



Press Release: Cascade Policy Institute Publishes Comprehensive Study of Metro's Parks and Nature Program

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PORTLAND, OR – In the next week or so, Portland area voters will receive their November ballots. One of the items is **Measure 26-203: a \$475 million bond measure by Metro**, the regional government for the Portland area. Metro wants the money so it can buy more land for its so-called parks and nature program. **Measure 26-203 will raise the region's property taxes by about \$60 million a year.** The \$475 million request is larger than the two previous Metro natural areas bonds combined, which were \$135.6 million dollars in 1995 and \$227.4 million dollars in 2006.

Cascade Policy Institute has published a [comprehensive study](#) of Metro's parks and nature program, with the following conclusions:

Metro's natural areas program **began as a vision to increase and preserve parks and natural areas** to a region facing increased population growth and density.

As the program evolved, **the mission moved from providing parks for people to locking land away from the community that paid for it.** The initial promise in 1995 to "provide areas for walking, picnicking, and other outdoor recreation" has shifted to the 2019 bond measure promise to "protect water quality, fish, wildlife habitat, natural areas."

Over the nearly two decades since the first parks and nature bond measure, **Metro has made, broken, and delayed its promises** to voters.

In 2002, Metro imposed a solid waste tax enacted to pay for the operating costs of new parks. In 2006, **Metro diverted the parks money into Metro's general fund.** In subsequent years, Metro put two operating levies on the ballot, increasing property taxes.

Chehalem Ridge was pitched as a regional park for Metro's west side, but current plans are for a few miles of walking trails and a small picnic area. **The park is more than seven miles from the nearest TriMet stop.**

After spending hundreds of millions of dollars and acquiring more than 14,000 acres of land, **less than 12 percent of Metro's acquisitions are accessible to the public.**

More than 80 percent of the acquisitions are outside the UGB.

Much of the land acquired by Metro was **never at risk of development** because Metro manages the region's Urban Growth Boundary.

Metro's restoration objectives, efforts, and results have been opaque and uncertain. Metro has provided no measurable documentation of changes to water quality or fish and wildlife populations.

Information was obtained from publicly available resources, interviews, and on-site visits to every natural area and nature park identified by Metro. Cascade paid thousands of dollars in public records requests to Metro.