



FY18-19, Backyard Habitat Certification Program, Quarter 4 Report

April 1, 2019 – June 30, 2019

Background

Columbia Land Trust and Portland Audubon, 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 5,600 enrolled properties region-wide.

We are in our eighth 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 484 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 137 acres of the City of Lake Oswego.

Narrative - Success toward FY2018-19 Program Deliverables

The attached table outlines program accomplishments made during quarter 4 of FY18-19.

Primary Deliverables

- *Site Assessments and Certifications* - During Q4 Friends of Tryon Creek, with support from Columbia Land Trust and Portland Audubon, conducted 14 Site Assessments on newly enrolled properties, and certified 12 additional properties (4 sites are pending certification). This reflects the positive responses we've been getting from outreach efforts.
- *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:

Gabe Sheoships and Cindy Ellison, alongside Portland State University students, organized a community stewardship event at the Oak Creek Elementary demonstration site, which effectively removed the invasive plants that had overtaken the area. The event was held during school hours to inspire and empower Oak Creek Elementary students and staff to steward their natural areas.

- The Lake Oswego program has 21 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)*
 - Melrose Court HOA (2018-2019)
 - Worker's Cottage Museum (2018-2019)

Secondary Deliverables

- *Community outreach* – During Q4, Friends of Tryon Creek (FOTC) promoted the Backyard Habitat Certification Program through a myriad of creative ways. On April 6th, FOTC Education Director Gabe Sheoships, along with valuable volunteer support, led a BHCP hike at Tryon Creek State Natural Area (TCNSA). The hike focused on native plants, natural presentation, and how to mimic the natural world within our own properties. The hike set the stage for the 39th annual Trillium Festival, which occurred immediately after the hike. Sheoships and volunteers hosted a BHCP table that saw upwards of 200 individual visitors. On April 27th, FOTC staff and volunteers led a free, public program as part of their Classroom Discovery Days series, which is a monthly open

house at TCNSA. The focus of this program was the BHCP, educational activities and workshops were built to serve a varied audience that includes young children through mature adults. We interacted with over 100 park visitors on this day. On Saturday, June 29th Cindy Ellison, Gabe Sheoships and a small army of loyal BHCP volunteers hosted the annual Lake Oswego Open Yard Tour. Cindy Ellison located three homeowners who agreed to open their homes and yards this year. Through a well strategized advertising campaign, 150 individuals registered to attend the program. The event saw well over 100 in attendance, with homeowners present to answer questions, along with experienced volunteers to support the event. Feedback from the event this year showed the event as very well-received, those in attendance were very grateful.

- *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 took place at Portland Audubon's office on November 3rd and 4th, and the spring sale took place at Echo Valley Natives nursery on April 12th and 13th. 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 located 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 Portland Audubon stating they will follow the

certification criteria standards on BHCP properties. On December 18th we held our annual training for local arborists and landscape companies so they can be listed in our Arborist and Landscape Professionals Directory, which now boasts 35 landscape professionals 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 4,021 “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 1,262 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 *Spring 2019* edition of the Backyard Habitat E-News on May 22, 2019. More than 5,992 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. Overall, in Q4, Backyard Habitat volunteers dedicated over 337 hours to the program. 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.