

Beacon Hills Wetland Park

in the Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District, between Southwest Emerald Street and Southwest Turquoise Loop in the southerly part of Beaverton

AFTER

Native wetland plantings establish wildlife habitat



The site has progressed from wet pasture land to a bulldozed water feature with five ponds (and a pumping system to maintain a flow of water in dry seasons) to a natural area for the neighborhood to enjoy.

Beacon Hill Wetlands Park was dedicated to the Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District in February of 1990. Reed canary grass was removed by bulldozing and spraying. Oregon ash, black cottonwood, red osier dogwood, nootka rose, Douglas' spiraea, willow species and meadow grasses were among the native grasses, shrubs and trees that were planted.



BEFORE

In March of 1994, two of the dams separating the five ponds ruptured. As a result, two previous ponds became two streams meandering through shallow basins. The initial recommendation was to consider repairing the dams. An in-depth look, however, resulted in identifying several advantages to allowing the fissures to remain.

The completed restoration would include:

- planting shrub willows around the fissures in the dams to further stabilize the soils
- selectively planting certain areas in nootka roses and other shrubs to create improved habitat and discourage human entry
- planting a limited number of ponderosa pines (native to the area) to create an upper-story of trees otherwise lacking
- placing western red cedars as snags and basking logs for improved waterfowl and songbird habitat.

This plan would also give the park a more traditional appearance of natural ponds and streams with wetland riparian edges and upland slopes.

A graduate class in plant biology from Portland State University brought in a wide variety of expertise. Students had backgrounds in wetland plants, hydrology and mammalogy.

Timeline and tasks

March 1994	Two of the ponds “disappeared,” fissures discovered in corresponding dams
May 1994	Agreement - fissures in the dams draining the ponds may be creating better biodiversity
June 1994	PSU graduate study – research ways to enhance biodiversity within the park
November 1994	Proposals – landscape plan
December 1994	Flyer to neighborhood residents on landscape plan
December 1994 -	
February 1995	Acquired plants and suitable deadwood for snags and basking logs
February - March 1995	Trees planted, snags and basking logs placed
March 1995 - present	Monitoring of trees, shrubs, wildlife and ponds/streams by THPRD and neighborhood residents

The total interactive communications progress of the restoration included making presentations before neighborhood meetings, walking the site with neighbors, meeting on-site with the graduate class on several occasions, canvassing the neighborhood with questionnaires, and making follow-up telephone calls to be assured that neighborhood consensus was being fully acknowledged.

Benefits

The primary goal was to create a natural area of ponds and wetlands that attracted songbirds and waterfowl. The secondary goal was to develop an area of aesthetic value for the local neighborhood. Many residents in the area had property that overlooked the park.

Budget

Proposed – \$7,500

Actual – \$9,670.75

Metro/US Fish and Wildlife grant award – \$2,700

Helpful hints – what worked, what didn't

- Cut live trees (western red cedars) for snags, avoiding dry, brittle branches that break off. This makes handling easier, adds to the life of the snags and makes the snags more realistic.
- Place the trees on a frame, such as for transporting

irrigation pipe, on the trailer. This protects the branches.

- Prepare a log in advance and log the condition of each tree, shrub group, snag and hydrologic feature subject to erosion or other form of change.
- Budget and plan for enough human resources to install beaver screens.
- Develop a nutria protection plan.
- Decide whether a watering program is needed. If yes, budget for it.
- Dams built of rocks are vulnerable to vandalism and to being disassembled by youngsters. Cedar logs are recommended for their natural appearance.
- Be sure to include the neighborhood.

Partners

Portland State University graduate plant ecology class

Park neighbors

Halstead's Arboriculture Consultants

Contact

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