

Interchurch Center, Suite B ■ 0245 SW Bancroft Street ■ Portland, Oregon 97239  
*phone* (503) 221-1054 ■ *fax* (503) 223-7007 ■ *Web site* [www.emoregon.org](http://www.emoregon.org)

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE:** Aug. 2, 2012

**CONTACT:**

Jenny Holmes, EMO Environmental Ministries director  
(503) 221-1054, ext 214, [jholmes@emoregon.org](mailto:jholmes@emoregon.org)

## **New website promotes watershed and wildlife projects on congregation land**

A new website launched today by Congregations Caring for Watersheds and Wildlife (C2W2) helps congregations and religious schools to pursue projects to protect the environment. The website, [www.watershedsandwildlife.org](http://www.watershedsandwildlife.org), hosts a project handbook, forum and case studies for faith communities.

As our suburban and urban areas become denser, congregations can provide the space for nature in our lives—which is vital to our mental and physical health. Such spaces create healthier, more resilient ecosystems and cleaner water. The C2W2 program was created to help congregations in the Portland metro area and beyond utilize land for water and wildlife habitat enhancement, while also benefiting spiritual and educational life. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns (INEC) and the Southwest Watershed Resource Center, with support from West and East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation Districts (EMSCD), collaborated on the program.

The handbook, available on the website, provides a step-by-step guide through the process of creating a watershed or wildlife habitat project on congregation land.

The new website will help congregations to discover their faith traditions' environmental ethics, and to put these in practice with concrete project ideas, organizing practices and resources for everything from tools to volunteers. While focused on the Portland metro area and watersheds west of the Cascades, most parts of the handbook are intentionally applicable to groups anywhere.

The website also contains an interactive forum for congregations to share experiences and ask questions, as well as case studies of congregations in the area that have successfully pursued projects at their location.

One such congregation is Hillsdale United Church of Christ. This church has removed invasive species on the property and replaced them with native plants, which creates food and habitat for local wildlife, holds topsoil in place and thereby protects water quality. This work builds on that of many of

#### MEMBER DENOMINATIONS

African Methodist Episcopal Church ■ African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church ■ American Baptist Churches ■ Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Christian Methodist Episcopal Church ■ Church of the Brethren  
Community of Christ ■ Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon ■ Episcopal Diocese of Oregon ■ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ■ Greek Orthodox Church ■ Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) ■ Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland ■ United Church of Christ ■ United Methodist Church ■ Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

their neighbors, creating a habitat corridor in the area. Improving connectivity of habitats is a major goal of urban ecologists.

Recent funding from the East and West Soil and Water Conservation Districts is allowing INEC to pursue relationships with local congregations, particularly low income or minority groups that often do not have access to quality outdoor space, in order to build restoration projects. INEC is currently seeking out congregations to support through the planning, organizing and action phases. Staff can provide time, other resources in addition to the handbook, and connections with outside organizations. INEC can also set up a mentor relationship for a group just starting a project with a congregation already pursuing a similar one.

Congregations are often concerned about the upkeep of such projects, but partnerships with local organizations, watershed groups and neighbors can provide sustainable support for many years. Watershed restoration and wildlife habitat can also reduce the time and cost associated with lawn care as well as reducing sewer and water charges.

*Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's (EMO) Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns connects, inspires, informs and empowers people, congregations and religious institutions to work for justice and the care and renewal of the earth. EMO is a statewide association of Christian denominations—including Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox bodies—congregations, ecumenical organizations and interfaith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through community ministry programs, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, environmental ministry and public policy advocacy.*