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JENKINS CREEK PARK OVERGROWTH BEING CLEARED TO RESTORE OAK PRAIRIE

Covington, WA – The City of Covington recently began the task of removing two acres of overgrowth in Jenkins Creek Park in an effort to help restore and preserve the park's Oak Prairie habitat. The project, expected to be complete by the end of May, will also create new open space and increase visibility in the park.

Volunteer efforts have been instrumental in breathing new life into Jenkins Creek Park in the recent past. City volunteer George Pearson was the first to remove significant overgrowth at the park and over the course of the last several years has helped demonstrated how open and beautiful the park can be. With additional park resources this year, the city has been able to add to the volunteer efforts and clear overgrowth with specialized equipment that makes it a much quicker task.

Earlier this year, the city completed a master plan process for Jenkins Creek Park that identified an updated design along with additional park improvements. The clearing of overgrowth is the first step towards achieving the new vision for the park. Following the removal of overgrowth, and with periodic mowing of these areas, some of the park will return to be an Oak Prairie habitat similar to a once much larger natural area that was significant to tribal inhabitants.

Jenkins Creek Park is part of the historic Jenkin's Prairie in the greater Covington area that was once at least 200 acres in size. These types of prairies and oak savannas were actively cared for and maintained by local tribes for thousands of years, which they used as important sources of food and medicine. There are also a number of rare plants and animals that can be found in the oak woodlands and prairies of Western Washington.

"With the significant changes in land management over the last 200 years, much of these historic prairies and oak woodlands have been lost to encroaching forests or development," said Ethan Newton, Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Covington. "The remnant oak woodland and prairie land in Jenkins Creek Park is a rare opportunity to restore and preserve an important part of the area's ecological and cultural history."

The city hopes that this project is a start to teaching new generations of Covington residents about these special habitats and the long history of people's relationship with the land and the ecosystem in Covington.

More information on the final Jenkins Creek Park Master Plan is available on the City's website at www.covingtonwa.gov/parks. The estimate to implement the full master plan design is \$7 million and is currently not funded.

[PICTURES INCLUDED]



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