

Tideman-Johnson Park

by Shelley Matthews

YEAR
6

in Portland, Oregon at SE 37th and Tenino



BEFORE

*Lack of plant diversity
and cover*

DURING

Volunteers helped to plant the site



AFTER

*Native species restore stability
and diversity to riparian area*

The focus of this project was the enhancement of 300 linear feet of riparian habitat along Johnson Creek in Tideman Johnson Park. The park was donated to the City of Portland in 1942 by the Johnson family. This six-acre park lies on a flat, terraced area in southeast Portland. Johnson Creek flows from east to west within a walled canyon and a dirt trail runs parallel to the creek at a distance of approximately 20 feet. Heavy public use and nonnative plants had degraded the riparian and fish habitat. Creek vegetation was dominated by blackberries overhanging the channel. Structural diversity was limited, but some food, cover, and nesting spots were provided by dense patches of shrubby vegetation and trees.

The overall goal of the project was to enhance wildlife habitat by stabilizing stream banks, using bioengineering techniques, and replacing non-native vegetation with native trees and shrubs. The work effort was divided into two components. During the upland enhancement phase, students manually removed blackberry root balls and weeds after the Parks Bureau regraded the area with a backhoe. In phase two, a 300-foot section of the streambank was prepared and planted. Volunteers and students planted native vegetation, installed paper squares, and laid straw mulch around the revegetated riparian areas. In addition, willow fascines, pole cuttings, and coir fabric were installed. Over the long run, this work will greatly improve the structural diversity of the creek corridor and provide wildlife habitat and fish cover.

Benefits

- Enhanced riparian habitat for the benefit of fish and wildlife.
- Improved water quality by stabilizing streambanks to control erosion.
- Improved trail system, enhancing the natural setting and aesthetic appeal of the park.
- Provided hands-on educational opportunities for students, environmental crews, and the public.
- Established a partnership between the school district, city agencies, youth crews, and neighborhood volunteers.
- Supported multi-phased enhancement efforts in Tideman-Johnson Park

Budget

Total Proposed – \$28,407

Total Actual – 23,373

Metro/US Fish and Wildlife grant award – \$9,470

Grant Dollars Spent - \$8,094

Helpful Hints – what worked, what didn't

- Planting maps can be time consuming and hard to follow. Rather than designing and following a detailed planting plan, group the plants by habitat requirements and general preferred location and designate the requirements for space. Make the planting map after the planting for monitoring purposes.
- Organize local news coverage on planting days to encourage enthusiasm and ownership of the project.
- Schedule regular planning meetings throughout the grant time, especially during the work sessions.

- Don't underestimate how much planning time is involved.
- Choose reliable partners that will follow through on tasks.
- Remember that middle school students take longer to complete tasks than adults.
- Consider using cereal straw for mulch - it's an inexpensive alternative to bark chips.
- Do not store any materials on site, they may be stolen or vandalized.
- Hiring a field coordinator for the project was very beneficial since a teacher was not available.
- Rotating six classrooms of students to the site to work on the project was very successful.
- Using the "tool wheel" method to cover safety issues and disseminate tools was very effective. Students are assembled in a circle around the tool wheel before each work session for an introduction to the days tasks and safety concerns. Tools are returned to the wheel at the end of the session.
- Spring wheat worked well as an affordable fast growing cover crop.
- Weeds did not take over on the planted sites due to adequate mulching and maintenance by the local stewardship group.
- The planning team met weekly to coordinate activities.
- We attempted to eliminate the trail closest to the creek, but failed when users by-passed the fence and recreated the trail.

Partners

City of Portland, Bureau of Environmental Services
 Envirocorps
 Environmental Middle School
 Northwest Service Academy
 Portland Bureau of Parks and Recreation

Contact

Sarah Taylor, Principal, EMS, (503) 916-6490; and Daniela Brod, Enhancement Project Coordinator, Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, (503) 823-7226

Timeline and Tasks

February	Completed contracts and FWS paperwork; obtained permits; developed list and ordered/reserved supplies; prepared and mailed flyer, informational letter, and neighborhood newsletters; held community meeting; established work crews; finalized planting plan
March	Delivered/picked-up supplies; installed silt and wire fences; removed blackberry; backhoe work; took photos; prepared site for planting
April	Set tags for planting and planted native vegetation; inventoried and ordered additional supplies
May	Took additional pictures; installed silt and farm fencing; implemented bioengineering techniques; weeded; installed beaver guards