



Leach Botanical Garden's "Back Five" — A Hidden Gem's Hidden Gem



Wisdom crew member Matt Mclean takes a measurement for site assessments at Leach Botanical Garden.

Tucked back off SE Foster Road, where 122nd Avenue crosses Johnson Creek, is one of Portland's lesser-known treasures: Leach Botanical Garden, named for John and Lilla Leach, who lived on the property beginning in the 1930s. They transformed "Sleepy Hollow," as they called it then, from a pig farm to a showcase for plants, with an emphasis on Oregon native species (Lilla, a prominent botanist, made significant contributions to western scientific knowledge of Oregon's flora). The Leaches willed their property to the Metropolitan Park District (later the Portland Park Bureau); the gardens have since expanded from the original 4.5-acre parcel to their present 17 acres.

One of those expansions—a roughly 5-acre lot at the upstream end of the property—has been "left fallow" since becoming

part of the garden in 1999. Encompassing a steep, partly-forested slope, a riparian wetland (an uncommon feature of the lower reaches of Johnson Creek, due to the rock wall that lines most of the lower 15 miles of its channel), and more than 500' of the north bank of the creek, the property is badly overrun with Armenian blackberry, English ivy, and other non-native species that suppress the regeneration of native plants. Thanks to a very exciting partnership, that is about to change.

The Leach Garden Friends, Wisdom of the Elders, the Blueprint Foundation, and JCWC will be teaming up with students from David Douglas High School and community volunteers over the next several years to begin native reforestation on this parcel. Just as importantly, we'll be using this as a kind of "living laboratory," where students and partner groups will be studying the flora and fauna that are present, how they change over the course of the work, and other aspects of the site (soils and geology, etc.). Those observations, in turn, will help inform the restoration work as it progresses, giving those involved a genuine sense of investment and ownership in the habitat they'll be helping to create.

With generous support from the Oregon Community Foundation, the Community Watershed Stewardship Program, and a private donor, we are poised to begin a whole array of improvements to vegetation, amphibian habitat, and stream health. Partners from Wisdom and Blueprint have begun pre-project site assessments; crews from Wisdom will start clearing blackberry in July. With such a large site, we'll just be working on the first acre (closest to the garden) for the first year, moving on to the second once the first is on a trajectory toward success. Data collection will continue regularly, in parallel with the restoration work.

Stay tuned for future updates on this exciting project!

Hello And Farewells On The Board

We said farewell recently to Vinh Nguyen, Board member since 2016 and a member of the Board Community Inclusion Committee. Vinh is a Supervisory Engineer at Portland General Electric.

Please help us welcome these two new Board members:



New Board member
Sarah Sapienza.

Sarah Sapienza has worked for the past 9 years at Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife as a fisheries biologist. She has had many positions there including tagging sturgeon, spawning ground surveys and coded wire tagging salmon at fish hatcheries across the state.

She started volunteering as a Creek Crew Leader and realized that she wanted to be more active with Johnson Creek Watershed Council.

She has a River Restoration certification from Portland State University and a B.A. in Environmental Science from Marylhurst University.

Charlotte Trowbridge works as the Conservation Education Program Manager at the Tualatin Soil and Water

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What's Up With The Uplands?

Although we focus our restoration and monitoring on the stream and riparian corridors, we have partnered for years with Portland Parks & Recreation on also restoring and monitoring upland habitats. In particular, we've conducted several community science monitoring efforts at Powell Butte Nature Park in Southeast Portland. At about 600 acres, Powell Butte is the largest Portland park on the East side of the Willamette River. It's also a highly disturbed area, having undergone decades of grazing and excavation for two underground water supply reservoirs.



Savannah Sparrow

Portland Parks & Recreation has spent two decades restoring this park, and the ecosystem and microhabitats have changed significantly. This change is what makes monitoring biological response here so exciting.

In 2016, nearly 150 volunteers spent a single day recording and photographing plant, insect, amphibian and bird species as part of an ecoblitz. We subsequently organized smaller ecoblitzes to monitor amphibian and lichen, fungi & moss.

In June, our volunteers completed the eleventh and final week of prairie-nesting bird monitoring project at Powell Butte. This is year one of what we hope to be a multi-year project to assess how restoration of prairie habitat is affecting prairie-nesting bird species like savannah sparrows and western meadowlarks.

This project was designed by Dr. Tom Virzi, an ornithologist and the Executive Director of the Happy Valley-based non-profit, Conservation Insight. Dr. Virzi's findings and analysis will supply valuable information to our partner Portland Parks & Recreation, and their ecologist Christian Haaning, in planning future restoration efforts at Powell Butte.

Twenty surveyors recorded species abundance along five pre-selected transects weekly. The data platform we use is the online international "eBird" site. Later this year, we intend to discuss the findings in a public forum.

For our community science volunteers and for JCWC, this project has been a clear example of how we can have fun, learn, and help improve conditions for wildlife right here in our home watershed.

-Daniel Newberry, *Executive Director*

THANK YOU SPONORS



NEW GRANTS

East Multnomah SWCD - \$76,666- This helps to support these program areas: Riparian, Instream, Community Science, Equity & General Support.

Clackamas Water Environment Services - \$22,203- Partially funds our Watershed Wide Event, Creek Cleanup, CreekCare, Service learning with schools and one Science in the Park event.

Community Watershed Stewardship Program (Portland Bureau of Environmental Services) - \$7,145- Towards our Watershed Wide Event.

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board - \$61,462- General council support for 2 years.

Herbert A. Templeton Foundation - \$6,000- Helps support our Service Learning with Schools.

The Autzen Foundation - \$6,000- Funding towards our annual creek Clean-Up event.

Gray Family Foundation - \$14,640- Three year funding towards service learning with schools.

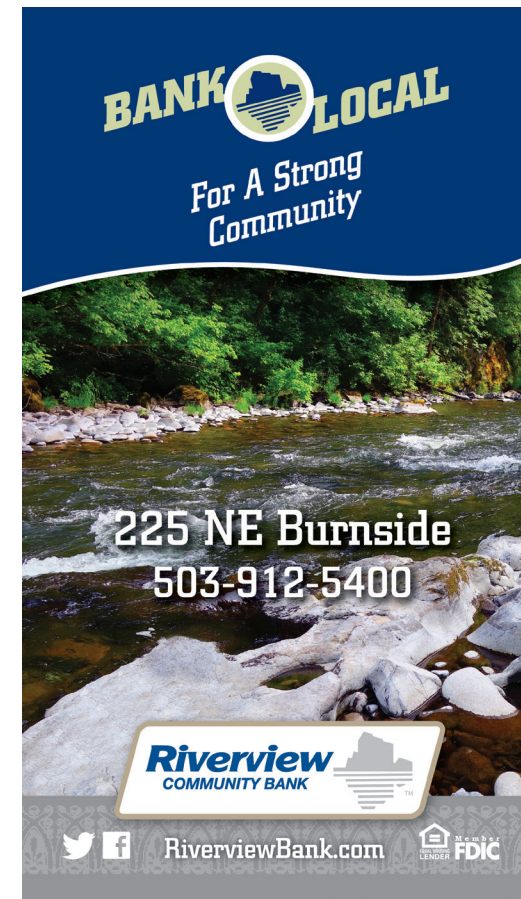
Metro Nature in Neighborhoods - \$36,750- Funds the Mitchell Creek restoration work over 2 years.

The Oregon Community Foundation - \$30,000- Funds the Leach Botanical Garden project working with underserved groups through job training and environmental education to restore habitat.

Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District - \$10,000- "CreekCare" program - Promotes riparian revegetation efforts in the Clackamas County portion of the upper Johnson Creek watershed by engaging private landowners to undertake restoration on their own property.



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Hellos And Farewells On The Board

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Conservation District. She coordinates adult education opportunities and communicates with the public about natural resource issues and solutions.

Charlotte previously worked for state agencies, focusing on the science and policy of wetland mitigation, as well as for a non-profit conservation organization, conducting research on threatened and endangered plant populations.

She has a Master's degree in Geography from University of British Columbia and a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies from Linfield College.



New Board member
Charlotte Trowbridge.

THANK YOU SPONSORS



Here's The Dirt On Turbidity

— Noah Jenkins, JCWC

June 10th turbidity event.

On June 10-11, 2019, we heard from several concerned creekside landowners that Johnson Creek was full of sediment; they wondered what was happening. So did we. Streams here in the Pacific northwest might look “dirty” sometimes. What does that mean? Is it a bad thing? The answer—as is so often the case with ecological questions—is, “It’s complicated.”

That “dirty” appearance is called turbidity, and comes from soil mixing with the water; the more soil in the stream, the more turbid it is. Turbidity can have a lot of different sources: some of them are caused by human activity, either directly or indirectly, and some occur without human influence.

Major storm events fall (largely) into this latter category; heavy rains cause some soil to wash into the nearest stream, and—voilà!—turbidity ensues. In streams that already contain large amounts of sediment, storm events can also stir up (resuspend) sediment that had previously settled to the streambed.

The conditions of the land around the stream help determine how much turbidity results from a storm: streambanks with healthy vegetation (including many layers, from ground cover to shrubs to trees) are better at resisting erosion, while banks with little or no vegetation will erode more readily, causing more turbidity.

Vegetation provides a protective cover to soil and intercepts rainfall above ground, while root systems below ground help stabilize banks, holding soil together. So, while some turbidity is to be expected after a rain event even in healthy streams, high turbidity could mean there’s erosion happening due to lack of riparian vegetation.

Major earth-moving events can also cause high turbidity. Again, these may be “natural”—think landslides—or may be the result of people’s activities. Construction work in or near streams, if not done properly (with the right permits and precautions, such as adequate erosion/silt fencing), can lead to sediment in the stream, as can dredging or draining of adjacent or inline ponds.

So, how much turbidity is too much? And why is it a problem? Well, let’s take that second question first. Turbidity, especially if it lasts for a long time, can be detrimental to aquatic life: fish and other animals that breathe with gills have difficulty getting enough oxygen in turbid water, and can’t see well to find food and escape from predators in these conditions.

Meanwhile, salmon and trout eggs need to be in clean gravel nests (“redds”) to have the best chance of survival; turbidity fills in the spaces between gravels, leaving less room for

vital oxygen and burying the eggs. Moreover, some toxic substances—including out-of-use (“legacy”) pesticides, like DDT and dieldrin—are bound to soils, and are thus more likely to be found in the creek when turbidity is high, which is dangerous for wildlife and humans.

Speaking generally, the less turbid a stream is, the better. The best bet for keeping streams clear? Keep multiple layers of vegetation on the banks, and keep heavy equipment away from the stream, unless it’s for permitted work (with proper precautions) that will enhance stream health.

If you see a lot of turbidity in Johnson Creek or any of its tributaries—especially if we haven’t had any rain recently—let us know, so we can contact the right regulatory agencies and try to track down the source.

Looking downstream from 252nd Avenue.

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Metro

STAFF UPDATES

Farewell, Jack!

- Jack Halsey, Outreach and Riparian Specialist, Confluence AmeriCorps Member 2018-2019

The past year serving with JCWC has been amazing. I have grown so much personally and professionally, and have met the most amazing people. It has been inspiring to see the dedication of community members, partners, and Council staff, board, and volunteers in this work. The passion of this community makes Johnson Creek a truly special place.

The cold winter mornings were worth getting up for because of the smiling volunteers, the enthusiastic work crews (shout out to Wisdom of the Elders and NCCC Blue 7!), and the curious birds watching us work. The difficult discussions around justice and equity work were motivated by seeking out discomfort, and using that to know when I was headed in the right direction. And taking on long hours to organize field trips for hundreds of students- that was inspired by the joy of seeing kids realize their curiosity for nature.

Thank you to everyone that I have worked with along the way—stay in touch!



Jack (second from left) bids farewell.
Photo: Colin Durfee

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Adrienne Farewell

Hello all, I can't believe the time has come to say farewell! Soon I will be leaving for a new adventure living and working in Washington State. I'd like to start by thanking everyone who has shown me kindness, and educated & empowered me in many ways while I have worked as the Community Outreach Coordinator here at JCWC!

It makes my heart happy thinking back on the many stories people have shared with me. We've also written some incredible new stories together. The dedication you see from JCWC volunteers, communities, staff and board is inspiring and brings me hope.

I am hopeful for a future Johnson Creek shaded by mature trees, for biodiverse wildlife communities that are just as safe living at the headwaters as they are at the Willamette confluence, and for a free-flowing stream that protects the salmon populations that sustain our very lives!

I'm hopeful for a united and inclusive population of watershed residents, informed and engaged by the many organizations protecting the natural areas we all love. And, I'm hopeful that my contribution to this legacy of work has been done in a good way.

Do you all remember when we pulled over 5 TONS of trash from the creek?! Do you remember strapping on waders to count beaver dams, and cleaning off our shovels after a day of planting at the park? I'll remember these things fondly for the rest of my life, and I plan to continue on as a JCWC volunteer if I do find myself back in the Portland area in the future.

The environmental sector is on an exciting brink of becoming more inclusive and equitable in their practices. Working to facilitate this shift has been bittersweet, much like this goodbye.



People tasked with diversity, equity, and inclusion in their employment face so many challenges, and many of them have gracefully and courageously been making positive impact for years now in the Greater PDX environmental scene!

To the leaders and of the environmental sector: protect your DEI workers, BIPOC, and femme employees. Be proactive about it and have processes in place to ensure they can feel happy and safe in their positions before they come on board.

Listen to them, read between the lines. Compensate them generously for the emotional labor this work requires, and humble yourself when they share stories of gender or racial bias that they may be experiencing in their work.

Starting the conversation, making a well-intentioned equity plan, and hiring one new person to do the work are small (but necessary) places to start. Recognize, however, when the time comes to walk your talk—even if it means difficult decisions or staff/board changes.

Again, I experienced tremendous growth, education, and FUN in my position with JCWC! If I were to omit the lessons I'm sharing here, however, I believe it would be a disservice to the community.

I'm so thankful for this experience, the new friends & colleagues and the many opportunities I was given. And, of course, I'm excited and nervous to see what the future holds!

Please feel welcome to reach out in the future. I know the next Outreach Coordinator here will be lucky to inherit some stellar programs, like Community Science and Bilingual Nature, and the tremendous opportunity to bring communities together over a shared love of the Creek.

Take heart! Be brave and be well!
With much love- Adrienne Moat

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Gresham and Fairview
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backyardhabits.org

¡Inscríbese antes del 15 de
agosto de 2019 \$35 de plantas
nativas gratis!

CITY OF GRESHAM

Thank you sponsors!

Photo: Rachel Ames/NPS



Our 2019 Interns Rock!

Our interns make our work possible, doing so many things including spreading the word about JCWC, supporting events, acquiring donations, and entering the data that makes the volunteer program run like a well-oiled machine.

MANY THANKS
TO OUR
INCREDIBLE
INTERNS!



Summer interns Jessica, Ni Ni, Yanling, and Fatima tour recent restoration project at Mitchell Creek with Restoration Program Manager Chuck Lobdell.



Watershed Engagement Interns

Nikkie Crain
Fatima Sandoval
Jessica Mains
Yanling Josling
Ni Ni
Kelley Delpit
Erin Rivers
Josh Betts
Annie Carter
Jeffrey Lee
Josh Abulencia
Becky Dorff
Laura Roberts
Tosha Sketo
Tyler Bryant

Fundraising Intern

Emmy Thompson

Bilingual Intern

Aaron Munoz

Videography Interns

Sam Friedman
Will Floor

Community Science Data Intern

Lacey Gunther

Data Science Intern

Nina Heiter
Amanda Holmes

Web Intern

Micah Cole

Garlic Mustard Team

Alex Loukides
Tristan Noguerra
Allie Etheredge
Kira Smith
Sue Konkol
Anne Thrall-Nash
Darlene Chirman
Sarah Rhodig



Pre-project plant transects with Leach Garden and Portland Parks and Recreation staff and interns.

Thank you Moda!

We would like to express our gratitude to Moda for printing our newsletters.





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Upcoming Events

Find details, registration, and more at our online Events Calendar: www.jcwc.org/events-calendar.

 **Johnson Creek Clean-Up #12 @ Mill Creek Park, Milwaukie**
Clean the creek with us!
Sat, August 24th
8:30 AM - 12 PM Stream Clean-Up
12 PM - 2 PM BBQ

 **Science in the Park @ Mill Park in Milwaukie**
Family friendly macroinvertebrate learning
Sat, September 7th, 12 PM - 2 PM


 **JCWC Board Meeting @ TBD**
Mon, September 9th — *Open to the public!*


 **Science Talk: Prairie Bird Survey Results @ JCWC HQ**
4033 SE Woodstock Blvd, Parish Hall
Details TBD


 **Habitat Enhancement @ Tideman Johnson Park**
Sat, October 5th, 9 AM - 12 PM

 **Habitat Enhancement @ Errol Heights Park**
Sat, October 19th, 9 AM - 12 PM

 **Science Symposium @ Reed College**
Tue, October 22nd, 12:30 PM - 5 PM

 **NO IVY DAY @ TBD**
Sat, October 26th, 9 AM - 12 PM

 **Habitat Enhancement @ Tideman Johnson Park**
Sat, November 2nd, 9 AM - 12 PM

 **Habitat Enhancement @ Errol Heights Park**
Sat, November 19th, 9 AM - 12 PM

 **Habitat Enhancement @ Tideman Johnson Park**
Sat, December 7th, 9 AM - 12 PM



Johnson Creek
Watershed Council

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JohnsonCreekWC



Courtney Beckel
Volunteer Program Manager

Cathy Geiger
Operations & Finance Coordinator

Noah Jenkins
Riparian Program Manager

Chuck Lobdell
Restoration Project Manager

Adrienne Moat
Community Outreach Coordinator

Daniel Newberry
Executive Director