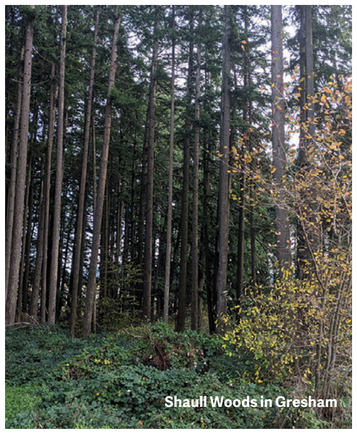
Building Blue Lake better

Renovations at Blue Lake Regional Park began earlier this year, with crews preparing to install a new water line needed to boost fire safety. Now preparations are underway for the next phase of improvements at the park, starting with the demolition of several old buildings and the modernization of the building that serves as the home base for most of Metro's park maintenance operations.

It's a big step forward for the renovations plan, and an even bigger step forward for Metro. This project will be the first at Metro to employ the Construction Career Pathways framework, a plan to increase access to the trades for women and people of color in greater Portland.

"We launched the Construction Careers Pathways Project to make a leap forward for an equitable economy while supporting our construction industry," said Metro Council President Lynn Peterson. "We're excited to see that work get underway."

The Construction Careers Pathways Program is important for Oregon's economy for several reasons. About a fifth of the region's skilled trades workers are nearing retirement age. The region is expected to need about 15,000 more construction jobs in the decade to come. Breaking down barriers to employment for women and people of color and helping them grow trade careers will make it easier for greater Portland construction companies to keep pace with the region's growth.


Shaull Woods in Gresham

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.

Gresham was the first city to put its local share dollars to work. Community members around Grant Butte had organized to protect an 8-acre stand of trees on the slope of the butte. "Our community was very, very clear in making their voices heard," said city councilor Eddie Morales, "We hadn't seen this kind of mobilization. It was from a diverse set of communities: Latinos, Black, AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander)."

The city's $2.45 million in local share funds were used to purchase the property, adding it to a complex of Metro and City of Gresham properties on the butte and surrounding wetlands.

In fall 2021, the Metro Council awarded nine grants totaling $700,000 for projects that improve water quality and fish and wildlife habitat, create and deepen partnerships between community institutions and organizations, and address racial inequities in the conservation movement.

These grants supported projects that will create community gardens, restore creeks and other habitats, re-green concrete spaces and support STEM education for children of color and children of families with low incomes. The grants are funded by the parks and natural areas local option levy.

"Funding [went to] projects designed to support the needs of communities of color with an emphasis on building transformational partnerships for the future and more diverse conservation workforce and leaders," said Mychal Tetteh, community services director of Metro's parks and nature department.



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 three levies.

The very last 2006 natural areas bond measure's funds were spent this year, putting an end to a tax-payer investment that achieved far more than it was expected to. The $475 million 2019 parks and nature bond measure now fully holds the legacy of continuing investments to protect land, improve parks and natural areas and support community projects. All six of the 2019 bond measure's program areas are operating at full speed.

Metro's bond work is overseen by the Metro Council and the Natural Areas and Capital Program Performance Oversight Committee. The committee provides critical community oversight and ensures Metro fulfills the promises made to voters.

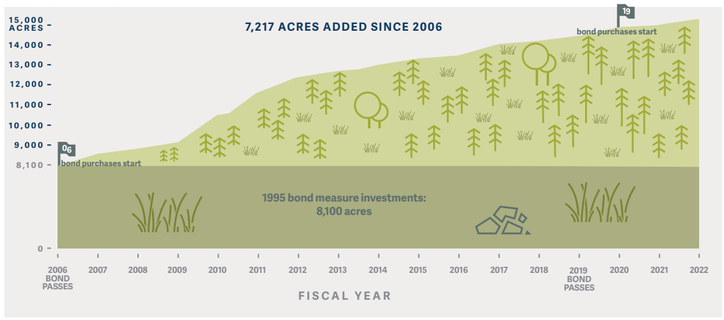
The Metro Council placed a high priority on creating a committee that reflected the diversity of greater Portland as well as formal expertise and expertise from lived experiences.

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: On left, Metro Council President Lynn Peterson. Top row: Councilors Shirley Craddick and Christine Lewis. Middle row: Councilors Gerritt Rosenthal and Juan Carlos González. Bottom row: Councilors Mary Nolan and Duncan Hwang.

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.

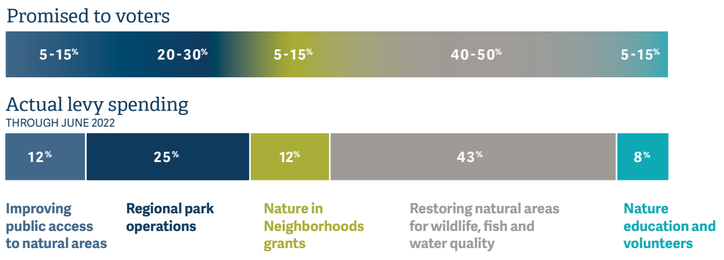
The last of the funds from the 2006 bond were spent or set aside for specific projects in fiscal year 2021-2022. In 2006, Metro's goal was to purchase 4,000 acres with the $168 million allotted to the acquisition program. Because of its outstanding credit rating, Metro was able to provide the program $210 million, which was used to acquire more than 6,800 acres. The 2019 parks and nature bond measure continues the work of the 2006 bond measure. Over the past year, Metro has added 240 of acres to its portfolio of natural areas.

Parks and Nature spending*
FY 2022

	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	$652,734	$5,106,547	$0	$0	$5,759,281
Access to nature	$50,000	$454,518	$417,128	$2,696,302	$3,617,948
Park improvements and operations	$2,643,393	$2,864,695	$0	$1,299,355	$6,807,443
Cemeteries	$1,541,813	$0	$0	$0	$1,541,813
Nature education and volunteer programs	$0	$1,006,863	$0	$0	$1,006,863
Community investments	$0	$952,768	$(52,928)	$3,179,875	$4,079,715
Land acquisition and associated costs/stabilization	$0	$0	$548,969	$6,423,520	$6,972,489
Administration**	$485,246	$6,011,414	$916,337	$4,071,612	$11,484,609
Total	$5,373,186	$16,396,805	$1,829,506	$17,670,664	$41,270,161

* 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.

2022 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

New natural area in Washington County

Story by Rebecca Koffman







Using funds from the voter-approved 2019 parks and nature bond measure, Metro recently purchased a steep canyon in unincorporated Washington County. The 40-acre property, now named Fir Clearing Creek Confluence Natural Area, includes upland forest, waterfalls, three fish-bearing streams and is home to dozens of native plant and animal species.

It is the first property ever to be purchased for conservation in the Heaton Creek watershed and is an anchor for future conservation investments there. Forested headwater creeks on the property provide cool, clean water to the Tualatin River and offer opportunities to improve water quality, habitat connectivity and climate resilience in the wider area.

The property cost $1 million. The new natural area is within Metro's Lower Tualatin Headwaters Target Area that links Chehalem Ridge to the west and the Tualatin River floodplain to the north. The target area includes dozens of small streams.

The natural area is enclosed by private properties and has no road access. To see a similar habitat, visit Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park in Oregon City or the Legacy Creek Trail at Graham Oaks Nature Park in Wilsonville.

Over the last couple of decades, Metro has acquired and protected 308 acres along Baker Creek, another important tributary one ravine to the east. Like those earlier purchases, Fir Clearing Creek Confluence Natural Area was protected because of its high conservation value, including its contributions to keeping the Tualatin River's water cool as summers get hotter. There are no plans to build trailheads or parking lots.

"Because Baker and Heaton are part of the same system, it was really natural to expand our work from Baker to include Heaton," says Jonathan Soll, Metro's science and stewardship division manager. "In focusing our efforts on streams in the same watershed that are identified as priorities for salmon recovery we are able to get more out of our investment than by scattering our acquisitions more widely on the landscape."

He explains that Heaton and Baker Creeks join a few miles downstream of this new property before flowing into the Tualatin River at Metro's Quamash Prairie Natural Area. Just downstream from that is the Tualatin National Wildlife Refuge: "So everything we are doing to protect water upstream is making things better in this area that our country and region has so heavily invested in."

Indigenous community members were deeply involved in the planning process to identify the types of habitats Metro should focus its energy on acquiring and conserving. The 2019 bond also directed Metro to emphasize properties with cultural resources, meaning plants and animals Indigenous community members use for ceremonies, food or materials for craftworks.

The creeks on the new property provide spawning and rearing habitat for salmon, steelhead, cutthroat trout and Pacific lamprey. "When we protect healthy forests, streams and wetlands," Soll says, "we are protecting a range of native species including many that are fundamental to the traditional lifeways of Indigenous people of the region."

The upland forest on the property provides habitat for resident and migratory birds, small and large mammals and many native plants, including western red cedar and beaked hazelnut.

Healthy forests shade headwater streams, providing a buffer as summers get hotter and rain patterns change. Models of how climate change may affect the region show that in the long term there may be less rainfall but severe storms are likely to increase in number and intensity.

Soll explains that when rain falls on roofs, parking lots or roads, most of the water runs off immediately. In a healthy forest, rain makes its way through the groundwater system before slowly being released into the stream. This means there is less danger of flooding during storms and more water available in late summer when rivers are at low flow. (Low flow means warmer water which is bad for salmon.)

Going forward, Metro staff will do initial work at the property by marking boundaries, removing old culverts from the creeks to improve fish passage, and getting rid of holly, blackberry and other invasive plants. They will also prepare the house on the property for lease. The residence is at the top of the canyon, far from the streams, and is in good condition. Rather than spend money to deconstruct the home Metro will lease it and use the money to support its parks and nature program.

"This is the beginning," Soll says, "of what's likely to be a multi-generational effort to protect habitat and water quality in the lower Tualatin and headwaters target area."

Fir Clearing Creek Canyon

Size: 39.5 acres

Purchase price: $1 million

Neat features: Three creeks (Heaton, Fir Clearing, unnamed), waterfalls, many seasonal springs and streams.

Now protected:

- 975 feet on both sides of Heaton Creek
- 1,350 feet on both sides of Fir Clearing Creek
- 740 feet of one side of an unnamed tributary

Habitats: Young- and old-growth forest, streams, springs and waterfalls that provide cool, clean water to the Tualatin River.

Animals: Fish, Coho salmon, steelhead, Pacific lamprey, cutthroat trout. Freshwater mussels. Birds including band-tailed pigeon. Small and large mammals. Northern red-legged frogs.



End of the road at Ennis Creek

Story and photography by Jaime Mathis

Removing broken-down logging roads improves forest health and cleans water headed to the Multnomah Channel and the Columbia River.

Maple trees and young evergreens stand at the entrance to Ennis Creek Forest Natural Area on a hillside on the northwest border of Forest Park. With so many trees, it's almost impossible to imagine this spot was clearcut less than 20 years ago. Here in the Tualatin Mountains, a near continuous swath of park and managed wildlands span thousands of acres along Portland's northwest corner.

Ennis Creek Forest's 350 acres of formerly logged land was purchased by Metro with money from bond measures passed in 1995 and 2006. An inconspicuous gate marks the entrance to what feels like a charming country path leading down a hill and around a corner. The road is just about the only sign of the former logging operations, and it is being unbuilt in a process called decommissioning.

Decommissioning these old logging roads involves removing every culvert, recontouring the land and digging up inches of compacted gravel so that newly planted roots and water can penetrate the soil. The ultimate goal of this dramatic remodel is to stop the horrendous damage that happens when a road washes out. This is done by returning the land to a near-natural shape through a process called "scarifying" (pronounced SCARE-i-fy-ing).

It's as intense as it sounds and requires heavy excavation equipment to literally rip up the top 12 to 18 inches of ground along the entire logging road. Looking at all the plants and trees growing in the area, it almost seems unnecessary. Isn't nature taking care of itself?

Adam Stellmacher, one of Metro's natural resource specialists, drives up to the gate. Wearing boots, jeans and T-shirt, Adam has the look of someone used to being in the outdoors.

Adam opens the gate and drives slowly down the bumpy road. It's a beautiful drive along a grassy road, but looks can be deceiving. He passes a pile of twisted metal – the remains of old culverts pulled from the logging road during the in-water work window, a period running from mid-July through the end of September when work can be done on streambeds and have minimal impact on fish and wildlife. The culverts – pipes that channel water under the road – are part of a highly engineered piece of infrastructure that won't just disappear with time.

Adam says that the road surface is so impermeable that rainwater runs down it in accelerating sheets. Making it worse, many of the culverts have broken, clogged up or otherwise failed. So instead of being channeled



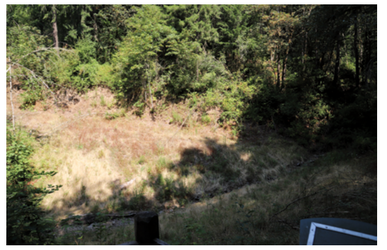
under the roads, the water pools on the road. It's a recipe for mudslides, and the road has washed out in multiple places. The slides dump catastrophic amounts of soil and gravel into streams. And the site of the slide becomes a persistent wound that continues to erode.

With more than two miles of road to decommission, there are 12 culverts to remove and 18 water bars to install. Adam explains that water bars are horizontal channels cut across the decommissioned roads to slow water down and reduce erosion. Then the land will be "fuzzed up": the loose soil will be seeded and planted with native plants like Oregon grape, salal and sword ferns that will create soft ground that water can soak into. It should be hard to tell a road was ever there.

Once the heavy construction equipment has done its restoration work and is gone, there should never be a machine bigger than a chainsaw on the site again.







Right now, it's the exact opposite of a peaceful, non-mechanical site. The sound of a heavy diesel motor punctuates the air near the stream bed. The ground slopes steeply toward a creek bed where an enormous excavator busily removing a culvert is dwarfed by the high sides of the canyon. "Sometimes you have to do something dramatic to jump-start the healing process," says Adam, picking his way down the newly shaped ravine and up the other side to the completed first stage of work.

Once the culvert is gone, the excavator will reshape the creek bed and place boulders. With these topographical changes, and through using the inherent water-slowing wisdom of native plants like salmonberry, willow and cedar, sediment will be captured, reducing erosion. It's called "roughing up the creek," and it helps slow the water down, a vital part of healing eroded lands.

On the other side of the ravine, the land feels more organic, less linear, and it's hard to pick out where the road actually went. The ground is uneven and covered with straw, ferns, and beneath the straw, seeds. Adam looks happy as he notes the ferns. He didn't ask the construction crew to place them there, but they've done enough projects like Ennis Creek to understand how to quickly heal the land. By next spring, Adam says, the ferns, grass and other native plants will be standing up and you would be hard pressed to tell a road had been here at all.

Restoration is an ongoing learning process that can offer valuable takeaways for informing future projects. Metro keeps track of the tools and techniques that have worked in other initiatives, hoping that they can be useful to future projects like Ennis Creek Forest.

During the 2019 restoration and decommissioning of logging roads at McCarthy Creek Forest Natural Area, which lies just up the road, Metro discovered several approaches that are being applied at Ennis Creek Forest.

Andrea Berkely, a natural resource scientist at Metro, will be using one of those successful methods to stabilize the stream banks and capture micro-particles of sediment so downstream water stays clean. She plans on laying down coconut coir mats, which resemble rough-fibered, tightly woven fishing nets. The mats hold juncus, a grass-like plant, which will send its roots into the steep stream banks and keep the soil in place.

Andrea says juncus' tiny, needle-like leaves are amazingly effective at speeding up the healing process, especially at stream headwaters. "Headwaters, where the stream begins, are underappreciated in our stream networks," she says. "Pound-for-pound, headwaters are so important for controlling stream sediment and nutrition downstream."

This section of Ennis Creek Forest is part of an upland watershed. It's important for the water in the creek and its tributaries to move slowly so it better gathers nutrients from plants, funguses and animals that fall into the stream and carry them to lowland habitats, where salmon and other wildlife depend on the nutrition. Adam says that decommissioning logging roads like the one at Ennis Creek Forest gives everything that lives downstream a healthier, more stable habitat, which means better food, better water and flood control, and more diverse ecosystems.

Over at McCarthy Creek Forest Natural Area, Adam shows what the future looks like for the decommissioned road at Ennis Creek.

Clockwise from left, opposite page: A newly decommissioned stretch of road lies under straw at Ennis Creek Forest Natural Area. Earthmovers shape the slope of a creek bed. A pile of crumpled metal is the remains of a culvert. At McCarthy Creek Forest Natural Area, it's nearly impossible to see where a logging road once wound through the forest. Adam Stellmacher has overseen multiple road decommissionings in the North Tualatin Mountains.

This site is noticeably different due to larger and more prevalent Douglas fir, remnants of a commercial forest that has been left to mature. A functioning gravel road makes a gently undulating loop through 402 acres – land that protects more than five miles of McCarthy Creek and its tributaries.

It's a peaceful hilltop drive along the main gravel road. After a mile or so, Adam pulls off to the side and walks down another sylvan lane which is actually a non-decommissioned section of a spur road that was decommissioned further down. While it has grasses growing on the surface, it's clear that it hasn't been scarified as there are no native plants growing and the ground is compacted and uniform.

About 400 yards down, Adam stops at a nice viewpoint. A big boulder and fence marks the end of the non-decommissioned road and the start of rehabilitated land. While the barriers are clearly there to protect the stream area it's unclear why it needs protection since it looks so pristine. Adam says that's the whole point. You can't tell where the old logging road ran. It looks like an undisturbed meadow peppered with bushes and trees. The land has been healed and is functioning as it was intended to.

Back at his car, Adam pushes his hat back and reflects on the life-cycle of decommissioning logging roads on sites like this. He says from initial planning to final planting, 8 to 10 years can pass. While this may seem like a long time, he says it's worth the effort. "This is joyful work," he says.



Field guide

KILLIN WETLANDS NATURE PARK

The waters of Killin Wetlands stretch – calm and serene – to mirror the open sky, and they mix with islands of sedges and willows that hum with life. Diversity thrives at the edges, and this 640-acre natural area offers a special experience where rolling hills, an ancient swamp and the work of North America's premier rodent come together as one.

Once part of a patchwork of peat soil wetlands that covered more than 10,000 acres in the Willamette Valley, Killin Wetlands may be one of the last wetland habitats of its kind. Thanks to the work of generations of beavers, slow-moving water allowed dead plants to sink to the bottom and build a rich peat soil that supports an abundance of plant and animal life.

One hundred and twenty five years of draining the swamp for cattle ranching exposed the fragile peat soils to air, oxidizing them and causing them to collapse. Today Killin Wetlands resembles a lakebed that is now many feet lower than it was a century ago. Wetlands specialists expect the lost peat soils to slowly rebuild over the next century.

Cedar Canyon Creek slopes in from the north, providing water to the wetland and a habitat connection to the rolling hills of the Coast Range.

Home to a barn owl, the dairy barn features a beautiful piece of artwork by the Westside Quilters Guild called "Doves in the Window," making it part of the Quilt Barn Trail of Oregon's Washington County.



Killin Wetlands Nature Park

46280 NW CEDAR CANYON ROAD, BANKS

DRIVING
From Portland, head west on U.S. 26, then take the exit for Highway 6 toward Tillamook. Stay on Highway 6 for 3 miles after Banks. You will see a big wetland area on your right. Turn right onto Northwest Cedar Canyon Road. Stay on Cedar Canyon Road as it curves right at the intersection. After about 1 ½ miles, turn right at the big, old barn on your right.

KNOW WHEN YOU GO
The park is open sunrise to sunset. No pets, please.

AMENITIES
Parking, restroom, trails, picnic tables.

In the neighborhood For a dose of that cozy, small-town feeling, stop by the community of Banks just before you reach the wetland. The Hop Cycle Brewing Company has a great selection of fresh-brewed beers to lighten your load after a walk in the wetlands.

This site is recognized by the Audubon Society of Portland as an Important Bird Area and is a featured stop on the Willamette Valley Birding Trail. Birders flock to Killin Wetlands to see and hear three birds that are hard to find: the Virginia rail, sora and American bittern.

Killin Wetlands is a year-round destination for visitors of all ages that invokes a sense of curiosity and exploration of a rare ecosystem in the Willamette Valley. Killin Wetlands is one of Metro's newest parks. Trails, restrooms, picnic tables and benches provide visitors a restful space to enjoy birding and beaver spotting.

oregonmetro.gov/killin

Season-by-season highlights

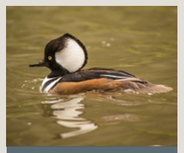
SUMMER: Killin Wetlands is an open site, so be prepared for sun. Dusk is a great time to catch a glimpse of beavers or river otters. Pink blooms on Douglas spirea shrubs decorate the wetland, and baby birds test their wings. Watch for American kestrels hovering above the fields, keen on catching a vole or mouse.

FALL: Roosevelt elk wind down Cedar Canyon, leaving tracks and scat as evidence of their nighttime wanderings. The rains return to refresh the wetland, and pintail ducks by the thousands stop for rest and food on their long trip south.

WINTER: Ducks, geese, hawks and eagles return from the north to settle in for winter. Watch for a sudden flush of ducks taking to the sky – a sure sign that a hunting bald eagle is near. Hooded merganser, great egret, northern harrier and merlin can all be seen here. Killin Wetlands hosts a dense population of northwestern salamanders that lay their eggs in the winter water.

SPRING: The wetland comes to life. Geyer willow, Oregon ash and black cottonwoods burst forth with new leaves, and the migratory songbirds soon follow. Listen for the bubbly chatter of the marsh wren, and the "fitz bew" song of the willow flycatcher.

Be on the lookout!


HOODED MERGANSER


WESTERN TIGER SWALLOWTAIL


AMERICAN BITTERN


DOUGLAS SPIREA



Tools for living

TELEVISION WASTE AND DISPOSAL TIPS







Story and small photos by Arashi Young

Many people choose to upgrade their television sets during winter. Holiday sales, beginning in November and lasting until spring, encourage consumers to clear the shelves to make room for new TV models.

It's a yearly retail cycle that can lead to a lot of waste and a lot of confusion about the best way to get rid of electronics people no longer want.

Before buying a new set, consider purchasing a used one. Buying used goods reduces the impact of manufacturing – getting more use out of the resources that went into design, production and transport of products. Used or refurbished TVs will often sell for a fraction of the cost of a new model.

If purchasing new, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) suggests looking for energy efficient products that carry the Energy Star label.

Some TV models also have fewer environmental impacts during manufacturing. For example, some models use recycled plastics in their components. The Global Electronics Council has created a tool to rate and suggest more environmentally friendly TVs. The Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool or EPEAT can be found at www.epeat.net.

TV packaging disposal

A new television set often comes with a lot of packaging – some can be recycled and some should be thrown in the trash.

The cardboard box can be recycled if it is clean and dry, otherwise it is trash. Flatten cardboard boxes and cut up any boxes larger than 3 feet in any direction. Plastic wrap and plastic strapping should be thrown into the trash.

Styrofoam packaging can't be recycled at home, so skip the curbside recycling bin. The Agilyx facility in Tigard accepts Styrofoam for free. Metro South transfer station in Oregon City accepts Styrofoam for an $18 fee.

Getting rid of unwanted TVs

In Oregon, it has been illegal to dispose of TVs in the garbage, landfills or incinerators since 2010. The disposal ban requires people reuse or recycle televisions, computers and monitors.

If the television still works, consider reuse or resale. Ask your community if there is someone who could use your TV or donate it to a secondhand store or reuse organization.

Broken televisions can be recycled for free through the Oregon E-cycles program. The program also provides free recycling of computers, monitors, printers, keyboards and mice. Call the E-Cycles hotline at 1-888-532-9253 to find the collection site nearest to you. You can bring up to seven electronic items for recycling at one time at an E-Cycles collection site or Metro's transfer stations.

What to do with remotes and cords

Don't toss that old remote control in that trash, especially if it has batteries inside. Leave the cords out of the recycling bin – they aren't recyclable at home and will clog recycling sorting machines. Donate your unwanted remotes and cords to electronics recyclers or secondhand stores where they can be recycled or reused.



Take your used batteries to a hazardous waste collection event or a Metro household hazardous waste facility. Hazardous waste disposal is free for households, up to 35 gallons per household per day.

For more information on waste prevention and recycling Ask Metro at 503-234-3000 or www.oregonmetro.gov/askmetro



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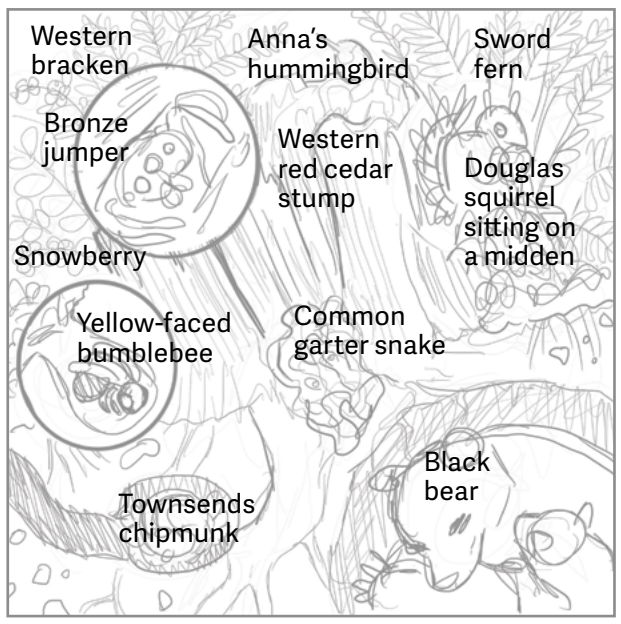
Color and discover!



Under the ground and fast asleep

Black bears are the best-known hibernators in greater Portland, but they aren't the only animals who take energy-saving snoozes in the winter. Bumblebees bury themselves in the soil, and spiders tuck away in leaves, and enter a state called diapause. Gartner snakes cuddle up in stumps and enter brumation. Tiny warm-blooded animals go into torpor, a sort of short-term hibernation. For hummingbirds it last just a night, while chipmunks conk out for a few days. Squirrels sleep a bit more, but they still spend plenty of time finding the food they stashed away for a cold day.

Follow OregonMetro on Instagram and Facebook or visit **oregonmetro.gov/parks** to find out when the park opens.



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oregonmetro.gov

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