

Date: April 2022

To: Metro Council

From: Natural Areas and Capital Program Performance Oversight Committee

Re: Year one report back

A report to the community from the Natural Areas and Capital Program Performance Oversight Committee

The 2019 parks and nature bond is a promise to build on the region's legacy to protect clean water, restore fish and wildlife habitat, and provide opportunities for people to connect with nature close to home. In 2019, the voters of the region chose to invest \$475 million to continue to protect clean water, restore fish and wildlife habitat and provide opportunities to connect with nature close to home across six program areas, which include

- Land acquisition and restoration
- Local share to the region's 27 park providers
- Nature in Neighborhoods capital grants
- Health, safety and accessibility improvements at Metro parks
- Investments to strengthen the region's walking and biking trail network
- Large-scale community visions

The members of the Natural Areas and Capital Program Performance Oversight Committee believe that natural areas are integral to the wellbeing of everyone in the region. The Natural Areas and Capital Program Performance Oversight Committee provides independent oversight of the 2019 parks and nature bond, the remainder of the 2006 natural areas bond, and capital investments from Metro's parks and nature five-year local option levy. Part of the committee's role is to monitor how bond implementation activities are meeting the direction in the bond measure, to monitor financial aspects of program administration and to share with the Metro Council related concerns or recommendations to help adjust work moving forward. The committee will report to the Metro Council annually.

This report back covers committee work from its first meeting in April 2021 to the present. At regular meetings in the last year, the committee has focused on building the foundations for its oversight work including the development of bylaws and group agreements; reviewing information about bond program goals and parameters with Metro staff; and receiving information about individual acquisitions made. In addition, committee members participated in one-on-one conversations and a committee discussion with a trainer to begin to build a shared understanding of the three bond criteria of racial equity, climate resilience and community engagement.

Over the last few months, the committee has formed topic-specific working groups to review in more depth the following topics: bond-funded land acquisitions, bond community engagement and bond finance. Feedback from committee members on these three topics helped shape the [staff report found on the Metro website](#) and summarized below.

Primary findings of oversight committee

The committee appreciates the detailed information in the [staff report](#) to the committee that helps reflect the depth and breadth of work to date to implement this bond measure.

- The committee finds that staff has conducted the primary components of the bond work reviewed by the committee – bond finance, land acquisition and community engagement – in a transparent and accountable way. The committee looks forward to reviewing progress made across multiple bond program areas as bond investments ramp up in a more detailed manner this year and beyond.
- At this stage, the committee finds Metro's administrative expenditures to be acceptable in light of the very high bar for engagement set by the 2019 bond measure. Committee members have discussed with Metro staff the broader trajectory of administrative spending at the beginning of these types of bond measures and will carefully monitor administrative expenditures over the coming year, with an expectation it will diminish as a percentage of overall bond spending as bond funded investments in parks, trails and natural areas ramp up.
- Channeling its role to share information about the bond measure with the greater Portland community, the committee strongly recommends staff development concise summaries of bond investments and implementation activities to regularly update the public on the work. The committee will also receive quarterly staff reporting on bond implementation activities.
- The committee is committed to ensuring racial equity is prioritized across the entirety of the bond portfolio. The committee has emphasized to staff the importance of carrying these values through all aspects of the bond work and clearly articulating how bond investments are advancing toward these outcomes.
- The committee has emphasized the importance of ensuring bond investments promote accessibility, taking into account the multiple factors that impact the ability of individuals to visit and interact with parks and natural areas in the region. This includes work to make Metro's sites truly safe, welcoming and inclusive for all with a focus on engaging individuals experiencing disabilities to help shape this work. This also includes the identification of opportunities for investments across the bond to address areas of the region that have minimal parks and natural areas nearby or easily reachable via transit.
- The committee appreciates staff work to facilitate meaningful community engagement to date and believes ongoing community engagement is essential to building programs and projects that truly reflect community priorities and need. The committee looks forward to continuing to work with staff to further evaluate the impact of engagement activities on bond programs and investments over the life of the bond.

Looking to the year ahead

A significant amount of the committee's discussions have been focused on the additional information, tools and reporting needed as the committee continues its oversight work. The committee has identified the following areas for its attention in the coming year.

Bond finance

- Continued review of reporting on bond spending.
- Continue to explore options for regular reporting on contracting with minority, women-owned and emerging small businesses and reporting on participation on a more granular basis including racial and other identity groups.
- Continue to review existing and potential strategies to increase participation for contracting with minority, women-owned and emerging small businesses.

Bond-funded land acquisition

- Continue to review of policies, engagement and regional priorities that shaped the 24 target areas in the bond measure.
- Understand how Metro's land acquisition program works with the other programs in the bond and other jurisdictional partners to increase access and benefits to communities that have historically not benefited from these investments.

Promoting accessibility through the bond

- Continue to review how the bond measure will support improvements across Metro's portfolio and the system of local parks around the region that make parks and natural spaces accessible to all with a focus on reviewing opportunities to consult with individuals experiencing disabilities.

Ongoing opportunities for community to help shape bond programs and investments

- Continue to review the impact of community engagement conducted to date including how feedback received has and will shape bond investments.
- Review upcoming opportunities for community engagement to help shape bond investments.
- Review the development of an outcomes framework and other tools that will be available to conduct an evaluation of progress toward meeting these goals in the coming year.

2021 Oversight Committee members

Burt Edwards, Co-chair	Communications Director, Friends of Columbia Gorge
Lisa Freedman, Co-chair	Former US Forest Service Executive and Budgeting Director
Tana Atchley Culbertson	Co-Director, Willamette River Network
John Ferguson	Former geotechnical engineer
Nicole Johnson	Community Engagement Director, 1000 Friends of Oregon
Shantae Johnson	Owner, Mudbone Grown LLC
Michelle Lin	Oregon Food Bank
Martita Meier	Digital strategist and project manager, Nike
PK Melethil	Environmental Scientist, private practitioner
Bryan Mercier	NW Regional Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Georgena Moran	Accessibility specialist, ACCESS recreation
Michael Morrow	Happy Valley Planning Commission
Tabitha Palmer DuPrau	Underwriting Counsel, Fidelity National Title Group
Eric Peterson	Vice President of Operations, Newland Communities
Vivek Shandas	Professor, Portland State University
Shannon Shoul	Director, Procurement Sustainability
Erin Upton	Environmental social scientist and landscape architect
Cary Watters	Contract Equity Specialist, Portland Bureau of Transportation
Owen Wozniak	Land Transactions Program Manager, the Land Trust Alliance