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Eugene Water & Electric Board

EWEB to begin native habitat restoration at future water storage site

As part of an effort to restore natural habitat at a future water storage site, the Eugene Water & Electric Board is teaming up with Friends of Trees on Saturday morning to plant a variety of native trees.

Later this year, EWEB will start construction on a partially buried water storage tank on an undeveloped 10-acre property near East 40th Avenue and Patterson Street in south Eugene. The lot has been largely undisturbed since EWEB purchased it in the 1950s. However, the parcel will be put to its long-planned purpose with the construction of a 7.5-million-gallon water storage facility that, when complete, will serve drinking water to all Eugene homes and businesses.

The property is fairly unique as it is home to increasingly rare oak savanna habitat. EWEB is planning to site the storage tank to preserve as much high-value habitat and natural space as possible. The utility is working with a professional arborist and ecologist on how to best preserve and support sensitive species during construction and restore the site to enhance the habitat afterwards.

One of the first restoration projects is happening Saturday, Feb. 27, when volunteers with Friends of Trees will plant native trees on the south side of the ridgeline. The volunteers will be working from around 9 a.m. to noon. Access to the site is off of E. 40th near Ferry Street.

The species selected by Friends of Trees include white and black oaks, valley ponderosa pine, incense cedar, pacific madrone, and Oregon myrtles -- species that are consistent with the oak and prairie-dominated habitat that historically characterized the area.

Oak woodland and savannah habitats are some of the most endangered habitats in the Pacific Northwest and are a statewide priority for conservation in the Willamette valley.

“This partnership project with Friends of Trees is a modest first step toward replanting and restoring species that are appropriate to the site and will support a diverse community of native plants and animals,” said Laura Farthing, an EWEB senior civil engineer and project manager.

“Thanks to partners like EWEB and our community volunteers, Friends of Trees Eugene improves our environment through restoration projects like this and dozens of others we’re involved with every season,” said Friends of Trees Eugene Director Erik Burke.

EWEB is making significant investments in the water treatment and distribution system to ensure the utility can meet critical community needs in the event of a major disaster, including fire suppression and dispersed drinking water distribution points.

These investments come at a time when millions of Texas residents remain without drinking water following a devastating winter storm that damaged the state's water infrastructure.

Learn more about EWEB’s water storage improve projects at eweb.org/waterstorage

Friends of Trees has planted more than 850,000 trees and native plants in the 32 years since its founding, with 10,000 of those trees planted in the Eugene-Springfield area. Learn more at friendsoftrees.org/Eugene.

Note to editors: A fact sheet and artist’s rendering of the new storage facility are available upon request. Representatives from Friends of Trees and EWEB will be available for interviews at the site from 10 a.m. to noon.

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