

ANALYSIS

Higher Education Coordinating Commission Equitable Water Access Investment

Analyst: Kim To

Request: Acknowledge the receipt of a report on an investment made to increase equitable water access in Oregon.

Analysis: SB 5506 (2023) appropriated \$500,000 in one-time General Fund to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for distribution to the University of Oregon Just Futures Institute for Climate and Racial Justice to conduct research to understand and address water needs of environmental justice communities and to award grants. The Higher Education Coordinating Commission, in collaboration with the University of Oregon, provided its written report in response to the following budget note included in the budget report for SB 5506 (2023):

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission, in collaboration with the University of Oregon, shall submit a report on the use of funds related to equitable water access to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means and any committee of the Legislature working on water-related issues during the 2025 legislative session.

The Just Futures Institute used the \$500,000 equitable water access investment to support the Community Water Justice Award program. The report submitted by the Institute, which has merged with the Climate Solutions Center as of January 1, 2025, includes a rationale for the purpose of the Community Water Justice Award program, a description of funding priorities and selection process for the awards, a list of grantees, and copies of midterm reports received from the awardees.

Because water infrastructure investments have not benefited communities equally, the Community Water Justice Awards funded research, capacity building, outreach, stewardship, and local education led by organizations supporting environmental justice communities. An environmental justice community is a geographic area (For example: neighborhoods near industrial facilities or contaminated lakes, rivers, and streams; remote/rural/frontier/coastal regions) where communities experience a disproportionate burden of environmental hazards and reduced quality of life relative to comparative communities due to factors such as drought conditions, contaminated drinking water, inadequate water infrastructure.

Awardees used grant funds to provide technical, policy, and legal assistance, including workforce development in water and environmental careers, stewardship of rivers and

floodplain, developing strategic plans and cultural restoration plans, organizing conferences to facilitate collaboration and inclusive approaches to land stewardship, drafting climate vulnerability assessment, and convening workshops focused on emergency preparedness.

A summary of the use of funds from the Just Futures Institute is detailed in the following table:

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
Just Futures Institute Payroll Expenses	36,154
Finance and Adminsitration Shared Services	11,409
Awards Selection Committee Stipend	2,000
Grant Awards	
Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians	50,000
Coalition of Communities of Color	50,000
Ethiopian and Eritrean Cultural & Resource Center	50,000
Friends of Tryon Creek State Park	50,000
Future Generations Collaborative	50,000
Long Tom Watershed Council	50,000
Necanicum Watershed Council	50,000
Portland Harbor Community Coalition	50,000
Portland State University	9,000
Rios to Rivers	28,125
Verde	30,000
Willamette Partnership	5,000
	\$ 521,688 *

*The amount exceeds the \$500,000 allocation because the Just Futures Institute used funds from another source to supplement state support for the Community Water Justice Award program.

Recommendation: The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends acknowledging receipt of the report.

Higher Education Coordinating Commission Chase

Request: Report on the Higher Education Coordinating Commission and University of Oregon use of funds related to equitable water access.

Recommendation: Acknowledge receipt of the report.

Discussion: Pursuant to a budget note included in the budget report for Senate Bill 5506 (2023), the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), in collaboration with the University of Oregon (UO), is required to submit a report on the use of funds related to equitable water access to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, and any committee of the Legislature working on water-related issues, during the 2025 Legislative Session.

In 2023, the Legislative Assembly approved a one-time \$100,000 General Fund appropriation for HECC to distribute to the Oregon State University Institute of Natural Resources to convene a statewide water conference to facilitate learning and relationship-building between sectors, identify research needs, and develop a statewide research and learning agenda. An additional one-time General Fund appropriation of \$500,000 was included for the UO Just Futures Institute to:

- Conduct research to understand and address water needs of environmental justice communities.
- Provide grants to community-based organizations, tribes, and other entities to build capacity to engage in water related work and projects.

The UO Just Futures Institute for Racial and Climate Justice established the Community Water Justice Award (CWJA) Program within the UO Climate Solutions Center. The CWJA Program provides grants to environmental justice communities (e.g., Tribes, Tribal organizations, community-based organizations), which support the following priorities:

- Funding positions to provide water education; learn about water law and policy; lead water stewardship activities; and develop better, equitable, and accessible emergency response systems.
- Investing in water stewardship and policy education that is designed by or co-designed with environmental justice communities.
- Investing in culturally sensitive communication and outreach specialists who can work with environmental justice communities, and provide technical, policy, and legal assistance to the efforts above.
- Investing in environmental justice communities to provide capacity building, including workforce development in water and environmental careers.

CWJA grants have been awarded to nine organizations to fund a variety of eligible projects. The UO report highlights the different projects using data provided by grantees from their midterm reports.



2024

Water Equity Fund Community Water Justice Awards

Midterm Report to the Legislature
December 2024

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Executive Summary

Senate Bill 5506 (SB 5506), passed in the 2023 Regular Session by the Joint Subcommittee on Capital Construction, created the Oregon Water Equity Fund, allocating \$500,000 “for distribution to the University of Oregon Just Futures Institute to conduct research to understand and address water needs of environmental justice communities and to award grants.”

SB 5506 also directed that “the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, in collaboration with the University of Oregon, shall submit a report on the use of funds related to equitable water access to the Joint Committees on Ways and Means and any committee of the Legislature working on water-related issues during the 2025 legislative session.”

Pursuant to SB 5506 and in keeping with a commitment to effective and transparent storytelling, the University of Oregon (UO) Just Futures Institute for Racial and Climate Justice (JFI) submits this report to share information regarding the Community Water Justice Award program made possible through SB 5506. This state budget allocation has been placed and managed within the Climate Solutions Center at University of Oregon. JFI will officially merge with the Climate Solutions Center as of January 1st, 2025.

The remainder of this midterm report provides the Award Narrative—information about the purpose of the Community Water Justice Award program and the related selection process—and copies of midterm reports received from the awardees.

Please contact Dr. Alai Reyes-Santos, University of Oregon, at alai@uoregon.edu or (503) 269-0498, with any questions, concerns, or ideas.

Background—Award Narrative

2024 Community Water Justice Awards: Narrative & Criteria

Why this award?

- Water infrastructure investments have not benefited communities equally.
- Under-investment, environmental degradation, environmental racism, toxic pollution, and displacement disproportionately impact environmental justice communities, such as Tribes, communities of color, low-income communities, and rural communities¹.
- Research, policy making, capacity building, and educational, outreach, water stewardship, and community initiatives must engage the voices, knowledge, and experience of those most impacted to address continuing harm.

What is the opportunity?

- Community capacity and social infrastructure is just as critical as built infrastructure.
- Investments in the water sector need to include funds for: research, capacity building, outreach, stewardship, and local education led by environmental justice communities.

¹ See House Bill 4077, passed in the 2022 Regular Session, for the Oregon Legislature’s definition of “environmental justice communities.” (<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2022R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB4077>)

- This funding opportunity is made possible by community-led advocacy.
- Senate Bill 5506 (SB 5506), passed in the 2023 Regular Session by the Joint Subcommittee on Capital Construction, created the fund for these awards “for distribution to the University of Oregon Just Futures Institute² to conduct research to understand and address water needs of environmental justice communities and to award grants. The Higher Education Coordinating Commission, in collaboration with the University of Oregon, shall submit a report on the use of funds related to equitable water access to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means and any committee of the Legislature working on water-related issues during the 2025 legislative session.”

What do the awards fund and what are the funding priorities?

- Funding water positions in environmental justice communities, such as Tribes, Tribal organizations, and community-based organizations that serve environmental justice communities to provide water education, learn about water law and policy, and develop better, equitable, and accessible emergency response systems.
- Funding water positions in environmental justice communities, such as Tribes, Tribal organizations, and community-based organizations that serve environmental justice communities to lead water stewardship activities.
- Investing in water stewardship and policy education that is designed by or co-designed with environmental justice

² This state budget allocation has been placed and managed within the Climate Solutions Center at University of Oregon. JFI will officially merge with the Climate Solutions Center as of January 1st, 2025.

communities, such as Tribes, Tribal organizations, or community-based organizations that serve environmental justice communities.

- Investing in culturally sensitive communication and outreach specialists who can work with environmental justice communities, and provide technical, policy, and legal assistance to the efforts above.
- Investing in environmental justice communities, such as Tribes, Tribal organizations, and community-based organizations that serve environmental justice communities to provide capacity building, including workforce development in water and environmental careers.

Evaluation criteria of applications³:

1. Proposal goals and plans are clear.
2. Proposal addresses at least one of the funding priorities described in the award narrative.
3. Proposal clearly states impacts for environmental justice communities and their water justice goals.
4. Environmental justice communities or those historically underrepresented and/or underserved in water advocacy, funding for water stewardship, and/or water governance lead or co-lead the project.

³ All applications were evaluated by an impartial three-person committee, including two representatives of community-based organizations that did not apply for funding and one University of Oregon researcher. Each committee member assessed each application. They evaluated applications against each evaluation criterion, assigning a numeric score (on a scale from one to ten, with ten being the lowest possible score) for each criterion. The 11 applications that received the lowest overall scores after all committee members' scores were aggregated were selected for funding. All committee members established whether applications fulfilled basic requirements or did not qualify at all before discussing and aggregating scores.

Midterm Awardee Reports

7 Waters Canoe Family

From September 3rd to September 8th, 2024, 7 Waters Canoe Family traveled with six adults and six youth to Wallowa Valley in Northeast Oregon—traditional Nez Perce Territory. Participants stayed, ate meals, and worked as a team on the Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland property, located on the Wallowa River. Much of the work was done on the “side channel,” a project completed a few years ago. The side channel offers fish additional habitat that connects to the Wallowa River and, in times of high water, offers smolt a safer place from fast water and predators. In the formation of this channel, many plants were added to shore up the banks with the root structure of plants including willow and cattail. 7 Waters added additional plants where needed and pulled invasive weeds, re-establishing the health of the floodplain. As they finished up work for the day, participants took trips to paddle Wallowa Lake, swim, fish, and enjoy the land and water. Throughout the workweek, the kids participated and learned about the history of the area, the health of the water, and the relationship Native people have to that environmental health, making the connection to their ongoing work. 7 Waters’ goal is to continue this work annually to steward and monitor the biology and witness the positive change that undoing settler paradigms brings.

Restoration
September 2024

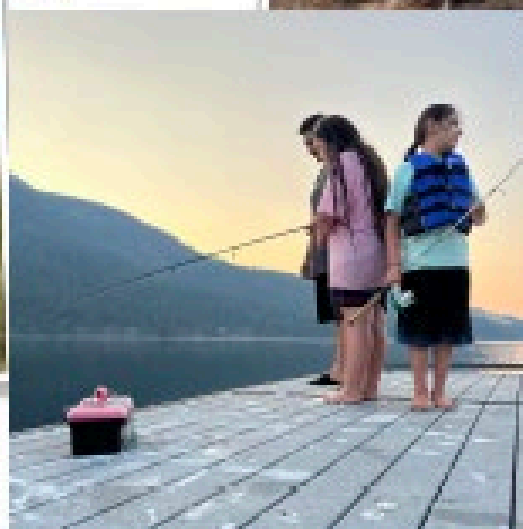
7 Waters- Restoration



A visit to Hurricane Creek



Pulling Invasive Weeds!



Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians / Changing Currents

Reporting Organization: Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) (Changing Currents)

Program Director: Direlle Calica, JD

Email: dcalica@atnitribes.org

Organization Website: <https://www.changingcurrents.net/>

Address: P.O. Box 66209, Portland, OR 97290 | 407 NE 12th Avenue, Portland, OR 97232

Population served with the project or proposal: Tribal communities and youth in Oregon and the footprint of the 57 ATNI member Tribes

Water Justice Principle: Indigenous Water Justice Leadership

Award Amount: \$50,000

Activities to date: Funds have been used to go towards two Indigenous Water Justice Leadership positions within ATNI's nonprofit team. This has been implemented through a service contract with Karim Associates, LLC. These positions serve as "Community Outreach Coordinators" for internal and external outreach and communications. Their duties have included constructing a 5-year strategic plan for Changing Currents and ATNI's water program. This includes developing a partnership and key contacts database, with a list of nonprofit partners, past

Summit participants and Summit speakers, youth alumni, government partners, and other intertribal organizations.

The Changing Currents program has two young professionals who have part-time employment in addition to their part-time employment with Changing Currents. 0.75 FTE is split between these two professionals as two .37 FTE appointments. One position is in charge of running the Tribal Water Summit Advisory Team Meetings and internal communications for ATNI work related to water. The other handles the development of the water and natural resource partnership database and communications protocols. Both are working together to develop an overall system and structure for the program to maintain relationships with ATNI's nonprofit and community partners to continue putting on the annual Summit and to expand the program.

The following are activities that Community Outreach Coordinators have participated in thus far:

- 2024 ATNI Mid-Year Convention at Seven Feathers in Canyonville, Oregon: One coordinator was an attendee at the conference and conducted outreach and networking.
- 2024 National United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY) Convention: One Coordinator served on the local UNITY planning committee and developed outreach and connections with local government and nonprofit organizations. One Coordinator developed a Tribal youth education workshop for the convention and this was attended by over 60 Tribal youth from across the country. Both coordinators tabled and stewarded an information booth at the UNITY Education, Career, and Vendor Exhibition.

- 2024 Changing Currents Tribal Water Summit: Both Coordinators served as a part of the Advisory Team and participated in the summit planning process. They both participated in outreach and networking before, during, and after the summit. A key item both worked on was developed a database of contacts from previous summits and the current year summit in coordination with ATNI staff. Both Coordinators worked closely with our website development team, virtual storymap development team, and our video storytelling team. These products are available on the newly redesigned website at <https://www.changingcurrents.net/>.
- 2024 ATNI Annual Convention at Ilani in Ridgefield, Washington: One Coordinator participated in the convention as an attendee.
- Upcoming activity: Both Coordinators will be participating in the ATNI Natural Resources Summit at Tulalip Casino Resort in Marysville, Washington.

WEBSITE RELAUNCH

- New landing page
- Added tabs for Education, Policy, and Donation
- The Education tab has lesson plans, storymap, and "top 5 things to know about water"
- Created 3 new youth produced videos.
- Newsletter page to build our network



WATER SUMMIT

Youth Panel
Youth in Canoe
Keynot Speaker



UNITY CONFERENCE



Coalition of Communities of Color

Throughout the grant period, the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC) has focused on strengthening the water justice movement across Oregon, especially in the Portland metro area. CCC has consistently convened the Oregon Water Justice Network, which has seen a rise in attendance in recent months, including contributions from members of the Oregon Water Justice Leadership Institute who shared their final projects with the network, enriching the discussions. This space remains a hub for learning about water justice advocacy across Oregon and opportunities for engagement in statewide legislative processes. In addition to statewide efforts, CCC has brought together water justice advocates in the Portland area, hosting a gathering at the end of summer 2024 to foster connections, share updates, and brainstorm collaborative approaches to advance local water justice goals. A second gathering is planned for the fall to continue these discussions and outline actionable goals for the coming months. In September, CCC and Verde presented the work of the Oregon Water Futures Collaborative at the Environmental Grantmakers Association's Annual Retreat, highlighting the role of storytelling in advocacy. Participants shared personal water stories, painting with watercolors and water from the Columbia River, deepening the connection to place and to the movement.





Ethiopian and Eritrean Cultural and Resource Center

Project Manager: Lydia Moges

Project Duration: July 2024 to June 2025

Objective: The Ethiopian and Eritrean Cultural and Resource Center (EECRC) Water Justice Initiative aims to enhance community awareness and leadership in water justice through culturally appropriate workshops and initiatives. The project includes workshops, training sessions, and community engagement activities designed to empower individuals with knowledge and leadership skills in water conservation and justice.

Progress Report:

On September 4, 2024, the Environmental Department of the EECRC successfully held its first Water Justice workshop. Although the project experienced initial delays due to staff transitions, the new hire quickly restored momentum. The workshop attracted 23 participants, exceeding the expected turnout of 15. Among the attendees were four volunteers who assisted with setup and breakdown. Participants represented a diverse range of ages and backgrounds, with languages spoken including Amharic, Tigrinya, and Oromo.

To assess the workshop's impact, pre- and post-surveys were administered to measure participants' knowledge of water-related issues and conservation practices. This evaluation approach helped organizers gauge the effectiveness of the workshop and track improvements in participants' understanding. The project

remains committed to raising awareness and fostering leadership in water justice while measuring tangible results.

Participant Feedback:

In response to the question, “What do you know about water and water justice?”, participants shared the following insights:

- “Plastic water bottles should not be reused because plastic contaminates water.”
- “We’ve been advised against drinking tap water due to its dirtiness.”
- “Water access here is better than in our home country.”
- “The taste of water varies, but quality should remain consistent.”
- “Shower water is said to cause baldness, indicating a need for fewer chemicals.”
- “Water is life.”

Workshop Content:

The workshop addressed topics such as:

- The history and sources of water
- Water justice and its importance
- Water preservation practices
- Disparities in water access and quality

One interactive session involved testing water from different sources to ensure compliance with Environmental Protection Agency regulations. All four tested sources met the required standards. Participants also received resources to test the quality of their water at home.

Next Steps:

The EECRC will continue to raise awareness, particularly among marginalized low-income families. A second workshop focused on Emergency Preparedness has been scheduled. Additionally, three out of four interested participants were recruited to be trained as Water Justice Ambassadors, with the goal of empowering future community leaders. As the project progresses, EECRC expects increased interest and participation in the Water Justice Ambassador program as more community members become educated on the significance of water justice.



Friends of Tryon Creek

Friends of Tryon Creek aims to restore the Tryon Creek State Natural Area (TCSNA) and its riparian zones to ecological balance through Indigenous land management methods. As the first step in this multi-year restoration project, Friends of Tryon Creek will develop a Cultural Restoration Plan to direct and prioritize restoration efforts within TCSNA. Executive Director Gabe Sheoships (Cayuse and Walla Walla) began leading this effort over the past few years and has now hired Restoration Program Coordinator Nanda Ramos to lead this effort moving forward. Friends of Tryon Creek is honored to be collaborating with Dr. Kari Marie Norgaard, a Professor of Sociology and Environmental Studies at the University of Oregon, to create a Climate Vulnerability Assessment for this project.

Dr. Norgaard lives, thinks, and learns on the unceded lands of Kalapuya Ilihi. She is a distinguished author with over three dozen articles and book chapters in environmental sociology, climate change, Indigenous environmental justice, and more. Her publications include *Salmon and Acorns Feed our People: Nature, Colonialism, and Social Action* (2019) and *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life* (2011). Dr. Norgaard has served as Chair of the American Sociological Association's (ASA) Section on Environmental Sociology and was a founding member of the ASA's Section on Indigenous Peoples and Native Nations. Since 2003, she has consulted with the Karuk Tribe on Tribal environmental policy, contributing to their Climate Adaptation Plan (2019) and Transportation Adaptation Plan (2021). As a dedicated settler scholar, she commits her intellectual energy to advancing Indigenous eco-cultural revitalization in this time of ecological crisis.

In the past quarter, Friends of Tryon Creek has made significant progress in reviving traditional Indigenous land management

practices to restore habitat and biodiversity in areas traditionally inhabited by various Tribes. Through the support of Friends of Tryon Creek's Restoration Program and award funds, the organization has worked with Indigenous Advisors and Dr. Kari Norgaard to produce a draft Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA), a critical first step in climate adaptation planning. The CVA, now nearing completion at 90 pages and seven chapters, blends cultural knowledge with Western science to support sustainable land management.

The CVA's chapters include:

- I. Ecocultural Context
- II. Climate Trends
- III. Vulnerabilities in Riverine and Riparian Systems
- IV. Vulnerabilities to Forest Systems
- V. Social and Cultural Vulnerabilities
- VI. Changing Patterns of Fire Behavior
- VII. Organizational and Institutional Vulnerabilities

The assessment incorporates insights from 45 knowledge holders (including Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge holders) and a public survey with 300 participants. Friends of Tryon Creek has been able to work with Kirsten Vinyeta, a Professor of Environmental Sociology, to create illustrations to showcase the future of Tryon Creek with Indigenous-led practices. Kirsten's research lends a hand to her illustration, as she examines the social and political dimensions of land and fire management, federal-Tribal relations, climate vulnerability and resilience, and multispecies dimensions of human social systems.


The Friends of Tryon Creek team continues to engage local Native communities through collaborative meeting, hosting partnership meetings to share about the organization's work and gain valuable input. This Indigenous-led planning process is

setting a precedent for water justice in Oregon, and Friends of Tryon Creek is committed to advancing this innovative, inclusive approach to land stewardship.



2024 INDIGENOUS LAND CONSERVATION SUMMIT

 DATE: OCTOBER 14TH, 2024

 TIME: 8:30AM - 5PM

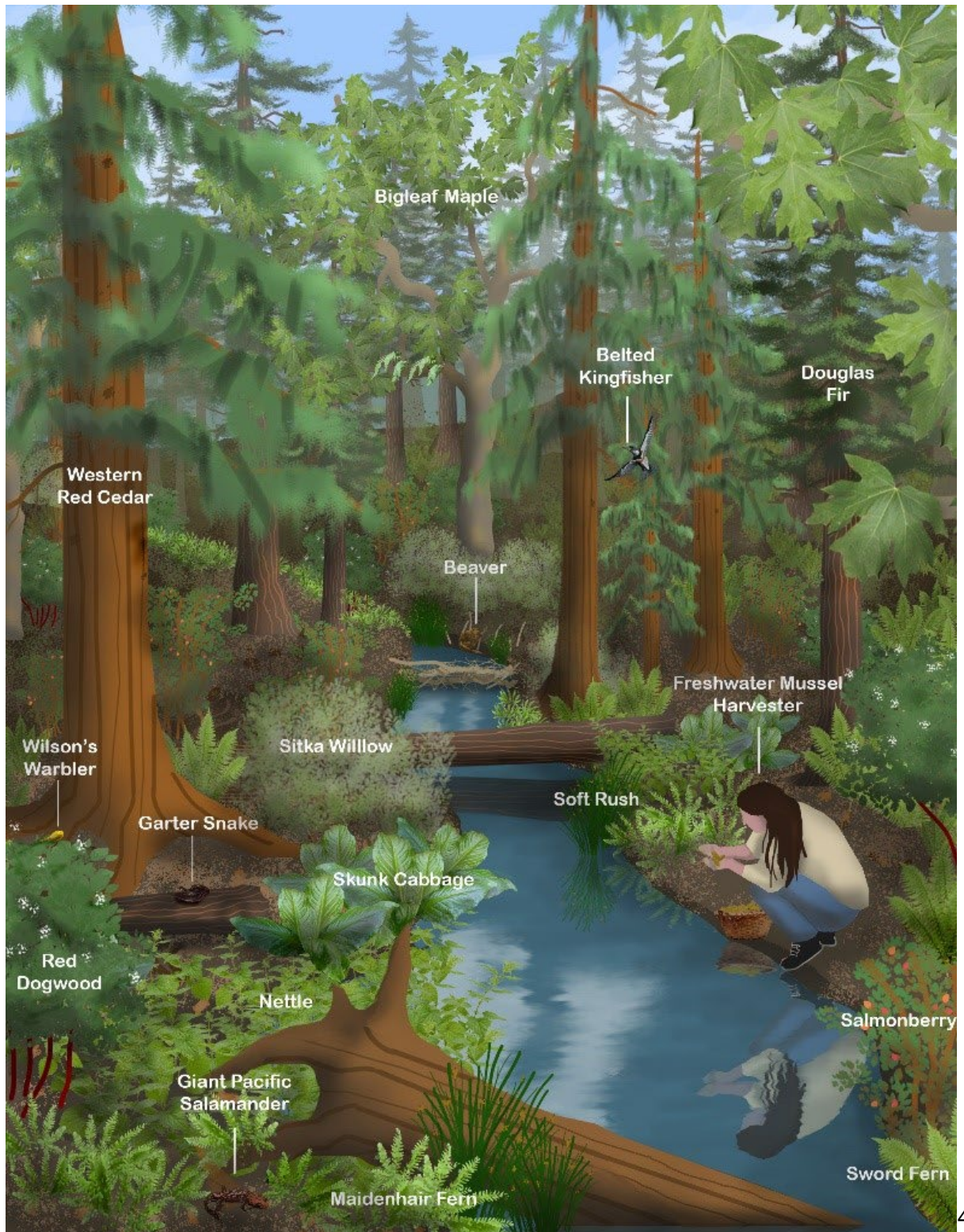
TIME	TOPIC	DETAILS
8:30 AM	Breakfast & Informal Introductions	Light breakfast, welcoming and networking
9:05 AM	Welcome & Opening	Hosts Gabe Sheoships (<i>Cayuse</i>), Friends of Tryon Creek Executive Director and Anna-Liza Victory (<i>Cherokee</i>), Coalition of Land Trusts, Project Manager
9:30 AM	The Relational Worldview and the Environment	Opening Keynote with Dr. Terry Cross (<i>Seneca</i>), Founder of NICWA
10:25 AM	1st Panel: Friends of Tryon Creek Cultural Restoration Planning	Dr. Kari Norgaard , Professor of Sociology at University of Oregon, Nanda Ramos , Friends of Tryon Creek Restoration Program Coordinator & Gabe Sheoships
11:25 AM	Break and Gather for a Hike	Hike lead by Joseph Pearson , Friends of Tryon Creek Nature Day Camp Lead
12:05 PM	Lunch, Open Mic, & Group Photo	Salmon Bake prepared by Clifton Bruno (<i>Wasco</i>) & Christine Bruno (<i>Comanche</i>), catered lunch. Social time with group photo
1:05 PM	2nd Panel: Funding & Fundraising	Stone Hudson (<i>Three Affiliated Tribes</i>) Meyer Memorial Trust & Carlos Garcia , Oregon Community Foundation, facilitated by Betty Bryant , Friends of Tryon Creek Education Coordinator
2:00 PM	3rd Panel: Workforce Development	Lili Yazzie (<i>Diné</i>) Friends of Tryon Creek Green Leaders Coordinator, Wayne & Feather Miller , and Philip Holiday (<i>Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs</i>) Warm Springs Youth Council and Thomas Stokely , The Nature Conservancy
2:55 PM	Open Mic: Shared Projects & Thoughts	Lili Yazzie (<i>Diné</i>) will facilitate a Q&A
3:40 PM	Closing Plenary	Lisa Watt (<i>Seneca</i>), Interim Executive Director of Magic Canoe
4:25 PM	Land Summit Comes to an End	Thank you all for coming, and see you again!











⁴ Illustration by Kirsten Vinyeta: Future riparian zone, with culturally specific plants and animals, and with humans' part of the ecosystem tending the land

Long Tom Watershed Council / Traditional Ecological Inquiry Program

Cultural Fire Exchange (CFEX)

From April 19th to 21st of 2024, with provided funding, the Traditional Ecological Inquiry Program (TEIP) led the first Cultural Fire Exchange (CFEX) training at the Siskiyou Field Institute in Selma, Oregon. This took place in the traditional homelands of the Takelma Band of the Rogue River Indians. During the violent removal of Indigenous people in Oregon, the traditional caretakers of this land were forced north onto a reservation and to join the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.

Returning fire to this landscape was a critical step in eco-cultural restoration and an unforgettable experience. This was a multi-generational, inter-Tribal event, collaborating Tribal partners, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations.

Five practitioners and community members included Ron Goode, Tribal Chairman of the North Fork Mono Tribe and team, Siletz Tribal members, Grand Ronde Tribal members, and staff supporting our partners at the Willamette Valley Fire Collaboration (WVFC), Cultural Fire Management Council (CFMC), Oregon State University (OSU), Fire Generation Collaborative, Friends of Tryon Creek, Siskiyou Field Institute, and members of the Wagon Burners Indigenous fire crew.

Indigenous Hands Tending Indigenous Lands:

Good fire is an intergenerational practice — healing landscapes and communities.



His name is Hoxie. His great-great-great grandfather, Hoxie Simmons, walked this terrain as a child, learning how to be in a world shaped by the Human People here, working with an abundant landscape, and tending with fire. Among the first of his memories will be the smell of smoky oak leaves, eyes bright with fire, and the laughter of his brother — all from the firm and gentle embrace of her Gaa-yu, his woven hazel cradle basket, a gift passed down and built of the skills of his ancestors. Good fire brought us all together here in this overgrown meadow, littered with leaves and tangled in brush. This meadow along the Illinois River is at the center of the ancestral home of the Takelma Band of Rogue River Indians. Seven generations after removal, descendants of this fire-adapted culture have returned to tend this neglected place.

Low fires in the leaves and grass, and high flaming piles take years of neglect and reduce them to rich ash and charcoal. People touch fire to the land, and it comes alive again. Bringing back balance — earth, air, water, and fire.

Enormous black oaks ring the meadows, gripped and hidden among firs and pines. These trees, a promise of nourishing acorns next fall, emerge from the shadows as sawyers free them, stretching and breathing, seeing sunshine for the first time in years. A new shadow emerges, casting down an oak-shaped circle, a place to rest and watch the work and the world go by. Under that tree, in that new shadow, on this day in spring, Hoxie looks out at the fire-cleaned landscape and winks and blinks his blessing.



Fire Practitioners Elizabeth of CFMC and Sara of WVFC



Sara of LTWC and her Partner Jerome, a Siletz Tribal Member



Meredith, one of our network volunteers, Talon of CFMC and Kyle of Fire Gen



Joe, our TEIP Director, Siletz Tribal member & Rouge River descendant, looks on as we complete an evening burn



Brooke and Amanita of TEIP with Hoxie and fire puppy



Brooke, Chantele, her son Hoxie and his Grandma Tanya

Impact:

In the world of eco-cultural fire, symbiosis is the star of the show. To achieve favorable outcomes, we cannot remove the land from the people as we cannot remove from the people from the land. Wildfire, overgrowth of invasive species, and disease in native trees have become undeniable issues all over the country, and this is especially evident in southern Oregon. Returning stewardship to Indigenous people and allowing good fire to be returned through collaborative events like CFEX is a step in healing.



Necanicum Watershed Council

The Necanicum Watershed Council (NWC) is grateful for the opportunity to provide a report on how the NWC and connected communities have benefitted from the awarded funds. NWC has made significant strides building and codifying shoulder-to-shoulder relationships with Tribal partners and Indigenous stewards of the Necanicum Basin. With support through the Community Water Justice Awards, NWC was able to hire a full-time Tribal Lands and Water Steward to act as a liaison with Tribal partners, increase NWC's capacity for communications, outreach, and planning, and elevate Tribal voices and knowledge in NWC's restoration work. Hugh Ahnatook, Inapuit, joined NWC's team early in the summer of 2024 and brings a wealth of knowledge, experience, and Indigenous relationships to the NWC staff team. In their short time with the organization, Hugh has assisted in education and outreach efforts to underserved communities (e.g., Días del Salmon event⁵) and served as a valuable liaison between NWC and Tribal partners. As just one example of their role in NWC's regular restoration work, the Tribal Lands and Water Steward has contributed significantly to the Middle Necanicum restoration project, bringing traditional ecological knowledge of holistic planting needs for the site restoration, and leading a community planting day on November 19th, 2024. Hugh has also obtained a group fishing permit for members of the Chinook Indian Nation and is pursuing multiple avenues to increase Indigenous and minority access to ethical and legal subsistence fishing practices. Most immediately, Hugh is pursuing programming to take Native youth fishing with traditional elders. With the additional capacity of this position, the Tribal Lands and

⁵ "Watershed Council partnership seeks to engage Latinx voices," *Daily Astorian* (October 28, 2024) — https://www.dailyastorian.com/news/local/watershed-council-partnership-seeks-to-engage-latinx-voices/article_f1f5a378-9264-11ef-b2c3-bb8c6fa6ac31.html

Water Steward has also begun to explore multi-cultural Spanish-language educational videos with Oregon and Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife to ensure state legal fishing regulations are accessible and culturally inclusive to all. NWC is grateful for the support that has tripled its staff capacity to pursue conservation practices and projects that center social justice and inclusivity at the heart of the work.



[View insights](#)

[Boost post](#)



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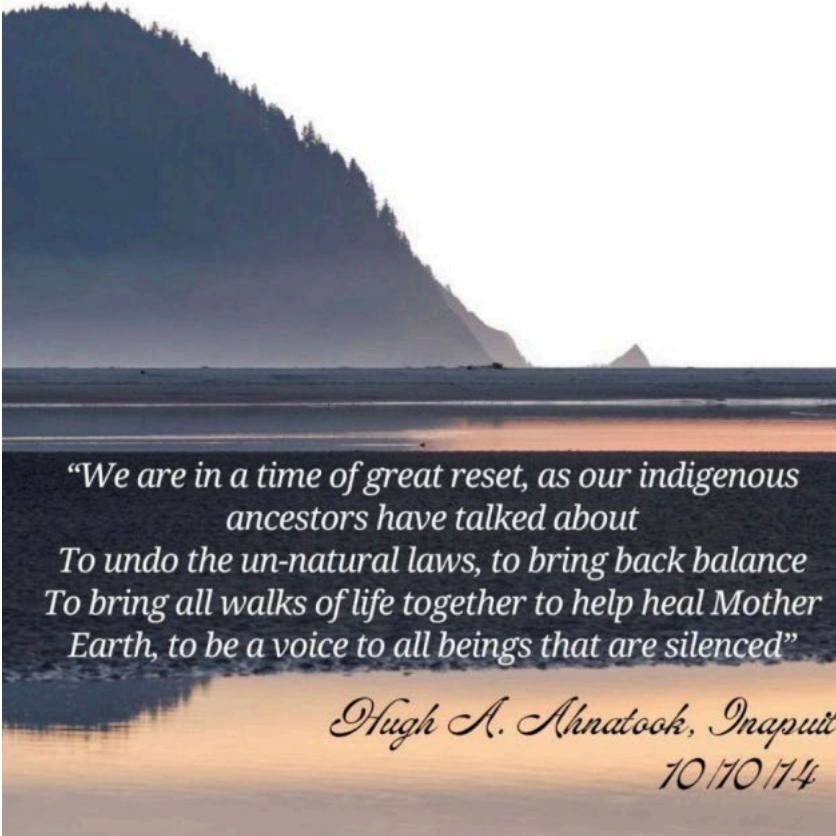


Liked by [consejohispano](#) and others

[necanicumwatershed](#) Over the last year, we've been working hard to develop programming with our very good friends [@consejohispano](#) to provide safe,




 **necanicumwatershed**
Seaside, Oregon





*"We are in a time of great reset, as our indigenous
ancestors have talked about
To undo the un-natural laws, to bring back balance
To bring all walks of life together to help heal Mother
Earth, to be a voice to all beings that are silenced"*


*Hugh A. Ahnatook, Inupiat
10/10/14*


[View insights](#)[Boost post](#)

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 23





Liked by donovanwargo74 and others

Portland Harbor Community Coalition

Purpose: Portland Harbor Community Coalition (PHCC) seeks to elevate the rights of impacted communities to restore and heal the lower Willamette River after a century of industrial contamination.

Key Objectives: PHCC aims to fight for clean water and fish access, develop a community-driven cumulative impacts assessment, and organize culturally sensitive events and workshops.

Legislative Efforts: PHCC advocates for legislation in 2025 to create career pathways for frontline communities in water restoration and remediation.

Community Engagement: PHCC supports food sovereignty and healthy fish access, raises awareness of river safety concerns, and involves impacted communities in decision-making and policy changes.

Activities: PHCC focuses on habitat restoration, equitable redevelopment, economic opportunity analysis, community-based research, and challenging superfund-based utility surcharges.

Key Objectives Updates:

Water Ceremony: Since receiving this award, PHCC hosted a 2024 Native and Indigenous-led Water Ceremony on September 8, 2024, to heal the river and waters. This was an all-day gathering of about 250 to 300 people, building on years of previous gatherings, and honoring ancestors. PHCC received tremendous volunteer support, coordination and planning from

community leaders, and incredible media coverage from the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRTFC), *Underscore Native News*, *Indian Country Times*, *Oregon Public Broadcasting*, etc.

Willamette Cove In-Water & Upland Designs: PHCC collaborated with Metro to circle back to diverse, BIPOC community leaders who had participated years prior in a Willamette Cove Train the Training, or who had intimate knowledge about Willamette Cove contamination and exposures to people, and conducted outreach to invite people to (1) attend the Willamette Cove Field Day and/or (2) complete an online survey⁶. PHCC successfully completed outreach, engaging and reaching people of color, people experiencing homelessness, and people with disabilities to weigh in on designs for a future nature park. Willamette Cover Regional Nature Park will ultimately be one of the only natural areas and human access points in the Lower Willamette stretch, where industry dominates.

CHIRP (Cumulative Health Impacts & Resilience Plan): PHCC has nearly secured committed funds from Health Effects Institute to leverage PHCC's Community Water Justice Award that will allow PHCC to provide compensation to community partners. PHCC has 17 frontline community organizations who have agreed to participate in the CHIRP during 2025 — committing to at least six planning meetings and two community forums where joint decision-making will occur to design the community-based research. 2026 will be when the community-based research and outreach will launch, and then lead into the resilience plan with action/implementation steps leading to systems changes addressing cumulative impacts through policies, infrastructure, and resource allocations.

⁶ PHCC's online survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6TPJ79G>

Legislation: Due to staff transitions, PHCC missed the deadline to do grassroots lobbying in order to secure a legislative champion for PHCC's proposed legislation and several conversations with the governor's office. PHCC did have several other conversations, including with a lawyer who happens to also work in the Legislature, to determine a path forward. PHCC will pursue two paths. (1) Resolution Northwest and the Governor have agreed to coalesce a group of stakeholders to coordinate Portland Harbor jobs/career pathways/community benefits along with other major infrastructure projects occurring in the same timeline and geographic area. PHCC will continue to encourage them to move quickly and to allow PHCC to help plan and make sure there is inclusion of community and labor stakeholders early on in the process. (2) PHCC will likely pursue legislation in the 2027 legislative session to create a statutory change to better define "community benefits" in the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) Prospective Purchaser agreements. This will help for sites along the river that are contaminated and in DEQ's registry, when prospective purchasers express interest in buying, to require more specific community-benefits standards, similar to terms of a community benefits agreement.

Verde

Verde continues to make significant strides in its community empowerment and water justice initiatives. Through its legislative advocacy efforts, Verde wrapped up the second cohort of the Water Justice Leadership Institute, engaging 16 participants from across the state. A Storytelling Day at the Oregon State Capitol is planned for December 10 through 12, providing a platform for community members and alumni to share their water justice stories with state representatives. Invitations will open in October, with a budget prepared for stipends, travel, and accommodations. Verde's Urban Habitat program also achieved meaningful progress, completing eight naturescape installations that transformed over 4,433 square feet of urban land and planted more than 400 native plants, providing hands-on learning for ten students from the Multnomah Youth Collaborative program. The team also conducted multiple follow-up monitoring and maintenance visits. The next season of activities, including work at three homeowner sites near Wilkes Creek Headwaters and another at the Native American Youth and Family Center, will involve nine Connecting Canopies interns. Verde's efforts, in partnership with the Columbia Slough Watershed Council, continue to enhance stormwater management and watershed health. The award funds will support these programs by covering costs for translation, travel, stipends, construction materials, native plants, and event-related expenses.