Happy Valley Nature Park

by Shelley Matthews

YEAR 6

In Happy Valley, OR.; bordered by SE 145th Avenue on the east, Happy Valley City Park to the north and west, and Happy Valley Elementary School to the south

BEFORE

Wetland and stream at the headwaters of Mt. Scott Creek were dominated by introduced pasture grasses and non-native shrubs

DURING

Students from Happy Valley Elementary school used piezometers to measure groundwater levels to gain a better understanding of hydrology at the site; they helped with on-the-ground restoration and continue to use the park for outdoor education

In 1995, the City of Happy Valley purchased a 24.9-acre parcel of property in the eastern corner of the City with the intention of adding it to the City's parklands. The parcel had been put to numerous uses over time including farming, livestock grazing, and even an airstrip during the 1950's. These activities, along with various hydrologic manipulations (i.e., drain tile installations and water control structures), had impacted native plant communities on the site, degrading former wildlife habitat and water quality functions. Portions of the site that retained wetland hydrologic characteristics were dominated by introduced pasture grasses and Himalayan blackberry and had very little structural diversity. In addition, the creek banks were seriously degraded from years of cattle grazing, causing erosion and impacting water quality.

The City originally planned to develop the land for community recreation. However, they later discovered that a large portion of the property is a wetland. As such, the City revised its plan to include the enhancement and conservation of the wetland site.

The City of Happy Valley Wetland Restoration Project was comprised of two main phases. In phase I, the city gathered as much information as possible about wetland characteristics, the actual size of the wetland, hydrologic trends, current vegetation and numerous other ecological factors. In May 1977, the city completed a wetland delineation study, which showed that 19.7 acres of the site were jurisdictional wetland. In addition, the City hired consultants from Pacific Habitat Services to mark locations for peizometers and to conduct a soils survey, fish and wildlife habitat assessment, existing vegetation community survey, and hydrologic assessment of the project site. Information from these surveys and data gathered from the peizometers was compiled into a formal report on the project site. The report was used to develop a comprehensive restoration plan for the site.

The goal of Phase II was to enhance the structural diversity of a 2.5-acre area along Mt. Scott Creek and its associated wetlands. Native vegetation was planted, non-native plant species were cleared, trash and debris were removed, habitat structures were installed, and a manmade pond located within Mt. Scott Creek was enhanced.

Benefits

- The City has preserved and enhanced a significant natural resource in the middle of a rapidly developing urban area.
- Enhanced the structural and species diversity of a 2.5-acre area along Mt. Scott Creek.
- Wildlife habitat, water quality, and wetland functions were improved.
- Provided a hands-on opportunity for grade schoolers in nature restoration and community involvement.

Budget

Total Proposed – $25,100
Total Actual – $23,617
Metro/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant award – $8,000
Grant Dollars Spent - $8,000

Helpful Hints – what worked, what didn't

- Let the nurseries take care of your plants as long as possible and make sure your plant material can be delivered as close as possible to the project site.
- Determine how your plants will get from the delivery site to the actual planting spot (by hand, wheelbarrow, tractor, etc.) and make sure that the ground will handle it; planting spots may be damp or remote. Make sure you have enough time to move the vegetation to their individual planting locations before planting day.
- If planting, try and prep the site close to the planting date. If you do it too soon, weeds may grow back up, you may create an erosion problem, or your project may change slightly rendering your hard work a waste.
- Color coordinate the plants with the locations where they will be planted and place planting diagrams at key locations within the restoration site. Place a colored ribbon on a stake near one group (type) of plants, then place the same color on a stake at the planting location.
- Arrange for media to visit your site on a workday; book a few weeks ahead of time.
- Keep a notebook handy to record matching expenditures quickly and efficiently.
- Consider pre-digging plant holes if the planting volunteers are grade schoolers; it will be more efficient and much more enjoyable for the children.
- If you use volunteer groups (Envirocorps, schools, etc.), make sure you contact them well in advance (four or five months) of your planting/work project. Also, have a crew leader from the group visit the site prior to your project.
- Take lots of pictures of everything.

Partners

City of Happy Valley
Clackamas County
Division of State Lands
Friends of Mt. Scott Creek
Happy Valley Elementary School
Pacific Habitat Services

Contact

Justin Patterson, Environmental Specialist, City of Happy Valley, (503) 760-3325

Timeline and Tasks

January 1997	Selected consultant
February – May 1997	Completed wetland delineation, biological (wildlife and vegetation), soils, and hydrological studies
April –May 1997	Completed restoration, excavation, grading, planting, and weed management plans
June 1997	Removed invasive plants, trash, and debris
July 1997	Excavated to improve hydrology for additional palustrine emergent wetland or open water habitat
August 1997	Installed water level control structures
September 1997	Re-vegetated with native wetland herbs
October 1997	Installed brush piles and bird boxes for wildlife habitat
November 1997	Planted native trees and shrubs