

RiverHealth Stewardship Program Grant Accomplishments 2023-24



History

The Clackamas Water Environment Services (WES) Board of Directors authorized the RiverHealth Watershed Stewardship Program (RHSP) and process for awarding grant funding to community groups for projects that enhance the health of District watersheds in a resolution on November 14, 2013 (Board Resolution 2013-92). The Board authorized the WES Director to develop, administer and expend funds for the program and directed that a report regarding the same be delivered to the Board annually.

The Program

The RHSP supports community groups, businesses and property owners who work to improve the health of WES watersheds. The RHSP can provide up to \$30,000 for projects that protect and enhance water resources in the District and/or provide watershed education and outreach. Stewardship grants are awarded annually. Citizen groups, businesses, schools, nonprofits, student groups, faith organizations, neighborhood or business associations, and service groups working to improve watershed health are eligible to apply. Examples of eligible projects include riparian restoration, stormwater features, habitat improvements, and education and stewardship events.

Each year, WES staff prepare a program guide and submittal forms for organizations to apply for these funds, advertise the information, accept proposals and evaluate them with a selection committee, and monitor project progress. Project proposals are solicited in the spring and awarded at the beginning of the fiscal year in July. The proposals are evaluated according to established criteria. Through this program, grantees have conducted outreach to neighborhood groups, schools and stream-side landowners, and worked with volunteers to improve watershed health through riparian planting projects. As the demand has grown, with budget approval from the Board, WES has increased the annual funding amount to the program from \$152,000 in the first year to \$300,000.

The projects have helped the District meet state and federal regulatory requirements to reduce pollution and improve the health of waterways. At the same time, the projects engage residents in stewardship, educating them about watershed health and encouraging them to take action on their own to improve water quality.

Clackamas Water Environment Services produces clean water, protects water quality and recovers renewable resources. We do this by providing wastewater services, stormwater management, and environmental education. It's our job to protect public health and support the vitality of our communities, natural environment and economy.



CLACKAMAS
WATER
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The following organizations received a combined total of \$300,000 in grant funds in 2023-24

Bob's Red Mill (\$26,473) - Restored 4.5 acres of the Mill's End Wetland by controlling invasive species and planting native vegetation to improve habitat and water quality.

Clackamas River Basin Council (\$29,811) - Controlled noxious weeds on 12.5 acres of riparian habitat and 1,200 linear feet of river and streams. The grant also funds Shade Our Streams stakeholder engagement.

Columbia Land Trust and Bird Alliance of Portland (\$18,135) - Worked with residents to reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides, remove weeds, and plant native vegetation through its Backyard Habitat Program.

Friends of Trees (\$30,000) - Educated and empowered landowners and engaged youth through hands-on stewardship and environmental education experiences.

Happy Valley Heights HOA (\$29,361) - Collaborated with four homeowner associations on riparian treatments to mitigate stormwater runoff impacts from increased impervious areas.

Johnson Creek Watershed Council (\$29,490) - Engaged 200 volunteers and six community partners in the Johnson Creek Clean-Up, 300 volunteers in Watershed Wide, and led two events: Watershed Discovery Day and Science in the Park.

Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership (\$26,996) - Designed a stormwater retrofit facility that captures and treats stormwater from the Sunnyside Elementary back parking lot. Engaged students in design.

North Clackamas Watersheds Council (\$29,995) - Provided training for landowner stewardship to participants in the Streamside Stewards Program, restoring vital riparian conditions in the Kellogg-Mt. Scott Watershed.

Northwest Youth Corps (\$27,000) - Introduced girls ages 15-24 from diverse ethnic and income backgrounds to natural resource-based service. Through activities with Friends of Trees, youth earned money as they worked outdoors, increasing their understanding of nature through daily environmental lessons, and acquiring academic credit at their home school.

Tualatin River Watershed Council (\$26,955) - Engaged streamside landowners in riparian forest restoration and developed partnerships to improve water quality and wildlife habitat.

West Linn-Wilsonville School District (\$16,740)

Engaged West Linn High School students in the Environmental Science Career & Technical Education program to train Riverside High School students to remove invasive species and plant native vegetation along 200 linear feet of the Tualatin River. High School students led restoration work with Stafford Primary 5th graders and instructed them on watershed health.

World Salmon Council (\$9,000) - Provided environmental education that combined classroom and online curriculum, field learning, and community service, incorporating innovative learning activities to enhance student's critical thinking and problem-solving skills.



Northwest Youth Corps in the field

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Riparian Restoration Projects

New acres planted	12
Number of sites	39
Acres of invasives removed	34
Acres of riparian area worked on	83
Linear feet of streams worked on	12,987
Planted trees	3,847
Planted shrubs	8,425
Planted herbaceous vegetation	275
Number of recruited volunteers	1,265
Volunteer hours	2,354



Watershed Wide event



Science in the Park

Education Projects

Number of lessons, field trips, tours	87
Number of events open to the public	35
Number of adults reached	461
Number of students reached	1,818

Rita's Reflections: Watershed Stewards in Action

Rita Baker, WES Advisory Committee

Volunteers Come Together on the Clackamas River

It was a cold, windswept day at Windswept Waters Dr. (near SE Obsidian St., Happy Valley) in February as about 70 volunteers of all ages worked diligently to plant native plants on a cut bank slope adjacent to the Clackamas River. Meng Vue and Michelle Yasutake of Friends of Trees organized the tree planting near the confluence of Rock Creek and the Clackamas River. Friends of Trees partnered with the Windswept Waters HOA to enhance this important natural area in Clackamas County.

Along with native plants that will become an important understory to the trees (such as snowberry, red flowering currant and Oregon grape), Willamette ponderosa pines and Oregon white oak trees were planted. Willamette ponderosa pine is a hardy tree and better able to withstand increased heat that continues to occur in the summer months.

The work party came together again in April to mulch the plants and trees to support the non-irrigated specimens through the dry months of the year.

This site is situated at the top of a bluff right on the Clackamas River. The river is home to threatened and endangered species of salmon, and provides drinking water to over 360,000 people, so water quality is extremely important here! Vegetation in riparian areas protects water quality in several ways. Their roots hold in soil, preventing erosion and sedimentation of riverbeds; they provide shade to keep the water cool, essential for salmon survival; and they provide excellent habitat for native wildlife. When they mature and die, they continue providing habitat for both terrestrial species and fish!



It Takes a Village, Working Together

Andrew Voss looks over his herd of goats contentedly chewing through a dense thicket of weeds and Himalayan blackberries and sees a safe and environmentally friendly way to remove flammable invasive plants. This particular site on SE Alta Vista Drive in Happy Valley was a project spearheaded by Dale Guenther as one of the sites in his successful RiverHealth Stewardship Program grant funded by Clackamas Water Environment Services.

For this project, four Homeowners Associations partnered to restore nearly 20 acres of natural areas, primarily located in the headwaters of Mt. Scott Creek. Dale Guenther, a retired USFS Forester, has lent his expertise and worked with neighbors to get this restoration off the ground. This project exemplifies how volunteers can work together to improve water quality, habitat, and even aesthetics within their communities.

Baby male goats have a perilous place in the cheese-making process, as they have no utility. Rather than their usual fate as a meat product, Andrew puts them to use in improving the ecosystem with their voracious appetites undeterred by sharp prickles in the vegetation they consume.

While goats have a reputation for being escape artists, Andrew says that as long as they have a job to do, they will remain where they are needed. They are thwarted from feasting on the tasty cambium on trees in their enclosure by a large bottle of hot sauce that Andrew applies when needed to deter them. In this way, the invasive plants can be removed without using herbicides.

As each summer brings more destructive wildfires impacting people, native plants, and animals, using goats to remove flammable invasive plants offers a potential solution to the problem.

