



Metro

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# Memo

Date: November 1, 2021

To: Metro Council

From: Karissa Lowe, Program Manager, Nature in Neighborhoods Community Grants  
Juan Carlos Ocaña-Chíu, Parks + Nature Community Investments and Cemeteries Manager

Subject: 2021 Nature in Neighborhood community stewardship and restoration grants –  
Review Committee Summary and Recommendation for Funding

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The purpose of this memo is to summarize the recommendation for funding from the grant review committee for the 2021 Nature in Neighborhood community stewardship and restoration grants. The Metro Council makes all final grant decisions and is scheduled to decide final grant awards on Thursday, November 18, 2021.

If desired, we are happy to schedule individual briefings before then. Please contact Susanne Raymond at [Susanne.raymond@oregonmetro.gov](mailto:Susanne.raymond@oregonmetro.gov) for scheduling.

The 2021 Nature in Neighborhood community stewardship and restoration grants review committee met July 27, 2021 and again on October 19, 2021. They reviewed 32 pre-applications, totaling \$2.2 million in funding requests, and 14 full applications, totaling \$1.06 million in funding requests. The review committee selected **9 of the most compelling programs** to recommend for funding a total of **\$700,000** to the Metro Council.

## Background

Metro Council provided the framework for the Nature in Neighborhood community grants in the legislation for the parks and natural areas levy and its renewal and the adoption of the Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, which directs the agency to incorporate racial equity into all aspects of its work. Staff used the Metro Council direction to develop an outreach plan, application materials, review committee and evaluation criteria for these community grants, referred to as Nature in Neighborhoods community stewardship and restoration grants. Staff aligned Metro's grant criteria with state, regional and community initiatives in order to achieve multiple benefits.

## Grant evaluation criteria

The following are the purpose and three goal categories for funding:

**Purpose:** Community stewardship and restoration grants support and create partnerships in local communities that improve water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and connect people with nature.

**Goal 1: Improve water quality, fish and wildlife habitat.** These grants will preserve and restore fish and wildlife habitat in local communities and support larger environmental justice and conservation initiatives such as the Oregon State Conservation Strategy, Regional Conservation Strategy, Watershed Action Plans or local community plans.

**Goal 2: Community partnerships, collaboration and accountability.** These grants create, support and/or deepen partnerships in local communities, by connecting people to nature and centering the needs of these communities; increase people’s awareness of the need for – and benefits of – protecting and stewarding natural areas; center racial equity and support communities (with priority given to BIPOC communities and communities most affected by white supremacy culture) in teaching and learning about, restoring, and experiencing the region’s natural areas.

**Goal 3: Economic and environmental equity.**

The community stewardship and restoration grants help address inequities in the conservation movement. The grants provide outdoor, environmental, and natural resources; economic opportunities; direct access to protected natural areas; and the positive impacts of clean land, air and water to Indigenous communities, Black communities, communities of color and other historically and continually marginalized groups in greater Portland.

**Review committee**

Jonathan Blasher, Parks and Nature Director, selected this year’s review committee from a pool of applicants. Participation on the grant review committee is by application, open and advertised to all community members. The review committee included local experts in habitat restoration, natural area land management, conservation planning, mentorship and job skill development, diversity equity and inclusion, community partnership development, philanthropy, and grant management.

The members of the 2021 Nature in Neighborhoods Community Stewardship and Restoration Grants review committee are: Leah Altman, Native Arts and Culture Foundation; Gwen Amsbury, City of Portland – ARM Division; Shannah Anderson, City of Portland – Bureau of Environmental Services; Kevin Hughes, City of Hillsboro; Jude Perez, Seeding Justice; Mike Phillips, Meyer Memorial Trust; Nathan Reynolds, Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center; Maggie Starr, Friends of Tryon Creek; Valerie Thompson, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality; Charlotte Trowbridge, Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District; Michelle Welton, Grow Portland; and Karen Wolfgang, CO2 Foundation.

Committee members declared any direct conflict of interest in the proposals and did not score or participate directly in the discussion or ranking of an application where there was a conflict. Perceived conflicts were also noted and recorded in meeting minutes.

**2021 Nature in Neighborhoods community stewardship and restoration grants review discussion**

Due to the large number of applications, Metro’s Nature in Neighborhoods community stewardship and restoration grant program follows a two-step process including a pre-application phase and a full application phase. The review committee evaluated pre-applications and full applications based on the information submitted by applicants, the stated evaluation criteria, and the review committee’s professional and collective judgment.

In the fifth round of the renewed natural areas levy grants, the review committee valued the range of organizations, project types and project scales represented in the pre-applications submitted. Proposals came from a mix of culturally specific organizations and conservation focused organizations and included both organizations familiar to this program and many first time applicants. Several committee members said they were impressed by how many applications met all three of the program goals.

Proposals recommended for funding show strong evidence of involvement from BIPOC groups in proposal planning and development. The review committee members were happy to see proposals focused on work done by and with BIPOC communities, rather than for them, and noted that even if a project isn't led by a BIPOC organization you can really tell which proposals were influenced by BIPOC leadership.

The review committee identified compelling projects which:

- Address career pathways in the environmental field;
- Remove barriers for marginalized communities to enter that field;
- Meaningfully engaged youth in hands-on restoration work that gave them opportunities to build skills and explore green careers;
- Help BIPOC youth become lifelong environmental advocates; and
- Combine boots-on-the-ground restoration with opportunities to build community power.

Several returning committee members said that the proposals felt more robust, well thought out, and collaborative this year. The review committee found compelling projects that made clear connections between conservation and restoration, where applicable, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge and food sovereignty. The committee discussed the history and contemporary presence of Indigenous people in the Portland Metro Area, and the importance of applicants partnering with both local Tribes and intertribal urban Native organizations.

The committee appreciated projects that acknowledge that communities' relationship with and access to nature is complicated, and projects that find new ways for communities to interact with nature at a neighborhood scale.

The review committee valued projects which:

- Aligned with the Nature in Neighborhood grant goals, individual organizations' plans or priorities, and state, regional or local conservation strategies;
- Demonstrated longstanding and holistic partnerships with communities and community-specific organizations.
- Partnered with Tribes and/or the intertribal urban Native community and talked about going beyond the land acknowledgement and deepening engagement with the community.

The review committee was mostly pleased with how applicants addressed their diversity, equity and inclusion experience, and this was especially true for organizations that were invited to submit full applications. They noticed that the applicant organizations were all on different parts of their equity journey but most of them were very transparent and authentic about who they were and where they are headed. Returning committee members noted an overall improvement in response to the diversity, equity and inclusion question from previous grant cycles.

Finally, the review committee valued authentic and holistic long-established or newer partnerships. They particularly noted partnerships that included clear plans to connect with historically marginalized communities and center BIPOC voices.

The committee acknowledged the difficulty of establishing true, long-term partnerships between larger, complex organizations and historically and systemically marginalized communities. The committee appreciated applicants' efforts to embrace the challenge and create such partnerships regardless of the difficulties faced along the way.

### **Recommended for funding**

The 2021 Nature in Neighborhood community stewardship and restoration grants review committee recommends the following nine (9) proposals for funding to the Metro Council.

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#### **East Portland Climate Greening + Health Community Advisory Board (CAB)**

**Recipient:** Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)

**Grant amount:** \$100,000

**Project Partners:** APANO, Friends of Trees, Portland State University

**Program summary:** APANO has partnered with Friends of Trees and Portland State University to engage community members living in outer East Portland to both oversee a research study on neighborhood greening and to build connection and community power amongst neighbors.

#### **Educational Invasive Species Removal and Restoration Reimagining Project**

**Recipient:** Beaverton School District Native Education Program

**Grant amount:** \$38,735

**Project Partners:** Beaverton School District's Native Education Program, Five Oaks Museum, Friends of Tryon Creek

**Program summary:** A collaborative DEI endeavor centered on increasing BIPOC educational career opportunities within environmental restoration. Additionally we will shift normative conservation narratives seeking to highlight traditional ecological knowledge as best practice.

### **Food Sovereignty for Immigrants and Refugees in East Portland**

**Recipient:** Center for Intercultural Organizing- DBA Unite Oregon

**Grant amount:** \$100,000

**Project Partners:** Unite Oregon, City Repair, Depave, Portland Parks and Recreation

**Program summary:** A cohort of over 20 immigrants and refugees will learn about building community gardens, pollinator habitats, and native planting in high urban density areas, and establish a community garden at Knott Park, created by and for immigrant and refugee community members.

### **Depave NARA TerraNova CNA 2021-3**

**Recipient:** Depave

**Grant amount:** \$49,940

**Project Partners:** Depave, City of Gresham, , East Multnomah SWCD, Native American Rehabilitation Association of the Northwest, Portland Clean Energy Fund, Terra Nova School/Beaverton School District, Tualatin SWCD, Tualatin Watershed Council

**Program summary:** Depave will complete two community re-greening projects, a healing garden at NARA Gresham and a learning rain garden at Terra Nova School in Beaverton. We will also expand past site support and a community needs assessment to communities beyond Portland.

### **Wayfinders and Tappin Roots Expansion**

**Recipient:** Camp E.L.S.O. Inc.

**Grant amount:** \$100,000

**Project Partners:** Camp E.L.S.O. Inc., BEAM Village, Blueprint Foundation, Friends of Tryon Creek, Greater Than, Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership, Metro Parks and Nature Naturalist team, Tualatin Riverkeepers, US Fish and Wildlife

**Program summary:** Expanding and improving year-round, culturally relevant STEAM education programs for BIPOC youth which are designed by and for BIPOC communities in collaboration with schools and community organizations, with a focus on expanding STEAM career pathways.

### **Leach Botanical Garden Community Restoration Project**

**Recipient:** Johnson Creek Watershed Council

**Grant amount:** \$56,619

**Project Partners:** Johnson Creek Watershed Council, African Youth & Community Organization, The Blueprint Foundation, David Douglas High School, Leach Garden Friends, Wisdom of the Elders

**Program summary:** Over 3 acres of unmanaged land at Leach Botanical Garden will be restored and monitored over 5+ years. This collaborative effort by 5 partners uses restoration as an opportunity for hands-on STEM youth education and workforce development.

**Partnering to Sustainably Restore Centro Cultural's Cornelius Campus & to Foster Deeper Connections to Nature: A community project**

**Recipient:** Portland Audubon

**Grant amount:** \$88,706

**Project Partners:** Portland Audubon, Centro Cultural de Washington County, Clean Water Services, Columbia Land Trust, Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District

**Program summary:** Centro Cultural, Backyard Habitat, and Tualatin SWCD are partnering on a community-led project to sustainably restore the land at Centro's campus to create habitat and connect Centro participants and the community to the nature around them.

**Student Crew Leadership Training Program (SCLTP)**

**Recipient:** Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center Inc.

**Grant amount:** \$50,000

**Project Partners:** Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center Inc. and Rosemary Anderson High School, Blueprint Foundation, Columbia Slough Watershed Council, Friends of Columbia Children's Arboretum, Friends of Trees, Gresham Parks and Recreation, Metro, Outgrowing Hunger, Portland Parks & Recreation

**Program summary:** Through SCLTP, POIC+RAHS and Friends of Trees (FOT) provide low-income youth and youth of color with the opportunity to restore local habitats and receive career-track natural resource mentorship and education.

**Verde Rain Garden & Naturescape Project**

**Recipient:** Verde

**Grant amount:** \$100,000

**Project Partners:** Verde, Backyard Habitat (Portland Audubon & Columbia Land Trust), Columbia Slough Watershed Council, Habitat for Humanity Portland, Hacienda CDC, Portland Audubon, Reynolds Learning Academy: Multnomah Youth Cooperative Program, PGE Project Zero

**Program summary:** Expand program capacity to install 36 rain gardens/naturescapes, extend our reach to include homeowners in East Portland, deliver bilingual training to Hacienda CDC and NAYA youth and work with them to design and install 6 rain gardens.

**Attachment A:** List of all applicants and their status throughout the review committee recommendation process