- HOME
- CALENDAR
- PLACES AND ACTIVITIES
- GARBAGE AND RECYCLING
- SUSTAINABLE LIVING
- PLANNING AND CONSERVATION
- MAPS, DATA AND RESEARCH
- GRANTS
- JOBS AT METRO
- VOLUNTEER
- DOING BUSINESS
- NEWS
- ABOUT METRO

SUBSCRIBE TO FEED

RSS

SUBSCRIBE TO DIGEST

You can receive daily, weekly, or monthly email digests of newsfeed posts.   Sign up for digest
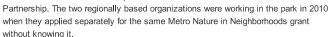
503-797-1700
503-797-1804 TDD
503-797-1797 fax

METRO NEWS HOME

ABOUT METRO NEWS

MEDIA CONTACT

UPDATES BY KEYWORD

- activities
- cemeteries
- climate change
- Climate Smart Communities
- Community Investment Strategy
- development
- employment
- field notes
- finances and funding
- grants
- maps and data
- natural areas
- news coverage
- parks and trails
- planning and policy
- public comment
- reporting
- solid waste
- sustainable living
- transportation
- urban growth boundary
- visitor venues
- volunteering

MONTHLY ARCHIVES

- June 2013
- May 2013
- April 2013
- March 2013
- February 2013
- January 2013
- December 2012
- November 2012
- October 2012
- September 2012
- August 2012
- July 2012

ABOUT

Find news, stories and things to do on Metro's website. Subscribe to daily, weekly or monthly e-mail digests, or view updates in your news reader.

May 22, 2013 2:00 PM

Grant program helps foster partnerships, build community through restoration

By Molly Simas. Bylined writers are Metro staff. Stories with a byline do not necessarily represent the opinions of Metro or the Metro Council. Metro news is committed to transparency, fairness and accuracy.   Learn more

Meldrum Bar Park in Gladstone is host to a variety of recreational activities – fishing, boating, sports, and birding, to name a few. However, visitors may also notice another activity taking place in the park: habitat restoration.

The restoration work is conducted with the direction of Wilderness International and the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership. The two regionally based organizations were working in the park in 2010 when they applied separately for the same Metro Nature in Neighborhoods grant without knowing it.

"Metro said, 'Hey, you two are in the same area and doing similar work, why don't you combine these applications and put together an even stronger proposal?'" said Russ Hall, executive director of Wilderness International. "So we did. And we got the grant."

Metro's Nature in Neighborhoods program is a regional initiative to restore and protect fish and wildlife habitat and integrate natural areas into the urban environment. Through the program, Metro offers restoration and enhancement grants for projects that connect people with nature in their communities.

Grant funding from Metro strengthened the work that was already occurring in Meldrum Bar Park and got the partnership between the two organizations "off the ground," Hall said.

The Meldrum Bar Park Habitat, Education and Job Training Project, run by Wilderness International and the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership, has been recommended by Metro's grant review committee to receive another round of funding. Together, these organizations coordinate students, at-risk youth, and community members to perform restoration work at the site.

Additionally, the Estuary Partnership and Wilderness International provide environmental education programs and career skills training at the site. The Partnership works with elementary school students, while Wilderness International partners with the Clackamas County Juvenile Department to help run its Project Payback program.

"With this project, we're taking kids to a place they all know and are familiar with, and connecting them to that place in a way they haven't connected before," said Josh Holcomb, volunteer coordinator with the Partnership and one of the primary project leaders at Meldrum Bar Park. "A lot of them have boated or fished out there, but haven't explored the forest."

In keeping with the Partnership's goal to increase knowledge and appreciation of the Columbia River and Estuary, the organization offers free education programs to grades 2-12. These combine in-classroom science lessons with field trips to nearby natural areas to make a comprehensive study unit.

Meldrum Bar Park is an ideal project site, Holcomb said, because the natural area needs a lot of restoration work, and there are many schools in the area.

"We work upstream and downstream on the Columbia River, trying get kids outside and connect them to these natural areas," Holcomb said. "We need to find partners in various communities so we aren't bussing kids somewhere really far from their homes."

The park is a good location to meet Wilderness International's at-risk youth program needs as well, Hall said.

"It's native habitat in a very urban environment. Most kids can get there on the bus line,

walk, ride their bike, or their parents can bring them," Hall said. "It's easy for them to report for their work, and also it's a very viable conservation site."

Wilderness International provides a life-skills development program for participants concurrently with the restoration project. Since 2010, the organization has mentored a total of 36 at-risk teens in the park.

While technically running separate programs, the Partnership and Wilderness International provide help for one another in different areas, said Holcomb. The Partnership's staff of professional educators has provided educational support for Wilderness International's crews, while Wilderness International maintains a physical presence on the site to guide restoration work and set day plans for the Partnership's field trips.

It's this overlap in work and mission that make the partnership of the two organizations such a strong one – and many other local agencies have rallied alongside them. Friends of Rinearson Creek and SOLV, two local organizations doing conservation and restoration work in the area, have voiced support for the Meldrum Bar Park project and embarked upon collaborative efforts.

The restoration has not gone unnoticed by the community at large. Nearby residents who walk through the park often stop to talk with the restoration crews, complimenting the work that they're doing and encouraging the kids, Hall said. Parents of kids who participated in field trips came to community volunteer days, and teachers contacted the organizations, independently seeking follow-up days at the site.

Scott Tabor, a supervisor in Gladstone's public works department, said in an email that patrons of Meldrum Bar Park like how open it has become after invasive plant removal and have taken an attitude of ownership regarding the space.

"Vandalism is down considerably, and people are commenting more and more on what a beautiful park it is becoming," Tabor said. "The city does not have the funds or staff to dedicate (to restore Meldrum Bar Park's natural area). Without the grant from Metro, this would not be happening at the rate at which it is."

The Nature in Neighborhoods grant program requires a funding match from grant recipients, although on average achieves a 4:1 match, leveraging $4 of outside contributions for every $1 of funding.

The stated purpose of the grant program is "to support and create partnerships in local communities that connect people with nature and improve watershed health."

This, Holcomb said, fits the Meldrum Bar Park project to a T.

"Working with the Clackamas County youth, getting kids out there, is right up the alley of Nature in Neighborhoods," Holcomb said. "It's a really community-driven partnership that supports the mission of a lot of organizations. We, among others, are helping change behaviors in an area that was not maintained for many years. Having a presence there, seeing people in the area, is changing perspectives."

Molly Simas can be reached at molly.simas@oregonmetro.gov or 503-797-1842. Follow Metro on Twitter @oregonmetro.

Learn more about Nature in Neighborhoods initiative and programs

SHARE THIS:

METRO HOME | PLACES AND ACTIVITIES | GARBAGE AND RECYCLING | SUSTAINABLE LIVING | PLANNING AND STEWARDSHIP | MAPS AND DATA | GRANTS | JOBS AT METRO | VOLUNTEER | DOING BUSINESS | NEWS | CALENDAR | ABOUT METRO |