

## Frequently Asked Questions



### What areas are managed by the Nature & Trails department?

The Nature & Trails department manages nearly 1,500 acres of natural areas and 50 miles of trails. Management involves stewardship plants, streams, ponds, trees, and habitat for wildlife. The department's mission is to connect people to nature through trails, environmental education, and stewardship. The Nature & Trails program of work is guided by the [Natural Resources Functional Plan](#) and [Trails Functional Plan](#).



### How does the Nature & Trails department respond to vegetation along property lines?

THPRD shares property boundaries with many neighbors with more than 130 different natural areas. There are limited resources to manage vegetation along these boundaries. Branches or plants that have grown onto private property, are the responsibility of the property owner to maintain. If there is a need to remove vegetation within the park, please contact staff to work out a resolution. Nature & Trails staff may be able to help with vegetation management if it contributes to healthy habitats in natural areas.

For further questions contact Scott Wagner at 503-619-3934 or [s.wagner@thprd.org](mailto:s.wagner@thprd.org).



### How does Nature & Trails department reduce the risk of wildfire?

Nature & Trails department works with Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue (TVFR) to review and develop strategies to reduce the potential risk of wildfire damage to natural areas and properties adjacent to THPRD parks. We consider many factors when developing these strategies, including canopy tree cover, slope, topography, climate, and the types of plant and tree species in an area. Natural areas are currently being managed for multiple objectives, such as fostering wildlife habitat, as well as providing public access for hiking and wildlife watching.

Washington County identifies the wildfire potential risk as relatively low in urban natural areas and parks in the [Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#).

Nature & Trails staff conducts annual and seasonal maintenance to reduce fuels near trails and establishes strategic fire breaks. In select areas, staff are removing flammable invasive species such as Himalayan blackberry and Scotch broom, and installing native plants to create habitats that are more resilient to fire.

Our ability to improve fire safety greatly depends on early detection and reducing the risk of ignition. Prevention is key to reducing the risk of fire and fire spread. THPRD prohibits smoking and campfires in parks. During extreme fire weather under a [Red Flag Warning](#) do your part to limit the use of lawn mowers and other yard equipment adjacent to park property. Please report potential ignition activity to THPRD [Safety Services](#) (Park Patrol) at 971-246-0169. **Please call 9-1-1 if you detect smoke in a park or natural area.**

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### How does the Nature & Trails department assess hazard trees?

Hazard trees are defined as trees that are more likely to cause property damage or personal injury in the event of a failure. THPRD uses the International Society of Arborists Tree Risk Assessment standard to determine hazardous tree conditions. The assessment provides a means to identify and reduce hazards. Upon assessment, tree hazards may include, but are not limited to, dead or dying trees, dead parts of live trees, or unstable live trees that appear to have potential targets like people or property.

If a tree causes damage to insured personal property, like a home or car, the damage should be covered by your home or car insurance. In the case of any property damage, please contact your insurance carrier before THPRD staff. If a tree has fallen on your property from a THPRD park, please contact the Nature & Trails department next, as we may be able to assist with tree removal or clean up.

If you suspect a tree to be a hazard, please contact Scott Wagner (Certified Arborist) at 503-793-1151 or [s.wagner@thprd.org](mailto:s.wagner@thprd.org).



### Why does flooding occur in some natural areas?

Flooding occurs naturally in the Willamette Valley and happens frequently during winter months. In more recent years, flooding frequency has gone up due to an increase in heavy rain and snow events, as well as an increase in impermeable surfaces such as buildings, and roads. These surfaces cause water to quickly pour into storm drains, which empty into creeks. Creeks can be quickly overwhelmed during rain events since water is entering the system from many different sources.

THPRD can not affect water levels in creeks or ponds during a storm event. The only thing we can do is to wait for the water to recede. This is especially true in areas that are designated as vegetated corridor or floodplain by Clean Water Services or the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). You can check your flood risk on the [FEMA interactive flood map](#). There are now strict regulations against developing infrastructure or building houses in a designated floodplain. However, before these regulations were in place, development was sometimes permitted in these areas. Therefore, some structures in the district flood more frequently.

For further questions contact Sebastian Ford at 503-619-3935 or [s.ford@thprd.org](mailto:s.ford@thprd.org).



### Can plants, animals, and other materials be collected in THPRD's natural areas?

Collecting plant materials, animals or other items is prohibited on THPRD properties. This rule helps protect natural areas and maintains the quality of wildlife habitat. Collecting materials prevents future visitors of the chance to study and enjoy them. This is especially true of wildflowers and animals.

In certain circumstances Nature & Trails staff may grant permits for collection of materials for research or cultural purposes. Requests for permits are submitted to and approved by the Nature & Trails department manager.

For further questions contact Greg Creager at 503-614-3933 or [g.creager@thprd.org](mailto:g.creager@thprd.org).

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### What do I need to know about fishing at THPRD properties?

THPRD allows fishing in designated areas in three parks: **Commonwealth Lake, Progress Lake and Bethany Lake**. A valid Oregon fishing license is required for all people and those fishing must be 12 years of age or older. The park district coordinates with the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, who periodically stock the lakes with rainbow trout during the spring season. The stocking schedule can be found online at <https://myodfw.com/fishing/species/trout/stocking-schedule>.

Please help protect sensitive water resources by following these rules:

- Keep chairs and coolers off pedestrian pathways
- Dispose of fish properly and do not throw them back into the lake
- Only fish from designated docks and landings

For further questions contact Sebastian Ford at 503-619-3962 or [s.ford@thprd.org](mailto:s.ford@thprd.org).



### Why are dogs prohibited at Tualatin Hills Nature Park and Cooper Mountain Nature Park?

Dogs are allowed at most THPRD parks, the two exceptions are Tualatin Hills Nature Park and Cooper Mountain Nature Park. Birds and other animals think of dogs as predators, including gentle and very friendly dogs, and even dogs on leashes. Wild animals have a keen sense of sight, smell and hearing. They can sense the presence of a dog, which can disrupt their normal behaviors. Dogs can unintentionally damage sensitive habitats and threaten the plants and wildlife that we are trying to protect. We also know that visitors see more wildlife in natural areas where dogs are not allowed. To learn more about how this policy is consistent with current research, visit [Metro's](#) report on the impacts of dogs on wildlife.

For further questions contact Greg Creager at 503-619-3933 or [g.creager@thprd.org](mailto:g.creager@thprd.org).



### Does THPRD manage non-native plant species?

The park district endorses the principles of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Our IPM program uses multi-faceted pest control strategies that are safe, cost-effective, sustainable, and minimize the negative impact on the environment and human health. Nature & Trails staff focus on the removal of targeted non-native plant species in natural areas to improve wildlife habitat and plant diversity. Removing invasive species decreases ongoing maintenance needs, reduces fire risk, and increases site safety. Managing invasive species often involves a combination of THPRD staff, contractors, partners, and volunteers.

When manual removal is not effective, herbicide is used for targeted invasive species control in natural areas. All staff who apply herbicide are licensed with the Oregon Department of Agriculture and receive ongoing training.

To learn more about common invasive species in our region visit the [Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District](#).

For further questions contact Sebastian Ford at 503-619-3962 or [s.ford@thprd.org](mailto:s.ford@thprd.org).

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### Can we feed wildlife on THPRD properties?

Feeding wildlife is prohibited on THPRD properties. Feeding wild animals, like waterfowl, is bad for their health. When animals become accustomed to being fed by humans they stop engaging in their normal hunting and feeding behaviors that ensure a healthy diet and long-term survival. They do not need food from humans to survive. Wild animals have specialized diets and they can become malnourished or die if fed the wrong foods. Also, some animals cannot distinguish food from wrappers or foil and can get sick eating these items. Too many animals in one place increases the chance of disease transmission to people and other wildlife. Please visit the [Audubon Society of Portland](https://www.audubon.org) to learn more about what you can do to protect wildlife.

For further questions contact Greg Creager at 503-619-3933 or [g.creager@thprd.org](mailto:g.creager@thprd.org).



### What should I do if I encounter wildlife on THPRD property?

Nature & Trails staff is committed to providing natural areas that promote healthy habitats and connectivity for Oregon's unique wildlife. As human populations expand in our region, people and wildlife may find themselves in close proximity to each other. Black-tailed deer, coyotes and bobcats are commonly seen in our urban natural areas and do not pose a danger to people unless they are being fed or cornered. To learn more about what you can do to protect wildlife and avoid conflicts visit the [Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife](https://www.oregon.gov/DFW/).

If you suspect an encounter with a mountain lion, please contact us to provide a description of the encounter and location.

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