Lower Columbia
Estuary
Partnership



Year in Review

2025–2026 HIGHLIGHTS

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.

Photo: Coho fry spawned in the East Fork Lewis River

Letter from the Director

Dear friend of the Columbia River,

One thing that rivers teach us is how to go with the flow. It's a lesson I take to heart these days. While the past two years have presented significant challenges to those working to care for our rivers and natural areas, like the mighty Columbia River, the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership is resilient and our work flows on.

Flow on we must. Our mission is as critical today as when we were founded in 1995. And our resilience, that flow of impactful work to restore habitat, improve water quality, and engage community members with their watershed, is only possible thanks to the power of partnerships.

Partners like Clark County, Metro, the City of Washougal, and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department entrust us with restoring lands under their care.

Partners like Portland Public Schools entrust us with developing green schoolyard projects that meet the needs of their students and surrounding community, while also improving water quality with stormwater features.

Partners like Afghan Support Network allow us reach immigrant communities and introduce them to a new sport—paddling our Big Canoes—while also teaching them about how they can support the health of their watershed.

Partners like you—our volunteers, donors, and other supporters—help us with hands-on action and with spreading the word about the important work that's being done to support a healthy Columbia River.

The past year has had some exciting progress.

While the East Fork Lewis River Reconnection Project is still under construction—heavy work wraps up this fall—our work there has already paid dividends. Over the winter and spring, while active construction was paused, this historic project became an active community restoration site and a learning laboratory. Through the fall and winter, we hosted eight volunteer planting events for 300 people and engaged nearly 500 students from four nearby schools in hands-on learning activities and reforesting. In addition, this winter brought two large storm events that put the project to the test. Our restoration ecologists were pleased to see that it performed very well, and we are excited to see the area regrow and return to its natural flow in the years to come.

We hope you will be a part of this work as we flow together into the next year.

For the Columbia,

E. Elaine Placido

E. ELAINE PLACIDO, DPA | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

The Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership is a 501(c)3 nonprofit and a National Estuary Program. The National Estuary Program was authorized in 1987 by amendments to the Clean Water Act that created place-based, collaborative programs to support our nation's most critical estuaries. The Columbia River estuary is one of 28 "estuaries of national significance" across the United States. Estuaries are critical ecosystems that feed us, drive our economy, nourish abundant fish and wildlife, and provide a home to vibrant river and coastal communities. The States of Oregon and Washington and the US EPA established the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership in 1995 to address the numerous issues facing the river, from habitat loss to toxic contamination to sea level rise.

Photo: The sun rises over Salmon Creek

Ilwaco
Columbia River
Astoria
Skamokawa
Grays River
Kelso
Coweeman River
Kalama
Lewis River
Woodland
E. Fork Lewis River
St. Helens
Ridgeford
Scappoose
Vancouver
Washougal River
Washougal
Camas
Portland
Troutdale
Gresham
Willamette River
Sandy River
Pacific Ocean
Wahkiakum
Lewis & Clark River
Youngs R.



Engaging Students with Their Watershed

Thanks to support from Gray Family Foundation, students from Scappoose and Sauvie Island engaged with hands-on environmental science this spring alongside our educators. **Students got special lessons in the classroom on native plants, local birds, and bird beak adaptations, followed by an experiential field trip to Scappoose Bay or Wapato Access Greenway and Multnomah Channel.** Students took a guided hike with educators, practiced identifying native plants they learned about in the classroom, watched osprey and heron through binoculars, and paddled our "floating classroom" Big Canoes.

3,226 students were served during the 2025-2026 school year.

Studies for Salmon

East Fork Lewis River chum assessment

The Estuary Partnership is improving habitat conditions for East Fork Lewis River salmon populations through two related projects. First, our lower East Fork Lewis River Thermal project, funded by the Washington Recreation & Conservation Office Salmon Recovery Board, developed restoration designs at four locations to create and enhance cold water refuge for coho, Chinook, and steelhead. The Thermal Project was developed from a prior comprehensive temperature assessment of the lower East Fork. Second, our lower East Fork Lewis River chum assessment, funded by PacificCorp, will identify opportunities and develop designs to improve habitat conditions for chum salmon, which have very specific water temperature spawning requirements.



The Lower Columbia River

stretches 146 river miles from its mouth at the Pacific Ocean upstream to Bonneville Dam. Over three million people live in the area. Our staff stay busy restoring rivers, helping schools and businesses develop stormwater solutions, inspiring students, engaging volunteers, and advancing scientific research.

HERE ARE JUST A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR WORK THIS YEAR.



Canoeing in Community

Hundreds of people get out on the river in our two Big Canoes each year thanks in part to support from the Oregon State Marine Board – and boaters who pay for their waterway access permit! For the first time, we offered a follow up paddling experience to the summer's participants, providing a second meaningful on-water experience to dozens of community members. **In partnership with eNRG Kayaking, community members paddled our Big Canoes or a rental kayak on a guided trip to see Willamette Falls, building their knowledge of the river's ecology, culture, and living history.**

1,518 students and community members paddled our Big Canoes.





Restoring Habitat

The Campen Creek Reconnection Project restored Campen Creek's connection to its floodplain, created wetlands, and addressed erosion, hazard trees, and invasive species in Mable Kerr Park in Washougal, WA. This project not only improved habitat in the park, it also has direct downstream benefits: Campen Creek is the most urban tributary of Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge's Gibbons Creek, an area that was restored and reconnected to its floodplain in 2022. More than 40 community members volunteered to help replant along Campen Creek in December.

Since 2000, 39,630 acres have been restored across the lower Columbia.

Improving Water Quality

Students at Rigler Elementary School are enjoying a greener schoolyard, thanks to our partnership with Portland Public Schools, Depave, and Padres de Unidos Rigler PTA. A summer 2025 project upgraded their schoolyard with green infrastructure to infiltrate stormwater. Community volunteers and crews removed 8,569 square feet of asphalt, which was replaced with new stormwater management features and planting areas, plus playground enhancements, boulder seating, and picnic tables. Students helped to plant trees to add much needed shade to the schoolyard and building, as well as grasses and shrubs that help infiltrate stormwater. This project helped to realize the Rigler Schoolyard Vision Plan, developed by Juncus and the school community.



Stewarding our Streams

We expanded our work with older students, partnering closely with technical schools to reach students who are close to launching their careers. **Schools like Evergreen Public Schools' Cascadia Tech Academy and Battle Ground's Center for Agriculture, Science, and Environmental Education offer high school-aged students opportunities to focus on hands-on activities in their chosen career field.** Students in Cascadia Tech Academy's Forest Management Program have learned alongside our staff at several sites over the past year, including Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge, identifying plants, learning about ecological processes and habitat restoration techniques, and gaining valuable firsthand experience with reforesting after a large-scale restoration project.





Mt. Scott Elementary School 4th grade students paddle on the Willamette River near Meldrum Bar Park.

INVESTMENTS IN THE WATERS AND ECOSYSTEMS OF THE LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER IN 2024–2025

In 2025-2026, we raised $19 for every $1 from the US EPA National Estuary Program, leveraging $16.3 million and creating 175 jobs. With the economic multiplier, that is a total impact of $23.3 million across our region.

BASE FUNDERS

US Environmental Protection Agency
Oregon State

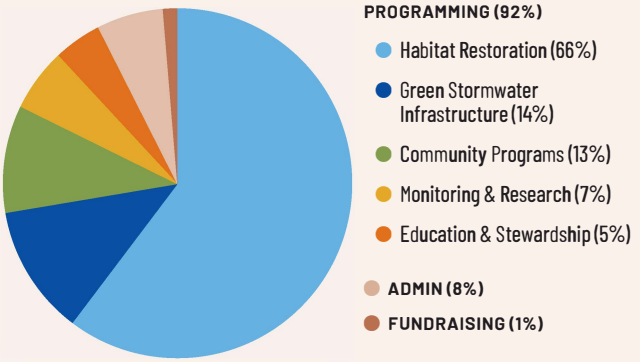
GRANTORS

Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office • Washington Department of Ecology • National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration • Bonneville Power Administration • US Environmental Protection Agency • City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services • Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board • PacifiCorp • East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District • Washington Department of Transportation • Glencoe School PTA • Clark County • Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board • US Fish and Wildlife Service • Bonneville Environmental Foundation • Gray Family Foundation • Oregon State Marine Board • Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission • Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District • Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund • Camas-Washougal Community Chest • Portland General Electric • Metro • Odyssey School • Columbia County • One Tree Planted • Washington State University

CORPORATE DONORS & SPONSORS

Compass Ecospatial • First Interstate Bank • Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde • Inter-Fluve • ERSM, LLC • Burns & McDonnell Foundation • KPFF • NW Natural • Wolf Water Resources • Aquatic Contracting • Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce • Fort George Brewery • Robertson Fick Engineering PC • Westervelt Ecological Services • Discovery Management Group • Epson Portland • Juncus Studio • Parametrix • Metro

WHERE 2025-26 FUNDS WENT



DONATED VOLUNTEER INVESTMENTS

CATEGORY	HOURS	VALUE
Board Members	318	$25,440
Professional Services	1,804	91,614
Student Service Learning	17,809	302,753
Parent & Teacher Volunteers	4,549	191,071
Planting & Community Volunteers	2,972	96,124
Other Goods & Services	-	$13,096
TOTAL	**27,452**	**$720,098**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
2025-26

John Anderson Washington Governor's Office
Barbara Bergquist Finance
Amy Boyd Port of Longview
Chad Brown Soul River, Inc.
Rosemary Furfey Community and Tribal Engagement
Matt Harding Port of Vancouver
Susan Holveck, PhD Retired, Portland Public Schools
Matt A. Jones, PhD NW Emergent
Trang Lam Port of Camas-Washougal
Margaret Magruder Magruder Farms, Columbia County Board of Commissioners
Rian Sallee, Chair Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Mary Lou Soscia Retired, US Environmental Protection Agency
Yvonne Vallette Retired, US Environmental Protection Agency

EX OFFICIO

Mark Bierman US Army Corps of Engineers
Shauna Hanisch-Kirkbride Washington Department of Ecology
Chanda Littles, PhD US Army Corps of Engineers
John Netto, Vice Chair US Fish & Wildlife Service
Courtney Shaff Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
Bobbak Talebi Washington Department of Ecology

HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS

Bill Hutchison, Esq. Corporate and Environmental Law
Debrah Marriott Emeritus