

# Welcome back to Blue Lake Regional Park!



## What's inside

**Cover story:**  
**Blue Lake Regional Park**  
After months of renovation work, the park is back open.  
**page 4**

**Willamette Cove**  
Turning an old industrial site into a nature park.  
**page 6**

**Protecting the Pudding River**  
A new 109-acre acquisition will help clean and cool this important waterway.  
**page 8**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Get involved	3
Blue Lake Regional Park	4
Willamette Cove	6
Protecting the Pudding River	8
Field guide: Mount Talbert Nature Park	10
Tools for living	11
Coloring: Bigleaf maples at Mount Talbert Nature Park	12

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

Ashton Simpson, District 1  
Christine Lewis, District 2  
Gerritt Rosenthal, District 3  
Juan Carlos González, District 4  
Mary Nolan, District 5  
Duncan Hwang, 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.



Printed on recycled-content paper, 30 percent post-consumer waste, 24008

# Share your nature and win!



**Winner: Mike Houck, Portland**

**Savannah Sparrow at Powell Butte Nature Park**  
“I took this photo of a Savannah Sparrow at Powell Butte Nature Park on March 29, 2024.”



**Finalist: Joanna Ceciliani, Portland**

**Hummingbird on icy branch**  
“I live in Northeast Portland and started taking photos when I turned 60. I’m now 74 and have never stopped. I love birds the most but take many types of photos and mostly here in my backyard and around Portland or on a vacation. I’m always keeping an eye out for birds. They are fun to photograph because they are not easy and a challenge and beautiful.”



**Finalist: Jamar Taylor, Portland**

**Nutria at Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden**  
“I took this photo of a nutria at Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden. I noticed it swimming as I was just casually snapping pictures. After a 3 minute swim, it took a break to clean itself and rest for a bit before it was on its next adventure.”

## Submit your photo

Win an annual parking pass, a full-day picnic shelter reservation at Graham Oaks or Scouters Mountain nature parks, or a choice between a tennis court session or 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 August 1 to:  
[ourbigbackyard@oregonmetro.gov](mailto: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](mailto:ourbigbackyard@oregonmetro.gov) or call 503-797-1545.

**On the cover:** After almost nine months of closure for renovations, Blue Lake Regional Park is back open for family fun and connecting to nature.



# Get involved

CLASSES AND EVENTS

SAT. JULY 6

### Summer bike ride

Ride from Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area to the Portland Expo Center. Learn about Metro’s connection to North Portland history.

Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area  
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
\$6/person, fee waivers available. Parking: free  
Advance registration required  
Ages: adults  
Difficulty: moderate

FRI. JULY 12

### Cemetery tending at Brainard

Participants will clean headstones and pick up litter while learning about symbols found on headstones. Gear and refreshments provided.

Brainard Cemetery  
10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Free. Parking: free  
Advance registration required  
Ages: all ages  
Difficulty: easy

SUN. JULY 14 SUN. AUG. 11

### Redefining our Relationships: Our winged neighbors

Join local nature educator Gladys Ruiz in exploring the ways that we each have forged a relationship with birds.

**Sun. July 14** Canemah Bluff Nature Park  
10 a.m. to noon or 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

**Sun. Aug. 11** Cooper Mountain Nature Park  
9 to 11 a.m. or 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

\$6/person, fee waivers available. Parking: free  
Advance registration required  
Ages: 14+ with adult, adults  
Difficulty: easy

SAT. JULY 20 SUN. JULY 21

### Metaphors and analogies in nature journaling

Join Metro on a short hike to deepen your connection with the natural world. Journaling melds art and science by allowing us to tap into our observation skills, self-awareness and curiosity.

Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park  
10 a.m. to noon  
\$6/person, fee waivers available. Parking: free  
Advance registration required  
Ages: all ages  
Difficulty: easy

SAT. JULY 20

### Blackberry picking at Howell Territorial Park

Enjoy a morning of blackberry picking at Howell Territorial Park with Metro staff. Harvesting bags and recipe ideas provided.

Howell Territorial Park  
10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.  
Free. Parking: free  
Ages: all ages  
Difficulty: easy

FRI. AUG. 2

### Multnomah Park Cemetery Tending

Learn about some of the headstone symbology at the site, clean headstones, and pick up litter as needed. All supplies, tools and refreshments will be provided.

Multnomah Park Cemetery  
10 a.m. to 1 pm  
Free. Parking: free  
Advance registration required  
Ages: All ages  
Difficulty: easy

SAT. AUG. 3

### Broughton Beach litter pickup

Join Metro for a litter pickup. All materials for participants will be provided. Free life jackets while supplies last.

Broughton Beach  
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Free. Parking: \$5 car/\$7 van or bus  
Advance registration not required  
Ages: all ages  
Difficulty: easy

SAT. AUG. 10

### Drop-in harvest day

Help harvest apples for Apple Jam. Potential to harvest other fruit depending on orchard bloom. Participants can keep some of their harvest.

Howell Territorial Park  
10 a.m. to noon  
\$6/person, fee waivers available. Parking: free  
Advance registration required  
Ages: all ages  
Difficulty: easy

Parks and nature news

Register for events at  
[oregonmetro.gov/guidedactivities](https://oregonmetro.gov/guidedactivities)  
503-220-2782  
Children must be accompanied by adults



SAT. AUG. 17 SUN. AUG. 18

### Fly fishing for beginners

This fun, workshop covers freshwater insects and their role in water quality; fly selections; knot tying; setting up a fly-fishing rod; casting; trout ecology and behavior; and ethical fish harvesting.

Blue Lake Regional Park  
10 a.m. to noon  
\$6/person, fee waivers available. Parking: \$5 car/\$7 van or bus  
Advance registration required  
Ages: all ages  
Difficulty: easy

SAT. AUG. 24

### Apple Jam

Harvest apples, play games, enjoy free food and music, see a cider press in action, and connect with people working to reduce food waste and increase access to resources like the park’s free orchard.

Howell Territorial Park  
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
\$6/person, fee waivers available. Parking: free  
Advance registration encouraged  
Ages: all ages  
Difficulty: easy

SAT. SEPT. 21

### Birding and wildlife photography

Learn birding basics such as species identification, wildlife behavior and habitat, photography ethics, patience and mindfulness, observational skills, and wildlife photography skills.

Chehalem Ridge Nature Park  
10 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.  
\$6/person, fee waivers available. Parking: free  
Advance registration required  
Ages: all ages  
Difficulty: easy

SAT. SEPT. 21

### Batty for bats of Blue Lake

Join an evening walk through the park’s wetlands to listen for bats, discuss their ecological significance, and build pollinator-friendly native seed bombs.

Blue Lake Regional Park  
6 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
\$6/person, fee waivers available. Parking: \$5 car/\$7 van or bus  
Advance registration required  
Ages: all ages  
Difficulty: easy

# Blue Lake Regional Park reopens

By Cory Eldridge



After almost nine months, Blue Lake Regional Park is open again. Metro closed the park last fall after Labor Day weekend in order to complete necessary repairs. This Memorial Day weekend, it welcomed visitors back.

Metro is in the middle of updating the park, which annually hosts hundreds of thousands of visitors coming for barbecues, family reunions, cultural celebrations, fun runs, Impala shows and any other gathering that can fit under a picnic shelter or on a lawn. The facilities that support these activities need an overhaul. The park was built in the 1930s and most of the structures were last updated in the 1960s. Critical infrastructure, like pipes, were more than 50 years old and not designed to serve so many people.

## What was done

Those old pipes are gone, replaced with 2.5 miles of new plumbing that connects Blue Lake to Fairview's water system.

The work was so extensive and required so much digging and heavy equipment that Metro had to close the park to protect visitors' and workers' safety. It was a massive project and when you visit Blue Lake this summer you'll see ... well, not much, actually.

"A lot of the work that has been done is underground," says Brent Shelby, Metro's construction project manager at Blue Lake. "A lot of work, a lot of investment, and not a lot to show for it on the surface."



"I think it's so amazing that we're doing underground infrastructure at Blue Lake Regional Park, because no one ever wants to do underground infrastructure," adds Metro Parks and Nature deputy director MG Devereux. "It's not sexy, there's no ribbon cutting for it. But if those water pipes fail, or those sewer pipes fail, you don't have a facility."

Along with the plumbing, Metro is working on operations and maintenance facilities located at the park, including a new park administrative office. This work isn't flashy, but it's foundational, says Shelby: "It's crucial to

all of the work that we do to take care of parks and natural areas throughout the region."

## What's new

A few changes will be noticeable to guests. One is the fishing pier, which had been closed since 2020 because it was unsafe. About half of the pier was removed, and the remaining sections were renovated. A new railing was installed that makes fishing accessible for folks using wheelchairs, and three covered shelters will soon be installed. The updated pier is 600 feet in length and extends 150 feet into the lake.



Another major change: Starting this year, you can launch your paddleboard, kayak, canoe, sailboat or other small, nonmotorized watercraft onto Blue Lake at the park. These craft were previously not allowed at the park from May to October, but now the lake will be open to them year-round. The craft must be less than 17 feet in length and must be carried to the water (no trailers).

Motorized boats up to 14 feet in length are allowed access to the lake between October 1 and April 30. A special use permit is required outside these dates.

"We heard from community members that access to the lake was important to them," says senior planner Olena Turula, who is overseeing park renovations. "Earlier this year, after engaging with neighboring property owners, Metro updated park rules so we could offer ways to access the lake that are safe and equitable for all."

Visitors should remember that while the lake is now more open to them, it is still a lake – not a swimming pool. There are no lifeguards and visitors are responsible for their own safety on and in the water. (See sidebar: "Boating safety tips.")

## What's next

Future improvements are being planned right now, and community members are shaping them.

Back in 2019, voters passed a third Metro parks and nature bond measure, which supports work across greater Portland. One of the key messages from voters was that they want Metro to take care of the parks we have, and Blue Lake was what many people had in mind.

Demolition of many of the park's old structures began in 2022. The next year,



**From top:** The renovated fishing pier features accessibility improvements, like cutouts in the railings that allow people in wheelchairs to fish. A crane works on renovations to the fishing pier.

Metro began planning the updated park by asking community members to weigh in about what they enjoy about Blue Lake and what could be improved.

There are now three design options that Metro is sharing for community input. All three focus on improving Blue Lake's key role as a place for large gatherings, improving access to the lake, expanding habitat for plants and wildlife at the park, and connecting Blue Lake more closely to Metro's parks and nature mission.

The designs find different balances, and they offer different amenities and lay out the park in different ways. Input from you and the rest of greater Portland's community will help show if one plan is a favorite and which elements from each plan could be brought together.

## Weigh in

See the first round of designs for the park improvements and share your insights.

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



## Boating safety basics

Now that small, human-powered watercraft are allowed to launch from Blue Lake Regional Park year-round, it's good to remember some basic paddling and floating safety tips.

### Check your gear before you leave home.

Make sure everything is in working order. Take care of issues like leaks, broken paddles, or outgrown life jackets before you head out. Also make sure your watercraft and gear are thoroughly cleaned and dried between outings to prevent the spread of invasive species.

### Prep in the parking lot.

Try to do as much preliminary work – inflating rafts, putting on life jackets, applying sunscreen, etc. – before making it to the water's edge. Lots of people may be trying to enjoy the water and launch their own watercraft. It's considered standard courtesy to spend as little time as possible at the launch site so others can also make use of the space. You can put into the lake anywhere at the park except the swim beach. You must carry your craft yourself; trailers require a special permit.

### Life jackets are for everyone.

According to Oregon law, sailboats less than 16 feet in length and all paddlecraft (canoes, kayaks, stand up paddleboards, drift boats or rafts, etc.) need to carry a properly fitting US Coast Guard-approved wearable life jacket for each person on board and the life jacket must be readily accessible. All children 12 and younger are required to wear a life jacket. But honestly, everyone should wear their life jackets while out on the water. No matter how great a swimmer you are, accidents can happen and you may not have time to grab your life jacket from where you stashed it during an emergency.

Forgot your life jacket? Borrow one for free from one of Metro's life jacket stations. There's one at the swim beach at Blue Lake.

Oregon law also requires all boats under 12 meters long to carry a whistle or air horn. Strap your whistle to your life jacket – now you're covered!

### Respect others on and around the lake.

Be aware of other people on the water and try to give them space. Remain 50 feet from the shoreline after launching. Even at that distance, keep an eye out for anglers on the shore so you don't accidentally get caught by a fishhook. Likewise, stay out of the swimming area to avoid hitting a swimmer.

### Respect private property.

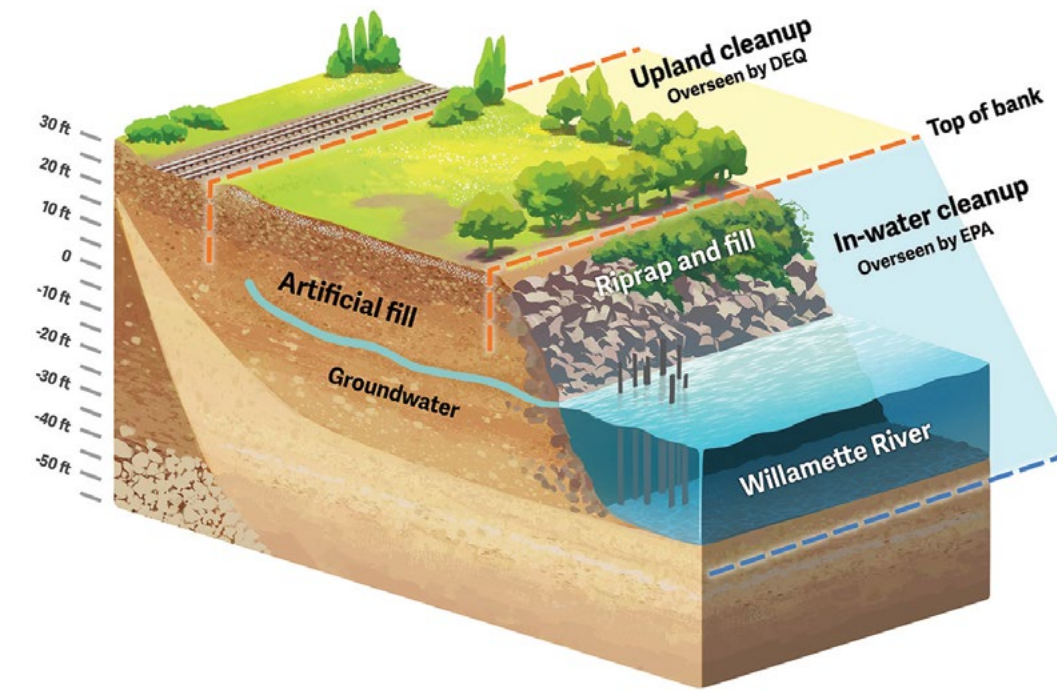
The docks and houses across the lake belong to private owners. Using them is trespassing.

### Respect wildlife.

Observe birds, frogs and other animals from a distance – chasing them can scare them. Do not try to feed them, as many human food items are harmful to wildlife.

### Learn more.

Brush up on boating regulations, learn how to properly clean equipment, and get other tips at the Oregon State Marine Board's website: [oregon.gov/osmb](https://oregon.gov/osmb)



## Updates

Summer may be the high season for park visitors, but Metro Parks and Nature staff were busy all winter and spring with the work that keeps our natural spaces green, healthy and full of wildlife. Thankfully, they get a lot of help from community members who contribute their time and energy to the work. Read about what they've been up to below.

### Amphibian egg count

Metro staff and 16 community science volunteers waded through ponds at seven natural areas from January to April to count amphibian egg masses. This important work (pictured above) helps Metro track the health of amphibian populations in the region.

Volunteers contributed more than 75 hours to support this effort. This season they counted more than 500 egg masses of Northern red-legged frogs, Northwestern salamanders, Pacific chorus frogs, and long-toed salamanders.

The data collected during this and previous years shows that Metro's restoration and maintenance efforts have helped to expand amphibian breeding habitat.

For example, surveys at one site revealed a surge in breeding activity after staff replaced invasive grass with native plants. Willows planted years ago now provide shade, keeping the water cool. Upland forests near these wetlands serve as overwintering habitat for the adult amphibians.

### Planting numbers

Over the fall and winter planting seasons, Metro staff and contractors planted 86,000 bare root shrubs and trees, 6,000 native bulbs and root fragments and spread 17,000 pounds of seed across more than 30 parks and natural areas.

Community members supported the efforts at planting events through Metro's community stewardship program, which organized planting parties and tending events at Metro parks and cemeteries.

Believe it or not, this year was a comparatively small year for Metro plantings. Currently Metro expects to quadruple these numbers next planting season!

### Want to get involved?

To volunteer with our scientists on wildlife monitoring, email [parksandnature@oregonmetro.gov](mailto:parksandnature@oregonmetro.gov)

To find out about planting parties and tending events, visit [oregonmetro.gov/guidedactivities](http://oregonmetro.gov/guidedactivities)

# Creating a nature park at Willamette Cove

By Cory Eldridge. Illustrations by Aki Ruiz

If you live in the greater Portland region, you've had this experience: You'll be in the middle of the city, or a suburb or even an office park, and then you take about eight steps and ... poof ... it's all gone and you're in nature.

These magical moments are part of why our region is special. And there's an opportunity to create a new one in North Portland.

Willamette Cove stretches along its namesake river for a half mile from the Burlington Northern Railroad Bridge toward the St. Johns Bridge. A bluff lines one side, hiding the Cathedral Park neighborhood above from eye and ear.

Neighbors have known for decades that it could be the perfect place for a park, and Metro has too, which is why it bought the property in 1996. Unfortunately, industrial activity had contaminated Willamette Cove and park planning gave way to a cleanup operation in 2000 (learn about the cleanup on the opposite page).

After nearly 25 years of studying, planning, consulting with tribal partners, and conducting preliminary cleanups, Metro knows enough about the cove's post-cleanup state that it can begin envisioning the long-awaited, future nature park. And community members like you are helping shape it.

But before you read any further, let's make one thing clear: **Do not visit Willamette Cove.** There's a reason it needs to be cleaned up – it's not safe. It will be, but not yet.

The cleanup will reshape the cove's landscape. The biggest impact – the hardest, really – is that most of the trees will have to be removed, including mature oak and madrone. This is because the dirt they are in is contaminated, but removing that dirt will kill the trees. Metro has examined gentler approaches, but they haven't worked. For the long-term health of the habitats, these trees need to go.

With something like this, governments usually say something like "this is an unfortunate reality" or "a difficult tradeoff." While those statements are true, they don't really convey how painful this decision has been. All of the Metro staff working on Willamette Cove adore nature and want to see it thrive, and removing mature trees feels like the opposite of that. But it's the right thing to do in this case.

Immediately after the cleanup, Metro will plant hundreds of trees and thousands of smaller plants. Native black cottonwoods will line the riverbank, anchoring a riverside habitat that joins an in-water habitat focused on providing salmon and Pacific lamprey with cool water and refuge during their migrations. The upland will hold woodlands made of Oregon white oak and Pacific madrone to support resident and migrating birds and wildlife. Meadows will spot the woods.

Above: This illustration shows the current state of Willamette Cove.



Tribes have worked closely with Metro to develop this conservation plan, and the future habitats at Willamette Cove aim to create opportunities for the practice of traditional and cultural lifeways at the site.

Community members are now helping Metro plan how to weave a park into this plan for trees, shrubs, fish and wildlife.

Some elements of the park are known. Since 1996, Metro has planned to build a stretch of the North Portland Greenway Trail through Willamette Cove, and that remains a main goal. The park will also include access to the Willamette River. Smaller trails will stem off the regional trail, marked with wayfinding and informational signs. There will be a parking lot and rest areas.

Metro is committed to working with both tribal partners and the greater community to imagine and shape exactly what all this looks like and what other elements and amenities are part of the park. In May, community members shared their insights through a survey and at a set of workshops. More opportunities like these are coming up over the next year and half.

To learn more and help Willamette Cove become one of the region's special places, visit [oregonmetro.gov/cove](http://oregonmetro.gov/cove)

## One site, two cleanups

Before the park can be built, contamination from 70 years of industrial operations needs to be dealt with so Willamette Cove can be safe for people, plants and animals. There are actually two cleanups being planned: one led by Metro and the Port of Portland and overseen by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality that will address the upland; and another overseen by the Environmental Protection Agency that covers the area from top of the riverbank down into the riverbed.

The illustration above shows the two cleanups. This article focuses on the upland work.

At its simplest, Metro and the Port will clean up Willamette Cove's upland by excavating and removing highly contaminated soil and covering the site with clean soil so people and animals can't touch any remaining contamination. DEQ selected a cleanup plan that governs what has to be removed, where it goes, and what replaces it. The cleanup will reduce risk so the area is safe to use for recreation.

In 2021, DEQ laid out its guidelines for the cleanup. The main elements are:

- All contamination that is a high risk to human health – these are called hot spots – must be hauled to a DEQ-approved landfill.
- All contamination from metals that are a high risk to plants and animals – called ecological hot spots – must be hauled to a DEQ-approved landfill or covered with clean soil.
- At least one foot of clean topsoil will be placed over the entire site.

Above: Metro is one partner working on the upland cleanup shown in this illustration.

From roughly 1900 to 1930, Willamette Cove's gently sloping shore and shallows were covered by as much as 60 feet of infill made of silt and sand dredged from the river. The result was a raised, level stretch of land that could house Willamette Cove's dry docks, barrel factory and lumber mills above the floodplain. The same type of engineered lands and structures were built up and down both sides of the Willamette and created today's riverfront in Portland.

Contamination at Willamette Cove's upland came from a variety of historic uses over decades of activity, much of which ended in the early 1970s.

Because of the way the upland was made, we can't dig to a perfectly clean surface. However, studies have shown that contamination is highest at surface and thins out as it goes deeper. Metro and the Port will make sure the remaining contamination can no longer cause risk to humans, plants or animals by using layers of suitable materials to isolate the contamination. These materials usually include lots of clean soil and topsoil that keep contamination in place and keep people and animals away and safe from the contamination.

Below: Taken from St. Johns Bridge, this photo shows the industry along the Willamette River in the 1930s. Willamette Cove is in the background, in front of the railroad bridge.



# Protecting the Pudding River



The target area was established through working with members of greater Portland's Indigenous communities. Investments in this target area focus on sustaining the area's vibrant and culturally important native plants and wildlife by protecting and connecting oak, prairie and floodplain habitats in the Middle Willamette Valley with Canemah Bluff, Willamette Narrows and the Willamette River Greenway to the north.

Once restoration is underway, this natural area will provide shady, forested areas where young salmon can hide from predators and find plenty of insects to nourish them while they grow. And not just salmon –

**Above:** Animal tracks and empty mussel shells reveal that this stretch of the Pudding River is still home to wildlife, despite its dangerously high temperatures and pollutant levels.

many species of wildlife including frogs, salamanders and birds will also benefit from the renewed habitat. This could improve fish and wildlife populations not just at the property, but also at the nearby Molalla River State Park.

A walk along the river shows just how many species the new natural area can benefit. The soft mud along the bank reveals the tracks of heron, coyote, and raccoon. Broken bits of shell reveal the presence of western ridged mussels, a freshwater mollusk that is being considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act due to its rapidly declining populations. According to the Xerces Society, this is the first record of western ridged mussels in the Pudding River – an exciting find for both the species and the river, as mussels play an important role in filtering and cleaning river water.

Some basic work will take place this year to stabilize the property – things like removing invasive blackberries and securing the property so drivers don't joyride through the fields. But as with most Metro land acquisitions, much of the first few years under Metro ownership will involve staff taking time to learn more about it and the wildlife that calls it home.

"We're in that getting-to-know-you stage with the property," says Berkley. "There's undoubtedly more to explore and learn about this place."

## In a nutshell

**Purchase price:** \$1.5 million

**Neat features:** This acquisition offers an opportunity to combat the challenges affecting the Pudding River's water quality, which has been listed under the Clean Water Act's polluted waters list.

**Now protected:** 109 acres of Pudding River floodplain and approximately 1.5 miles of riverfront

**Habitats:** Riparian forest and wetlands.

**Animals:** Salmon, trout, lamprey, frogs, turtles and freshwater mussels. Mammals include black-tailed deer, coyote and bobcat. Birds include great blue herons, red-winged blackbird, osprey and warblers.

**From top:** Restoration work done at this property will help clean and cool the waters of the Pudding River. Metro Parks and Nature staff tour the property with Councilor Christine Lewis (carrying baby McCall). This field was largely flooded just a few weeks before their visit.

This is the farthest south Metro has ever purchased land for a natural area. It is part of a new target area identified in the 2019 bond: the Molalla Oaks, Prairies and Floodplains area. Target areas are specially designated geographic areas of interest within which Metro may acquire lands from willing sellers under the 2019 parks and nature bond measure.



## Metro plans to turn former farmland into a living sponge to help clean up pollution

By Hannah Erickson

Metro Parks and Nature scientist Andrea Berkley stands on the banks of the Pudding River in a bucolic stretch of farmland outside Canby, part of a 109-acre property purchased by Metro in January. She stretches her arm up to touch a tangle of dried river reeds floating like ribbons from the tops of willow bushes.

"You can see how high the water gets here during flooding," Berkley says. "The idea is to slow that water and let it sit here and soak into the ground, instead of it running off immediately."

Decades of agricultural development have led to a reduction in the riverside wetlands and forests that used to absorb floodwater and gradually release it back into the river, a process that helped to cool the water and filter out sediment and pollutants. As a result, the Pudding River has been listed under the Clean Water Act as having excessive pesticides, bacteria, and high temperatures. This new property acquisition offers Metro an opportunity to improve the river's water quality.

Metro purchased the former farmland along the river as part of the Protect and Restore Land program of the voter-approved 2019 parks and nature bond. Right now, it is mostly made up of flat open fields. A drainage ditch runs through the property, diverting water filled with agricultural run-off into the river.



In years to come, Metro staff will work to restore this property into a multilayered wetland and floodplain forest that can help capture and filter run-off before it makes its way into the Pudding River – and, from there, into the Molalla River, which in turn feeds into the Willamette. In this way, work done here can have an effect on the whole region's waterways.

"We can reduce downstream flooding, because more water is going to soak into the ground while it's here than happens currently," explained Berkley. "It's slowing the water down. The pollutants and sediment will have time to settle. We'd rather have them here than in the river."

# Zip. Click. Pull.



Wearing a life jacket is the best thing you can do to stay safe in water. The jacket has to fit to do its job. Here's how to find the right jacket for the right fit.

## 1 Size

Life jackets are made for people of different sizes and weights.

Check the label for the jacket's weight range and chest size.



## 2 The kids

Life jackets for children include a leg strap. Life jackets for infants also have a collar.



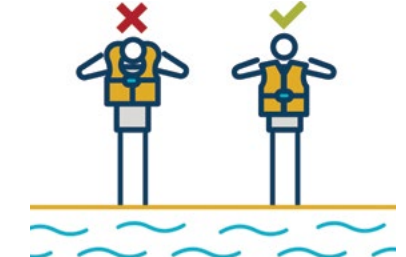
## 3 Zip, click, pull

Make sure all zippers and clips are fastened. Pull straps tight.



## 4 Shoulder test

Pull the jacket up at your shoulders. If it slides up to your ears, it's too big. If it stays tight, you are ready for the water!



Learn more at [oregonmetro.gov/watersafety](http://oregonmetro.gov/watersafety)

# Field guide

MOUNT TALBERT NATURE PARK



## Sun-sational sustainability

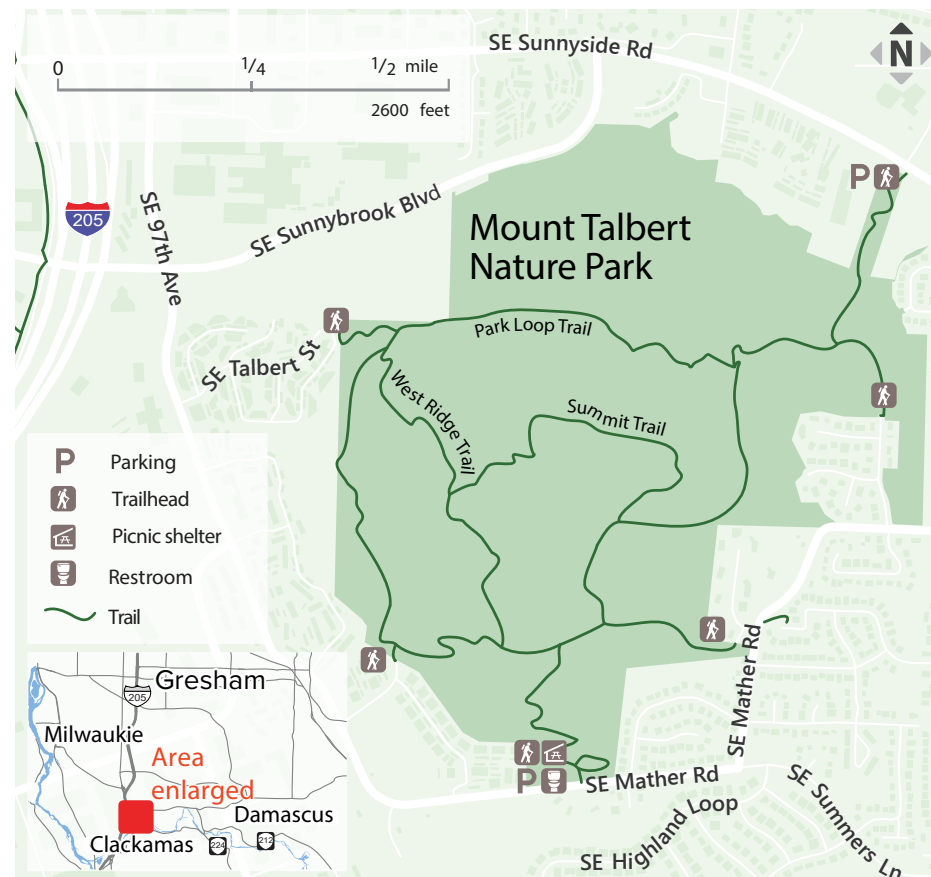
WASTE PREVENTION AND DISPOSAL TIPS FOR SUMMER

This beautiful forested oasis nestled between bustling Interstate 205 and Happy Valley rises 750 feet in elevation. Mount Talbert is a volcanic butte shaped for nearly 3 million years by fountains of lava, floods, fires and people. A mosaic of habitats and more than 4 miles of trails offer a year-round getaway for those looking to experience nature as it changes throughout the seasons.

Visitors who enter from the Mather Road Trailhead will be treated to a picnic shelter, restrooms and a short, wheelchair-accessible loop that circles through a prairie. For thousands of years the Willamette Valley was covered with prairies that were maintained by fires set by Indigenous communities, and that later settlers have since turned into farmland or developments.

Climb the butte's southern slope through patches of Oregon white oak woodlands and savannas. Oaks grow slowly and are easily overtopped and shaded out by faster-growing trees. Less than 5 percent of historic oak woodlands remain in the Willamette Valley, and the surviving fragments need active management. At Mount Talbert, Metro strategically removes competing trees when necessary and controls invasive species that threaten native wildflowers and other plants.

Round the west side of the butte on the Park Loop Trail to find deep red soils that hint at a once-active cinder cone volcano, spewing



### Mount Talbert Nature Park

10945 SE MATHER ROAD, CLACKAMAS

#### DIRECTIONS

From I-205, take exit 14 for Sunnyside Road and head east briefly. Take a right immediately onto Southeast 97th Avenue, which curves onto Southeast Mather Road. The main park entrance is on the left. TriMet buses 155 and 156 also run near different entrances to Mount Talbert.

#### KNOW WHEN YOU GO

Open sunrise to sunset. No bikes or pets please.

#### AMENITIES

Parking lot, picnic shelter, restrooms and short loop path near the Mather Road Trailhead are all wheelchair-accessible.

[oregonmetro.gov/mounttalbert](http://oregonmetro.gov/mounttalbert)

and frothing iron-rich lava into the air. Watch for a large grove of cascara trees with shredded bark at the base that give testimony to a large blacktailed deer buck, marking his territory with vigor.

Entering the park from the Sunnyside Road trailhead will take visitors through a series of meadows and across Mount Scott Creek, a small salmon-bearing stream.

For more details about all 19 Metro destinations, visit [oregonmetro.gov/parks](http://oregonmetro.gov/parks)

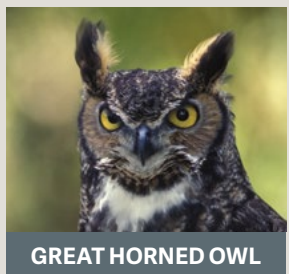
### Be on the lookout!



ORANGE HONEYSUCKLE



RUBBER BOA



GREAT HORNED OWL



WHITE FAWN LILY

### Season-by-season highlights

**FALL:** Fall rains bring a lovely assortment of mushrooms that rise from the duff beneath Douglas firs and Oregon white oaks. Move slowly, step quietly and watch carefully for an elusive native squirrel. Western gray squirrels are larger than the squirrels commonly seen in the city, and they sport pure white bellies and massive fluffy tails.

**WINTER:** Bare trees make geologic features easier to see. Ice Age floods about 20,000 years ago likely caused the major landslide features on the Park Loop Trail. As you climb, notice rounded river cobbles in the trail that reveal the mystery of an active river system that somehow buried the volcano nearly to its summit.

**SPRING:** Wildflowers ranging from white fawn lily to common camas adorn the wet meadows and mixed woodlands in spring. Because Mount Talbert is an island of natural habitat in a sea of development, it is an ideal spot for migrating neotropical songbirds to rest, feed and nest. Warblers, vireos, orioles and tanagers can be seen.

**SUMMER:** Summer is the perfect time to walk on trails shaded by bigleaf maple trees and listen to the cooling burble of Mount Scott Creek. Native shrubs such as salal, serviceberry and red huckleberry offer sweet edible fruits for wildlife.

Summers in the Pacific Northwest are a thing of beauty. After what feels like eight straight months of rain, the warmth of the summer sun inspires people to get outside. From hiking and camping to picnics and backyard barbecues – there are tons of activities to fill the long summer days.

Tons of activities can also mean tons of new gear and accessories, which can lead to tons of waste. Here are some tips to have a low-waste summer and safely dispose of hazardous materials that come from summertime adventures.

#### Think “reuse” first

Reusing gear keeps still-useful stuff out of the trash and helps the environment. New products take finite natural resources and a lot of energy to manufacture. So, when you reuse gear, you are conserving energy and making good use of already spent resources.

Several local stores specialize in reusing outdoor gear, such as Play it Again Sports or the bargain basement at Next Adventure. Members of the REI Co-op can shop the Re/Supply store in Happy Valley. Other reuse options include thrift stores, Buy Nothing groups and Facebook Marketplace.

#### Consider renting your gear

Renting isn't just for skis and snowboards; in greater Portland you can find rentals for nearly every part of a camping weekend – s'mores sold separately. Check out the Portland Mountain Shop for backpacks, tents, sleeping bags, trekking poles and more.

The Portland State University campus recreation center rents gear for backpacking, camping, climbing, rafting, kayaking and more. Campus recreation members receive a discount, but anyone with a valid government-issued photo ID can rent gear.

If you use gear only occasionally, renting is cheaper than buying. Renting also allows you to “try before you buy,” to see if you enjoy something before investing in it. And renting saves on maintenance and storage costs.



The best disposal practice is to completely use up these materials or give them to someone else who will use them. Completely empty aerosol cans and lighter fluid containers can be recycled at home, but not empty propane tanks.

For leftover hazardous materials, people in greater Portland can take them to a Metro household hazardous waste facility for free disposal year-round. Trained staff will make sure they are handled safely and disposed of properly. You can drop off up to 35 gallons of household hazardous waste per day.

This free service is offered only to individuals. Businesses and organizations can apply for discounted disposal rates through Metro's very small quantity generator hazardous waste program.

#### The hazardous wastes of summer

Many outdoor activities come with hazardous wastes that need safe disposal. If household hazardous waste gets mixed in with garbage and recycling, it can cause fires and pollute the air, waterways and other natural areas. Some of these wastes include:

- Propane tanks for barbecues or camping
- Lighter fluid
- Charcoal
- Pool and spa chemicals
- Aerosol products like sunscreen and bug spray
- Boat fuel
- Marine flares
- Batteries

Metro's Recycling Information Center can help identify hazardous wastes and locate a household hazardous waste facility. For answers to your garbage and recycling questions, Ask Metro at 503-234-3000 or visit [oregonmetro.gov/AskMetro](http://oregonmetro.gov/AskMetro)

# Color and discover!



## Bigleaf maples at Mount Talbert Nature Park

Many of the trails in the upland forest at Mount Talbert Nature Park are lined with the remarkably beneficial bigleaf maple. The mosses, lichens and ferns you see growing on them aren't parasites – they create nutrients that nourish the tree as well as the creatures living in it. Squirrels, chipmunks, and birds eat the maple seeds. During the summer, the broad leaves provide crucial shade for plants, animals, and fish-bearing streams. It is often 10 – 15 degrees cooler under a big maple tree than in the sun.

Want to keep up on all the seasonal changes at Metro parks and natural areas? Follow @OregonMetro on Instagram and Facebook or visit [oregonmetro.gov/parks](https://oregonmetro.gov/parks)

