

Enhancing our Urban Green Spaces

Why they matter and what we can do to protect them



Presented by Friends of Fanno Creek Headwaters
and Westside Watershed Resource Center

Photo: Helena Stedman



- Friends of Fanno Creek Headwaters is a non-profit organization whose mission is to help save, restore, and educate about the importance of urban green spaces in the Fanno Creek watershed.



- The Westside Watershed Resource Center inspires awareness and action on behalf of watershed health in SW and NW Portland.

Overview

- ▶ What is a watershed and why is watershed health important?
- ▶ Parks and green spaces in Portland
- ▶ Value of green spaces to people, animals, and the environment
- ▶ Illustrate the importance of conservation efforts
- ▶ Resources for technical assistance and funding opportunities



Neighborhood coyote

So...what is a watershed?

A watershed is an area of land where all the water that falls there flows into the same waterway.

Fanno Creek Watershed

Fanno Creek →

Tualatin River →

Willamette River →

Columbia River →

Pacific Ocean

Why protect our watershed?

- ▶ Anything that enters Fanno Creek ends up in all these other locations too!



Fanno Creek Watershed

- ▶ Spans 15 miles between Hillsdale and the Tualatin River
 - Land area of over 20,000 acres
- ▶ Urbanized area with many paved and impervious surfaces
 - Impervious = water can't move through it
 - Roads, parking lots, roofs, driveways
- ▶ Stormwater runoff from these surfaces creates pollution in the creek
 - Oils, pet waste, chemicals, heavy metals, dirt/dust
- ▶ Restoration projects to reduce and filter stormwater, and replace invasive weeds with native plants enhance wildlife habitat and mitigate water pollution
- ▶ Restored areas near Fanno Creek create benefits for people and animals
 - The Tualatin River provides drinking water to portions of Washington County
 - Wildlife is still abundant along the creek including a family of beavers!

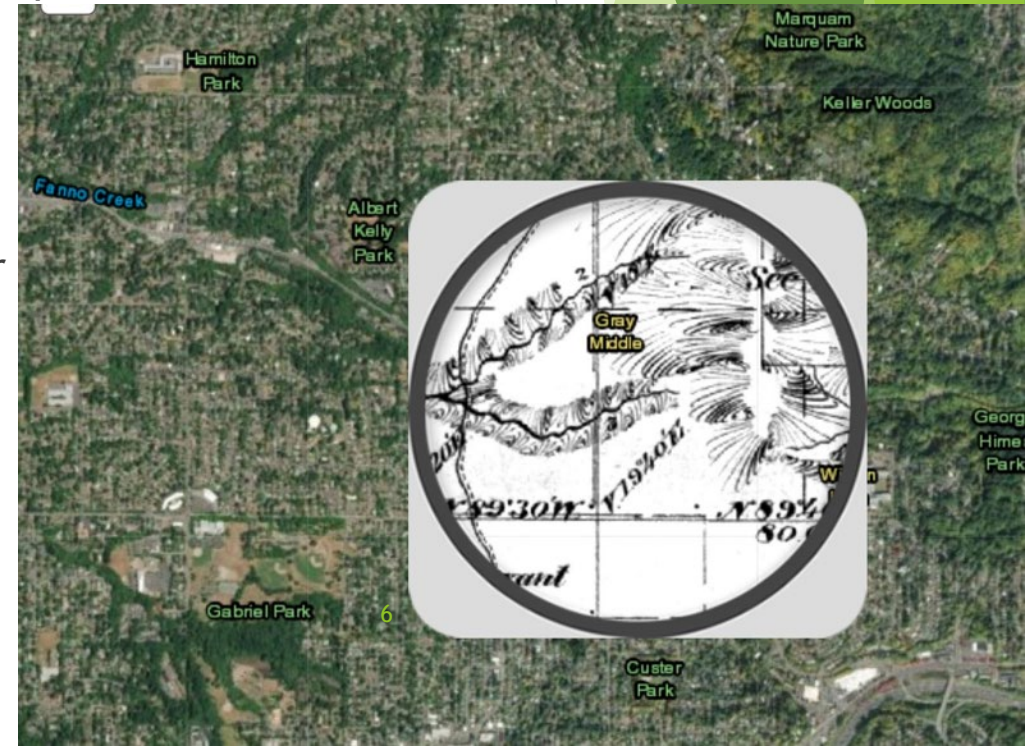


Parks and Green Spaces in Portland

- ▶ Acknowledging the Original Creators of Trails
 - ▶ Before there were parks and “urban” green spaces, there were just green spaces
 - ▶ In the 1850s, the majority of “Portland” residents were Indigenous Peoples
 - ▶ Native tribes such as the Atfalati, Chinook, Cowlitz, Kalapuya, and Mollala live(d) in and care(d) for these areas for thousands of years
 - ▶ “Hiking trails” often began as game trails, which became more well defined as native tribes used them to hunt and gather food and other resources
 - ▶ Some roads that we drive and bike on today started out as primary travel routes used by native tribes

*Info courtesy of Dr. Tracy J. Prince, Portland State University American Indian Teacher Program

1852 survey map of
SW 25th Ave Community
Trail area



Parks and Green Spaces in Portland

- ▶ Portland is home to 325 parks, ranging in size from 5000 acre Forest Park, to Mill Ends Park at just 2 feet across (the world's smallest park!)
- ▶ 89% of Portland residents live within a 10 minute walk of a park or green space (Trust for Public Lands, "Park Score")
- ▶ Plans for Forest Park were conceived in the 1800s, and the first citywide parks plan was developed by John Charles Olmsted in the early 1900s (this included Terwilliger Parkway in SW Portland)



Mill Ends Park in
downtown Portland

Terwilliger Parkway
circa 1918



Parks and Green Spaces in Portland

- ▶ **1973:** Urban growth boundaries are set in Portland, limiting loss of forest and farm land outside the city, but providing no protection for natural areas within city limits
- ▶ **1982:** Officials declare “no place for nature in the city”
- ▶ **1992:** Environmental activists campaign for a ballot measure to protect open space, parks, and streams; ballot measure fails
- ▶ **1995:** Voters in the Portland Metro community approve a \$136 million bond to protect natural areas and complete missing pieces of trails
- ▶ **2006:** Parks and Nature Bond is passed to provide \$227 million of funding to conserve and restore natural areas and parks, \$15 million in funds available as grants for community scale conservation projects
- ▶ **2019:** Voters pass a new \$475 million bond to support regional projects like land protection and enhancement, park development and improvement, regional trail construction, grant funding for community projects, and racial equity and social justice

Human birdhouse in
Pioneer Square



Value of Urban Green Spaces

- ▶ Environmental Benefits
 - ▶ Clean, cool, and filter air and water
 - ▶ Provide habitat and food for endangered and displaced wildlife
 - ▶ Bird populations have declined by 25% since 1970 (Cornell Lab of Ornithology)
 - ▶ Many pollinating insects are struggling due to lack of habitat (Xerces Society)
 - ▶ Support biodiversity of native plant and animal species
 - ▶ Create safe travel corridors for wildlife to move through to mate, migrate, and access other resources
 - ▶ Mitigate impacts of climate change

Blue heron at Tanner Springs park in the Pearl District



Value of Urban Green Spaces

► Personal Benefits

- Increase property values (Netusil, Noelwah R. “Valuing the Environment and Natural Resources: Portland, Oregon.” 2019)
- Decrease crime by increasing areas of visibility, activity, and community involvement (Catrakilis, Natasha. “Literature Survey: Green Space and Property Values.” 2015)
- Increase physical and mental health through outdoor activity and time spent in nature (Williams, Florence. “Nature Fix.” 2017)
- Provide recreation opportunities and community gathering spaces close to home
- Create safe walking and alternative transportation routes

Students on the SW 25th
Ave trail



Value of Urban Green Spaces

- ▶ Benefits of Education and Supporting the Next Generation
 - ▶ Young people benefit from knowing that the adults in their lives care about and want to do something to protect our planet
 - ▶ Structured educational opportunities in urban green spaces encourage the next generation to develop a lifelong interest in conservation
 - ▶ Some schools visiting the SW 25th Ave Community Trail have planted their own pollinator gardens, and we have helped them with ideas, resources and materials, like Bug Hotels
 - ▶ Each small project plays a part in enhancing the connectivity and positive impact of urban green spaces

Students at Rieke Elementary School show off a bug hotel



SW 25th Ave ROW Trail Project

- ▶ **2009:** SW Trails PDX reclaimed the trail by removing blackberries and ivy and laying down gravel
- ▶ **2015:** Volunteers work with Andrea Wall to remove invasive plants
 - ▶ Heavy downpours send water from the MJCC parking lot onto the trail and flood a house on SW Idaho St
- ▶ **2016:** Andrea contacts City of Portland to find out what can be done to help stop the flooding; 3 employees make a site visit and recommendations
 - ▶ Recommendations include installing a bioswale and applying for grant funds to not only manage stormwater, but do restoration along the trail
- ▶ **2017:** Andrea has applied for 9 grants and received 8 to perform restoration work

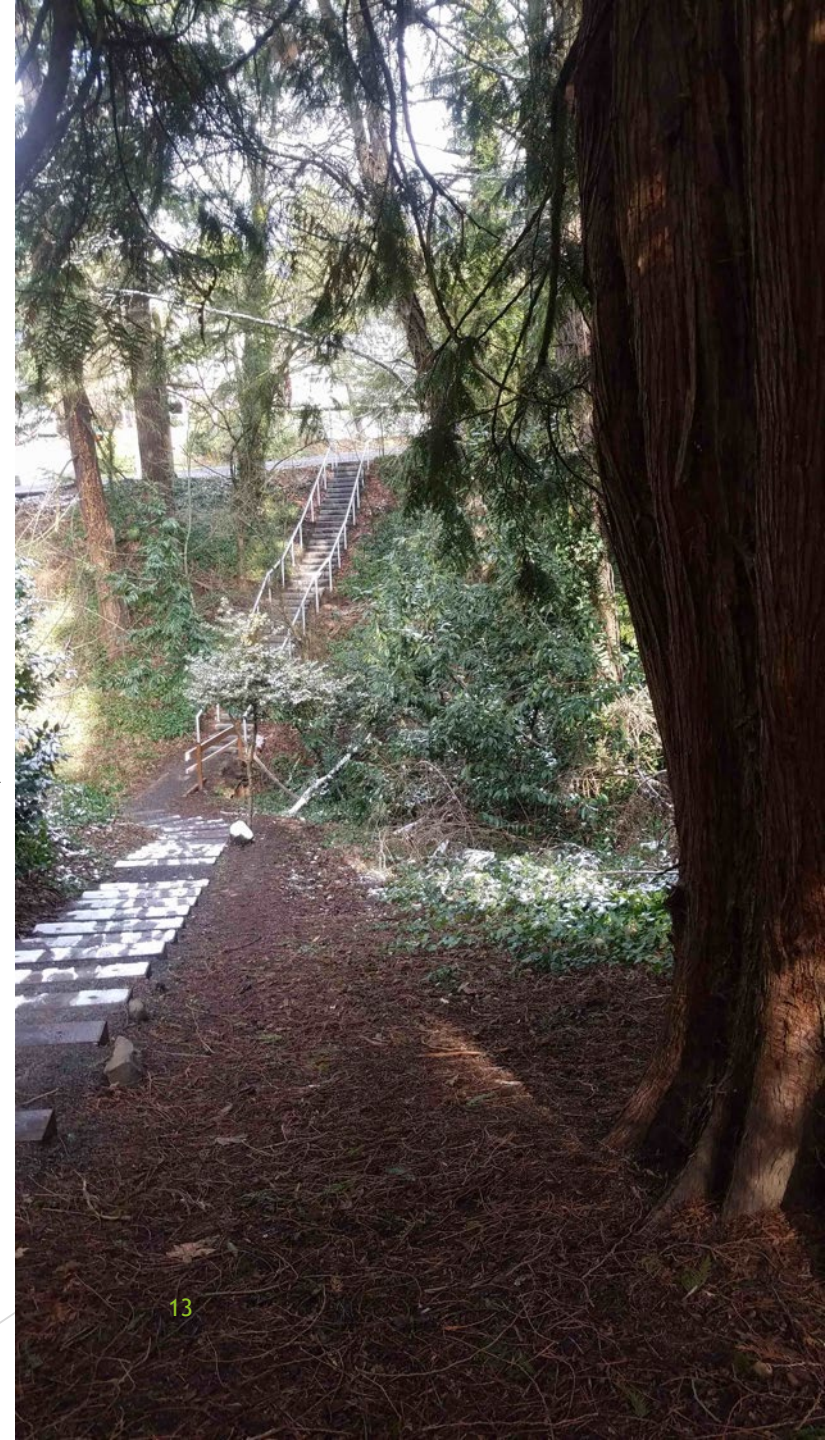
Waterfall from MJCC
parking lot onto SW 25th
Ave trail



SW 25th Ave ROW Trail Project

- ▶ **2019:** A second pollinator garden was installed on the north end of the trail along SW Bertha Blvd
- ▶ **2020-2022:** During the pandemic, the Friends of Fanno Creek Headwaters continued to work in small, socially distanced groups along the trail. We engaged our contractor and volunteers to remove over 25,000 square feet of invasive weeds and replaced most with native plants. We continued to weed, water and replant along the trail as maintenance is an ongoing task
- ▶ We plan to complete restoration along the headwaters of Fanno Creek on the north end of the trail, and add a rain garden along SW 25th Ave, a gravel, unimproved roadway, as a demonstration project for stormwater management
- ▶ Friends of Fanno Creek Headwaters is funded by grants and donations

Stairway installed by SW Trails and volunteers along SW 25th Ave Community Trail near headwaters of Fanno Creek



Before



02/17/2017

During



10/29/2017

After



What can you do?

- ▶ Remove invasive weeds, plant native plants
- ▶ Create wildlife habitat (bird houses, bug hotels, pollinator gardens, piles of sticks)
- ▶ Filter stormwater
- ▶ Educate the community
- ▶ Create gathering spaces

Inspired by work along the SW 25th Ave community trail, neighbors at the Hillsdale Village Condos completed Backyard Habitat Certification in the summer of 2021



Resources

- ▶ Westside Watershed Resource Center
- ▶ West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District
- ▶ City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services
- ▶ Urban Greenspaces Institute
- ▶ Metro Nature in Neighborhoods Grants
- ▶ Bureau of Environmental Services Mini Plant Grants and Community Watershed Stewardship Grants
- ▶ Habitat Restoration NW



ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
CITY OF PORTLAND
working for clean rivers



WEST MULTNOMAH
Soil & Water Conservation District



Watershed Resource Center Programs

How can we work together?

- ▶ **Native Plant Swap** - Free native plants from your neighbors
 - ▶ <https://www.nativeplantswap.org/>
- ▶ **Tool Shed** - Request to borrow our tools (for FREE!)
 - ▶ <https://westsidewatersheds.org/tool-loan>
- ▶ **Stormwater Stars Workshops** - Yard-scale stormwater management
- ▶ **Partnership opportunities**
 - Current projects include:
 - Working with school groups to protect and create wildlife habitat
 - Educational fieldtrips for youth
 - Neighborhood restoration projects
 - West Willamette Restoration Partnership



Gratitude

THE PORTLAND GARDEN CLUB

- ▶ City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services
- ▶ Daniel Soebbing, Assistant Planner
City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability
- ▶ Hillsdale Community Foundation
- ▶ Hillsdale Neighborhood Association
- ▶ Metro
- ▶ Oregon Wildlife Foundation
- ▶ Portland Garden Club
- ▶ SOLVE
- ▶ SW Neighborhoods Inc.
- ▶ SW Trails
- ▶ West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District



ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
CITY OF PORTLAND
working for clean rivers



WEST MULTNOMAH
Soil & Water Conservation District



Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.



SOLVE
Taking Care of Oregon



Metro

Inspiration

- ▶ **“We need to save our urban green spaces now because once they are gone, they are gone forever.”**

Mindy Brooks, City Planner
City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

- ▶ **“Ours is not the task for fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach.”**

Clarissa Pinkola Estes

- ▶ **“If man is not to live by bread alone, what is better worth doing well than the planting of trees?”**

Frederick Law Olmsted
Designer of New York City’s Central Park

- ▶ **“In livable cities is preservation of the wild.”**

Mike Houck
Urban Greenspaces Institute

- ▶ **“One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.”**

William Shakespeare

Socially distanced
volunteers on the SW
25th Ave community trail

