

STAFF REPORT

IN CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION 24-5417, FOR THE PURPOSE OF APPROVING 2023 NATURE IN NEIGHBORHOODS COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP AND RESTORATION COMMUNITY GRANTS

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BACKGROUND

For nearly two decades, the Metro Council has provided funding for grants to community groups, non-profits, and other organizations, designed to support and create partnerships in local communities that improve water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and connect people with nature.

In May 2013, voters approved Measure 26-152, providing new funding for Metro's parks and natural areas and providing increased funding for Nature in Neighborhoods community grants, which was referred to the voters by Metro Council (Resolution 12-4398). The Metro Council awarded Nature in Neighborhoods restoration and community stewardship grants in 2014 (Resolution 14-4554), in 2015 (Resolution 15-4644), in 2016 (Resolution 16-4725), and in 2019 (Resolution 19-4985).

In November 2016, voters renewed the Metro parks and natural areas levy with the approval of Measure 26-178, referred to the voters by Metro Council (Resolution 16-4690), which continued funding for Nature in Neighborhoods community grants. Furthermore, in June 2016, the Metro Council adopted the Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (Resolution 16-4708), which directs the agency to incorporate racial equity into all aspects of its work.

In May 2023, voters renewed the Metro parks and natural areas levy with the approval of Measure 22-5279, which continued funding for Nature in Neighborhoods community grants.

Grant program staff used the framework provided by Metro Council in Resolutions No. 12-4398, No. 16-4690, No. 16-4708, and No. 22-5279 to develop an outreach plan, application materials, review committee and evaluation criteria for these community grants, referred to as Nature in Neighborhoods community stewardship and restoration grants. Staff also aligned Metro's grant criteria with state, regional and local conservation plans and community initiatives in order to achieve multiple benefits.

Grant Evaluation Criteria

The following are the purpose and three goal categories for grant funding. Fulfillment of these purpose and goals are the primary evaluation criteria for the proposals submitted to the Nature in Neighborhoods community stewardship and restoration grants program:

Purpose: Community stewardship and restoration grants support and create partnerships in local communities that improve water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and connect people with nature.

Goal 1: Improve water quality, fish and wildlife habitat. These grants will preserve and restore fish and wildlife habitat in local communities and support larger environmental justice and conservation initiatives such as the Oregon State Conservation Strategy, Regional Conservation Strategy, Watershed Action Plans or local community plans.

Goal 2: Community partnerships, collaboration and accountability. These grants create, support and/or deepen partnerships in local communities, by connecting people to nature and centering the needs of these communities; increase people’s awareness of the need for – and benefits of – protecting and stewarding natural areas; center racial equity and support communities (with priority given to BIPOC communities and communities most affected by white supremacy culture) in teaching and learning about, restoring, and experiencing the region’s natural areas.

Goal 3: Economic and environmental equity. The community stewardship and restoration grants help address inequities in the conservation movement. The grants provide outdoor, environmental, and natural resources; economic opportunities; direct access to protected natural areas; and the positive impacts of clean land, air and water to Black communities, Indigenous communities, communities of color and other historically and continually marginalized groups in greater Portland.

Review committee

Parks and Nature Director Jonathan Blasher approved this year’s review committee who were recruited from a diverse pool of applicants. Participation on the grant review committee is by application, which is open to all and broadly advertised. The review committee included local experts in habitat restoration, natural area land management, conservation planning, mentorship and job skill development, diversity, equity and inclusion, community partnership development, philanthropy, and grant management.

The members of the 2023 Nature in Neighborhoods Community Stewardship and Restoration Grants review committee are:

- Nicole Allen, *Through the Trees Collective*
- Nancy Bales, *Gray Family Foundation*
- Ridhi D’Cruz, *Atabey BIPOC Medicine Council; Your Street Your Voice, ELSO; Stelo Arts Core Artist Resident*
- Megita Denton, *Independent Perennial and Livestock Consultant, Intermedia Artist, Able Farms PDX*
- Kim Hack-Davidson, *Columbia Gorge Stewardship Network*
- Tera Jarrett, *Oregon Metro*
- Sophie Kaady, *Murmur Creative*
- Erin Law, *Educate Ya*
- Willie Levenson, *Human Access Project*
- Aisha McCoy, *US Bank CDC*
- Maria Monroymota, *El Programa Hispano Catolico*
- Darryl Ramsey, *Outdoor Afro*
- Jessica Tierney, *Independent Fundraising Professional*

Committee members declared any direct conflict of interest with the proposals and did not score or participate directly in the discussion or ranking of an application where they had a conflict. Perceived conflicts were also noted and recorded in meeting minutes.

2023 Nature in Neighborhoods community stewardship and restoration grant review discussion

Due to the large number of applications, Metro's Nature in Neighborhoods community stewardship and restoration grant program follows a two-step process including a pre-application phase and a full application phase. The review committee evaluated pre-applications and full applications based on the information submitted by applicants, the stated evaluation criteria, and the review committee's professional and collective judgment.

In the first round of the renewed natural areas levy grants, the review committee valued the diverse types of organizations, robust partnerships, and the wide range of projects represented in the pre-applications submitted. Proposals recommended for funding show strong evidence of involvement from BIPOC groups in proposal planning and development, and a clear path forward for their continued involvement in project execution. The review committee members were impressed with proposals that focused on work done by and with BIPOC communities, rather than for them, and which were clearly grounded BIPOC perspectives, traditions, and ways of knowing.

Committee members also noted that many proposals meaningfully incorporated opportunities to introduce youth to green career opportunities and/or created skill building and career development opportunities for early career professionals in the environmental sector.

Committee members were impressed by how many applications were strong on all three of the program goals. Proposals came from both culturally specific organizations and conservation focused organizations and included both organizations familiar to this program and many first time applicants.

The review committee identified compelling projects which offer opportunities to participate in hands on outdoor STEM education, gain habitat restoration skills and experience, address career pathways in the environmental field, remove barriers for marginalized communities to enter that field, and help BIPOC youth and adults become lifelong environmental advocates. They emphasized the importance of projects that combined boots-on-the-ground restoration with opportunities to build community power and voice to create lasting holistic impact. The committee discussed the history and contemporary presence of Indigenous people in the Portland Metro Area, and the importance of applicants partnering with both local Tribes and intertribal urban Native organizations. The committee appreciated proposals that incorporated Indigenous Traditional Ecological and Cultural Knowledge alongside western restoration science and methods.

The review committee valued projects which aligned with the Nature in Neighborhood grant goals, individual organizations' plans or priorities, and state, regional or local conservation strategies. They found proposals stronger when they demonstrated longstanding and holistic partnerships with communities and community-specific organizations. They also found it compelling when

applicants that partnered with Tribes and/or the intertribal urban Native community talked about going beyond the land acknowledgement and deepening engagement with the community.

For the most part the review committee was pleased with how applicants addressed their diversity, equity, and inclusion experience, and this was especially true for organizations that submitted full applications. They noticed that the applicant organizations were all on different parts of their equity journey but most of them were very transparent and authentic about who they were and where they are headed. They found compelling projects that made clear connections between conservation and restoration, where applicable, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. They appreciated projects that acknowledge that communities' relationship with and access to nature is both critical and complicated, and projects that explore new ways for communities to interact with nature at a neighborhood scale and beyond.

Finally, the review committee valued authentic and holistic long-established or newer partnerships. They particularly noted partnerships that included clear plans to integrate historically marginalized communities' priorities and center BIPOC voices. The committee acknowledged the difficulty of establishing true, long-term partnerships between larger, complex organizations and historically and systemically marginalized communities. The committee appreciated applicants' efforts to embrace the challenge and create such partnerships regardless of the difficulties faced along the way.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the approval of the slate of grants indicated in Exhibit A of this Resolution. Metro received 42 pre-applications, totaling \$3,361,521 in funding requests and 16 full applications, totaling \$1,395,220 in funding requests. The review committee reviewed the pre-applications and full applications according to the grant criteria and recommends **nine (9)** grants for funding a total of **seven hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$750,000)** to the Metro Council (see Exhibit A).

Pending Metro Council approval, grant-funded projects will begin June 1, 2024. Grant applicants may have up to three years to complete their projects.

ANALYSIS/INFORMATION

1. Known Opposition

None.

2. Legal Antecedents

Resolution No. 22-5279, For the Purpose of Referring to the Voters of the Metro Area Renewal of the Metro's Local Option Levy for Protecting Water Quality, Restoring Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Connecting People to Nature.

Resolution No. 21-5213 For the Purpose of Approving 2021 Nature in Neighborhoods Restoration and Community Stewardship Community Grants

Resolution No. 19-4985 For the Purpose of Approving 2019 Nature in Neighborhoods Restoration and Community Stewardship Community Grants

Resolution No. 16-4690, For the Purpose of Referring to the Voters of the Metro Area Renewal of the Metro's Local Option Levy for Protecting Water Quality, Restoring Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Connecting People to Nature.

Resolution 16-4708, For the Purpose of Approving the Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

Resolution 16-4725, For the Purpose of Approving the 2016 Nature in Neighborhoods Restoration and Community Stewardship Community Grants.

Resolution No. 15-4644, For the Purpose of Approving 2015 Nature in Neighborhood Restoration and Community Stewardship Grants.

Resolution No. 14-4554, For the Purpose of Approving 2014 Nature in Neighborhood Restoration and Community Stewardship Grants.

Resolution No. 12-4398, For the Purpose of Referring to the Voters of the Metro Area a Local Option Levy for the Purpose of Preserving Water Quality, Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Maintaining Metro's Parks and Natural Areas for the Public.

Resolution No. 05-3574A, Establishing a Regional Habitat Protection, Restoration and Greenspaces Initiative called Nature in Neighborhoods.

Resolution 05-3580A, Transferring \$1,250,000 from the Balance of the FY 2004-05 Recovery Rate Stabilization Reserve to a General Fund Reserve for Nature in Neighborhoods Restoration Projects.

Ordinance No. 07-1160B, Transferring \$250,000 from the Recovery Rate Stabilization Reserve Fund for Nature in Neighborhoods Restoration Projects.

Ordinance No. 09-1215B, Approving \$92,500 in the FY 2009-10 Budget and Appropriation Schedule for an additional round of Nature in Neighborhoods Restoration and Enhancement Grants.

Ordinance No. 10-1235B, Approving \$150,000 in the FY 2010-11 Budget and Appropriation Schedule for an additional round of Nature in Neighborhoods Restoration and Enhancement Grants.

Ordinance No. 12-1274A, Approving \$200,000 in the FY 2012-13 Budget and Appropriation Schedule for an additional round of Nature in Neighborhoods Restoration and Enhancement Grants.

3. Anticipated Effects

This Resolution approves the award of 2023 Nature in Neighborhood community stewardship and restoration community grants and begins the individual contract award process for the selected grant applicants with an anticipated project start date on or after June 1, 2024. Projects may be up to three years in length.

4. Budget Impacts

This Resolution authorizes award of contracts in an amount previously identified by the Metro Council in the budget for this purpose. The adopted FY 2023-24 budget includes the necessary appropriation authority for reimbursement of these grants.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Chief Operating Officer recommends approval of Resolution No. 24-5417.

Exhibit A to Resolution 24-5417

Recommended for funding

The 2023 Nature in Neighborhood community stewardship and restoration grants review committee recommends the following nine (9) proposals for funding to the Metro Council.

The Metro Council makes all final grant decisions and is scheduled to decide final grant awards on May 23, 2024.

7 Waters Canoe Family Restoration

Recipient: 7 Waters Canoe Family

Grant amount: \$75,000

Project Partners: 7 Waters Canoe Family; Portland Parks and Recreation; Metro; Multnomah County; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; Columbia Slough Watershed Council; Mad Bears LLC; 1855 Plants; SymbiOp Landscaping; Nesika Wilamut; and Future Generations Collaborative

Program summary: This project will uplift and revitalize traditional Indigenous canoeing practices and Indigenous Traditional Ecological and Cultural Practices. Project activities include restoration work done in riparian areas accessible by canoe, public volunteer days for plantings and clean ups, educational hikes and nature walks, and a Fire Summit that will be co-hosted with Nesika Wilamut.

Oleson Woods Habitat Restoration and Environmental Engagement

Recipient: Community Partners for Affordable Housing, Inc.

Grant amount: \$75,000

Project Partners: Community Partners for Affordable Housing, Inc.; Home Building Foundation; and Tualatin RiverKeepers

Program summary: Oleson Woods is an affordable housing property in Tigard with a wetland and forest on site. This project will restore the wetlands and forest habitats on the property; restore the walking path through the natural area; engage with diverse resident households about the benefit of stewarding the natural environment that surrounds the property; and provide hands-on, free educational STEM programming to resident youth who attend CPAH's no-cost summer youth programs. This project provides the community with essential and precious resources: deeply affordable housing, an urban native habitat, and resident and youth services.

Indigenous Traditional Ecological and Cultural Stewardship at the Sandy River Delta

Recipient: Confluence

Grant amount: \$98,270

Project Partners: Confluence; Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership; Indigenous Traditional Ecological & Cultural Knowledge keepers; and MAD Bears LLC

Program summary: Today, Indigenous Traditional Ecological and Cultural Knowledge specialists are helping to resurrect, reestablish, and reclaim ways of knowing and caring for place that can only add to any efforts to restore and protect our environment. Confluence and its partners seek to elevate this cultural and environmental memory to augment restoration strategies based in traditional western scientific knowledge and restoration models at the Sandy River Delta. This funding will support work to conduct the next First Foods and Cultural Materials Inventory and Stewardship Implementation Plan for the Sandy River Delta.

Morningstar Church Nature Space

Recipient: Depave

Grant amount: \$75,000

Project Partners: Depave; Morning Star Church; Pequeñitos Childcare; Oromo Seventh Day Adventists; Learning Landscapes Design; GPT Construction; UWD Pre-Build; POIC-RAHS; All Natural Additions; Friends of Trees; Mudbone Grown; PCEF; BES Percent for Green; and Multnomah County Drainage District

Program summary: Depave will transform 18,000 square feet of pavement into a new greenspace with food gardens, trees, native landscaping, and a nature playground at Morning Star Church to mitigate flooding and urban heat island effects, sequester carbon, and benefit diverse communities. The Church hosts two African American congregations and Pequeñitos Childcare, a subsidized Spanish immersion preschool, but has limited capacity to lead a project to revitalize its grounds. These funds will help fund Depave to plan and execute the new Morning Star Nature Space to remedy these needs, and improve access to nature for a diverse set of beneficiaries.

Friends of Trees' Community Tree Care and Mentorship with Youth and Adult Interns

Recipient: Friends of Trees

Grant amount: \$74,950

Project Partners: Friends of Trees; Connecting Canopies (via The Intertwine Alliance); Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center; The Blueprint Foundation

Program summary: Youth and adult interns with Friends of Trees, Connecting Canopies, The Blueprint Foundation, and Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center's workforce programs will partner to assess and care for hundreds of young trees in East Multnomah County. These funds will support all interns' participation in summer pruning/tree health assessment training/events, Adult Urban Forestry/Connecting Canopies interns' participation in general Friends of Trees planting, pruning, and tree health trainings and events, plus intern-specific trainings/events.

Ecological and Cultural Restoration at Tryon Creek State Natural Area

Recipient: Friends of Tryon Creek

Grant amount: \$100,000

Project Partners: Friends of Tryon Creek; Oregon State Parks; The Blueprint Foundation; Tryon Creek Watershed Council; Oregon State Parks; and M.A.D. Bears Environmental Restoration LLC

Program summary: This project will improve fish and wildlife habitat at Tryon Creek State Natural Area, guided by a new Cultural Restoration Plan based on Indigenous knowledge and practice and fostering Indigenous cultural revitalization. This work will be implemented with the help of Indigenous practitioners, community members, and will offer ecocultural restoration experience for the early career and BIPOC green workforce and increase engagement from diverse communities at Tryon Creek State Natural Area, building our next generation of leaders.

From Basic Blacktop to Green Schoolyard

Recipient: Peninsula Elementary School

Grant amount: \$75,000

Project Partners: Peninsula Elementary School (Portland Public Schools), DePave, Harpers Playground, Elbow Room, National Wildlife Federation (ECHO), and Eco-School Network

Program summary: This project will create a green schoolyard by removing pavement from an underused portion of the blacktop and replacing it with a schoolyard habitat and an accessible green STEAM lab and nature play area. Harpers' Playground will consult to support an accessible configuration of the nature play area and green STEAM lab. Artists with intellectual and

developmental disabilities from Elbow Room will create designs inspired by students, decorating, and activating the accessible nature space. The project will engage the school and neighborhood community around design, building the site, planting the habitat, creating artistic elements and ongoing stewardship.

Verde Urban Habitat Program

Recipient: Verde

Grant amount: \$76,780

Project Partners: Verde; Backyard Habitat Certification Program; Columbia Slough Watershed Council; Reynolds MYC; Taking Ownership PDX; Connecting Canopies Coalition; and Greening Wilkes Coalition

Program summary: Verde will install rain gardens and naturoscapes and will offer education and maintenance support for low-income/BIPOC homeowners in North Portland. This project will continue to address critical, interconnected social and conservation issues through additional naturoscape installations, environmental education, opportunities to acquire hands-on experience, and further developing maintenance resources for previously installed naturoscapes to ensure the longevity and effectiveness of the work.

Restoration Planning at Public Access Site for Willamette Falls

Recipient: Willamette Falls Trust

Grant amount: \$100,000

Project Partners: Willamette Falls Trust; Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation; Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians; Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs; City of West Linn; and Portland General Electric

Program summary: This project encompasses the creation of a habitat restoration plan informed by deep community engagement, particularly with Indigenous communities, as Willamette Falls Trust and partners develop a public gathering space at Willamette Falls. Funds from this request will support the engagement of technical, design, and cultural experts to complete this work.