

Portland-Vancouver National Wildlife Refuges Receive Funding to Increase Community Engagement

Portland-Vancouver National Wildlife Refuges – encompassing four refuges in the region -- will receive \$1 million in funding to engage urban communities and youth in conservation and outdoor recreation. The four refuges that span the Portland, OR/Vancouver, WA urban area are Tualatin River, Ridgefield, Steigerwald Lake, and Wapato Lake national wildlife refuges.

The refuges have joined forces to form the Portland-Vancouver Urban Wildlife Conservation Program, and teamed up with the regional Intertwine Alliance, a coalition of private firms, public agencies and nonprofit organizations. Together they will offer new outdoor opportunities for area residents. The refuges received the award through a competition conducted across the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

“Children across our nation are increasingly disconnected from nature, yet playing outside and learning about the natural world is fun, healthy and builds confidence in kids,” said Service Director Dan Ashe in making the funding announcement. “Congratulations to the refuges and their partners for nurturing a movement to foster the next generation of leaders and outdoor stewards while helping people connect to nature in their community – particularly in urban areas.”

Innovative projects that will be funded include:

- a trailer with fishing gear to bring fishing opportunities to at-risk youth;
- an outdoor skills-building workshop in conjunction with the Oregon and Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife; and
- construction of a 40,000-square-foot Inter-Tribal Gathering Garden at Cully Park, Portland’s most diverse, park-deprived neighborhood, to provide a place that will honor and educate about indigenous cultural values and ethics.

“The Intertwine Alliance is demonstrating that a collective approach to public and youth engagement, community health, and equity and inclusion yields a much deeper and more sustained impact, said Executive Director Michael Wetter. “In making this investment, the Service is both challenging us to take this work to the next level, and supporting us in doing so.”

The Service’s Urban Wildlife Conservation Program, launched in 2013, provides new opportunities for residents of America’s cities to learn about and take part in wildlife habitat conservation. The Service is committed to serving a growing diverse and urban audience.