

the Northwest Youth Corps and local schools, donate labor. Rogers says that FBP volunteers, ranging from students to businesspeople to senior citizens, contributed more than 600 hours to FBP projects last year, representing about \$85,000 of labor and doubling the work capacity of FBP's paid crew.

"I've always felt that restoration work is about more than restoring a piece of ground," says Rogers. "It's more about restoring the relationship between people and nature. My personal experience as a volunteer coordinator is that people are craving that, because they're constantly relating to computers and machines and other people. But to come out here and relate to plant and sun and wind and hawk and fish and water — it's just a different perspective on what's real."

## AMAZON PARK

Tom Pringle is antithetical to the stereotype of the pansy environmentalist. He has a blunt tongue, sun-toughened skin, and white chest hair that puffs out of his shirt, and he scoffs at the rosy-cheeked joggers bouncing along Amazon Park trail. "I grew up in the Midwest, where there's a stronger work ethic," says Pringle. "Down by this trail, I see all these healthy young people going by, and I think, 'I've got some cardio for you. I've got some stretching for you.'" He flashes a mischievous grin.

Pringle, a 59-year-old geneticist and the chair of the Native Plant Society, has removed two and a half tons of blackberry from Amazon Park between 31st and 33rd avenues and planted 52 species of native trees and shrubs — 495 plants total — at a personal cost of \$1,200.



For years Pringle, who's lived up the hill from Amazon Park since 1978, felt disturbed by the tangles of invasive plants choking the creek. "It was not restful, visually," he says. "I realized that I wouldn't be able to enjoy my walks unless something happened here. And something wasn't going to happen here unless I did it."

Determined to get his hands dirty restoring the creek, Pringle hooked up with a neighborhood group founded in 1994 by local environmentalist Nancy Schafer. The group, Miracle on 33rd Street, operates with support from city agencies such as the

Eugene Stream Team, NeighborWoods, and the Parks & Open Space division. But in Pringle's view, the city manages the creek primarily for flood control. "I know the plants will get blamed if it does flood," he says. "The whole flood culture is sort of a boogeyman. I think the city has been schizophrenic about it for a long time. It has nothing to do with property damage; it's about man controlling nature. It's a war against nature. You can look back and say, 'Mistakes were made,' but I prefer to look forward to see what can be done."

For Pringle, restoration is less about

attaining a past ideal than about changing people's perspectives. The city's metal fences, he says, send the wrong message. "It's alienating. It's saying: 'The creek is dangerous. Don't play here.' It's very industrial." On the other hand, says Pringle, making the creek beautiful causes people to view it differently.

Pringle's biggest concern is that neighbors aren't willing to put forth even a minimal effort to improve the creek. "I come out here for 20 minutes, I see a problem, I fix it and I move on," he says, tugging at the bill of his visor. "Politics gets us nowhere. I think it's a shame that we want to preserve what's beautiful, but let what's in our backyard fall apart. The Amazon speaks volumes."

## AMAZON CREEK: FAIRGROUNDS ALLIANCE

Farther west along Amazon Creek, another dedicated Eugene resident is working to green the creek. Jon Belcher, a straightforward man with curly white hair, gazes at Amazon's slow flow from a pedestrian bridge on the Lane County Fairgrounds.

Belcher is the head of the Jefferson-Amazon Greenway Committee, a neighborhood group that aims to convert the Amazon into a more natural waterway from the EWEB substation at Jefferson Street to Van Buren Street. The short-term goal, says Belcher, is to naturalize the north bank of the creek "chunk by chunk" by replacing invasive species with natives. The long-term goal is to excavate the south slope of the creek, widening the channel and allowing for a more natural flow.

Belcher says that the greenway project represents a successful alliance between a

# HOW LOCAL GROUPS ARE HELPING

## THE EUGENE STREAM TEAM

One of the most prominent city restoration programs is the Eugene Stream Team, an agency funded by stormwater fees that aims to improve the stewardship of Eugene's water. The Stream Team forges partnerships with local groups working to enhance the watershed, often providing volunteers and plant materials for restoration projects.

Lorna Baldwin, a silver-haired woman with piercing brown eyes and a no-nonsense manner, is the Stream Team's environmental volunteer coordinator and its only full-time employee. Baldwin says that because invasive species, coupled with continued development, are the biggest threat to native habitats, restoration efforts focus on removing invaders and replacing them with native species.

The Stream Team's two native plant nurseries are run completely by volunteers. Plants from the nurseries go to restoration sites across Eugene, and the agency supplies tools for local environmental groups like the Walama Restoration Project. "The Stream Team has no budget for direct funding of another group, so we help however we can," says Baldwin. "Tools and plants and word of mouth are all I can do."

**Volunteer info: 682-4850.**

## CURRENT CITY PROJECTS

The city is completing a \$6.5 million wetlands restoration project on Meadowlark Prairie, funded in partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers. The recently completed, \$800,000 Greenhill Tributary Wetland Enhancement Project was funded by city stormwater fees. The next big priority project, says Natural Resource Manager Scott Duckett, is the restoration of Delta Ponds, a \$3.7 million project undertaken in partnership with Army Corps as well as the Eugene Rotary group and Oregon State Parks. And this summer, the city and the BLM will begin work on the Dragonfly Bend Stream Enhancement Project and the Dragonfly Bend Wetland Mitigation Project. The projects, overseen by city project managers, will eventually incorporate volunteers from the Stream Team.

Another city program that encourages native vegetation is NeighborWoods, a partnership of city employees, local businesses, and community volunteers who share the common goal of planting and caring for native street trees in public spaces. According to the program's web-

site, volunteers for NeighborWoods — led by city's urban forestry staff at the Public Works Parks and Open Space division — have planted almost 5,000 trees since the program's founding in 1992. Volunteers agree to water and weed the trees they plant, and the city commits to pruning.

**NeighborWoods volunteer info: 682-4800.**

## WALAMA RESTORATION PROJECT

Local activist Yotokko Kilpatrick founded the Walama Restoration Project in 2001 to support the rehabilitation and native revegetation of local watersheds. The organization's stated purpose is to restore high-priority native habitats in the Willamette Valley, including oak savannas, wetlands, upland prairies, and bottomland hardwood forests. Walama focuses on community involvement, engaging students in habitat rehabilitation projects. With support from the city, volunteers, paid staff members and local nonprofits, Walama has restored habitats in 10 local parks.

Unlike the neighborhood restoration groups, Walama's scope encompasses restoration work in a spectrum of public open spaces. "We work with local watershed councils doing stewardship projects throughout Lane County," says Walama outreach coordinator Stephanie Schroeder. "Our mission is to conduct ecological stewardship within the Willamette Valley." Walama has a staff of about 10 paid crew workers and about 700 members throughout Lane County.

Walama's funding comes from private donations, grants, and work contracts from the city. Its five main stewardship sites — in Lafferty Park, Maurie Jacobs Park, Berkeley Park, the Butterfly Meadow in the Whilamut Natural Area, and the Gudu-kut restoration project (which it runs with the Westmoreland Advocacy Group) — are run primarily by volunteers during seasonal "work parties." Walama crew members removed invasive species to enhance a wet prairie habitat in Amazon Park, and in partnership with the city and the Nature Conservancy, the organization rehabilitated oak-savanna habitats at Skinners Butte and in the Coburg Hills.

**Volunteer info: 484-3939.**

See this story online at [www.eugeneweekly.com](http://www.eugeneweekly.com) for more of volunteer organizations.

— Kera Abraham