


Fifth annual Watershed Wide Event on March 12 at Pendarvis Farm in Happy Valley

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St. Patrick's Day is still a week or so away, but the outlook is green for Clackamas County and a large group of environmental partners, and the community is invited to participate at several different levels.

First up is the Rock Creek Partnership's popular fifth annual Watershed Wide Event on March 12 at Pendarvis Farm in Happy Valley. All are welcome to come and help plant 1,600 shrubs and trees, but participants need to sign up in advance at rockcreekpartnership.org.



SUBMITTED PHOTO - Volunteers plant trees at last year's Watershed Wide Event; registration for this year's event, held on March 12 at Pendarvis Farm in Happy Valley, is still open.

The partnership was formed in 2011, and is a collaboration among the Clackamas River Basin Council, Friends of Trees and SOLVE, and is supported with funding from Clackamas County Water Environment Services, on behalf of Clackamas Service District No. 1.

Citizen input also is welcome, as the Clackamas River Basin Council prepares to plan how to spend the \$137,696 grant it received from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, for the Clackamas Partnership.

The grant was one of eight provided to local organizations statewide to support fish and wildlife habitat and water-quality programs, that seek to develop partnerships that support landscape-scale habitat

improvements for native fish and wildlife.

For a full list of partners, see the sidebar.

Watershed Wide Event

The event "is a really great opportunity for citizens to get involved in stewardship opportunities," said Morgan Parks, environmental outreach and engagement coordinator for the Clackamas River Basin Council.

What she likes best about the Watershed Wide Event is that it is a collaboration among partners who "get together to celebrate and actively engage in restoring the area they live in."

The work party at Pendarvis Farm regularly attracts 100 volunteers from the community, including adults, schoolchildren, scouting groups and Job Corps members, Parks said, noting that many of the volunteers are returnees.

It is crucial to get restoration underway in the Happy Valley and Damascus areas, she said, because rapid development has impaired the tree canopy over the streams and invasive plants and weeds have taken over.

Also, there are so many paved areas that stormwater runoff is becoming more of a problem.

"Now is the time [to restore the watershed] before even more housing is built. We need to be planting as many areas as possible to be buffers and to reduce water temperatures by planting the tree canopy," Parks said.

She added that the roots of the trees help filter pollutants and sediment, which flow into the streams.

Pendarvis Farm

Over the past five years, volunteers have help restore fish and wildlife habitat on 18,000 feet of streamside property belonging to 27 different landowners, but this year, participants will confine their efforts to Pendarvis Farm.

“We will be planting a hedgerow of native trees and shrubs to restore wildlife habitat and attract pollinators at Pendarvis Farm itself, where the groundwater flows into Rock Creek,” Parks said.

The farm is famous for its summer Pickathon Music Festival, which attracts hundreds of visitors, many of whom camp at the site.

“So we will be planting little openings for the campers, putting plants in between. We will work with the landowners so they can continue [the festival] and still benefit nature,” Parks said.

Volunteers will plant a wide range of native species, she said, including spirea, dogwood, red-flowering currant, vine maple, snowberry and more.

Clackamas Partnership Grant

The \$137,696 grant will allow the partnership to build on “a lot of other work we’ve done in the past,” said Jenny Dezso, project manager for the Clackamas River Basin Council.

“This is a capacity grant that will bring in our existing partners and additional partners to evaluate what the important elements are to improve fish habitat. And I am excited to share this opportunity with the community — we want to get them involved,” she said.

The partnership is hoping that farmers, nursery owners and community members will help identify spots where there are fish-passage barriers or where there is limited or impaired habitat in the watershed.

“We are [also] asking for recommendations from the community where there are areas with limited streamside planting,” Dezso said.

Once the projects have been identified, the next step will be to prioritize the projects. Planning will begin this spring and be completed by July 2017.

Funding for OWEB’s grant program to help restore, maintain and enhance Oregon’s watersheds come from the Oregon Lottery.

Crucial watershed

Why is this area so important?

“The Clackamas watershed is the largest in Clackamas County; it supplies 400,000 people with drinking water, and it is really important that the drinking water stays clean,” Dezso said.

Also, in the summer the Clackamas watershed becomes a “huge recreation area,” she added.

And then there is the matter of fish and wildlife habitat.

“We have three species of endangered fish, including spring chinook, coho and steelhead. We want to work with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife on a recovery plan to make sure the fish return. Our ultimate goal is to have [the fish] removed from the endangered list,” Dezso said.

Creating jobs

Another aspect of this process is how “restoration projects give back to the community, not only in improving water quality and wildlife habitat, but in creating jobs,” Dezso said.

In a recent study by the Whole Watershed Restoration Initiative, figures show that restoration work stimulates economic growth and provides an enduring investment, fundamental to the community’s health and quality of life.

In addition, Dezso said, the study shows that “every \$1 million spent on restoration work creates 16 jobs, and 80 cents of every dollar spent stays in the county where the projects take place.”

This, she added, “is a big deal for Clackamas County. We use local engineering firms and construction companies for our projects; it’s a great little cycle.”

Work the watershed

What: Rock Creek Watershed Wide Event

When: 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, March 12

Where: Preregistration is required; groups will meet at Happy Valley City Hall for a shuttle ride to Pendarvis Farm.

Register: Visit rockcreekpartnership.org to register, and for more information.

Grant: For more information about the Clackamas Partnership grant, contact Cheryl McGinnis, executive director of the Clackamas River Basin Council, at info@clackamasriver.org. Read the watershed study at

ecotrust.org/media/WWRI-Restoration-Economy-Brochure.pdf.

The Clackamas Partnership includes: Clackamas Soil & Water Conservation District, Clackamas County Water Environment Services, Clackamas County Parks, Clackamas River Basin Council, Metro, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, North Clackamas Parks & Recreation District, Portland General Electric and the U.S. Forest Service, joined by Greater Oregon City, North Clackamas Urban, and Johnson Creek watershed councils.

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