

Bankston Family Nature Preserve

A Family's Legacy of Conservation

AS A YOUNG GIRL IN THE 1970s, Carla Bankston played with her sister in the woods of their family property along the north bank of the Tualatin River. Each spring, when the trilliums bloomed, she'd walk with her mother through an explosion of color. Upslope, meanwhile, cows grazed among apple trees in a meadow—the family raised cattle.

In the decades since, Washington County's population has steadily grown. The Bankston property now sits on the edge of encroaching development between Tigard, Sherwood, Tualatin and King City. Adjacent to 1,500 acres of separate conservation areas, the lot's position along the river makes it a vital, connective piece of natural space in a rapidly urbanizing landscape.



Tree for All engages communities large and small in conservation projects throughout the Tualatin River Watershed in Oregon.

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The Site

SIZE	12.84 acres	FIRST PLANTING	2020
STREAM LENGTH	Tualatin River tributary 1,300 ft.; Tualatin River 700 ft.	PLANT COMMUNITIES	Riparian Forest



Habitat Connectivity



Keystone Species



Community Involvement



Protects Water Quality



Floodplain Access

The Challenge

Reed canary grass and blackberry vines had overtaken the property, and relics of former agricultural activity remained on the site. Deep gullies coming off of Bull Mountain had created extensive erosion. The property owners weren't equipped to adequately steward such a large, complex piece of land without significant support. But they were determined to see it through.



"It's really great when we find landowners who are so excited to restore their property," says Mary Meier, habitat conservation specialist at the Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District (TSWCD). "We offer financial incentives to encourage people to do that."



The Transformation

Carla Bankston says, “My mom loved the animals and wanted them to be protected here forever.” A dedicated volunteer with Tualatin Riverkeepers, Charlene Bankston had long ago committed to preserving her family’s piece of paradise.

In 2009, working with Three Rivers Land Conservancy (TRLC) and Clean Water Services, she filed an easement with Washington County. Columbia Land Trust has been managing the easement since TRLC merged with it in 2010. In 2017, TSWCD enrolled the property in its stream restoration program. Two years of site work prepared it for planting in 2020.

“Tualatin Soil and Water has been great,” Carla says. “They’ve done so much. Once my dad passed away, we didn’t have any way to deal with the blackberries, which had overtaken the property. They’ve taken that down, as well as ivy, reed canary grass and poison oak.”

The restored 12-acre site provides important habitat to a wealth of wildlife. Deer and coyotes are often spotted; bald eagles, red-tailed hawks and herons visit frequently. Beavers have constructed an 8-foot dam on the east edge of the property, and an impressive wetland now extends through the lowland.



“The back of this property, which is now the easement, has always been special to us as a family, special for being a home for wild animals and birds and just a quiet place to walk. These things we hope it will always be. The animals, birds and native plants need a place to grow.”

— Charlene Bankston, 2017



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Key Partners

