

April 28, 2019

Kevin Cook  
1600 SE 190<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, OR 97233-5910

Re: Metro's North Tualatin Mountains Land Use Application

Dear Mr. Cook,

I am James Thayer, a long time advocate of building a comprehensive network of regional footpaths to connect Portland's urban trails with the regional trails that crisscross the entire state. Currently, I am the official representative on the **Oregon Recreational Trail Advisory Council** (ORTAC) for Congressional District 1. I am also on the Executive Board of the **Columbia Land Trust** that has conserved over 43,000 acres of critical habitat in both Oregon and Washington. Recently, I also served on the **Metro taskforce** considering the development of trails in the North Tualatin Range. In that capacity, I worked closely with other trail advocates, wildlife habitat experts, neighborhood groups, cyclists, equestrian groups and other hikers interested in extending the Wildwood Trail into the Coast range.

As the President of **The Friends of Forest Park** in the 1980's, I initiated the first efforts to extend the Wildwood trail to Newberry Road, and then secured the last remaining "old growth grove" in the vicinity of the Burlington Woods property for the later addition to Forest Park's trail system. The Friends of Forest Park (aka the Forest Park Conservancy) also launched the first feasibility study to consider linking Forest Park to trails in the Coast range, thereby creating a pedestrian route from Portland to both Seaside and Tillamook. Later I published two books entitled, Portland's Forest Hikes, and Hiking from Portland to the Coast, both published by the OSU Press. These efforts to promote regional trails ultimately contributed to the development of the **Salmonberry Trail**, which serves as a crucial link connecting Portland's urban trails to the regional trails traversing the Coast Range in Northwest Oregon.

I am writing in support of Metro's application to build a nature park within the North Tualatin Range in northeastern Multnomah County. As an active member of the land conservation movement, and as a dedicated hiker that knows this geography well I can assure you that Metro's proposal is a balanced proposal. It's approach accommodates much needed pedestrian, equestrian and cyclist access to prime woodlands, but it also preserves hundreds of acres of prime wildlife habitat for conservation purposes.

As an avid hiker I have walked these hillsides since Hampton Hardwoods owned the property in the mid-eighties. Unfortunately, the slope was neglected for many years after it was logged and the dense underbrush reduced the habitat value significantly. Metro's plans to rehabilitate the property to accommodate recreational use as well as improved wildlife habitat will restore these lands to support both conservation purposes as well as recreational needs. Today these slopes accommodate some local neighborhood use, but are otherwise underutilized. It has long been Metro's desire to mitigate the ravages of past commercial logging on this site in order to improve the quality of the habitat for fish, birds, and wildlife, as well as improving the water quality on these slopes. Utilizing intelligent park designs Metro proposes to develop a trail system that will accommodate bikers, hikers, and riders while at the same time shielding the critical habitat for birds, amphibians and wildlife.

The development of this section of the North Tualatin Range is the culmination of a long-time dream, because it provides a critical linkage for both human recreation, and animals moving along the so-called "wildlife corridor" serving animals migrating along the eastern face of the Tualatin Range. This acquisition and the mitigation of the landscape within its bounds also serves as an extension of the regional trail system that links Portland to its rural surroundings, including the Banks-Vernonia Trail, the Crown Zellerbach Trail and the evolving Salmonberry Trail. It meets the documented needs for more connections between Oregon's many urban park systems and the regional trails that connect communities to each other.

Metro conducted a thorough outreach process that drew in many trail advocates and neighbors voicing privacy concerns, cyclists' input, comments from hikers and dog walkers, as well as wildlife experts' opining on the park's habitat. In the end, Metro was able to satisfy most of the taskforce participants, although some residents were fearful that the proposed park development might attract more Portlanders to their secluded hillside community. Nonetheless, most taskforce members felt that Metro's proposed park development represented much needed investments in recreational opportunities, improved wildlife habitat and the significant extension of a key regional trail.

I urge Multnomah County to approve Metro's comprehensive Plan Amendment request and land use application, so that we may all realize the full potential and benefits of our shared public lands.

James D. Thayer