

Proposed Budget - Department Overview

FY2026-27



Parks and Nature, April 2026

Summary of Department Budget for FY26-27 Proposed Budget

Parks and Nature protects water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and connects people to nature through a connected system of parks, trails and natural areas. With nearly 20,000 acres, the department manages parks and natural areas across every community in the region. Thanks to two decades of voter investments, along with managing more than 11,000 acres of natural areas, Metro has built and operates 17 parks, manages 14 cemeteries and offers three boat ramps.

The work of the Parks and Nature Department is organized into five major program areas: Protect and Conserve Nature; Create and Maintain Great Places; Connect People to Nature; Support Community Aspirations; and Convene, Plan and Build a Regional Trail System. The primary funding sources are the voter approved general obligation bond and local-option levy. Additional sources are transfers from the Metro general fund, fees for service, and grants.

A few accomplishments in FY26 to highlight include:

- Bond investments: Take Care of Metro Parks {completing Willamette Cove master plan, beginning construction on Lone Fir Memorial – Lang Faa}; Protect and Restore Land and Trails acquired 862 acres, continued site stabilization on several sites including the 536 acres in Eagle Creek and completed several restoration projects such as Coffee Lake Creek Wetlands.
- Levy investments: habitat restoration {6,000 acres estimated}, park visitation {650,000 estimated}, Nature in Neighborhood grants {\$750k awarded to 10 grantees with more than 50 project partners}; provided nature education and stewardship programming to hundreds of children and adults.
- Other: Almost 6,000 life jackets distributed to community members over the summer to raise water safety awareness and reduce drownings, hosted impactful events like the 12,000+ person Marianas Festival; navigating a busy summer season with limited staff capacity.

The FY27 proposed budget reflects a total budget of \$113 million and includes \$78 million in the bond fund, \$28 million in the operating fund, and \$7million in other small funds. The department FTE count remains unchanged from FY26 at 121.9.

Ongoing Department Growth and/or Reductions included in FY26-27 Proposed Budget

The proposed budget maintains the significant reductions initiated the last two fiscal years. Small one-time or project related expenditures are proposed to ensure that critical work around; cultural resource protection, public welcoming of completed Take Care of Metro Parks projects, work to complete a 2027 System Plan update, and regional trail leadership is continued. Parks and Nature will also invest in collecting park utilization data and community outreach work related to a potential levy funding measure. The department weathered service reductions last fiscal year and can restore some seasonal/VHE support for ongoing maintenance, operations and customer service efforts. Reductions in administrative support, communications staff, and leadership positions continue to constrain capacity and ability to respond to new agencywide requests, emergencies, or new requests for service. Staff anticipate this will be the case through the lifecycle of the current operating levy.

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Highlighted Significant Changes from FY25-26 Budget

The department budget remains reasonably static compared to last fiscal year. There is about \$4.5 million in appropriation increases in the bond fund due to the portfolio of work advancing.

Any Other Overall Impacts that Require Council Direction and/or Attention

The Council's continued collaboration to affirm service levels for updating the system plan in preparation to referring a local option levy prior to the current expiration of June 30, 2028, remains a primary focus. Without ongoing operational funding, Council's support will be needed to maintain the current Parks and Nature portfolio.