

Whittaker Ponds

the Old Whittaker School wetland is in Northeast Portland with Columbia Boulevard on the south, the Columbia Slough on the north and light industry to the east and west



BEFORE

Non-native plants have taken over

AFTER

Willow and native shrubs are planted to provide cover

The 21.29-acre property owned by Portland Public Schools encompasses a school building no longer used for classrooms, three baseball fields actively used by Little League teams, some grassy area in the central and northern sections of the property and portions of two large ponds. The banks and upland area of the pond are surrounded by five additional property owners.

The site and surrounding areas were historically grazed and have been encroached upon by a variety of non-native grasses, forbs and shrubs. Large blackberry patches, some as hedges more than 8 feet high and 50 to 100 feet long, were the predominant shrub layer. Teasel, milk thistle, purple star thistle and various introduced grasses covered much of the adjacent property. The natural vegetation structure of the site has been altered, which decreases the number of habitat niches for wildlife. A junkyard, believed to be a small commercial operation, was located along the Northwest shore of the west pond. The junk pile contained debris such as rusting cars, stacks of miscellaneous metals, creosote-treated scrap wood, old tires, etc. Less than 20 feet of bank separates the junkyard from the shoreline.

Project coordinators addressed the vegetation problem by manually removing the non-native plants and revegetating with native plant species. The removal/re-vegetation portion of the overall restoration effort occurred in March 1994 to correspond to the spring phase of Cascadia Quest, a private, nonprofit organization based in Seattle that seeks to promote international cooperation, citizen diplomacy and conflict resolution through environmental restoration projects. Thirty adults, ages 18 to 24, from the United States and more than a dozen other countries participated in the global service project in the Portland metropolitan area. These members were part of a larger delegation of 125 participants that volunteered throughout the Northwestern United States and British Columbia. The Cascadia Quest project was part of numerous efforts at Whittaker that included water quality improvement, securing the cooperation of adjacent landowners and improving the site for passive recreation.

Benefits

Improving habitat was beneficial to water quality and increased wildlife diversity. Native plant species diversity

Timeline and tasks

September - March 1993	Cascadia Quest project planning
October 1993	Complete water quality studies
November 1993	Secure property owners permission
November 1993 - February 1994	Junkyard owner removes, cleans up debris
October - November 1993	Develop final site master plan
January 1994	Plan approval
March 1994	Project implementation
March 6, 1994	Cascadia Quest volunteers arrive in Portland
March 7 - 12, 1994	Blackberry and other non-native plant removal
March 14 - 19, 1994	Re-planting
March 21, 1994	End of project celebration

was also increased by the removal of competing non-native vegetation. The improvements are of value to local residents and provide environmental education opportunities for Cascadia Quest volunteers and future users of the site.

Budget

Proposed – \$20,200

Actual – \$20,200

Metro/US Fish and Wildlife grant award – \$5,000

Helpful hints – what worked, what didn't

- Have as many committed crew/site supervisors as possible scheduled on a day-to-day basis to prevent project manager burnout. The project manager spent every day on the site, as well as every day on another Cascadia Quest project in the Columbia Gorge, due to insufficient coverage by volunteer supervisors.
- Keep a running log of photo plot locations as the photos are taken. This makes identification of the locations easier as time passes and the site changes from vegetation manipulation seasonal changes.
- Take advantage of professional restoration firms that donate staff time for design work and/or on-site demonstrations. Get an agreement from them, then write them into the grant proposal.

- Try to get a commitment from one or two people before or during project implementation who will work on writing the project report. If conditions change for the project manager (i.e., relocation or change of job responsibilities), it may be impossible for him/her to complete the report single-handedly.

Partners

Portland Parks and Recreation

Portland Public Schools

Urban Streams Council

USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program

Piedmont Neighborhood Association

Friends of Trees

Foundation for Global Community

United Nations Association, USA

Cascadia Native Plant Restoration

Contact

Gregory Wolley, Metro Regional Parks and Greenspaces Department, 797-1550