



FY18-19, Backyard Habitat Certification Program, Quarter 1 Report

July 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018

Background

The Audubon Society of Portland and Columbia Land Trust, in partnership with Friends of Tryon Creek (FOTC), launched the expansion of the Backyard Habitat Certification Program (BHCP) into Lake Oswego on August 1st 2011. The program provides assistance and incentives to residents with small lots (an acre or smaller) who seek to restore native wildlife habitat to their backyards. At that time, the program had already operated successfully in Portland since its city-wide launch in 2009. Today, there are over 5,100 enrolled properties, spanning about 1,400 acres, region-wide.

We are in our seventh year of implementing the BHCP within Lake Oswego. With each year, the program continues to sustain its growth at a consistent rate, meeting and then exceeding deliverables. Overall, the Backyard Habitat Certification Program has enrolled and provided our high-quality technical assistance and educational services to 446 sites within the City of Lake Oswego. These sites are mostly single family residential lots, but also include several multi-family dwellings, and other public demonstration sites like schools and religious institutions. Cumulatively, backyard habitats now span nearly 128 acres of the City of Lake Oswego.

Narrative - Success toward FY2018-19 Program Deliverables

The attached table outlines program accomplishments made during quarter 1 of FY18-19.

Primary Deliverables

- *Site Assessments and Certifications* - During Q1 Friends of Tryon Creek, with support from Portland Audubon and Columbia Land Trust, conducted 17 Site Assessments on newly enrolled properties, and certified 6 additional properties. There are an additional 4 new sites where the visit is being scheduled. This reflects the very busy summer season we had this year.
- *Community Demonstration Projects* – FOTC continued to develop relationships and support ongoing habitat restoration at the community demonstration sites listed below. FOTC maintains ongoing relationships with community demonstration site stewards, offering guidance and leadership in a unified effort to reach the shared goal of certification. In June 2017 we negotiated revised program deliverables for FY17-18 that allow staff to focus on supporting community demonstration sites on working towards certification goals. Staff increased the level of support and follow-up assistance for demonstration gardens in the following ways:

- *Sent personalized letter to each Backyard Habitat Certification Program demonstration site in Lake Oswego, inviting them to the Fall workshop.*
 - *Sent personalized email invitations to each BHCP participant in Lake Oswego, inviting them to Fall workshop.*
 - *Hosted Interpretive Plant Hikes for TCSNA to teach native plant ecology, species diversity and invasive/native effects.*
- The Lake Oswego program has 19 community demonstration sites (*Certified):
 - Friends of Rogerson Clematis Garden (2014-2015)*
 - Brighton HOA - Fosberg Rd (2014-2015)
 - 3930 Lake Grove HOA (2014-2015)
 - 4340 Botticelli (2014-2015)
 - Leslie Commons Home Owners Association (2014-2015)
 - Westlake Fire Station (2014-2015)
 - Tryon Pool Corp (2014-2015)*
 - Lake Oswego United Church of Christ (2013-2014)
 - River Grove Elementary (2013-2014)
 - Lakeridge Junior High (2013 -2014)*
 - Lake Oswego United Methodist Church (2012-2013)*
 - Forest Hills Elementary (2012-2013)*
 - Oak Creek Elementary (2015 – 2016)
 - Weatherstone HOA - Mountain Park (2015-2016)
 - Campbell Native Garden (2015-2016)
 - Oswego Bay Condominiums (2015-2016)
 - Dennis’ 7 Dees Garden Center (2016-2017)
 - 1571 Glenmorrie Drive (2017-2018)
 - Palisades Elementary School (2017-2018)*

Secondary Deliverables

- *Community outreach* – During Q1, FOTC promoted the Backyard Habitat Certification Program through a myriad of creative ways. On September 22nd, FOTC Education Director Gabe Sheoships, FOTC Site Technician Cindy Ellison, and BHCP Site Technician Lorena O’Neill welcomed 16 participants for a workshop and hike focused on entry into the BHCP program, individual focus on local yard considerations, and an interpretive native plant hike, all at Tryon Creek State Natural Area (TCSNA). Warm treats and hot drinks were provided for all on this day, generously provided by the Lake Oswego Sustainability Network. This free event combined environmental education and landscape with the ecological connection between Backyard Habitats and the TCSNA. This event is made possible through a partnership with the Lake Oswego Sustainability Network.
- *Native Plant Sales* - Each spring and fall, Columbia Land Trust and Portland Audubon make discounted native plants available as an exclusive perk for BHCP participants, through our popular

sales. The fall sale is led by Portland Audubon, while Columbia Land Trust leads the spring sale, in partnership with Echo Valley Nursery. The fall sale will be taking place at Portland Audubon's office on November 3rd and 4th, and the spring sale will take place this coming April 2019 at Echo Valley Nursery. Together, over 19,000 Willamette Valley native plants are sold each year at steeply discounted prices. Both of these sales are designed to increase access to native plants, reduce financial barriers to creating habitat at home, while supporting our local green economy.

- *Open Garden Projects* – This new Portland-metro project originated as an effort to support program current participants in their certification goals and to deepen participants' understanding of local ecology and their connections to one-another. It is largely volunteer managed, making it an excellent investment. The concept is that program volunteers agree to open their gardens at a specific date and time. A schedule of open gardens is listed on a password protected page on the BHCP website. All program participants were encouraged to register for the project, in order to receive access to view the online calendar. In its first year, 595 program participants registered for the Open Gardens Project. This summer the tour was open from April – Sept and boasted over 26 open gardens, which feature an impressive range of habitat garden styles for education and inspiration. On average, each open garden receives between 15 – 50 visitors.
- *In-Kind Incentives to BHCP Participants* - Incentives help drive changes in backyards by reducing barriers to restoration activities and creating motivation. Each of the new participants in FY18-19 will receive a resource packet chock-full of educational materials and coupons for discounts on native plants at three regional nurseries. Additionally, each of the participants who become certified will receive a Certification Benefits Package that recognizes and honors their efforts with free memberships to Columbia Land Trust and Portland Audubon, a gift card to the Backyard Bird Shop, and coupons to One Green World Nursery and Timber Press publishing house. These certification benefits strategically serve several purposes: they incentivize certification, reduce barriers for participants to reach consecutively higher levels of certification, support our region's local green businesses and the green economy, while connecting participants to broader conservation initiatives of the Land Trust and Portland Audubon.
- *Professional Landscaper Directory and Partner Nurseries* - Backyard Habitat Program staff manage a portfolio of local landscaping professionals who specialize in sustainable landscaping management. These partner companies are trained by the BHCP and sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Columbia Land Trust and Audubon Society of Portland stating they will follow the certification criteria standards on BHCP properties. In December, we will be training new companies and listing them in the Directory that now boasts more than 35 landscape professional committed to sustainable, natural landscaping practices.
- *Social and Electronic Media* - The Backyard Habitat Facebook page, managed by Portland Audubon and Columbia Land Trust, now has about 3,500 "followers" and very high traffic volumes. In addition to our official program Facebook presence, a program volunteer has started a spin off public Facebook group of "Friends of Backyard Habitats". This unofficial program page is a fan club of sorts, with over 1,099 members that are using the online community as a tool for crowd sourcing plant identification, sharing plants, and getting their gardening questions answered by each other. This Facebook group has proven to be an extraordinarily effective tool for building community and support around participants working toward certification. Lastly, the Backyard

Habitat Certification website, www.backyardhabitats.org, was launched in Aug 2014 and has become a widely-used community resource for Backyard Habitat Program participants in Lake Oswego, as well as the other cities we serve, and even residents outside of our service areas that are working to make a difference. Last year we added an interactive map to our website showing retail, wholesale and seed nurseries in the region that sell native plants, as well as information about each nursery's native plant availability and whether they sell plants treated with neonicotinoids. We've also added more information and resources so that anyone, even larger property owners that aren't able to participate in the program, can access and use.

- *BHCP E-Newsletter* – Columbia Land Trust and Portland Audubon collaborated and distributed the *Summer 2018* edition of the Backyard Habitat E-News in August 2018. More than 5,433 individuals received this E-news and see it as an invaluable resource for their projects; brimming with resources, information about region-wide workshops, plant sales, presentations and other habitat-friendly programming and encouragement.
- *Volunteer Component* - There are currently about 119 Backyard Habitat Program volunteers. Due to a staff vacancy at Portland Audubon we are not able to provide a total for the number of BHCP volunteer hours in Q1. We will provide that information with our Q2 report. Their activities include time conducting follow-up certification visits, follow-up calls to program participants, stuffing resource packets, data entry, and planning our multi-month open garden tour.