



2019 Parks and Nature bond

In November 2019, voters in greater Portland approved a \$475 million bond measure to further protect clean water, restore fish and wildlife habitat and provide opportunities for people to connect with nature close to home. The bond measure provides funding across six program areas:

- *Protect and restore land, \$155 million*
- *Local parks and nature projects, \$92 million*
- *Nature in Neighborhoods capital grants, \$40 million*
- *Metro parks improvements, \$98 million*
- *Walking and biking trails, \$40 million*
- *Large-scale community visions, \$50 million*

Natural Areas and Capital Program Performance Oversight Committee

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. This includes review of how bond implementation activities meet the direction in the bond measure, program finances and reporting directly to the Metro Council. More information about the committee's work to date can be found on the [Metro website](#).

Turning the bond expectations into actions

Bond refinement – the work to turn the 2019 parks and nature bond into programs ready to invest in the region's parks, trails and natural areas – is mostly complete. Programs are now implementing refinement plans to strengthen our unique system that has nature at its heart. They are doing this through programs that protect clean water, restore fish and wildlife habitat and provide access to nature for communities across the region.

Key accomplishments to date

With this bond measure, the voters of the region asked Metro to do our work differently.



At the core of this bond measure is racial equity, meaningful community engagement and work to make the region more resilient to climate change. Over the last year, staff have facilitated meaningful [engagement activities](#) that encourage deeper involvement in decision-making, representation, accountability to strengthen relationships and trust with community members and partners across the region. Feedback collected through the following activities has helped shape bond program priorities and will inform work across the parks and nature portfolio:

- Engagement sessions with over 550 community members, park providers, conservation organizations and other partners, including several sessions that focused on BIPOC community members, to help shape bond programs and confirm priorities for investment.
- Deep partnership with the urban Indigenous community to help identify data and shape priorities for the bond's land acquisition work.
- Listening to BIPOC and people with disabilities about how environmental inequities affect their lives and experiences of nature and applying these findings to provide additional context when making land acquisition recommendations to the Metro Council.

- Engaging with BIPOC community members to provide guidance on how future trail investments across the region should be prioritized based on which factors were most important to them.
- A capital grants pilot that seeks to provide community members with a direct say in selecting a priority project in their community.

During this period of extensive engagement, the bond also helped support significant investments in parks, trails and natural areas across the region. As of December 2021, Metro has spent \$18.3 million of the \$200 million in 2019 bond proceeds available. Now that the programs are up and running, staff expects bond spending to ramp up significantly.

A few key highlights include:

- Acquired multiple parcels of land from the Sandy River Gorge on the east to the Dairy McKay Creeks bordering Hillsboro. Recent purchases include a 52-acre property at Killin Wetlands Nature Park, near Banks in Washington County, and a 117-acre parcel in the East Buttes area right on the Clackamas–Multnomah county line. A complete list of acquisitions since 2020 is listed in the [staff report](#).
- Local share funds supported the City of Gresham’s acquisition of nearly 8 acres of woods and wetlands next to Southwest Community Park in a neighborhood a few blocks northeast of Powell Boulevard and 182nd Avenue, one of Oregon’s most diverse areas.

Summary of primary findings from the Natural Areas Oversight Committee

- The committee finds that staff have conducted the work related to the primary components of the bond reviewed by the committee – bond finance, land acquisition and community engagement – in a transparent and accountable way and looks forward to reviewing progress across multiple bond programs as bond investments ramp up this year.
- 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.
- The committee recommends staff development concise summaries of bond investments and implementation activities to regularly update the public on the work.
- The committee is committed to ensuring racial equity is prioritized across the entirety of the bond portfolio and emphasizes the importance of clearly articulating how bond investments are advancing toward these outcomes.
- The committee emphasizes 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, among other efforts, 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.
- 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.
- Helped open Chehalem Ridge Nature Park just south of Forest Grove, which is Metro’s biggest park west of the Willamette River and has 10 miles of trails for hiking, biking and horseback riding.
- Helped open Newell Creek Canyon Nature Park, which is in the heart of Oregon City and has 2.5 miles of hiking and walking trails and 2 miles of dedicated mountain biking trails.