

2025 *State of the Columbia River Estuary Report*



Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership

A National Estuary Program



estuarypartnership.org

Letter from the Director



As we prepare this 5-year State of the Estuary Report we are reflecting on the last five years of education, restoration, science, paddling, convening, and partnerships that we have shared in. It has been a tremendous span of accomplishments for the Estuary Partnership and the lower Columbia Region, but there is still so much left to do.

With this latest State of the Estuary Report we will be taking a different approach to presenting the status, trends, opportunities, and challenges that face the lower Columbia and its tributaries. The report will contain the same five indicator sections we have tracked in our previous State of the Estuary Reports, listed below in the order of release.

- [Connecting People with the Columbia](#)
- [Imperiled Species](#)
- [Habitat](#)
- Water Quality
- Land Use

Each of the indicator sections will be released in their own stand-alone report that will allow for a greater exploration of each indicator, the data, and the stories. Each chapter of the Report will be available on our website as it is released

None of the work that is accomplished in the estuary is accomplished alone—it takes partners, funders, volunteers, community members and leaders. In each of the indicator sections we hope that you can see the impact of this commitment to the estuary by so many.

In partnership,



E. Elaine Placido, DPA
Executive Director



Acknowledgements

Many thanks to our staff who have contributed to this report and who continue to care for the Columbia for current and future generations:

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| Andy Bauer, <i>Environmental Educator</i> | Nick Lewis, <i>Restoration Ecologist</i> |
| Chris Collins, <i>Restoration Project Manager</i> | Katarina Lunde, <i>Research Scientist III</i> |
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| Jenny Dezso, <i>Principal Restoration Ecologist</i> | Keith Marcoe, <i>Physical Scientist</i> |
| Samanta Dumont, <i>Volunteer Coordinator</i> | Tonya McLean, <i>Environmental Education Coordinator</i> |
| Kari Dupler, <i>Principal Restoration Ecologist</i> | McKenzie Miller, <i>Environmental Education Coordinator</i> |
| Ian Edgar, <i>Research Scientist III</i> | Elaine Placido, <i>Executive Director</i> |
| Erinne Goodell, <i>Communications & Development Manager</i> | Valerie Pufahl, <i>Director of Education Programs</i> |
| Adam Goodwin, <i>Program Specialist</i> | Alex Rhodes, <i>Environmental Educator</i> |
| Chris Hathaway, <i>Community Programs Director</i> | Alvey Seeyouma, <i>Field Technician</i> |
| Erica Keeley, <i>Technical Contracts Specialist</i> | James Sterrett, <i>Environmental Educator</i> |
| Connor Kerns, <i>Cost Accounting Coordinator</i> | Ona Underwood, <i>Research Scientist</i> |
| Paul Kolp, <i>Restoration Project Manager</i> | Jasmine Zimmer-Stuckey, <i>Public & Legislative Affairs Manager</i> |
| Marci Krass, <i>Principal Restoration Ecologist for Community Programs</i> | |
| Doug Kreuzer, <i>Principal Restoration Ecologist</i> | |



The Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership is a National Estuary Program administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and supported by the States of Oregon and Washington and the U.S. Congress.

Looking Forward to 2030

The past five-year period saw a global pandemic, intensifying impacts from recurring extreme weather events, dramatic funding swings from all sources, and many other challenges. But we also saw the completion of the largest habitat restoration project ever undertaken on the lower Columbia, tremendous growth in Estuary Partnership stormwater programming and we completed critical toxics monitoring in the estuary.

As we look forward to the next five-year period, there are many potential opportunities and challenges for the lower Columbia. While each chapter will also contain a brief assessment of opportunities and challenges, below are some of the most significant:

Opportunities

- Increasing interest in stormwater and green infrastructure projects in a variety of urban and suburban areas.
- Increasing volunteer stewardship and community engagement activities throughout the estuary.
- Development of an inventory of ecosystem services potential by habitats across the lower river.
- Convening and coordinating partners to enhance regional strategies and partnerships and heighten protection of the lower Columbia River, including hosting Science to Policy Summits, Columbia River Estuary Conferences, and participating in a range of local, regional, and national collaborations and conversations.
- Working with communities and partners to assess, identify, and generate solutions that address vulnerabilities and increase resilience.
- Identifying opportunities to increase the understanding of harmful algal blooms in area waterways and assess actions to address.
- Identifying, protecting, and enhancing cold-water refuge areas for salmon survival
- Assessing the impacts of sea level rise and increased riverine flooding on lower Columbia wetlands.

Challenges

- Lack of long-term, ongoing funding for water quality and toxics monitoring in the estuary.
- Uncertainty of long-term support of and access to scientific data sets, research, and mapping.
- Elimination of funding for various environmental education programs including Washington's Outdoor Learning Grant and decreases in support for Outdoor School.
- Increasingly complex regulatory and permitting requirements for construction, restoration, and retrofit projects.
- Building resilient communities in the face of decreasing acknowledgement of the impacts of recurring extreme weather events.
- Habitat loss and modification, conventional pollutants (such as elevated temperature, increased dissolved gas, bacteria, and sediment), and toxic contaminants in fish tissue and sediments.

Our Mission:

To restore and care for the waters and ecosystems of the lower Columbia River, for current and future generations of fish, wildlife, and people.

Our Estuary:



Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership study area

Dive Into the Indicators



*Connecting People to the
Columbia River*



Imperiled Species



Habitat



*Water Quality
(coming April 2026)*



*Land Use
(coming May 2026)*