

Volunteers help restore Rock Creek native habitat

Raymond Rendleman Sunday, December 23, 2018

0 Comments

Clackamas River Basin Council partners with Clackamas County's Water Environment Services and Friends of Trees on Dec. 1



SUBMITTED PHOTO - Gail Shaloum of Clackamas Water Environment Services provided tours of the Rock Creek-confluence project site.

(<http://pamplinmedia.com/images/artimg/00003628247605-0600.jpg>)The Clackamas River Basin Council partnered with Clackamas County's Water Environment Services and Friends of Trees on Dec. 1 to plant over 500 native trees, shrubs and ferns along Rock Creek.

Friends of Trees recruited 80 volunteers from throughout the region for the project. The group gathered at a cul-de-sac in the Windswept Waters development in Happy Valley just adjacent to the Rock Creek confluence with the Clackamas River.

Pat Kaczmarek, the spokesperson for the basin council, said the Windswept Waters HOA has been supportive of the restoration efforts by encouraging residents to participate in the habitat restoration work on Rock Creek.

Groups of students from Gladstone High School and La Salle Prep turned out to work on the restoration of Rock Creek, planting in rocky soil and moving yards of mulch with a bucket brigade.

Kaczmarek said Rock Creek is an important tributary of the Clackamas River and home to salmon, beaver, osprey and other fish and wildlife.

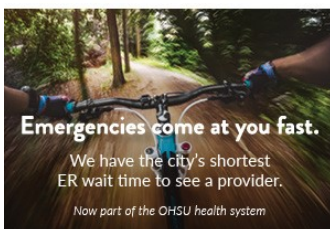
"The Rock Creek Confluence Project was initiated in 2013 and included the removal of over 12 acres of invasive weeds, the placement of over 25 large wood structures and numerous boulders, and the planting of over 18,000 native trees and shrubs," Kaczmarek said. "Restoration efforts have improved habitat for spawning adults and for juvenile salmon before they migrate to the ocean."

The Dec. 1 work party continued the project by planting upland areas of the site that have little tree cover and are exposed to summer heat and winter storm erosion. Planted species included red alder, bigleaf maple, Douglas fir, Western serviceberry, snowberry, Oregon grape and sword fern.

Kaczmarek said native plantings will encourage the recovery of a more diverse habitat along this section of the creek and provide improved cover and food sources for wildlife.

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Grasses, trees and shrubs along streambanks are called riparian buffers, and can protect the stream from nearby land uses.

The goal of the Rock Creek Confluence Project is to achieve a dense, healthy buffer of native vegetation along creek sides. Gail Shaloum, WES technical services coordinator, was on hand to offer tours of the site.

"WES is funding this project," Shaloum said, "because streamside plantings of trees, shrubs and grasses can intercept rainwater and filter out contaminants from surface water runoff before they reach a stream; and they help restore damaged streams."

Buffers assist with stream health by slowing water runoff, trapping sediment and enhancing water infiltration in the buffer itself. They trap fertilizers, pesticides, bacteria, pathogens and heavy metals, keeping these pollutants out of the stream.

More community planting events are planned for 2019. The first work party is scheduled for Feb. 23 at the Burlwood development just upstream. To register for the event, visit clackamasriver.org/get-involved/volunteer (<http://clackamasriver.org/get-involved/volunteer>).