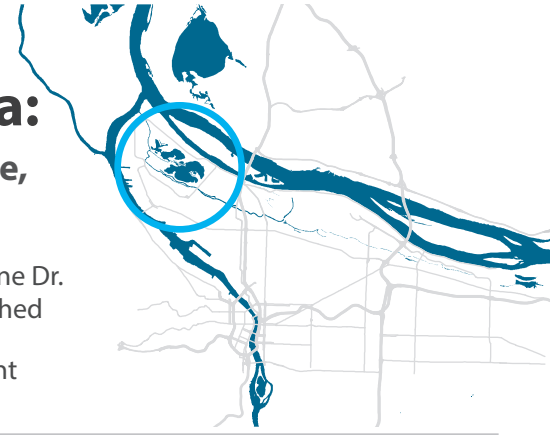


# Priority Turtle Conservation Area:

**Smith and Bybee Wetland, Heron Lakes Golf Course, Ramsey Lakes, and T-5 Powerline**



**Location:** North Portland, Multnomah County; Willamette River to the south, N Marine Dr. to the north; I-5 to the East and Kelly Point Park to the West; Columbia Slough Watershed

**Ownership:** City of Portland; Metro; Port of Portland and private landowners adjacent to the wetlands

**Site Description:** Smith & Bybee Wetlands is one of America's largest urban wetlands at 2,000 acres. From 1940 to 1990, part of the site served as the St. Johns Landfill, which accepted most of the region's trash. Later, Metro took over management, closed the landfill and started the transition back to nature. Heron Lakes Golf Course is a public, municipal golf facility located just east of Smith & Bybee wetlands and is owned by the City of Portland and operated by Portland Parks & Recreation. The present 340-acre site was once part of Vanport City, which at the time, was the second-largest city in Oregon. Ramsey Lakes and the T-5 powerline site are located to the west of Smith & Bybee Wetlands and are both owned and managed by the Port of Portland as wetland mitigation sites. Ramsey Lakes consists of three excavated ponds adjacent to the Columbia Slough and the T-5 Powerline site is adjacent to the Willamette River within a corridor that connects the river with the Columbia Slough and ultimately, Smith and Bybee Wetlands. Smith & Bybee Wetlands, Ramsey Lakes and the T-5 powerline site have enhanced wetland, upland and turtle nesting areas along with enhanced shallow water areas and basking structures. The Smith & Bybee and the Columbia Slough natural areas are within [Oregon Conservation Strategy Conservation Opportunity Area #056](#) and are considered Special Habitat Areas by the City of Portland.

**Turtle Significance:** These areas may support the largest population of Western painted turtles in the state of Oregon. One Western pond turtle was reported at Ramsey Lakes. Multiple age classes of Western painted turtles have been seen and nesting has been confirmed at Ramsey Lakes, T-5 and Smith & Bybee Wetlands.

## Current Threats to the Population:

- There are non-native red-eared sliders at Ramsey Lakes, Heron Lakes and Smith & Bybee Wetlands.
- Recreation disturbance at Smith & Bybee and Heron Lakes Golf Course have the potential to disturb basking turtles; dogs/people have the potential to interfere with nesting turtles.
- There is documented nest predation along fencelines and limited nesting habitat.
- Trails at Smith and Bybee and the Heron Lakes Golf Course, as well as roads such as N. Marine Dr. and N. Portland Rd. pose hazards to movement.
- Because Smith and Bybee Wetlands and Heron Lakes Golf Course are open to the public, there is a potential risk that pet turtles could be released and native turtles taken from these sites.
- Smith & Bybee Wetlands and Heron Lakes Golf Course are poorly connected; these sites are separated by a busy road and railroad tracks. Part of the undeveloped corridor between the T-5 powerline site and the Columbia Slough is separated by railroad tracks.
- A section of this corridor known as Bonneville pond (which has supported a large population of Western painted turtles in the past) is covered with invasive species that may interfere with turtle movement and nesting.

## Opportunities for Conservation :

- Continue to add woody debris/basking structures to ponded areas.
- Improve connectivity between Smith & Bybee and the Heron Lakes Golf Course. Also between the T-5 Powerline site and the Columbia Slough.
- Identify and improve nesting habitat conditions. Create and maintain healthy nesting habitat.
- Protect nesting turtles and known nests sites from disturbance and predators.
- Reduce red-eared slider, carp, and bullfrog populations to decrease predator and competition pressures.
- Educate recreationists and adjacent landowners about turtle populations and what they can do to reduce their impact.
- Heavily vegetating the banks of water features at Heron Lakes Golf Course with shrubs of medium height, will help reduce visibility and level of disturbance to the turtles, while still maintaining an attractive appearance to the landscape.

## Active Conservation Partners:

- Port of Portland: <http://www2.portofportland.com/>
- Metro: <http://www.oregonmetro.gov/>
- Portland Parks & Rec: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/>

# Smith and Bybee Wetland, Heron Lakes Golf Course, Ramsey Lakes, and T-5 Powerline

