



East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District

Construction to begin on three culverts at Headwaters Farm

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Construction starting August 1st to remove three barriers to fish passage on Johnson Creek.

When the East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District (EMSWCD) purchased Headwaters Farm in Gresham five years ago, their staff and board saw it as an opportunity to do what they do best: promote clean water, healthy soil, and wildlife habitat. They quickly found a project on the property that addresses all three at once: replacing the culverts for safe fish passage.

There are three spots on Headwaters Farm where the North Fork of Johnson Creek crosses the farm roads. At each crossing, Johnson Creek flows through an old, undersized, or perched culvert. All three culverts act as barriers to fish as they swim upstream. Animals such as salmon and lamprey spend their adult years in the ocean before returning to the stream of their birth to lay eggs. If the outlet of the culvert is perched above the stream below, it can block their journey home.

Undersized culverts can also cause other problems. If they are too small to accommodate streamflow during large rainstorms it can lead to flooding, which is what happened at Headwaters Farm last winter. We know that floods can be devastating for our roads and homes, but they also wash nutrient rich topsoil off fields and into streams. When this happens it degrades the health of the soil and the health of the stream at the same time.

East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District will improve all three culverts at Headwaters Farm using different techniques. One culvert will be enlarged for greater capacity, one replaced with a bridge, and one will be removed entirely by eliminating the road crossing. When construction is finished, all three will allow fish to pass through freely. But wait, are there even salmon in that part of Johnson Creek?

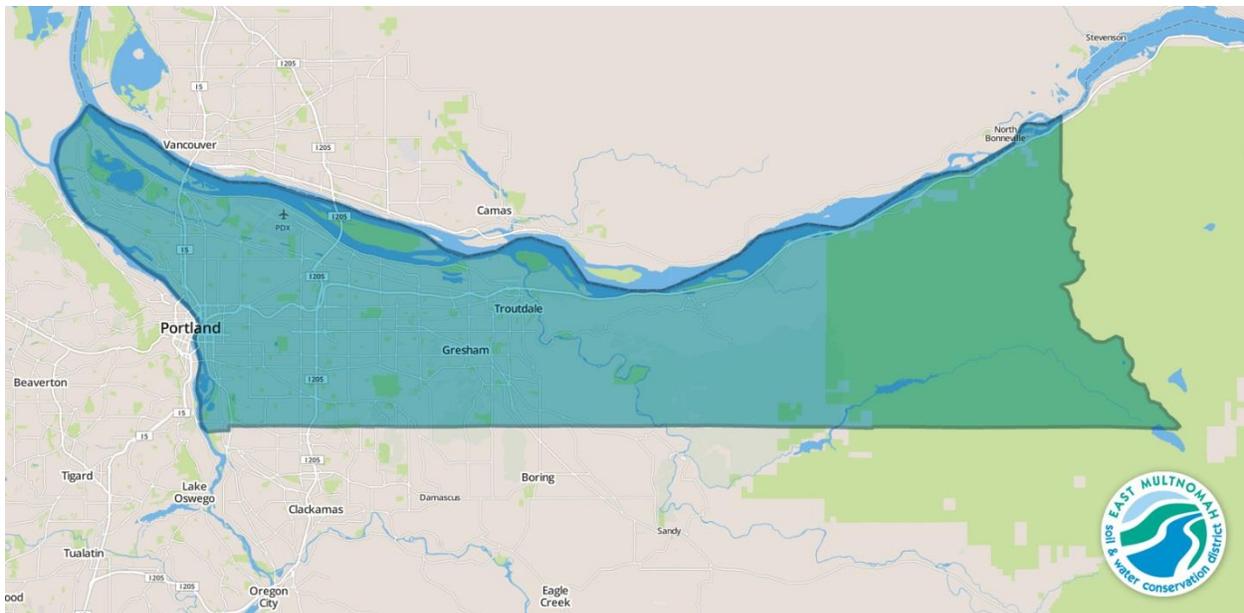


Not yet, but that’s about to change. EMSWCD’s culvert projects this summer kick off a huge coordinated restoration effort with partners Johnson Creek Watershed Council, Multnomah County, Portland Parks & Recreation, and Oregon Department of Transportation. Over the next two years they will work together to remove an additional four culverts that are still blocking fish passage downstream of Headwaters Farm, opening up the entire North Fork of Johnson Creek to salmon.

“We’re really happy to see so many organizations coming together to add nearly two miles of salmon habitat to the Johnson Creek watershed”, commented Julie DiLeone, Rural Lands Program Supervisor at EMSWCD, “it’s going to be great for the folks who live here to see salmon return to the area.” Once all seven barriers are removed, we could see Coho salmon heading up the North Fork almost immediately, and Headwaters Farm will be ready for them.

The East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District (EMSWCD) is a unit of local government whose mission is to help people care for land and water. The EMSWCD is led by an elected board of five directors and works entirely on a voluntary, non-regulatory basis with landowners, land managers, and other residents east of the Willamette River centerline in Multnomah County. All of the EMSWCD’s work is geared toward keeping water clean, conserving water and keeping soil healthy.

Contact Julie DiLeone, Rural Lands Program Supervisor, with any questions about the culvert project at julie@emswcd.org or (503) 935-5360. Learn more about us at www.emswcd.org



Map of EMSWCD District area, which is all Multnomah County East of the Willamette River.

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