

Watershed Events

Glenn and Gibson Creeks Watershed Council
Fall 2022



Fire on the Oak Savanna

Early Friday, August 19, heat from the field mower started a grass fire on the Oak Savanna, resulting in about 70% of the field burning.

The mowed perimeter fire strip and response by neighbors and City of Salem firefighters prevented fire spread and damage.

Neighbors helped one resident to a safer place and sprayed water on the fire to prevent fire spreading.

No injuries or property damage, aside from some heat damage to landscaping has been reported.



Change comes to the Oak Savanna

Courage and Caring

That was the theme heard listening to neighbors' stories. Many 911 calls came in immediately. Fire Station #11 crew was out on another call, so the Oak Savanna fire response came from other fire stations. While residents waited for firefighters to arrive, they trained lawn sprinklers and spray from garden hoses on the fire edge.

As smoke rose, neighbors outside the immediate burn area arrived with more hoses to keep houses and residents safe. Neighbors knocked on doors, made phone calls to sound the alert, and made certain that a neighbor with mobility issues was moved to safety. Neighbors checked on each other and sprayed the fire with hoses until the fire fighters arrived.

The immediate and apparent damage is to grass and small trees. Mortality to wildlife is unknown, but voles have been seen peeking out from their entryways within the burned area. Birds feasted on grasshoppers, and two days after the fire, in the early morning, a red-tailed hawk had breakfast on the lawn of Fire Station #11 while a mother deer and fawn made their way up the slope, so for the wild creatures on the oak savanna, life goes on.



Chuck Baker waters an Oregon White Oak

Study Opportunity



Will the fire help reduce the incidence of Tansy Ragwort and other invasives?

For millennia, Oak Savannas in the Willamette Valley have been maintained by fire, resulting in a rich and complex web of life. Fire suppression is one of the factors blamed for loss of this important habitat type.

Glenn and Gibson Creeks Watershed Council views the burn on the Orchard Heights Oak Savanna with mixed emotions. We are very grateful that neighbors, City of Salem Public Works officials, City of Salem Fire Department and the mowing contractor reported no injuries. Property impacts appear limited to heat damage on shrubs and trees.



Increased biodiversity?

Though unplanned, now there is opportunity for study of the effect of fire on the Orchard Heights Oak Savanna project.

Wildfires help native habitats thrive by opening up thickets and forest and reducing or removing invasive species. Grass fires typically move fast and create irregular burned spaces or niches. These varied areas become diverse habitats allowing a wide variety of residents to move in. Fire can create a healthy, biodiverse ecosystem.

Over the next years, Environmental Science students from Willamette University and West Salem High School will be studying fire impacts and recovery of the Oak Savanna.



Who will come?

Polk SWCD Grant Awarded

We are proud and pleased to announce GGWC has been awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Polk Soil & Water Conservation District for pollinator gardens in West Salem.

The funding will provide site preparation, native plants, and seed for pollinator gardens at the Orchard Heights Oak Savanna and the Audubon Nature Preserve.

Salem Audubon Society has begun purchase of plant materials for the Audubon Nature Preserve.

The Oak Savanna site preparation began with City crews removing Himalayan Blackberry. Reemergent vines will be treated with herbicide in the Fall, then the pollinator garden area will be planted to native pollinator plants this Spring.



For more information about GGWC activities in the watershed, check our website. There are several ways to support watershed health programs like the pollinator gardens.

<https://glennigibsonwc.org/>

Click on “ways to help”

The Orchard Heights Oak Savanna is important habitat. The new pollinator garden will add to the existing biodiversity.



Knotweed in Your Neighborhood:

Invasive Knotweed Streamside Survey and Treatment Project in West Salem

Polk Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is partnering with the City of Salem, Glenn-Gibson Watershed Council, Marion Soil & Water Conservation District, and Ash Creek Forest Management, Inc. to conduct surveys and treatments of streamside invasive knotweed in the City of Salem this summer and fall. The project is scheduled to begin soon.

How you can help

Please let us know if you have this plant along the stream on your property or have seen it along streams in West Salem.

Citizens are encouraged to report locations of knotweed to the Oregon Invasives Hotline at <https://oregoninvasiveshotline.org/>. Reporters are asked to provide an accurate description of the location of plants when reporting. Photos are also helpful for verifying the identification of the plants.

Free treatment assistance is available for landowners with knotweed along streams on their property in West Salem.

We want to find infestations so we can conduct treatments to control this noxious weed.

Knotweed is an aggressive noxious weed designated by the State of Oregon. There are four similar species of invasive knotweed that can be difficult to tell apart: Japanese, giant, Bohemian, and Himalayan. Knotweeds are robust perennial plants with bamboo-like stems that spread by underground roots to form dense thickets. Knotweed plants can clog waterways, displace desirable vegetation, increase bank erosion, and degrade habitat for fish and wildlife. Knotweed can also harm infrastructure such as pipes, roads, sidewalks, building foundations, and driveways. It can be found growing along waterways, roadsides, in vacant lots, and in yards.

<https://www.oregon.gov/oda/shared/Documents/Publications/Weeds/JapaneseKnotweedProfile.pdf>

Thank you for cooperating with our efforts to assist the City of Salem in identifying and controlling knotweed along streams in West Salem. This will protect the health of the watershed and prevent this noxious weed from spreading.

Funding for this project in West Salem was provided by the City of Salem.

If you have questions or would like more information on this project, please contact Luke Westphal, the City of Salem's Urban Streamside Program Coordinator at - LWestphal@cityofsalem.net



KNOXIOUS WEED ALERT

KNOTWEED

FREE treatment assistance available along stream

- Forms large dense stands
- Smooth, hollow stems, like bamboo
- Grows quickly to 10+ feet tall
- Chokes waterways, displaces native plants, erodes streambanks, threatens infrastructure such as sidewalks, roads and foundations

Knotweed plants spread quickly. It is highly aggressive and typically grows along streambanks and roads, in yards and vacant lots. Small, white/cream flowers form in August.



Learning...

Conservation With Community

Coordinated by Morgan Neil, Outreach Coordinator for the Polk Soil & Water Conservation District (Polk SWCD).

Polk SWCD, City of Salem Public Works Department, Glenn and Gibson Creeks Watershed Council sponsored the event. 21 people attended the event.

Participants learned about watersheds, beavers, pollinator gardens, and the three-year long Glenn Creek restoration project.

Polk Soil & Water Conservation staff welcome folks to Conservation With Community



3 - year Glenn Creek riparian restoration along the reach through Orchard Heights Park



Deborah Topp talks about watersheds. Her advice : "if you can just do one thing, plant a tree."



Matt Johnston and Brian Smith discuss the Orchard Heights Park pollinator garden



Fall Native Plant Sale – Bulbs, Perennials and Seeds

Polk Soil and Water Conservation District's fall native plant sale is now live at Polkswcd.com.

This year, Polk SWCD is expanding with a larger quantity and variety of bulbs, perennials and seeds. Your purchase supports native habitat in your own backyard, and also oak woodland and prairie restoration at Polk SWCD's conservation easements. These 275 acres preserve our natural landscape, attracting sensitive and native pollinators, birds and wildlife.

You can pre-order your plants now and pick up October 14th or 15th at the Delbert Hunter Arboretum in Dallas. The District is also looking for volunteers for the event. Please help spread the word as we work to restore the native landscape in Polk County plant by plant.

Volunteer at the Native Plant Sale - Volunteer - Native Plant Sale - POLK SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT (polkswcd.com)

Native Plant Resources - Native Plants - POLK SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT (polkswcd.com)

Buy Native Plants - Native Plant Sale - POLK SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT (polkswcd.com)