



Audit issued on Natural Areas Program

October 17, 2007

The Office of the Metro Auditor released an audit today of the 2006 bond measure program to preserve natural areas in the region. The purpose of the audit, titled "*Natural Areas Program: Improved transparency recommended*," was to determine if the Natural Areas Program had processes in place to ensure accountability.

In 2006, voters approved a measure allowing Metro to protect regional natural areas and to issue \$227.4 million in bonds. Metro will use \$168.4 million to purchase land and award \$59 million to local organizations and governments to preserve natural areas. The Natural Areas Program has a goal of purchasing 3,600 to 4,500 acres in 27 target areas. Currently, 14 staff members in the Regional Parks and Greenspaces Department and five staff in the Office of the Metro Attorney are working in the Program.

"Our purpose was to determine if Metro was prepared to effectively manage land purchases for the citizens of the region," Metro Auditor Suzanne Flynn said. "There is always room for improvement and we found that the Program was receptive to our recommendations." The audit makes recommendations about performance measures that should be reported to the public, Metro Council, and a citizen oversight committee that was established by the bond measure. Auditors also found that communication could be improved and that lessons learned from the previous bond measure should be preserved to help improve operations.

For more information contact Suzanne Flynn, Metro Auditor, at 503-797-1891.

The audit is available on the Metro website at www.metro-region.org. Copies of the audit can also be obtained by calling the Office of the Metro Auditor at 503-797-1892. The Metro Auditor will brief the Metro Council on November 15, 2007.