



Lower Columbia
Estuary Partnership
Celebrating 25 Years

YEAR IN REVIEW

2019-2020 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Dedicated to the Lower Columbia River
and its Communities



FOR 25 YEARS, the Estuary Partnership has been working and engaging with our communities on and around the lower Columbia River. But never in our history have we had to do so without being face-to-face with partners, volunteers, and students. In March when COVID-19 spread, we had to cancel all of our field trips and classroom visits, volunteer events, and Columbia River Estuary Conference. As we adjusted to a more remote style of work, our hearts went out to community members suffering from the pandemic and its consequences. The horrifying murder of George Floyd—along with so many other injustices to our Black and Indigenous neighbors—made us refocus our efforts

and dedication to improving Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion throughout our organization and programs. Then another big change came at the end of June, when we said farewell to our Executive Director of 25 years, Debrah Marriott. Elaine Placido joined us with fresh energy to lead the organization. It has been a year of challenges. But like a river, we are resilient. We are adapting our programs and know we will have to be creative as we continue to protect and restore the river, work to advance children's science education, and engage the community to make a difference in their watershed.



Growing Knowledge

Students need more time in the school day to learn science, and firsthand experiences to build a connection to their watershed.

THIS YEAR:

- **3,542 students received a total of 18,003 instructional hours** in environmental science.
- **Students planted 14,609 native trees and shrubs and removed four truckloads of invasive plants** to help improve their local rivers and streams.
- **472 youth and adults paddled our Big Canoes.** We partner with culturally specific groups and those serving BIPOC youth and other underserved groups.
- **Educators pivoted in March and began to create online, place-based science videos and virtual field trips.**

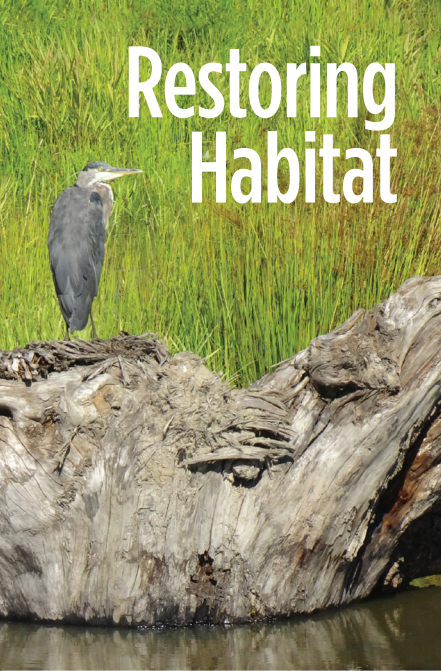


Greening Our World

Planting native trees and shrubs, reducing stormwater entering our streams, and cleaning up debris improves water quality.

THIS YEAR:

- **597 volunteers planted 9,807 trees and shrubs.** In the spring, staff rallied to finish planting more than 2,300 trees – while maintaining social distance – before the end of planting season.
- **Sitton Elementary School in North Portland got a stormwater facility for their schoolyard,** depaving 3,000 square feet of asphalt and replacing it with rainwater-filtering trees and native plants.
- **We installed a stormwater retrofit at ClackaCraft Drift Boats** near the Clackamas River.
- **Staff conducted a boat- and barge-based marine debris clean up along a stretch of the lower Willamette River and part of Multnomah Channel.** We removed more than 200 tires, 6,840 pounds of mixed garbage, 2,460 pounds of metal, and one 20-yard drop box full of Styrofoam.



Restoring Habitat

The Columbia is a river profoundly affected by human development. More than half of the Columbia’s historic habitat has been lost since 1880—habitat necessary for salmon and other wildlife.

THIS YEAR:

- **Partners broke ground on a 965-acre restoration project at Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge.** This 3-year project involves 17 partner agencies and organizations and will improve habitat at the refuge for juvenile and spawning salmon, lamprey, and many other species.
- **We expanded a restoration project along Horsetail Creek, a site we began recovering in 2013.** Part of the site was affected by the 2017 Eagle Creek Fire, and we felled locally burned trees into the creek and floodplain to increase habitat complexity. We planted 30 acres of native plants to jumpstart recovery from the fire, and installed beaver dam analogs to encourage these “engineers of nature” to take up residence here.
- **Across the lower Columbia, 423 acres of habitat were restored at five project sites** by entities including the Estuary Partnership. Since 2000, partners have collectively restored 28,610 acres across 245 projects.



Sharing Science

Our understanding of ecosystems is constantly evolving. We gather and analyze data to ensure partners have up-to-date information.

THIS YEAR:

- **We presented our studies on sea level rise** at the Washington Salmon Recovery Conference and to River Restoration Northwest.
- **Our strategy on becoming a climate smart conservation organization was shared** at the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board technical conference.



Monitoring

Tracking ecosystems and restored areas ensures we get intended outcomes.

THIS YEAR:

- **We collected our 15th year of ecosystem monitoring** to advance our understanding of how relatively well-functioning native wetlands along the Columbia are faring.
- **Our use of drones (unmanned aerial vehicles or UAVs) for monitoring expanded.** We now have four staff who have their commercial FAA drone pilot licenses. Drones can help us create accurate 3D models of sites, map plant communities, and collect thermal data.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

STEIGERWALD RECONNECTION PROJECT

Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge is part of the ancestral homelands of several different bands of Chinook-speaking Indians; including the Watlalas tribe and Cascade peoples. For decades, the area has been cut off from the Columbia River by a levee, but that is in the process of changing. With partners including the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Port of Camas-Washougal, we are in the midst of a 3-year construction project to restore and reconnect the refuge. The project creates two new setback levees to protect the Port and nearby private landowners from flooding, so that 2.2 miles of the current levee can be removed and the Gibbons Creek floodplain can regain its natural connection to the river. Wildlife habitat will increase from 115 acres of restored wetlands and more than 200 revegetated acres, as well as a new, more natural and meandering channel for Gibbons Creek to make it more beneficial for salmon and lamprey.



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**THE ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP IS
A 501(C)3 NON-PROFIT CORPORATION.**

Who We Are

THE LOWER COLUMBIA ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP is a National Estuary Program charged with protecting and preserving the lower Columbia River from Bonneville Dam to the Pacific Ocean. This 146-mile stretch of the watershed includes 28 cities, 9 counties, and 45 school districts within the states of Oregon and Washington.

The lower Columbia River estuary is one of the country's 28 estuaries of national significance—these life-giving estuaries feed our nation, support vibrant and healthy communities, and sustain our economies. The States of Washington and Oregon and the US EPA established the Estuary Partnership in 1995 to provide regional coordination, advance science, and get on-the-ground results to improve the river's habitat and water quality.

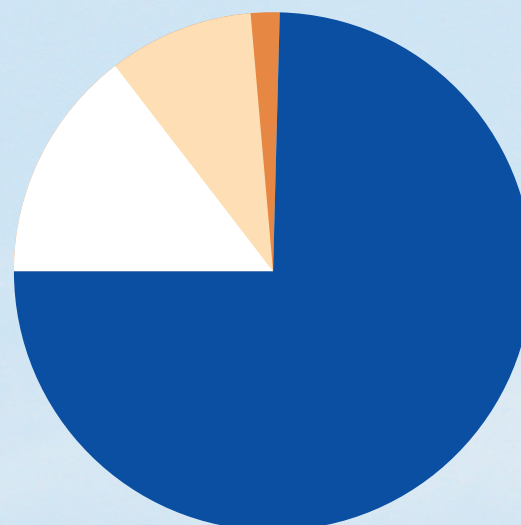
In 2019-2020, we raised \$11.43 for every \$1 federal NEP dollar—that is a total of \$5.6 million to the region to support our local economy.

More than 200 businesses, private foundations, and individuals support the Estuary Partnership.

Since 1999, the Estuary Partnership has raised over \$81.8 million in cash for the region and created 1,630 jobs. The economic multiplier gives a total impact of \$154.4 million.

Donated Volunteer Investments

	Hours	Value
Board members	512.75	\$30,765.00
Scientists and Technical Experts	541	\$32,460.00
Forums	60	\$3,600.00
Student Service Learning	12023.5	\$180,352.50
Parent and Teacher Volunteers	1853	\$40,766.00
Planting and Community Volunteers	2691.5	\$14,157.00
Professional Services	100	\$40,000.00
Other Goods and Services	-	\$2,725.60
TOTAL	17781.75	\$344,826.10



Where 2020 Funds Went

- 74.6%** Technical Programs: Habitat Restoration, Monitoring & Data
- 14.5%** Community Programs: Education, Volunteer, Paddling & Stormwater
- 9.4%** General and Administrative
- 1.5%** Fundraising