

Metro makes tracks toward closing the region's trail gaps in 2010

Runners, walkers and cyclists can look forward to 2.25 miles of new trails

Metro's voter-approved Natural Areas Program is saying happy trails to 2010, an important year for closing gaps in walking, running and cycling paths across the Portland metropolitan area.

Several trails are represented in the 27 areas where Metro invests the region's 2006 natural areas bond measure, which protects water quality, wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation opportunities for future generations. When it comes to trails, Metro typically doesn't buy land – just the right to put a trail on it. Metro then coordinates with the local government that will expand the trail, eliminating missing links that force users onto public streets.

Trails success stories in 2010 have paved the way for 2.25 miles of off-road recreation. Metro also purchased land to welcome visitors to a new trail on the east side of the region, and opened more than three miles of new trails at Graham Oaks Nature Park in Wilsonville.

“It's amazing all the good that comes from a trail,” said Metro Council President Tom Hughes. “Trails make it easier to get from place to place, give people an affordable way to exercise and help them connect with nature.”

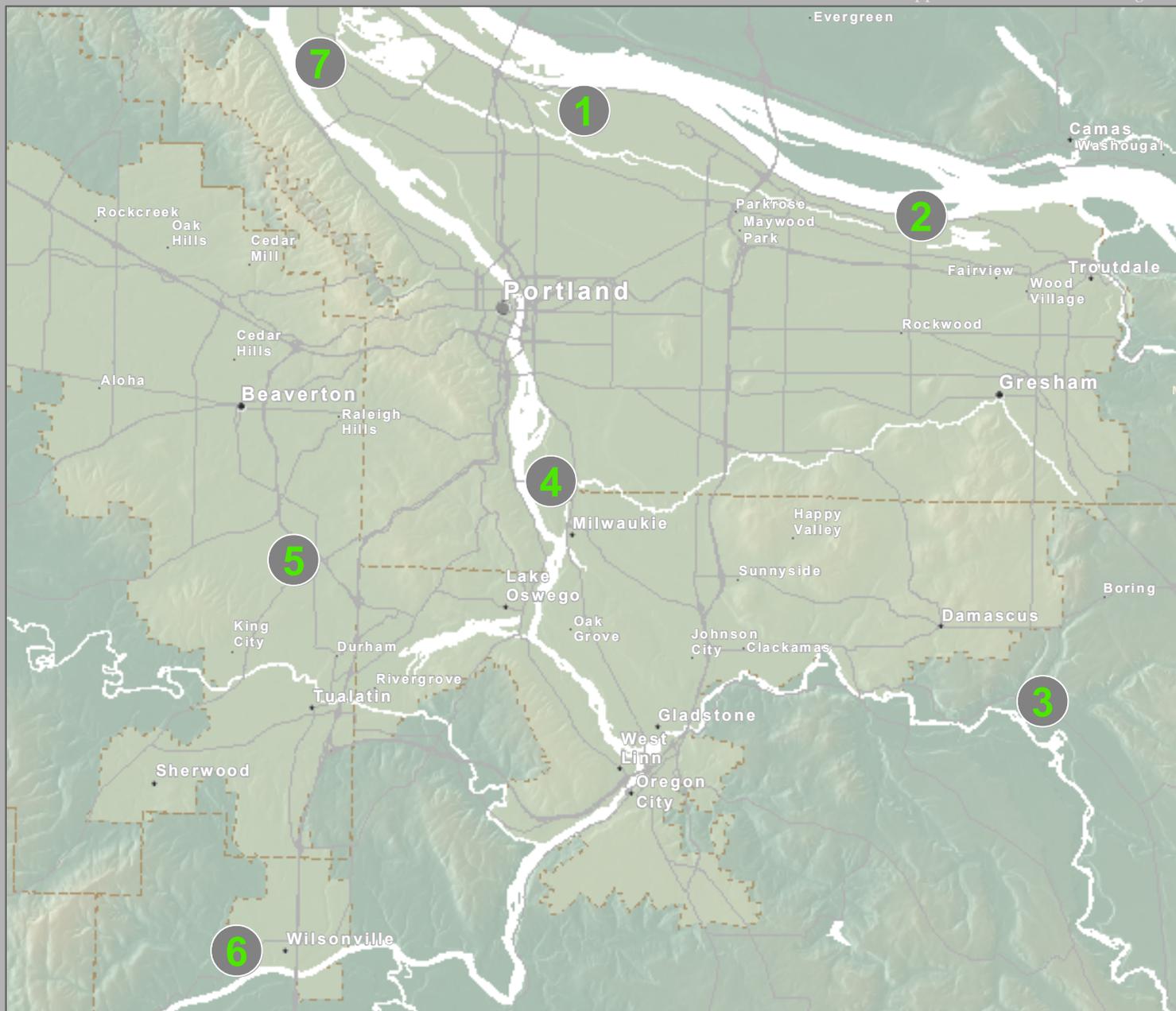
Read on to learn about 2010 trails progress, including exciting end-of-the-year developments in Northeast Portland.

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HAPPY TRAILS 2010

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Metro's voter-approved Natural Areas Program



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Columbia Slough, Northeast Portland: Most recently, Metro made inroads in expanding the Columbia Slough trail system. Pathways will someday trace this 19-mile remnant of lakes, wetlands and slow-moving channels in the Columbia River's southern floodplain. The slough contains diverse plants and wildlife such as deer, beaver, river otter and 175 bird species.

An agreement with one property owner allows 535 feet of trail to be built near the slough's intersection with Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Expanding the trail will improve access to the slough and its outdoor destinations, such as Delta Park West and several golf courses.

Nearby, easements on three side-by-side properties along the Peninsula Canal will fill the majority of a north-south gap that separates the slough itself from Marine Drive to the north, near Northeast 33rd Avenue. These properties make way for a combined total of more than three-quarters mile of trail.

“Our region is fortunate to have beautiful scenery and valuable wildlife habitat in very urban settings,” said Metro Councilor Rex Burkholder, who represents most of Northwest, North and Northeast Portland. “By expanding the Columbia Slough trail system, we can help residents connect with nature close to their neighborhoods.”

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Fanno Creek Greenway, Tigard: Metro logged its first trails success story of the 2006 bond measure by securing rights to extend the Fanno Creek Greenway in central Tigard. Two side-by-side easements will allow more than half of a one-third mile gap to be filled between downtown Tigard and the city's Woodard Park. The greenway, which is about half complete, will traverse 15 miles and five cities, beginning at the shores of the Willamette River in Southwest Portland and weaving through Beaverton, Tigard and Durham to Tualatin, where Fanno Creek joins the Tualatin River. Metro's previous bond measure protected about 40 acres for this commuting and recreational trail, which connects dozens of neighborhoods, parks, schools and businesses.

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Marine Drive Trail, Gresham: While walkers, runners and cyclists explored the Marine Drive Trail last summer, Metro paved the way for an expansion of the popular pathway on four properties near the Portland- Gresham border. Metro secured rights to build more than 1,000 feet of trail – nearly the equivalent of one lap around a track – on an expanse of land flanking Northeast 185th Avenue. These new trail easements will help close a one-mile gap, one of several in the paved pathway that traces Marine Drive and the Columbia River. Eventually, the Marine Drive Trail will stretch 20 miles from the St. Johns neighborhood in North Portland eastward through Gresham and Troutdale, offering spectacular views of water, wildlife and mountain peaks.

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Willamette River Greenway, North Portland: The walking, jogging and cycling path that links communities along the Willamette River will expand in North Portland, onto property Metro collaborated to purchase with the City of Portland Parks & Recreation and Bureau of Environmental Services. A six-acre addition to the Willamette River Greenway will allow the city to build more than one-third mile of trail north of the St. John's Bridge, at North Catlin Avenue and North Decatur Street. City plans call for "re-greening" the land in conjunction with trail development – potentially restoring rare and valuable white oak habitat similar to that found elsewhere in the Baltimore Woods corridor. This habitat could support diverse wildlife such as the slender-billed nuthatch, Western wood-pewee and Western gray squirrel. The Willamette River Greenway is part of the 40-Mile Loop.

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Cazadero Trail, Boring to Barton: A trailhead will welcome visitors to the new Cazadero Trail where it meets Barton Park, thanks to the natural areas bond measure. Metro acquired 25 acres as the gateway to a four-mile section of the Cazadero Trail, which will extend the Springwater Corridor from Boring to Barton – and, eventually, up the Clackamas River through the Eagle Creek, Estacada, Faraday, Cazadero and Promontory Park areas. The forested trail, which is owned by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, traces a historic rail line used to ship timber from Cascade forests to the Portland riverfront. Clackamas County, Metro and the state are coordinating to plan and develop the future trailhead.

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Graham Oaks trails, Wilsonville: When Graham Oaks Nature Park opened in September, so did three miles of trails traversing this 250-acre legacy of Metro's natural areas bond measures. Cyclists and joggers can cut across the park on the paved Tonquin Trail, which eventually will connect Wilsonville, Tualatin and Sherwood. A spur trail leads to a wetland overlook, perfect for bird-watchers; Coyote Way meanders through young oak woodlands. For a bit of shade, visitors can follow the Legacy Creek Trail through a rich conifer forest where thousands of species thrive. And, among it all, they'll find interpretive signage and plazas that offer a chance to rest, reflect and learn about the park.

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Springwater Corridor, Southeast Portland: Runners, walkers and cyclists needn't scrutinize trail plans to name the region's most notorious missing piece – the Sellwood Gap, which forces people off the Springwater Corridor for a mile in its namesake neighborhood in Southeast Portland. That gap will shrink dramatically, thanks to an agreement reached last September by Metro and the Oregon Pacific Railroad Co. The new agreement allows the City of Portland to build more than half a mile of trail, taking commuters and outdoor enthusiasts from Southeast Umatilla Street to Southeast 13th Avenue. That leaves just several blocks of missing trail in the Springwater Corridor, which stretches 20 miles from central Portland through Southeast Portland, Milwaukie and Gresham to Boring.

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