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## **Parking as if Mother Nature Designed It**

### **Sunset Swim Center parking lot eliminates runoff.**

Urban streams throughout the country suffer from the effects of development. With every storm, stormwater runoff rushes off of rooftops and pavement, and is piped to the nearest creek through storm sewers. Runoff carries pollution from the streets and landscape, and seriously erodes stream banks and causes flooding. In the Tualatin Basin, parking lots cover 5000 acres and are a significant source of runoff.

What if Mother Nature designed a parking lot? When rain falls on a forest, there is no surface runoff. Trees and shrubs intercept rain and enable it to evaporate before it hits the ground. Rich, organic soil formed by falling leaves acts like a sponge and absorbs rain. Tree roots penetrate clay soils and allow water to infiltrate into the groundwater system. A parking lot that acted like a forest would produce no runoff.

THPRD Sunset Swim Center has a new parking lot that produces no stormwater runoff.

Using funds from the 2008 bond measure, Tualatin Hills Parks & Recreation District has been remodeling the Sunset Swim Center. As part of that project, they installed a porous concrete parking lot that allows rainwater to pass through it and soak into the ground.

As an additional green infrastructure demonstration, Tualatin Riverkeepers secured funding from a DEQ Grant to use trees in parking lots to manage stormwater. Usually parking lots are built on heavily compacted soils, a harsh environment for trees, but new technologies are changing that. At Sunset Swim Center, contractors constructed linear tree wells using engineered “structural soil” that supports the weight of pavement and vehicles, but allows tree roots to grow and water to infiltrate. Structural soil is a mix of large gravel, soil and other beneficial amendments. Using the structural soil allowed the addition of the trees to the parking lot **without losing any parking spaces.**

A grant from the J. Frank Schmidt Foundation paid for the trees for these linear tree wells.

Design and construction partners on the parking lot project include

- Green Girl Land Development Solutions
- 3J Consulting - Civil Engineers
- Alder Geotechnical
- D&T Excavation, Inc.
- Todd Prager & Associates – Consulting Arborist
- Evolution Paving Resources

Tualatin Riverkeepers hopes that this parking lot that produces no runoff becomes the standard for parking lots. For more info about this project and our other demonstration on the PCC Sylvania Campus, go to <http://www.parkingforest.org/>

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*Tualatin Riverkeepers (TRK) is a nonprofit organization working to protect and restore Oregon's Tualatin River System. Tualatin Riverkeepers builds watershed stewardship through education, access to nature, volunteerism and advocacy. Tualatin Riverkeepers is based in Tualatin, Oregon. Website: [tualatinriverkeepers.org](http://tualatinriverkeepers.org)*