

# Fall 2023 Parks and Nature quarterly update

Covering bond activities and investments from July-September 2023



## **BOND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMPLETED: JULY–SEPT. 2023**

**Staff have completed the following outreach across bond programs:**

- Conversations with 36 landowners about land acquisition
- 18 conversations with park providers about land acquisitions opportunities
- In August, 50–100 community members participated in a kickoff event at Blue Lake Park and over 120 community members visited a self-guided, online open house that includes a survey of how they are currently using the park available in both English and Spanish.
- 33 BIPOC community members participated in a focus group for to share their experiences at Blue Lake Park and hopes for site renovation.

## **BOND REPORTING AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES COMPLETED**

[A set of infographics](#) are posted on Metro’s website to visualize bond progress over time to the public. These are meant to serve as a compliment to the [storytelling](#) that highlights specific projects and bond wide progress.

In July 2023, the [Metro auditor](#) presented an [audit of the early work of the 2019 parks and nature bond](#) to the Metro Council. In September 2023, the Metro Auditor presented the audit and its findings to the Natural Areas Oversight Committee.

## **BOND ACTIVITIES AND INVESTMENTS COMPLETED: JULY–SEPT. 2023**

### **Protect and restore land activities from July–Sept. 2023**

[oregonmetro.gov/protect-and-restore-land](https://oregonmetro.gov/protect-and-restore-land)

The team of three continues to ramp up outreach to landowners across the region to create a pipeline of opportunities for acquisition in alignment with the targets and goals approved by the Metro Council in 2022. The team is in preliminary negotiations with 20 landowners and has initial offers on six properties (not the same as property closure).

Most recently, the team acquired a 53-acre property to fill a critical gap in the Tualatin River Floodplain and to protect 4,650 feet of the Tualatin

River, an important drinking water source for Washington County and supports native fish populations like Salmon, Steelhead and Lamprey. The property also contains culturally significant plant communities, and protection provides the opportunity to restore and enhance these plant communities. This acquisition is the nineteenth completed with 2019 bond funds across 13 different target areas and over 550 acres.

See more specific information about acquisitions in the [appendix of this report](#).

### **Local share activities completed from July–Sept. 2023**

[oregonmetro.gov/localshare](https://oregonmetro.gov/localshare)

The local share team is working with the region’s park providers to submit priority projects for bond local share funding and received a submittal from the City of Tigard for the Steve Street project.

The team has finalized intergovernmental agreements with four park providers for eight projects and \$15.5 in bond funds:

- Portland Parks and Recreation has five projects: Whitaker Ponds Natural Area, Wilkes Headwaters Natural Area, Hoyt Arboretum Bristlecone Pine Trail ADA improvements, Park Pathway Lighting Renovation, and Rose City Golf Trails.
- Forest Grove’s Stites Park, which will have a nature park with a community garden, picnic, and play areas.

- Wilsonville's Frog Pond West property acquisition, which will protect natural park land within a neighborhood that is currently being developed.
- North Clackamas Parks and Recreation Department for the Concord Property Park project in Oak Lodge.

### **Walking and biking trails activities completed from July–Sept. 2023**

Since Council approved [12 trail grant awards for \\$19.5 million](#) across the region, the team has finalized four intergovernmental agreements of the 12 project awards, which will allow project work to advance and submittal of reimbursement requests.

### **Take care of Metro parks activities completed from July–Sept. 2023**

Progress continues on health, safety and accessibility improvements at Blue Lake and Oxbow, where projects are heading towards breaking new ground and at Lone Fir's Cultural Heritage and Healing Garden

In order to complete the work safely and efficiently, Blue Lake Regional Park is closed to the public until late spring 2024. The disc golf course will remain open. Staff have convened a partner cohort to participate and help shape the process around the Blue Lake renovation project, made up of seven community members who responded to an open recruitment process, a few of whom participated in previous bond engagements.

### **Nature in Neighborhoods Capital Grants activities completed from July–Sept. 2023**

Staff are working to finalize funding agreements for the [\\$2.7 million of Nature in Neighborhoods capital grants](#) awarded by the Metro Council this summer for seven projects ranging from investing in greenspace and recreational improvements, to an affordable housing development in Clackamas County, to supporting Friends of Tryon Creek and Oregon State Parks in creating a new education space for the whole community within the urban forest. Four of the seven funding agreements are complete.

### **[Nature in Neighborhoods Community Choice grants](#)**

#### **activities completed from July–Sept. 2023**

The final round of voting for community choice grants launched last week and will be open through November 7. Along with project partners in District 4, the team will attend several community events throughout the month with opportunities for anyone 11 and older to vote on iPads for up to five projects. There will also be an event on October 28 at Centro Cultural to publicize voting on the project ballot.

The Community Choice grant program is designed to give community members the power to imagine, design, and vote on what parks and nature projects they'd like to see in their communities and engagement for this process has been driven by a focus on centering community members in the communities of interest in District 4. The projects that receive the

most community votes will be included for Council consideration and approval in January.

### **[Large scale community visions](#)**

#### **activities completed from July–Sept. 2023**

In May 2023, the Metro Council designated up to \$15 million in bond funding for three projects for the pilot round of large scale community visions.

- Trust for Public Land/OSU – Forest Acquisition (\$3.5 million)
- OMSI+CRITFC– Waterfront Education Park (\$10 million)
- Albina Vision Trust – Acquisition/Development (\$5 million)

Staff are currently working with each of these three entities to complete work needed to ensure readiness to finalize an eventual funding award and having conversations with partners around the region about project opportunities for a second round of awards in 2024.



## BOND RELATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOTS

### Community choice grants: July–Sept. 2023

This summer, the Community Choice grants pilot process in District 4 kicked off its project development and selection phase. The team cast a broad net to engage community members in District 4, using multiple avenues for outreach at community hubs where community was already congregating and translating all materials in English and Spanish and focusing intentionally on communities of interest in District 4. Engagement activities completed to support the preliminary voting included three public community design workshops with 30–50 attendees at each to display and develop projects with community members providing feedback, input, and direction to refine project ideas for the final vote. Workshops were held at Cedar Hills Recreation Center in Beaverton, Brookwood Library in Hillsboro and Centro Cultural in Cornelius. There were fewer attendees than during the project submission phase, but there was more intensive engagement and consultation.

As a result of this engagement and outreach, the team has received 375 total votes; 94 percent from zip codes in District 4 and a list of 28 projects moved forward to final development and ballot that will be open to a final voting period in November 2023. The final voting period, open to anyone in District 4 who is 11 and older, will finalize a recommended slate of awards for the Metro Council to consider and approve in January 2024.

### Blue Lake Park renovation engagement case study: July–Sept. 2023

When Metro staff presented an update to the oversight committee about planned engagement activities around the Blue Lake Park renovation project, staff described three levels of community engagement—a broad audience, targeted focus groups and a small cohort of community members. Outside of these three levels of engagement, there is ongoing tribal government engagement.

This summer, the team launched the initial engagement milestone around the Blue Lake Park renovation project at these three levels, which included the following activities in August and September 2023:

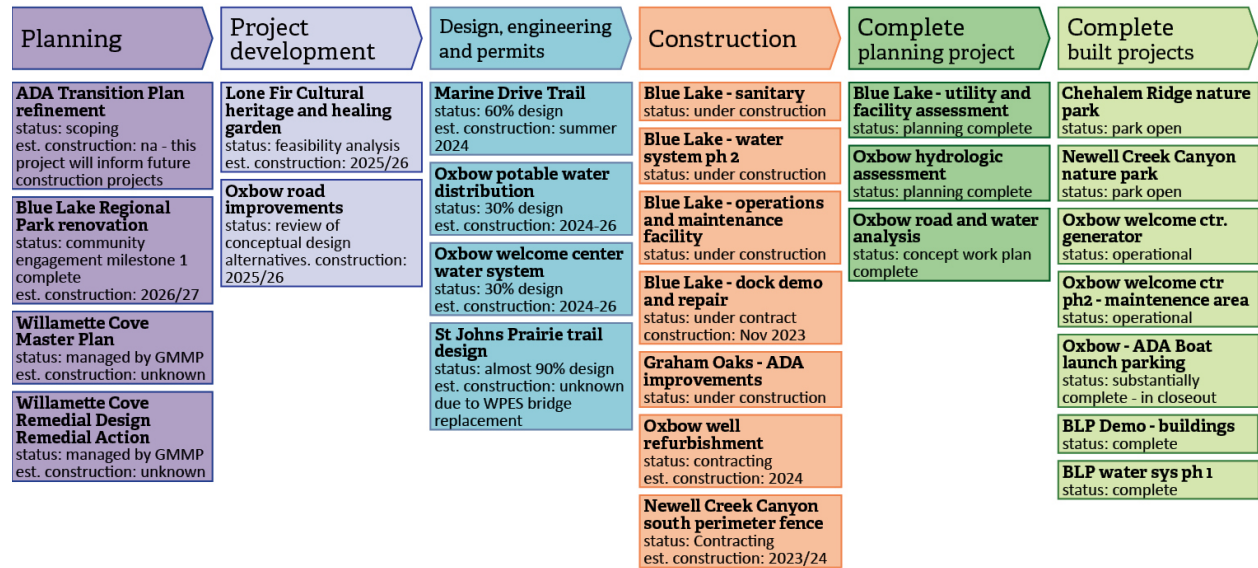
- Kick off event for general public at Blue Lake Park in August (50–100 attendees)
- Online open house with survey (over 120 responses)
- 33 BIPOC community members at a focus group
- Site visit with 20 members of Indigenous community



## Status of bond funded Metro parks capital projects (take care of Metro parks)

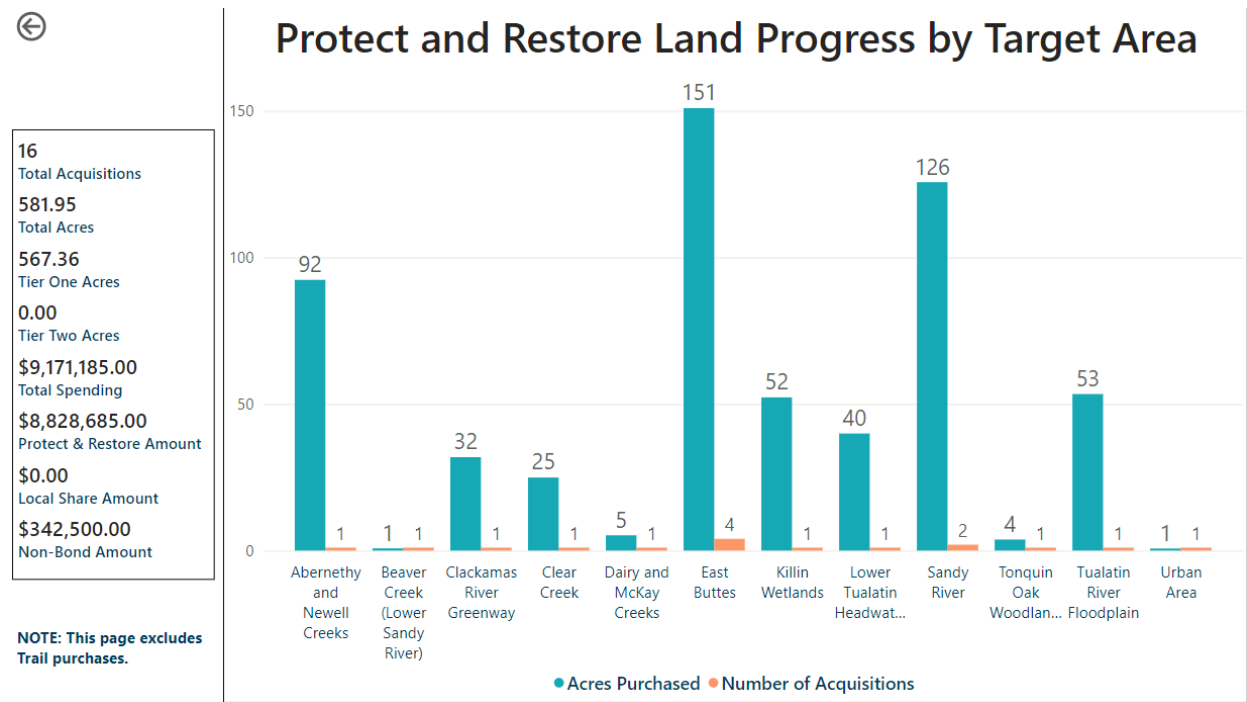
### Take care of Metro parks projects

Project status October 2023



Protect and Restore Land supplemental information, covering investments to date (July 1, 2020 – September 30, 2023)

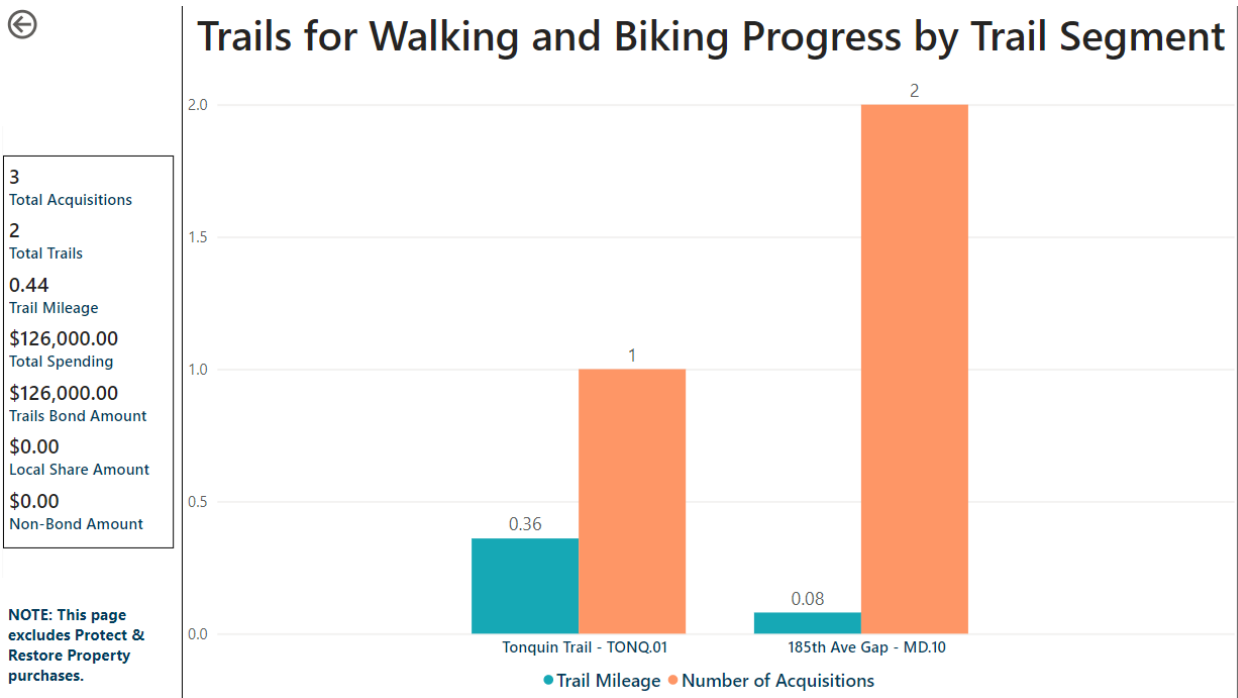
Acquisitions to date by target area



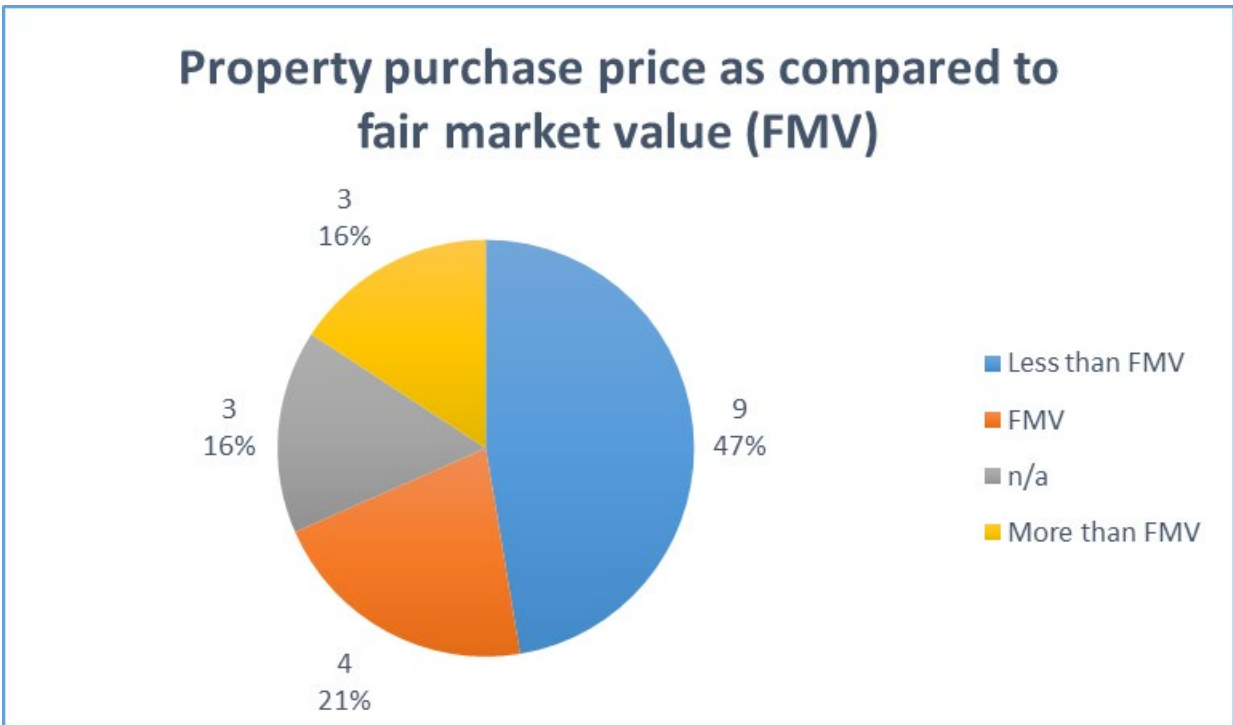
What is this chart?

Through the policy established in the [2019 parks and nature bond measure](#) and the [target area refinement plans](#) the Metro Council has directed staff to acquire properties in 24 regional target areas that meet the refinement plan goals. Each property varies in size and other features. This chart displays the both the number of properties purchased and acres protected in each target area through the protect and restore land program over the lifetime of the 2019 bond. Through September 30, 2023, Metro staff have acquired 16 properties totaling 582 acres across 12 target areas, along with three trail acquisitions. This number will expand over time as more properties are purchased across all target areas and trail corridors.

Protect and Restore Land supplemental information, covering investments to date (July 1, 2020 – September 30, 2023)



Purchase price vs. market value

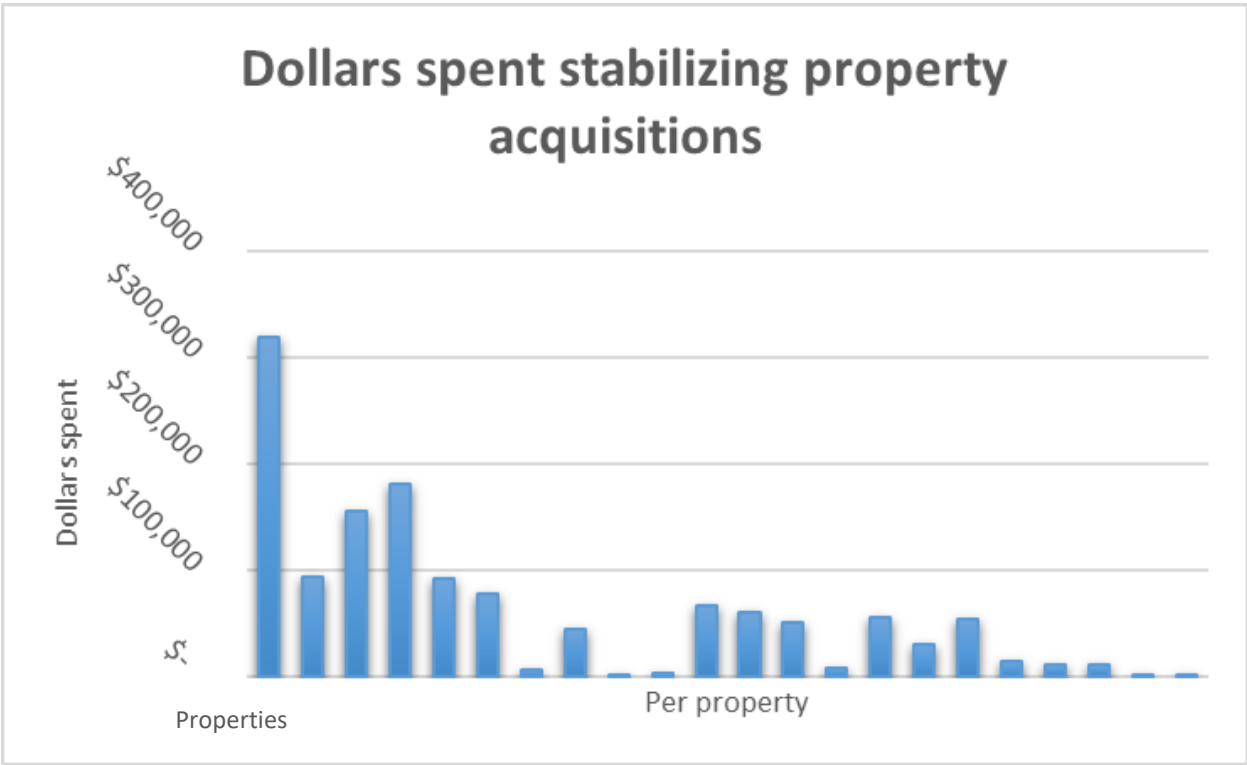


Protect and Restore Land supplemental information, covering investments to date (July 1, 2020 – September 30, 2023)

What is this chart?

This chart shows that most properties purchased to date were for fair market value or an appraisal was not required (i.e., the purchase price was less than \$50,000). This includes all purchases funded through the protect and restore land as well as create trails for walking and biking programs. The Metro Council may direct staff to purchase property at any price, but through the policy established in the Natural Areas Work Plan, the Metro Council has delegated authority to staff to acquire properties for fair market value as supported by an independent appraisal (with the exception of properties purchased for less than \$50,000, which do not require an appraisal). The Chief Operating Officer may purchase a property for up to \$100,000 or 10% more than the value established by an appraisal provided certain conditions are met. The executive steering committee has recommended that staff bring more negotiations to the COO to consider a purchase price within \$100,000 or 10% of the appraised value, so the percentage of properties purchase above FMV may grow over time.

Cost of stabilization to date



2019 bond dollars spent through September 30, 2023  
Note: Each blue bar represents one property.

What is this chart?

Stabilization is one of the four program activities eligible for protect and restore land funds. Stabilization is the phase of management that follows acquisition. During stabilization Metro uses bond funds to address threats that would otherwise compromise the values for which a new natural area is acquired. As no two properties are the same or have the same conditions present,

**Protect and Restore Land supplemental information, covering investments to date (July 1, 2020 – September 30, 2023)**

stabilization plans and costs will vary by property and the conditions present. Metro uses a function-based approach to identify and implement stabilization activities appropriate to each site. Function-based stabilization focuses on actions that protect high ecological function and shift currently degrading conditions to a positive trend leading to Metro to meeting the conservation objectives for which the property was purchased. Common stabilization actions include natural resource enhancement and property management and security actions. Important ecological functions addressed include key features such as: soil erosion control, habitat quality and trend, temperature and flow modification of streams, and public safety.

**Constraints**

The market continues to be dynamic and challenging for off market transactions. The largest challenges in the market are still related to timelines and seller expectations of value – but Metro real estate staff are now also seeing impacts of low inventory and high interest rates on willing seller cultivation, i.e., the desire for people to sell their property and move. To overcome this barrier the real estate team is utilizing tools such as land use actions to purchase portions of property with conservation values while sellers retain ownership of portions with homes and other structures, however, land use actions add 4–6 months on to a transaction timeline.

Additional constraints related to the team's ability to complete transactions quickly include the desire to work with public agency partners on acquisitions, primarily in the urban target area and the regional trail network. Metro must be willing to work on the partner's timeline and within their capacity to complete these purchases, which can vary.

Capacity is growing with two senior real estate specialists on the team and a recruitment firm on board to support hiring for two more positions. We are seeing the groundwork laid over the past months from outreach transition into negotiations and closed transactions. When the team is fully staffed, there will be 4 FTE (full time equivalent) working on acquiring real estate for Metro.



**2019 Parks and Nature Bond - Spend by Program Area**

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	Total Spend
<b>Protect/Restore</b>						
Personnel	8,897	1,027,574	1,318,586	1,772,632	493,541	4,621,230
M&S or Capital	120,063	843,385	5,104,935	5,311,633	350,919	11,730,935
Total	128,960	1,870,959	6,423,521	7,084,265	844,460	16,352,165
<b>Take Care of Metro Park</b>						
Personnel	8,897	642,133	1,334,500	1,199,311	259,573	3,444,413
M&S or Capital	221,847	3,051,112	2,279,728	2,820,384	131,746	8,504,817
Total	230,744	3,693,245	3,614,228	4,019,694	391,319	11,949,230
<b>Local Share</b>						
Personnel	29,397	213,678	240,033	236,912	59,036	779,056
M&S or Capital		2,464	2,492,200	1,616,171	-33,316	4,077,519
Total	29,397	216,142	2,732,233	1,853,083	25,721	4,856,576
<b>Grants</b>						
Personnel	12,847	184,414	240,528	364,932	95,285	898,005
M&S or Capital		2,061	85,755	71,588	3,293	162,697
Total	12,847	186,475	326,283	436,520	98,578	1,060,703
<b>Trails</b>						
Personnel	8,489	243,278	233,358	313,024	63,010	861,159
M&S or Capital	3,825	818	148,071	17,165		169,879
Total	12,314	244,096	381,429	330,189	63,010	1,031,038
<b>Community Visions</b>						
Personnel	-	3,480	121,359	29,181	-834	153,187
M&S or Capital	-	-	-	434	0	434
Total	-	3,480	121,359	29,615	-834	153,621
<b>Total Program Spend</b>	<b>414,262</b>	<b>6,214,397</b>	<b>13,599,053</b>	<b>13,753,367</b>	<b>1,422,254</b>	<b>35,403,333</b>
<b>Admin</b>						
Personnel	100,692	555,696	591,933	647,919	149,718	2,045,958
M&S or Capital	402,467	990,481	2,934,472	2,929,420	586,894	7,843,734
Personnel	10	330	395	-		735
M&S or Capital	309,359	27,344	544,812	489,411	25,577	1,396,503
Total	812,528	1,573,851	4,071,612	4,066,750	762,189	11,286,929
<b>Total Bond Spend</b>	<b>1,226,790</b>	<b>7,788,248</b>	<b>17,670,665</b>	<b>17,820,117</b>	<b>2,184,442</b>	<b>46,690,262</b>
<b>% of Total Bond Spend</b>	<b>66.23%</b>	<b>20.21%</b>	<b>23.04%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>35%</b>	