

City of Tacoma 2025 Stewardship Opportunities Report

Q.85a Attach a list of stewardship opportunities

The City of Tacoma has a variety of programs and opportunities for stewardship focused on the prevention of stormwater pollution and maintaining the health of Tacoma’s open spaces and aquatic ecosystems. During the 2025 reporting year, the City provided the stewardship opportunities described below.

Adopt-a-Storm Drain Program

The Adopt-a-Storm Drain (AAD) program provides a free, year-round stewardship opportunity for residents to adopt storm drains in their neighborhood and commit to regularly removing leaves, trash, and debris to prevent pollution and flooding. Participants use a web application to locate and adopt storm drains in their area ([Adopt-a-drain.org](https://adopt-a-drain.org)). They also track the amount and type of debris collected using the online tool and are directed to contact the TacomaFirst 311 hotline if they observe any illicit discharges, supporting the City’s source control efforts. Increased awareness of catch basin conditions and what is entering the storm drain system serves as a bridge to educating participants about other pollution prevention behaviors, such as proper yard care practices that protect water quality, responsible car washing, pet waste management, and the safe use and disposal of household chemicals and cleaners. In 2024, Tacoma coordinated with several Western Washington jurisdictions to run a Spanish Language AAD Campaign. This campaign included poster creation and distribution, a Spanish social media toolkit, TV commercials, and radio ads. All materials were created and distributed using input from the AAD Spanish Speaking Focus Group. Building on the 2024 regional Spanish-language campaign, the Environmental Services Director also participated in a Spanish-language radio interview in 2025 to encourage participation and provide stormwater education.

In 2025, Tacoma created and implemented a comprehensive behavior change strategy and schedule for Adopt-A-Drain, The City also created and implemented a comprehensive communications plan. The plan included social media outreach, community partner social media toolkits, mailers, tabling events at community gatherings, and adding an Adopt-A-Drain sign-up QR code to street sweeping notice cards. These combined efforts resulted in Tacoma’s highest adoption year to date.

2025 Program Metrics:

- New Participants: 134
- New Drains Adopted: 217
- Total Participants: 328
- Total Drains Adopted: 590
- Pounds of Debris Collected: 2,133

Open Space Habitat Restoration

The City owns and stewards approximately 515 acres of open space properties for goals of improved stormwater interception and infiltration, healthy tree canopy, ecosystem function, biodiversity, and community health and wellbeing. This stewardship is primarily conducted by two WCC crews who lead ecological restoration efforts in environmentally critical areas such as steep slopes and wetlands. Stewardship is also supported by community volunteer work parties, through the Tacoma Habitat Stewardship Program. The City holds a lead role in the Green Tacoma Partnership, established in 2005, which promotes restoration and community stewardship in urban natural areas. In 2025, Open Space Management began a partnership with PCD to grow the volunteer stewardship program, including

training habitat stewards, onboarding more volunteer sites, and hosting regularly scheduled volunteer events.

The Natural Systems Management Group promotes activities to protect existing urban natural areas and forests and increase Tacoma's tree cover while educating the public about the stormwater benefits of urban forestry and green infrastructure. Through educational programming and outreach, the City emphasizes how trees and vegetation function as low impact development practices by intercepting rainfall, reducing stormwater runoff, filtering pollutants, preventing erosion, and decreasing the impacts of impervious surfaces on local waterways.

Educational messaging focuses on the connection between urban natural areas and stormwater management, including how a healthy, multi-layered canopy, consisting of trees shrubs, and understory species, reduce peak stormwater flows, mitigates erosion, improves water quality by filtering pollutants before they reach surface waters, and mitigates the effects of impervious surfaces in urban environments. Participants in planting events and educational programs learn about proper plant and tree selection, planting techniques, and care practices that maximize stormwater benefits while supporting healthy plant establishment and growth.

The City's canopy cover increase is achieved by planting trees with help from partner organizations and community members and by preserving existing healthy trees. The City also helps sponsor an annual Green Tacoma Day/Arbor Day celebration, which serves as a platform for educating volunteers about the role of trees in stormwater pollution prevention and the broader environmental benefits of urban forests and natural areas. The program supports various other educational opportunities to successfully plant and care for trees and native plant species, ensuring that participants understand both the stormwater management functions and long-term stewardship requirements of urban green infrastructure.

In April 2025, the Natural Systems Management Group's Open Space Program partnered with the Pierce Conservation District to relaunch volunteer stewardship in the City's open spaces through the new [Tacoma Habitat Stewardship Program](#). The four activated sites are located in the South Tacoma neighborhood, the South End neighborhood, and the port; these areas rank on the lower end of both the Tacoma Equity Index and the Tree Equity Score. Both the South Tacoma and South End neighborhoods are historically redlined, overburdened, and underserved communities.

The program offers community members two primary ways to participate. First, trained habitat stewards take on leadership roles at designated sites, contribute to site-specific restoration planning, and help lead work parties while educating volunteers and the public. Second, volunteers may participate in restoration work parties, where activities focus on planting native plants and trees and removing invasive weeds. Together, these efforts support the restoration and long-term care of Tacoma's urban natural areas, enhancing critical benefits such as cleaner air and water, improved stormwater management, wildlife habitat, climate resilience, and expanded community health and access to green spaces.

2025 Program Metrics:

- Active sites: 4
- Volunteer events: 25
- Volunteer number: 268
- Stewardship hours: 795
- Acres enrolled: 10.9
- Trees/plants planted: 341
- Focus weeds removed: 75,025 sq ft
- Mulch spread: 14,390 sq ft
- Garbage: 946 gallons

Green Tacoma Day

Green Tacoma Day is an annual community stewardship event organized by the Green Tacoma Partnership to engage residents in restoring urban natural areas that support watershed health. While the City of Tacoma does not own the event or the partnership, it serves as a primary coordinator for both. Held at multiple sites across the city, the event brings together community volunteers to plant trees and native vegetation, remove invasive species, and improve habitat. These efforts help reduce stormwater runoff, filter pollutants, and protect the ecological health of local streams and Puget Sound. Green Tacoma Day provides residents with hands-on opportunities to care for the environment while contributing to long-term improvements in urban green space and water quality.

2025 participating organizations included: Pierce Conservation District, Tacoma Tree Foundation, Washington Conservation Corps, Metro Parks Tacoma, Port of Tacoma, Tahoma Bird Alliance, University of Washington Tacoma, Washington State University, Clover Park Technical College, South End Neighborhood Council, and Pierce County Parks.

2025 Program Metrics:

- Volunteers: 223
 - Volunteer hours: 505
 - Trees planted: 171
 - Shrubs planted: 193
 - Groundcovers planted: 340
 - Weeds removed: 6,050 sq ft
 - Trash collected: 3,290 gallons
 - Recycling collected: 1 gallon
 - Mulch applied: 6,857 sq ft
 - Trees given away: 197
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Depave Program

Tacoma staff work with Pierce Conservation District to coordinate Depave events, which involve removing hard surfaces like concrete and asphalt from public locations throughout the city. These projects aim to reduce impervious surfaces, improve stormwater infiltration, and increase green space. Residents nominate potential Depave sites, and if selected, the City provides trees, plants, TAGRO, and support for asphalt and concrete removal. Community members then work alongside the City and Pierce Conservation District to install the vegetation, gaining hands-on experience in green infrastructure and stormwater management. Residents also commit to maintaining the site long term, fostering a sense of ownership and environmental stewardship in their neighborhoods.

2025 Program Metrics:

- Total square footage depaved: 2,554 sq ft
 - Number of projects completed: 4
 - Types of surfaces removed: concrete, asphalt, compacted gravel
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Pet Waste Program

The City of Tacoma's Pet Waste Station Program offers community members a hands-on opportunity to address pet waste issues in their neighborhoods. Residents identify areas where pet waste is a concern and request a station to support cleaner, healthier public spaces. If approved, the City installs a pet waste station, provides an educational sign, and supplies waste bags at no cost to the resident. In return, the sponsor commits to maintaining the station by emptying the waste basket and refilling bags using City-provided supplies. This program fosters long-term community stewardship by empowering residents to actively reduce stormwater pollution from pet waste and protect local waterways.

2025 Program Metrics:

- New volunteers: 5
 - New pet waste stations installed: 5
 - Total volunteers & Stations: 79
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Make A Splash Grant Program

The City of Tacoma partners with Pierce Conservation District to administer the Make a Splash grant program, which offers up to \$4,000 in reimbursement funding for community-led projects that promote stormwater education, surface water protection, and habitat restoration. This program directly supports public stewardship by empowering residents, schools, and community organizations to lead on-the-ground projects that improve watershed health and engage others in pollution prevention practices.

Grant applications are accepted each fall and awarded in January. Funded projects must include a clear stormwater pollution prevention message or demonstrate stormwater benefits. All proposals must align with at least one program goal: public education, surface water protection, or habitat restoration and tree planting.

2025 Program Metrics:

- Projects funded: 8
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Low Impact Development Rate Reduction Program

The Stormwater Utility offers a [Low Impact Development Surface Water Rate Reduction](#) incentive. Property owners may qualify for a rate reduction if they choose to install permanent low impact development or green stormwater features beyond permit requirements for new and redevelopment projects. Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) 12.08D.250 outlines the program requirements. To qualify for the program, the LID feature must manage a significant portion of the runoff from a hard surface like a roof or driveway. The LID feature must be designed per the Stormwater Management Manual standards, inspected by the City, and the property owner must submit an annual maintenance report to verify it continues to function properly.

Catch Basin Marking Program

Tacoma engages volunteers in the Catch Basin Marking Program to raise awareness about stormwater pollution. Catch basin markers serve as a visible reminder that only rain should go down storm drains, helping to prevent pollutants from entering local waterways.

Storm drain marking events are conducted in collaboration with the Environmental Programs Group (EPG) and EnviroChallengers, engaging college, trade school, and high school students. These events take place through the Environmental Services High School Summer Training Program, Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) workforce training, Next Move Internships, and other workforce development initiatives. Participants gain hands-on experience in environmental stewardship while learning about stormwater management and pollution prevention. The EPG provides marking supplies.

Neighborhood Greening programs

The City of Tacoma provides and promotes stewardship opportunities that support watershed habitat improvement, urban forestry, and community-based environmental education. These programs encourage active participation from residents and businesses through tree planting, training, and volunteer events.

In partnership with the Tacoma Tree Foundation and Pierce Conservation District, Tacoma offers multiple urban forestry programs focused on increasing tree canopy including:

- **Grit City Trees:** Free street trees, planting supplies, and assistance.
- **Green Blocks:** Group-based neighborhood plantings with support.
- **Community Tree Program:** Equity-focused tree giveaways and education.
- **Urban Tree Sale:** Discounted trees with training for long-term care.
- **Tree Coupon Program:** Tree discounts at local nurseries.

2025 Program Metrics:

Overall Impact

- Trees distributed: 1,860
- Participating households: 793
- Outreach events: 13
- Residents trained: 22
- Volunteers engaged: 178

Tree Distribution by Program

- Grit City: 71
- Tree Coupon (2024–2025): 1,372
- Green Blocks: 303
- Branch Out: 114

Participating Households by Program

- Grit City: 21
- Tree Coupon (2024–2025): 595
- Green Blocks: 114
- Branch Out: 57

Tidy-up Tacoma Litter Clean-up Programs

Environmental Services, Solid Waste Management manages both the Adopt-a-Spot and Neighborhood Litter Patrol programs, which provide residents with opportunities to take an active role in keeping public spaces clean and reducing stormwater pollution. Community volunteers apply to adopt a location or host a one-time litter clean-up event. By removing trash from streets, sidewalks, and parks, these programs help prevent litter from entering the stormwater system and impacting local waterways.

Volunteers are provided with free safety gear and litter collection supplies. Solid Waste Management also offers collection services for bagged trash following clean-up events. These programs support long-term community stewardship and promote shared responsibility for maintaining clean, healthy neighborhoods and watersheds.

2025 Program Metrics:

- Volunteers enrolled in Adopt-a-Spot: 145
- Volunteers enrolled in the Neighborhood Litter Patrol program: 42

Tacoma Green Resilience Opportunity Corp (TGROC)

The Tacoma Green Resilience Opportunity Corps is an eight-week paid workforce development program for young adults (ages 18–26) focused on green stormwater infrastructure, watershed protection, and sustainable land management. The program is delivered through a regional partnership between Environmental Services, Pierce Conservation District, Clover Park Technical College, The Nature Conservancy, and Palmer Scholars, with two cohorts graduating each year.

Participants receive a blend of classroom instruction and fieldwork led by stormwater and environmental professionals. Each cohort engages in a minimum of one major stewardship activity, which may include:

- Tree planting to expand the urban canopy, increase interception, and reduce stormwater runoff
- Building rain gardens to improve infiltration and reduce pollutant loads
- Participating in Depave projects to remove pavement and restore pervious surfaces
- Constructing or installing cisterns to capture and manage roof runoff
- Hands-on GSI maintenance, including bioretention care, vegetation management, and BMP inspections
- Habitat restoration activities such as invasive plant removal and native plant installation

In addition, students interact with a wide range of ES and partner-organization professionals, including engineers, regulatory staff, stormwater monitoring sample crew, GSI maintenance crews, source control inspectors, and natural systems specialists. These activities build technical skills while strengthening stewardship behaviors that protect water quality and watershed health.

TGROC helps develop Tacoma’s future environmental workforce while providing direct, measurable benefits to the City’s stormwater system and community green infrastructure network.

2025 Program Metrics:

- Cohorts: 2
- Graduates: 15