

Community

Watershed Stewardship Program

2013-2014 PROJECT

St. Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Church Parking Lot Rain Garden



PHOTO COURTESY OF DEPAVE

Stormwater runoff can impact water quality in rivers and streams. Natural resources, like urban streams, forests, and wetlands manage stormwater naturally to protect water quality, public health, and the environment. Green infrastructure reduces flooding and erosion, provides cool, clean water to our rivers and streams, and adds wildlife habitat and urban green space for healthier watersheds.

"We are four organizations that collectively make up a very diverse group of people. We worked together. We ate together. We really enjoyed being together. And in some cases, lasting friendships were formed."
—MATT CLARK, JCWC Executive Director

Project Overview

Members of St. Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Church worked with partner organizations Johnson Creek Watershed Council, Green Lents and Depave to solve the problem of recurrent flooding of the parking lot and church building. The groups removed 2,500 square feet of asphalt, replacing it with a native plant rain garden that now soaks up the water from the parking lot. Over 80 volunteers participated in the depaving and plantings, and dozens more attended an Ethiopian dinner fundraiser.

Community Issues Addressed

For several years, the St. Mary church building frequently flooded during even moderate winter rains. Costly repairs to a drywell system in the church parking lot failed to fix the problem. Church members had to place sandbags around the building and use pumps almost every time it rained. Since project partners constructed the rain garden in October 2013, the church has not flooded.

NEIGHBORHOOD:

Lents

WATERSHED:

Johnson Creek

COMMUNITY

OUTCOMES:

Solved flooding of church building, created partnerships among community members from diverse backgrounds

WATERSHED OUTCOMES:

Improved stormwater infiltration, created green space and pollinator habitat

FOR MORE

INFORMATION:

depave.org/saint-mary



ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
CITY OF PORTLAND

working for clean rivers

in partnership with
Portland State University

Community Benefits

- Solved problem of church flooding
- Created new green space for a small, immigrant church congregation and its neighbors
- Neighbors from diverse backgrounds worked together and learned from one another

Watershed Benefits

- Untreated stormwater runoff from the parking lot no longer flows directly to Johnson Creek
- Allowing rain to soak into the ground improves water quality
- Created habitat for pollinators

Additional Sources of Support:

- Depave helped with project planning and site preparation, soil testing, volunteer recruitment, and project permitting.
- The Johnson Creek Watershed Council helped plan and promote the June 2013 fundraising dinner, recruited volunteers and administered Community Watershed Stewardship Program (CWSP) grant funds.
- Green Lents helped with site planning, landscape design and volunteer recruitment, and provided tools through its Community Tool Library.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DEPAVE

“St. Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Church is a small immigrant church with very limited resources. For years, our church building has flooded during heavy rains because our property lacks sufficient drainage. We are forced to use sandbags and pumps to protect our building and get stormwater from the parking lot to the street. With the CWSP grant, and the help of several partner organizations, we removed 2,500 square feet of unneeded asphalt, and replaced it with rain gardens and new green spaces. Stormwater soaks into the ground instead of flowing into our church. This project makes our property a more beautiful place for the entire community.”

–TADELE GELAGAY
Board of Trustees Chair
St. Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Community Watershed Stewardship Program

The Community Watershed Stewardship Program (CWSP) offers grants of up to \$10,000 to help Portlanders improve their neighborhoods and communities, while also improving the health of our streams and rivers.*

More information at www.portlandoregon.gov/bes/stewardship or 503-823-7917

*Funding subject to City Council budget approval.

A Community Member Profile

Before this project Tadele Gelagay and Matt Clark had never met, but now they are good friends. Matt is the Executive Director of the Johnson Creek Watershed Council (JCWC) and Tadele is a member leader of St. Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Church. For Tadele, this project had multiple benefits. It solved the flooding issue. In addition, church members learned how to access city resources and engage the community in fundraising. They learned about watershed health, and now save money on their monthly stormwater bill through the Clean River Rewards program. For Matt, the goals of the project aligned with his organization's mission to improve water quality and the JCWC was excited to partner with an immigrant community group that it had not previously worked with. Both Tadele and Matt feel like they have built a relationship that extends far beyond the rain garden project.