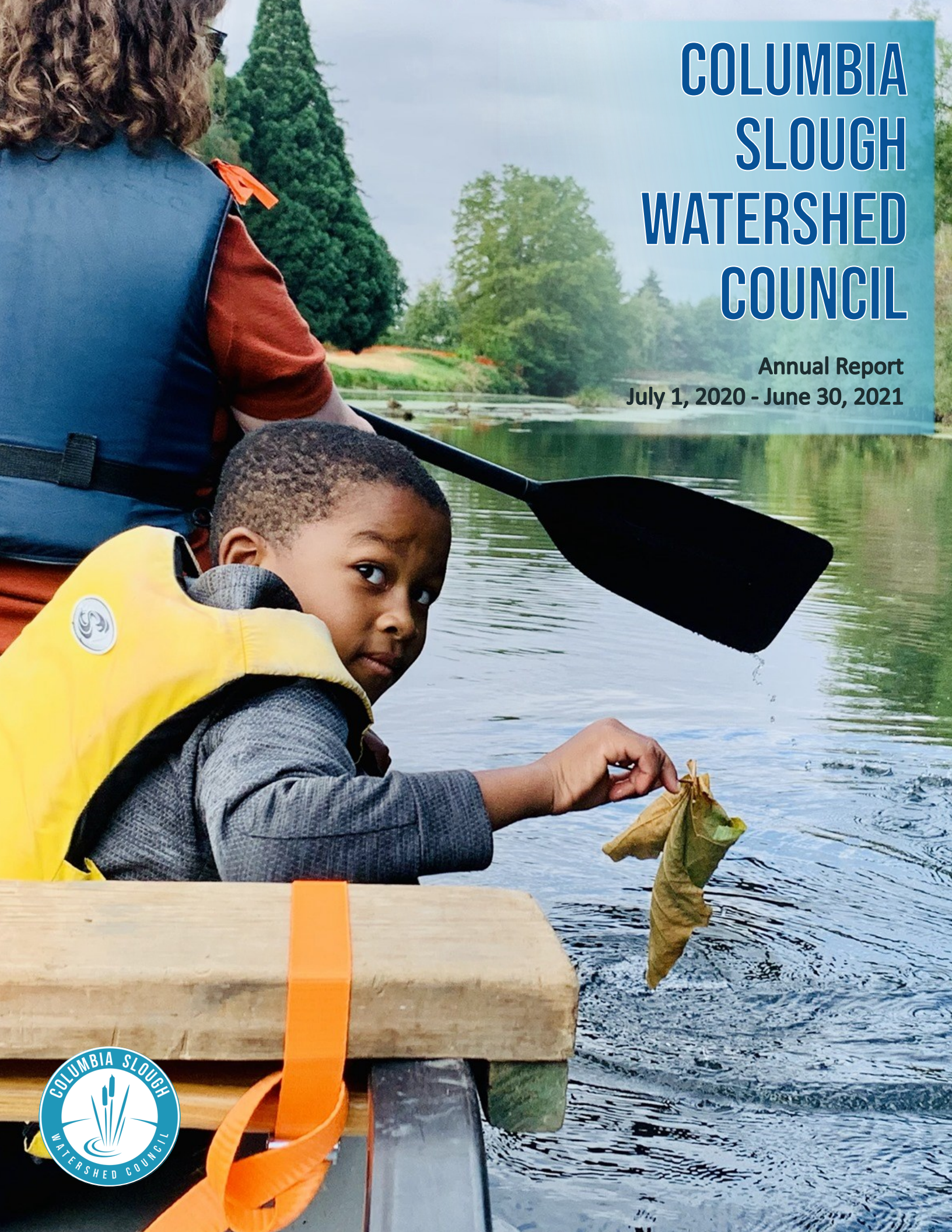


# COLUMBIA SLOUGH WATERSHED COUNCIL

Annual Report  
July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021





## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

During a time of change—in our city, nation, and organization—our most important messages to share are of community care, resilience, and innovation. We know the past year has been hard on a great many in our community. We hope that the natural areas and systems that we restore and share have contributed to helping you to get through very difficult times.

We also have much to celebrate: we have been challenged to reconsider ways of doing things, to reevaluate our priorities, and to invent new ways we can serve and succeed. To a large measure, we have succeeded in bringing community members together safely, continuing to improve water quality and habitat, and raising public awareness in innovative ways.

A strong executive director and staff have served our mission well. Outgoing Executive Director, Cathy Kellon, helped to strengthen our financial position over the past year. Our staff is capable and energetic, including the expert team of Jennifer Starkey (education), Max Samuelson (stewardship), Rachel Walsh (community engagement & volunteers), and Ryan Banning (community partnerships & events). Our events and approaches have shifted and evolved under the demands of the pandemic, providing us with a wealth of learning opportunities. Popular and expanding programs like our bilingual paddles and bird walks are finding new and enthusiastic audiences. With the help of many partners, we continue to find new ways to reach underserved members of our community, and remain committed to providing free, welcoming outdoor events and education opportunities for all.

This past year, we also became the fiscal sponsor for People of Color Outdoors. We are excited to continue supporting and partnering with them and other groups to expand outdoor access to a broader diversity of our community (more on page 12).

Like the waters of the Columbia Slough, time also flows on, and the world continues to change. We are happy to provide this report on our achievements and organizational health, as we look forward to more opportunities to serve the watershed in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Adam Reese, Board Chair  
Nick Hardigg, Interim Executive Director



# OUR MISSION

*To protect and enhance the Columbia Slough and its watershed through community engagement, education, and restoration.*

The Columbia Slough Watershed Council brings community members together to enhance the health of the Columbia Slough and expand opportunities for people to enjoy this urban gem. We work to improve water quality, build and restore fish and wildlife habitat, increase public awareness and accessibility, empower youth, and advocate for a healthy watershed. Everything we do is possible thanks to the commitment of community members and engagement of local agencies, businesses, and partner organizations.



## EVENTS



## STEWARDSHIP



## EDUCATION



## VOLUNTEER

# EVENTS

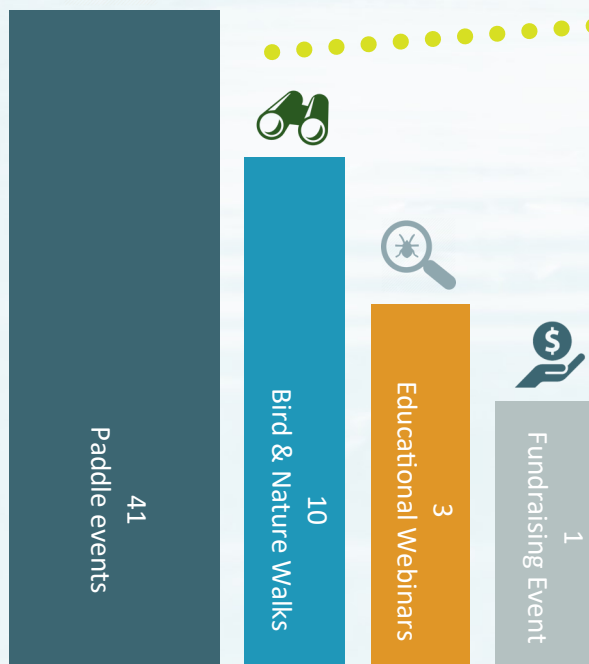
## THE SLOUGH AS SANCTUARY IN A TRYING TIME

It's been a tough year for our community, and we are grateful for the chance to continue providing free opportunities for community members to get outside, relax and recuperate in urban nature, and explore their neighborhood watershed by foot, wheel, canoe, or kayak. This year perhaps more than ever, these events felt critically important.

While 2020 and 2021 presented many challenges, we still were able to provide a variety of safe, family-friendly events and educational opportunities, including our free kayak and canoe rental program, monthly birding and nature walks across the watershed, our famous Owl Prowl and Bat Night outings, and several popular educational webinars and online environmental activities—including an all new Aquifer Adventure online toolkit!



We are proud to have successfully navigated the unexpected challenges and uncertainties of Covid-19 this year and to have continued to find safe and exciting ways for people to explore the Slough. While the large events and festivals of years past were not possible in light of the pandemic, we were able to provide connections and experiences that were more intimate, quiet, and personal, providing a welcome respite to community members in this stressful time. Moreover, we ramped up our efforts to connect with and serve communities underrepresented in the outdoors, a mission that has become a central part of our events program.



## COMMUNITY CONNECTION

One of the new partnerships that the Council developed this year was with Darrell Wade and [Black Men's Wellness](#) (BMW), a community-based initiative that addresses health concerns commonly affecting Black and African-American men. Through culturally-specific, trauma-informed workshops, Black Men's Wellness engages African-American men of all ages to identify and discuss health concerns they are susceptible to or are currently experiencing. BMW offers curriculum and activities focused on physical fitness and healthy eating to raise awareness, build positive habits, and promote strategies for prevention. The Council partnered with Black Men's Wellness to host paddling and birding events this year, and Darrell took part in our Paddle Team and CPR training. We look forward to expanding our partnership with Black Men's Wellness in the coming year!



# AQUIFER ADVENTURE

Celebrating Groundwater, Portland's Buried Treasure




## FESTIVAL AND WORKSHOPS GO VIRTUAL!

Aquifer Adventure is one of our flagship annual festivals: a pirate-themed groundwater education celebration organized in partnership with the Portland Water Bureau (PWB). Since large gatherings were not possible this year, we and the PWB shifted course and created an online version of the Aquifer Adventure event, complete with educational videos, hands-on activities (including how to build your own edible aquifer!), maps, graphics, and even a pirate dictionary. Thanks to the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO), we were able to translate the entire online platform into Spanish, Russian, and Vietnamese, allowing us to reach more families and provide additional educational activities for the communities within our watershed.

We also organized three educational webinars this year for the public. In our first webinar, we learned all about turtles and other local wildlife with Laura Guderyahn, an ecologist with Portland Parks and Recreation, who showed us live turtles and shared fascinating elements of natural history and biology. We then partnered with The Confluence Project to host a discussion on Indigenous land management practices and how Native knowledge helps us work towards healthier watersheds today and moving forward. We were honored to have both David Lewis, a member of the Grand Ronde Tribe, and Teara Farrow Ferman, an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, join us for this important conversation. Lastly, we gathered folks from the USGS, Army Corps of Engineers, Oregon State University, and Climate Impacts Group to help answer the questions: What does climate change mean for flooding in the Columbia Slough watershed? How can we adapt to more stormwater runoff and Columbia River flood risk and still protect businesses, without causing more environmental damage or social injustices?

**Confluence Conversations**  
A Native Lens on Regenerative Ecosystems  
*with*

Teara Farrow Ferman David Lewis








**WHAT DOES CLIMATE CHANGE MEAN FOR FLOODING IN THE COLUMBIA SLOUGH WATERSHED?**

**JOIN OUR WEBINAR TO FIND OUT!**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28TH @ 6PM**



316

WEBINAR  
ATTENDEES



Aquifer Adventure was a new event

# STEWARDSHIP

## RESTORING AN URBAN WATERSHED

The Columbia Slough functions as a critical corridor of habitat in the urban and industrial floodplain of north Portland, Fairview, and Gresham. Nestled between airports, highways, and businesses, the Columbia Slough is home to river otters, hundreds of species of birds, migrating salmon, and even the occasional sturgeon. Our Stewardship program partners with community groups, government agencies, and businesses to help conserve habitats and improve water quality across the watershed. With hands-on support from volunteers and green workforce development crews, we build rain gardens and pollinator corridors, clean trash from the Slough, remove invasive species, and install thousands of native plants in natural areas.



# 307

## YOUTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT HOURS



## BUILDING GREEN NEIGHBORHOODS AND GREEN CAREERS

An important part of our stewardship work is partnering with nonprofits that mentor, train, and employ low-income community members and people of color, helping to offer local, living-wage jobs and build skills for careers in the environmental sector.

Since 2019, the Council has been collaborating with Portland Parks and Recreation, the Portland Bureau of Transportation, and Wisdom of the Elders to build a habitat corridor that connects the isolated habitat patches of Alberta Park and Fernhill Park in NE Portland via NE Ainsworth Street. This year, the Council partnered with **Outside In**, a local organization that works to support unhoused youth and other marginalized people, to provide workforce development opportunities at the Ainsworth Habitat Corridor. Outside In's Supported Work Exchange program paid youth to come out weekly and learn about native plant landscaping and the importance of urban habitat corridors. Together, we planted, watered, and mulched native plants, removed weeds, and helped maintain a walking path. The youth then took these lessons and skills and applied them to help establish a native plant garden at the Outside In facility.

*Learn more on our website:*  
[columbiaslough.org/blog/stewardship](https://columbiaslough.org/blog/stewardship)

## HONORING HISTORY, EXPANDING HABITAT

Since 2018, we have been working to restore a riparian forest along Force Lake, an important stopover site for migratory birds including waterfowl and pelicans. In winter of 2021, we expanded the project to restore habitat along the adjacent Mud Lake and seeded 5 acres of native pollinator patches in out-of-play areas at Heron Lakes Golf Course. Each year, we've planted native shrubs and trees in partnership with the **Blueprint Foundation**, which works to provide career-building opportunities for Black youth and communities of color. Professor James Harrison (at left) joined the event this year to provide historical context about the wartime city of Vanport, which once stood at this location and plays a huge role in the region's history.



# 10

STORMWATER-CATCHING  
RAIN GARDENS  
INSTALLED



# 22

PUBLIC  
STEWARDSHIP  
EVENTS



*"I love that the Council provides us with stewardship opportunities that are right in our own backyard, so my kids can have the experience of contributing to our environment right here where we live."*

- Emily Henke, Stewardship Volunteer & Board Member

# EDUCATION

## LEARNING FROM YOUR OWN HOME

Our Education Program, also known as Slough School, offers free, place-based environmental education to students attending school in the Columbia Slough watershed, with a special focus on Title I schools and low-income students. Slough School helps youth learn science concepts through local examples, connect with their neighborhood watershed, and become environmental stewards at an early age.

Creativity, patience, and strong relationships were all really helpful in this challenging year of distance education! We couldn't have done this without long-term partners at Woodland, Fairview, and Rigler Elementary, Alliance HS at Meek, NAYA Many Nations Academy, POIC-RAHS, and the *many* children who played Kahoot after watching a streaming video through Microsoft Teams.

Taking the time to turn Slough School lessons into videos and slide decks with research and multimedia has been helpful to the long term health of the program, and has given us the chance to make content that is effective for many different kinds of learners. With digital lessons and materials housed in Slough School Online, we can easily share concepts and information with students and teachers across the watershed, no matter where they are.

Check out our online education resources:  
[columbiaslough.org/slough-school-online](http://columbiaslough.org/slough-school-online)



## EXTRACURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

In addition to working with teachers, classes, and students as we always do, this year Slough School began partnering with extracurricular groups that serve youth, such as **Betties360** (left). These connections allowed us to safely meet in person and have small-scale, intentional educational experiences outside together.

Read more about our 2020-21 school year:  
[columbiaslough.org/blog/education](http://columbiaslough.org/blog/education)



# 87

CLASSROOM/ZOOM  
LESSONS + FIELD TRIPS

SERVING **93%** LOW-INCOME  
STUDENTS

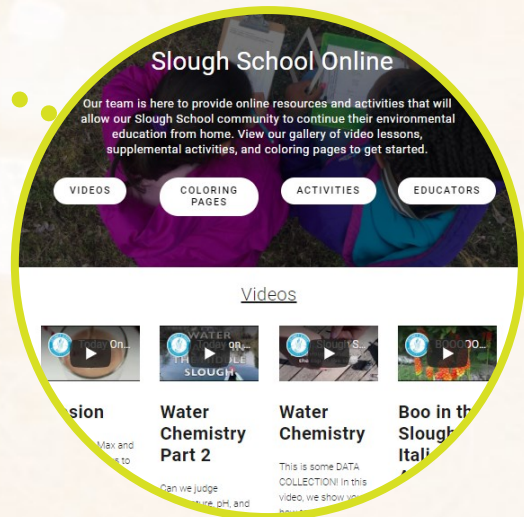


# 21

NEW EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS

# 18

NEW ONLINE  
EDUCATIONAL  
ACTIVITIES



*"I am so grateful for you and all you do for  
the watershed education community!"*

- Jennifer Flynn, science teacher, Helensview High School

# VOLUNTEER

## THE HEART OF THE SLOUGH IS YOU

Volunteers are more than just tree planters, ivy pullers, trash pickers, and paddle leaders. They are the community that keeps the Council running. Volunteers use their free time to make their watershed and world a better place. Their role as stewards and advocates for the Slough is invaluable to the Council's mission to protect and enhance the Columbia Slough and its watershed. Volunteers are the heart and hands of the Watershed Council!

In 2020-21, we faced many challenges that made it hard for us to be together and share in our common goal to care for our watershed. Despite these challenges, we adapted and found ways to come together safely. We held smaller, more intimate volunteer events with new safety measures to keep us all healthy. We discovered that sharing our love for the outdoors was a great way to build community while staying safe. And importantly, we learned that creating spaces where everyone can feel comfortable and welcome while enjoying the respite that the outdoors offer was something special we could help provide to our community in trying times.

Although our reach was smaller this year due to the pandemic, we were able to create some deeper connections in ways that made a difference. The Bilingual Paddle Leaders program engaged new cultural communities and inspired new leaders for the Slough. The Adopt-the-Slough program provided an opportunity to steward the Slough while maintaining safe social distance. These are two stories that showcase new ways of caring for the Slough with the power of our growing community.

## SOCIALLY-DISTANCED STEWARDSHIP

One of the ways the Council responded to the unique challenges of COVID-19 was to encourage socially distanced volunteering for the Slough independently and in small groups. We partnered with SOLVE to promote their **Adopt-a-River** program, which provides resources for volunteers to go out and independently remove litter from local waterways. As part of this program, 5 people adopted 9 miles of the Slough and put in more than 620 hours removing over 7,000 pounds of garbage! But there are still many miles of the Slough and its side channels that need care. Would you be willing to adopt a section of the Slough? Learn more about the program here: [columbiaslough.org/blog/step-up-your-stewardship](https://columbiaslough.org/blog/step-up-your-stewardship)



# 1,892

VOLUNTEER HOURS



*"When I paddle along the stretch of Slough I've adopted, it fills me with joy to see how clean it is and how much progress has been made. This motivates to me keep doing it. I'm hopeful that we can build up a community of adopters that will keep the entire Slough trash-free."*

- Paul Taylor, Adopt-a-River Volunteer

*Cleaning up the Slough makes a difference and you can see it by the return of wildlife. I am happy if I can help a little to conserve and provide a cleaner habitat for wildlife to thrive."*

- Zora Hess, Adopt-a-River Volunteer

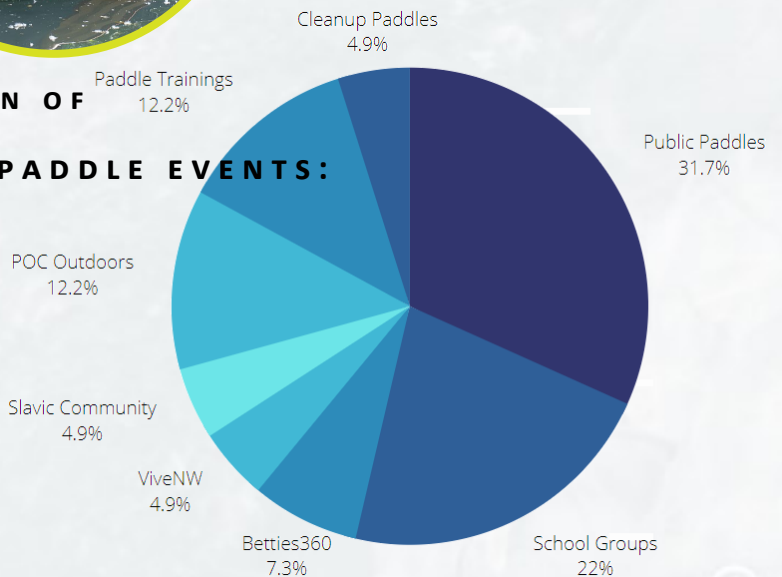
# BILINGUAL PADDLE LEADERS PROGRAM

In fall 2020, we launched our first year of the Bilingual Paddle Leaders program. In partnership with **Vive NW** and **Slavic Community Center of NW**, 10 new paddle leaders with Spanish and Russian language skills received training in paddle techniques and safety, event and gear management, and communicating with the public about the Slough. These new leaders led four culturally-specific paddle events, engaging 45 members of the Latinx and Slavic communities. This program reduces barriers to participating in outdoor activities and engages new community members in learning about and enjoying the Columbia Slough.

Read more about the program on our website:  
[columbiaslough.org/blog/bilingual](http://columbiaslough.org/blog/bilingual)



## BREAKDOWN OF 41 PADDLE EVENTS:



**63** PADDLE TEAM MEMBERS

*"These events have expanded leadership opportunities and local, place-based outdoor recreation for Portland's Spanish-speaking community. We look forward to similar program partnership in the future!"*

- Jorge Guzman, Executive Director of Vive NW



# WE'RE PROUD TO FISCALLY SPONSOR: PEOPLE OF COLOR OUTDOORS



In 2020, the Council began providing fiscal sponsorship to People of Color Outdoors (POCO), an energetic and expanding community of outdoor enthusiasts who are passionate about connecting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to nature. Entirely volunteer-powered, POCO educates, inspires, and connects BIPOC to the outdoors by hosting frequent outings in natural areas. They introduce people to spaces that are new to them, sharing how to navigate and helping develop feelings of familiarity and safety in those spaces. We are honored by the association, and pleased to help them advance our aligned missions in such innovative and impactful ways.



POCO Outdoors paddle. Founder, Pam Slaughter, at right.

Thanks in part to our fiscal sponsorship, supporters have been able to make tax-deductible donations to POCO through the Council, and to apply for grants through our organization. To learn more about our friends at POCO, please see more on [our website](#), [theirs \(pdxpocoutdoors.com\)](#), or visit the vital POCO community of over 3,000 outdoor enthusiasts online via [MeetUp](#) and [Facebook](#).



## VIRTUAL DIY HOUSE PARTY FUNDRAISER



This year, our annual Slough celebration and fundraising event took a creative turn. In light of restrictions on in-person gatherings, we organized a virtual house party, complete with food, drinks, Slough trivia, salsa lessons, a DJ, and two live-streamed bands! Thanks to Vibrant Table Catering and contributions from a host of local businesses, we were able to deliver delicious food and drinks to partiers' doorsteps. We all enjoyed sharing in the soulful and toe-tapping tunes of two Portland-based bands, *Wren* (below) and *Matices Latin Ensemble*, and dancing to the beats of local DJ, Mr. Mom. If you missed the party and concert, you can watch the full recorded livestream here: [tinyurl.com/SloughHouseParty](https://tinyurl.com/SloughHouseParty)

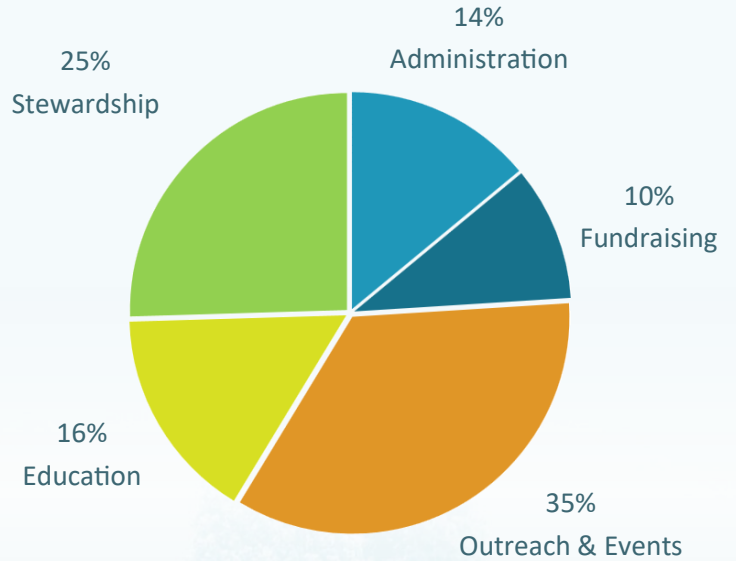
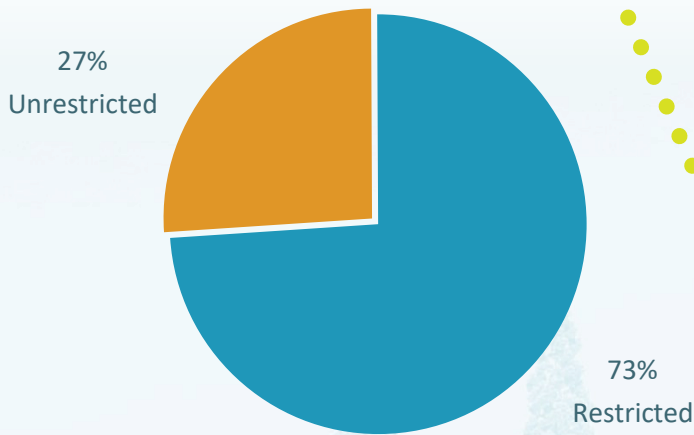




# FINANCES

## INCOME

\$623,038



## EXPENSES

\$563,513



Art by Paddle Team volunteer Wendy Lee @chromaaquatic

May 29, 2021  
 We learned to load and unload the canoes, fit life jackets, how to row/paddle and how to instruct new paddlers with grace and kindness when we see them needing help (this part will be really good for me, lol)... I'm really looking forward to volunteering with the Columbia Slough Watershed Council!

# THANK YOU TO OUR PROGRAM PARTNERS

The Columbia Slough Watershed Council aims to strengthen the accessibility and inclusivity of our events and programs by collaborating with diverse community organizations, Title I schools, and government agencies. We thank our new and returning program partners for their ongoing support:

## AGENCIES

- US Army Corps of Engineers
- City of Fairview
- City of Gresham
- East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District
- Metro
- Multnomah County Drainage District
- Port of Portland
- Portland Bureau of Environmental Services
- Portland Bureau of Transportation
- Portland Parks & Recreation
- Portland Water Bureau
- United States Geological Survey

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

- Audubon Society of Portland
- Betties360
- Black Men's Wellness
- The Blueprint Foundation
- The Confluence Project
- Climate Impacts Group
- Columbia Corridor Association
- Friends of Nadaka
- Scout Troop 117
- Multnomah Youth Cooperative (MYC)
- Native American Youth & Family Center (NAYA)
- Portland Outdoor Afro
- Outside In
- People of Color Outdoors
- PGE Project Zero
- Slavic Community Center of NW
- Together for Watersheds Collaborative
- SOLVE
- Verde
- Vive NW
- Wisdom of the Elders
- 55th Cascadia Scouts

## SCHOOLS

- Alliance High School at Meek
- Fairview Elementary School
- NAYA Many Nations Academy
- Oregon State University
- POIC at Rosemary Anderson High School
- Portland Community College
- Reynolds Learning Academy
- Rigler Elementary School
- Salish Ponds Elementary School
- Woodland Elementary School

## BUSINESSES

- ACME Storage
- Apex Companies
- Bora Architecture
- GCR Tires
- Hydro
- Kelly's Olympian
- Maul Foster & Alongi
- McKinstry
- Mosaic Ecology
- Portland General Electric
- Samara Group
- Vibrant Table Catering & Events



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Adam Reese  
Andrew Rich Vintner  
APEX Companies, LLC  
Autzen Foundation  
Bill Bradford  
Boeing Company  
Bullitt Foundation  
Carla Coleman  
Charles Starkey  
Christina Scarzello  
City of Fairview  
City of Gresham Water Resources Division  
City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services  
CommuniCare  
Curtis Loeb  
Cynthia Voth  
Daryl Houtman  
East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District  
East Portland Action Plan  
East Portland Community Office  
Elizabeth Robillard  
Fairview Lake Property Owners Association  
Gilgamesh Brewing  
Gray Family Foundation  
Grocery Outlet  
Hopworks Urban Brewery  
Jane Affleck  
Jeffrey Condit  
Jocelyn Beh  
Kathy Oliver  
Lisa Coke  
Lynn Barlow  
Maul Foster & Alongi  
McKinstry Charitable Foundation  
Meei Lum  
Metro Nature in Neighborhoods  
Metro Vanport Legacy Enhancement  
Meyer Memorial Trust  
Miller, Nash, Graham & Dunn  
Mitzvah Foundation  
Multnomah County Drainage District  
Nancy Hendrickson  
North Portland Trust Fund  
New Belgium Brewing  
Oregon Community Foundation  
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board  
Parametrix  
Peninsula Drainage District 2  
Port of Portland  
Portland Bureau of Environmental Services  
Portland General Electric  
Portland Parks Foundation  
Portland Water Bureau  
Richard Moore  
River Network  
Sandy Drainage Improvement Company  
Steve Fancher  
Trailblazers Foundation Fund  
Troy Clark  
Vanport Placemaking Project



We thank PGE Project Zero for supporting our two fabulous Council interns this year, Keagan Moore & Khan Tung. Read more about them here: [columbiaslough.org/blog/interns2020](https://columbiaslough.org/blog/interns2020)



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Board Chair and Business Seat



**Kathy Shearin**

Vice Chair



**Jenn Bies**

Board Secretary



**Keri Handaly**

Board Treasurer



**Meei Lum**

At Large Seat



**Troy Clark**

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**Emily Henke**

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**Carrie Sanneman**

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Neighborhoods Seat



**Bob Dolphin**

Neighborhoods Seat



**Daryl Houtman**

Government Seat



**Elizabeth Robillard**

At Large Seat



**Erwin Bergman**

Neighborhoods Seat

# COUNCIL STAFF

**Cathy Kellon**

Executive Director

**Rachel Walsh**

Community Engagement  
& Volunteer Director

**Ryan Banning**

Community Partnerships  
& Events Director

**Jennifer Starkey**

Education Director

**Max Samuelson**

Stewardship Director

**Thomas Meinzen**

Program Associate

**Grace Graham**

Program Associate

**Elaine Murphy**

Bookkeeper

**Khan Tung**

Project Zero Intern

**Keagan Moore**

Project Zero Intern





# SUPPORT THE SLOUGH

SPONSOR      GIVE      VOLUNTEER

[WWW.COLUMBIASLOUGH.ORG](http://WWW.COLUMBIASLOUGH.ORG)





# COLUMBIA SLOUGH WATERSHED COUNCIL

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