

CASE STUDY

## Glencoe Creek

# Stitching Together a Contiguous Corridor Along an Urban Creek

**FOUR-MILE-LONG GLENCOE CREEK** originates in an industrial area of north Hillsboro. It travels past high tech manufacturers, the city's public works yard and Hillsboro Airport before entering a residential area. Here, Glencoe Creek flows near four public schools, three homeowners associations, two public parks, designated nature preserves and a web of trails spanning public and private lands.

This small stream, a tributary of McKay Creek, is an important resource for fish, wildlife, plants and people. Like many urban creeks, it has experienced a slow degradation of ecological conditions. Over the years, at various spots along Glencoe Creek, concerned individuals and organizations have made a number of ecological enhancements to help improve habitat for birds and other wildlife. These efforts — mostly involving planting native shrubs — have not completely remedied the problem. A more coordinated plan is needed.

Now a team of Tree for All partners is poised to address the challenge at a larger scale, with a plan that promises to bring lasting results. The project already includes almost three miles of the creek and its tributaries — and still more opportunities exist for private landowners to get involved.



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

[JOINTREEFORALL.ORG](http://JOINTREEFORALL.ORG)



## The Site

SIZE	65 acres	FIRST PLANTING	2019
STREAM LENGTH	2.8 miles	PLANT COMMUNITIES	Scrub-shrub wetland, forested wetland, riparian forest

Today, invasive vegetation dominates much of Glencoe Creek.

## The Challenge

Uninterrupted corridors of ecological enhancement give native plants a better chance of survival, and provide more room for the free movement of birds, small mammals and other wildlife along the creek. As of early 2019, however, this project includes only the portions of Glencoe Creek and its tributaries owned by the City of Hillsboro, Hillsboro School District and Jackson School Homeowners Association.

To strengthen the project's effectiveness, partners are reaching out to private property owners, who will provide crucial links in the connectivity of the project area. Partners seek contiguous stretches of creekside properties whose owners are willing to sign access agreements and become part of the larger project. Owners of these private parcels are offered free site assessments, invasive species removal, planting of native species and plant monitoring. By working with clusters of properties, partners seek to enlarge the project while keeping its boundaries ecologically sound.

As new parcels join the project, new stakeholders, histories and constraints come into play. Although this mosaic of land ownership makes the project

more complex, it also multiplies its expected positive impact. Past ecological uplift efforts along Glencoe Creek have had limited lasting effect, in part because they spanned relatively small and isolated portions of the stream.

Plants such as Himalayan blackberry and reed canary grass pose a great challenge along Glencoe Creek. These invasive species have crowded out native plants, greatly reducing the creek's ability to offer habitat to fish, birds and wildlife, as well as aesthetic pleasure to neighbors and visitors.

Underground utilities are another challenge. Although this project will not require much construction or heavy equipment, partners will need to work around the sanitary sewer lines that run parallel to the creek.

Finally, as wildlife returns, it will be particularly important to monitor and guide beaver activity. Partners will use techniques learned on other projects to support beavers' powerful contributions to ecological health, while minimizing negative effects on infrastructure.



Around the middle of the project site, the stream spreads out into a wetland area known as Glencoe Swale. Many swale-adjacent neighbors value their proximity to water and wildlife -- including the massive beaver dam visible in the foreground.

## The Transformation

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**Since 2018, four Tree for All partners — Friends of Trees, Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District, the City of Hillsboro and Clean Water Services — have joined forces to restore Glencoe Creek, in collaboration with nearby schools, homeowners associations and individual residents. This broad approach promises to bring lasting results.**

One of the most exciting elements of this collaboration is that Glencoe Creek will be among the Conservation District's first urban projects. Also distinctive is the opportunity that certain private property owners have to expand the scope of the project. The greater the area of watershed restored, the less habitat fragmentation there will be.

Most of the on-the-ground activity will take place between 2019 and 2022. Site preparation, including invasive plant removal, will take about two years. The site will then be ready for revegetation with carefully chosen native trees, shrubs and wetland plants, followed by long-term monitoring and maintenance. Partners aim to:

- Enhance wildlife habitat by planting native trees and shrubs
- Filter stormwater runoff before it reaches the creek
- Create shade to keep water cool, thus improving water quality and saving ratepayer dollars
- Offer opportunities for residents to help with the restoration effort and deepen their connections with the creek

In this era of rapid urbanization and concerning weather trends, everyone involved in the project is looking forward to a healthier, more resilient Glencoe Creek corridor.



Barred owls, bald eagles, northern flickers and many other native bird species have been sighted along Glencoe Swale.  
Photo: Jane Wilson.



## Explore Glencoe Creek

The public can explore the transformation of this area at Glencoe Creek Park on the northeastern edge of the project, near the airport, or at UJ Hamby Park just past the project's southern edge, not far from downtown Hillsboro. Find out about community tree planting events at Glencoe Creek visit [jointreeforall.org/calendar](http://jointreeforall.org/calendar).

Learn more at [jointreeforall.org/glencoe-creek](http://jointreeforall.org/glencoe-creek).



With the creek right on campus, Glencoe High School students don't have to go far to build skills in community science and ecological enhancement.



Learn more about TFA partners at:  
[jointreeforall.org/partners](http://jointreeforall.org/partners)

## Key Partners

