

Delta Ponds Tour for Representative Nancy Nathanson

March 18, 2014

2:30 – 4:00 p.m.

1. Tour Location



* Meet in the Delta Ponds (north) parking lot on Goodpasture Island Road at 2:30 p.m., denoted by the red asterisk on the map, above. Parking spaces in this lot are limited, so please give yourself some extra time in case you need to park in the overflow parking area. Overflow parking is located to the south on Goodpasture Island Road (see map, above).

2. Tour Description

On this tour, we will take a leisurely walk along the new gravel walking path to discuss the Delta Ponds project. Parks and Open Space staff will share current management efforts at Delta Ponds, including efforts to control a highly invasive aquatic weed called Ludwigia.

3. Background on the Delta Ponds Restoration Project

Delta Ponds is a 150 acre complex of former side channel habitat on the eastern flank of the mainstem Willamette River in the heart of Eugene. It is owned by the City of Eugene and managed by the City's Parks and Open Space Division. For many community members, Delta Ponds is a favorite spot for bird and wildlife viewing, fishing, walking, and biking. But it hasn't always been that way. In the late 1800s, the Delta Ponds area was part of a river floodplain network of side channels, sloughs, and tributaries that provided a rich habitat well-suited for

many fish and wildlife species. Over time, flood control management, urbanization, and gravel mining changed the area so that only a few remaining ponds and sloughs offered refuge to fish and wildlife. The highly disturbed ground and steep banks were quickly colonized by invasive plants, such as Armenian blackberry, Scotch broom, and English ivy. There were no trails or parking areas to allow people to enjoy what wildlife did find refuge there.

The City of Eugene collaborated with local, state, and federal partners over a decade to restore this side-channel habitat of the Willamette River. The restoration project was completed about two years ago. The primary goals of this project were:

1. To re-establish hydrological connections between the mainstem Willamette River and the Delta Ponds so that the Delta Ponds system serves as a side-channel to the Willamette River (as it did historically). This will reconnect 2.2 miles of side channel habitat to the Willamette River.
2. Improve in-stream and riparian habitat for a wide variety of species including Chinook salmon, American beaver, Western pond turtle, river otter, and neo-tropical migratory birds.
3. Provide appropriate levels of interpretation and public access to the Delta Ponds.

The project was a tremendous success. We re-established critical hydrologic connections between the ponds and the mainstem Willamette River, removed over 56 acres of invasive species, and established over 40,000 native trees and shrubs. Spring Chinook salmon and cutthroat trout have been documented in the ponds since the hydrologic connections to the Willamette River were made. In addition, recreational improvements, such as additional gravel walking trails, a parking lot, and an accessible boardwalk and over-look on the ponds' edge have improved access to and enjoyment of this natural area gem in the middle of Eugene.

Because of the project's success, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife adopted the project as a Salmon Trout Enhancement Program (STEP) project in 2006. The project has received multiple awards, including from DOGAMI in 2008, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in 2009, and the Oregon State Land Board in 2011.

Many organizations have contributed funding or contributed to this project in other valuable ways, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, University of Oregon, Delta Rotary, Eugene Downtown Lion's Club, Eugene Tree Foundation, and other community organizations and individuals.