

Parks Views article September 2019

Have YOU Thought about the Water in Our Watershed?

By North Mountain Park Nature Center Manager, Libby VanWyhe

Water connects our human and natural communities, and it is a central theme in everything we do at North Mountain Park. Every season of the year, we find more ways to enjoy Bear Creek and educate about our park's precious water resource.

We do this by exploring the creek with children, turning over rocks and looking for macro invertebrates, and we put students to work restoring the riparian area through our service-learning programs. We teach about water-wise landscaping in our demonstration gardens, and we offer community programs about water conservation and rain-catchment. We play water conservation games, teaching kids how to collaborate to meet the demands on a limited resource. We bring elementary students down to the creek to role-play salmon migration and learn how Native American tribes relied on the salmon runs.

And this October is special, because we're bringing you even more programming about our favorite subject, with two big events highlighting the value of water and our role in protecting it!

In the first week of October, watershed health will be the focus of our Bear Creek Salmon Festival, held at North Mountain Park on Saturday, October 5 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. This annual event is held on the first Saturday in October, to celebrate the return of our native salmon to the streams and creeks of their birth. It's important to note that it has only been in the last 20 years, since several key points of blockage were removed from Bear Creek, that substantial numbers of Fall Chinook have been able to successfully travel as far as Ashland in Bear Creek. We hope to see salmon swimming in the creek as visitors explore North Mountain Park and learn from local organizations and stream advocates how our watersheds function and what we can do to further improve habitat for all of our native fish.

The Salmon Festival is a free, family-friendly event that highlights the connections we share, not only with native fish, but also the diverse habitats and organisms that serve watershed health from the highest peaks to the lowest creeks. This year's event will feature music from community favorites like Montana Soul and The Brother's Reed, delicious food offerings from Figgy's food truck, and interactive exhibits hosted by our local partners in watershed health. Come celebrate Bear Creek and the return of the salmon with a day of family activities, live music and good food. BearCreekSalmonFestival.net

In addition to our streams and creeks, water infrastructure also connects our community. From Reeder Reservoir, to our storm drains, to our waste water treatment plant, these systems are vital to our daily lives. That's why we are proud to participate in the "Imagine a Day Without Water" campaign. October 23 is an international day of action when schools, municipalities, businesses utilities and citizens educate about and advocate for, our intricate human water systems. The state of Oregon acknowledges that we need to address the needs of our aging water infrastructure and invest in new infrastructure to meet the demands of our changing communities. The development needs of a growing population and the challenges of climate change, such as the increased intensity of wildfires and the potential drought and flooding, make attention to our infrastructure even more important. It's time to work together to invest in our natural and built water systems, to improve the quality and quantity of water for our communities.

Together with our partners throughout Jackson County, the City of Ashland and APRC are hosting a full week of free programming... so you can KNOW your water systems and LOVE YOUR WATER. On the week of October 21, join us for free tours and workshops. Learn where your water comes from and where it goes. Sign up for classes about stormwater management, rainwater catchment and building your own greywater systems. Tune into APRC's social media that week, because we'll be linking to more great information on this important topic.

Visit AshlandParksandRec.org to register online for the "Love Your Water Week" classes and tours. Or call the Nature Center at 541-488-6606.

Abundant, clean water is vital for our habitat and for our citizens. As the season turns, you can do more than dance for fall rains! This October, we invite you to learn more about our watershed and what you can do to support it.

North Mountain Park Nature Center is a division of APRC