

# Willamette Park Wetland

in West Linn’s Willamette Park, east of Willamette River mile 28.4



**BEFORE**

**AFTER**

*New native plants help diversify wetlands*

As part of an overall park expansion project, the city acquired an additional 7.25 acres adjacent to Willamette Park. A portion of the property contained a new softball/soccer field with the majority of the property hosting a newly restored and enhanced wetland area. The main project objective was to replace a reed canary grass wetland with a more desirable native vegetation. Other objectives were to improve the water quality of stormwater before it enters the Willamette River. Soil near the small pond had been contaminated by an illegal dumping of electrical capacitors, which leaked polychlorinated biphenyls. The site provided an outdoor laboratory for students from the adjacent middle school and created public awareness on the values of urban wetlands.

City staff worked with volunteers to develop and implement a plan for restoration and enhancement of the site. Blackberries, reed canary grass and other exotic grass species were removed, a pond excavated and the surrounding area was planted with native emergent wetland plants, trees and shrubs. An old tile filtration system was

removed and replaced with natural bio-filtration system. Public awareness, natural history, wetland interpretation and stewardship responsibilities were promoted through citizen participation in the project. Interpretative signs, materials and shelter at the site has established a continuing educational benefit to the school groups as well.

### Benefits

A once monoculture sea of reed canary grass is now a native plant wetland riparian natural area. Wildlife use and habitat value have increased. Student and citizen involvement in project design, implementation and monitoring have increased understanding of the multiple value of urban wetlands. Water quality has improved with creation of a natural bio-filtration system.

### Budget

- Proposed – \$42,159
- Actual – \$42,159
- Metro/US Fish and Wildlife grant award – \$15,620

## Timeline and tasks

April 1991 .....	Site reviewed, site base map created (consultant)
May 1991 .....	Wetland survey, mapping and delineation completed (consultant)
June 1991 .....	Applied for Metro restoration grant (city staff)
June - October 1991 .....	Preliminary site design created (consultant)
October 1991 .....	Grading and planting plan created (consultant); final design completed, permit applications submitted (consultant); large trees transplanted at the site (contractor)
June 1992 .....	An interpretive narrative about the site and project was developed (consultant)
August 1992 .....	Site cleared and graded, irrigation system installed (city staff)
August - October 1992 .....	Native grasses and turf lawn installed (city staff)
September - October 1992 .....	Upland plant material planted (city staff and volunteers)
October 1992 .....	Emergent plant material planted (city staff and volunteers); weir instructed and installed (city staff and volunteers); bird nest boxes put up (city staff and volunteers)

Restoration and enhancement work under the Metro/US Fish and Wildlife Service grant was completed in December 1992. Some additional upland plant material was planted in June of 1993. The city of West Linn plans to complete construction of pathways, parking lots, electrical, interpretive shelter and signs in July of 1997.

## Helpful hints – what worked, what didn't

- If irrigation is required for plant establishment, borrow aluminum above-ground pipe and sprinklers. Most neighboring school districts, cities or even friendly farmers have miles of this laying around as surplus.
- In retrospect, the project may have been over-designed. Contrived plant schemes rarely look natural and can limit a site's versatility. Random plantings with materials that will do well in your situation may prove to work better.
- Instead of planting clover or orchard grass as cover crops, which are species that land managers are always trying to eliminate, plant different sterile grains or wild flowers.
- Get a copy of Hortus West, a native plant and nursery directory and journal. It will save time identifying where to purchase different native plant species.

## Partners

City of West Linn Parks Department  
Middle school biology classes  
School environmental clubs  
Scout troops  
Neighbors and interested citizens

## Contact

Ken Worcester, city of West Linn Parks Department,  
557-4700