

Accomplishing Watershed and Outdoor Education: A Discussion for Oregon Watershed Councils

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Introduction

Since 2012, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) has provided over 100 Outreach grants for Oregon watershed councils and other organizations for watershed learning activities and events for adults and students. These projects have ranged from summer camps and classroom presentations to river clean-up events and have involved dozens of organizations and school districts. While Measure 76 passed by voters in 2010 provided a predictable source of funding for watershed restoration, it represented a trade-off; beginning this fall, grantees may need to demonstrate how their outreach activities are necessary for carrying out restoration projects or find alternative approaches and funding sources for accomplishing their education goals. General watershed education and events in schools and in communities may not be eligible for OWEB outreach grants unless they are demonstrably necessary for accomplishing a specific restoration project or implementing a program that leads to a specific restoration project.

The Network of Oregon Watershed Councils has heard from more than 18 councils for whom this shift may deem some of their education projects ineligible because their activities are not linked with restoration projects. These councils indicated that they may need to find alternative funding sources.

Because of the immediate potential impact, OWEB provided a technical assistance grant to the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils to investigate alternative approaches and funding sources for watershed councils and their partner organizations to accomplish their watershed education goals. This discussion is an attempt to share what we have learned to save councils time in seeking alternatives. There is understandably a desire by councils to maintain investments made in curricula, relationships, media relations, teaching materials, and staffing built over several years.

Unfortunately, there does not appear to be a 'one-stop' funding alternative to OWEB's Outreach grants. No other single funder seems to have as broad a mandate as OWEB has had when it comes to outreach and education; most have more specific goals, geographic regions, and audiences and are highly competitive.

However, with reframing and connecting with new partners and because of the strong momentum in Oregon for outdoor education, I believe there are opportunities for watershed councils to continue conducting public and youth watershed education, although for many it will look different than before. Recent passage of an Oregon Outdoor School ballot measure last November is one example of a new

opportunity that some councils may be able to plug into. The Oregon State Legislature approved \$24 million for Outdoor School for residential environmental education for 5th and 6th graders statewide. Being involved on the ground level locally (such as serving on outdoor school advisory committees) could be a fruitful and strategic move for councils considering this approach.

Some current council outreach programs are a blend of non-eligible education activities and eligible outreach activities that staff haven't needed to distinguish between until now. If there is a way to engage current outdoor education audiences in outreach related to a specific restoration project, goals would shift from human-related goals such as "increased understanding of watershed health" to "accomplishing restoration accomplishments on the ground." In this case, engagement of the public and/or youth becomes the means, not the end. All projects that engage community members and youth must address identified priority restoration needs.

I predict that the days of single-funded outdoor education programming are likely behind us; I believe that the strongest programs will likely be those with multiple funders, with staff that take a lead in their regions within the outdoor education community, and with staff that seek and create partnerships beyond the "usual suspects" (that is, with organizations such as in the arts, workforce, faith communities, or other social and professional circles).

What is in this discussion?

This paper is more than a list of alternative funding sources for outdoor education, although a funder list is included. It's first and foremost about taking a moment to think about missions and goals related to outdoor education, and who it is that councils want to target for that education. It's about ways to increase efficiencies, and encouraging new partnerships and accessing 'less-likely' funding sources. It's about encouraging councils to jump on board as strategic players in their regions in response in what has been described as the "Outdoor Education Momentum" in Oregon. Being a strategic player in outdoor education in their regions may position councils to be poised for new opportunities as they arise.

Many councils are already implementing many of the ideas discussed in this paper and know a lot about specific funding options for outdoor education - hopefully we can learn from each other. For others just getting started considering options, I hope that this will be helpful in inspiring some new thinking.

What this investigation entailed

The project involved three phases:

Phase 1-Interviewing funders, providers, and state leaders, (such as Gray Family Foundation, OSU Extension faculty, Clearing Magazine publisher), reviewing documents and websites, (e.g. Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan, Outdoor School for All website, organizational websites) and attending strategic meetings with funders and state leaders.

Phase 2-Creating this discussion and distributing it to existing outreach grantees, especially those who are currently doing outreach that is not associated with a restoration project and need to find alternative funding sources and approaches.

Phase 3-Communicating the information to councils, districts, land trusts through webinars and posting information on the Network website and other announcements/articles. A webinar was held (and archived) on June 29 at 10 a.m. called *“The Outdoor Education Momentum in Oregon: the Role for Watershed Councils, Conservation Districts, and Land Trusts”* featuring Susan Sahnaw of OSU Extension, a state leader in the Outdoor Education and Environmental Literacy movement in Oregon. A second webinar, *Accomplishing Watershed Education in Oregon in 2017 and Beyond* by Shawn Morford, Executive Director, Network of Oregon Watershed Councils will share results of this work.

The big picture: outdoor education in Oregon

To increase a watershed council’s ability to take advantage of the momentum of outdoor education in Oregon, it behooves staff to become familiar with the outdoor education landscape and evolution in Oregon: the terminology, history, players, and leaders.

I was a member of the Environmental Education Association (EEAO) in the 1980s when it was a small but committed group of science educators and agency public affairs staff with an annual conference focused largely on programs and curricula. Oregon’s commitment to outdoor education has been evolving and broadening for several decades. Many more diverse organizations and sectors have collaborated through the years to bring outdoor education into the forefront in Oregon, particularly in the past 10 years. EEAO, which has since become the state affiliate for the National Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE), has been joined by other committed groups that have become active with the legislature and state leadership.

Beginning in 2008, a coalition of 32 organizations convened as the *No Oregon Child Left Inside Coalition* (the Oregon version of a national organization aimed at passing federal No Child Left Inside legislation, so far unsuccessfully). This coalition successfully lobbied the Oregon Legislature to pass the *No Oregon Child Left Inside Act* in 2009 that established an 11-member Environmental Literacy task force and led to a statewide environmental literacy plan. A copy of legislation is at <http://www.leg.state.or.us/09reg/measpdf/hb2500.dir>.

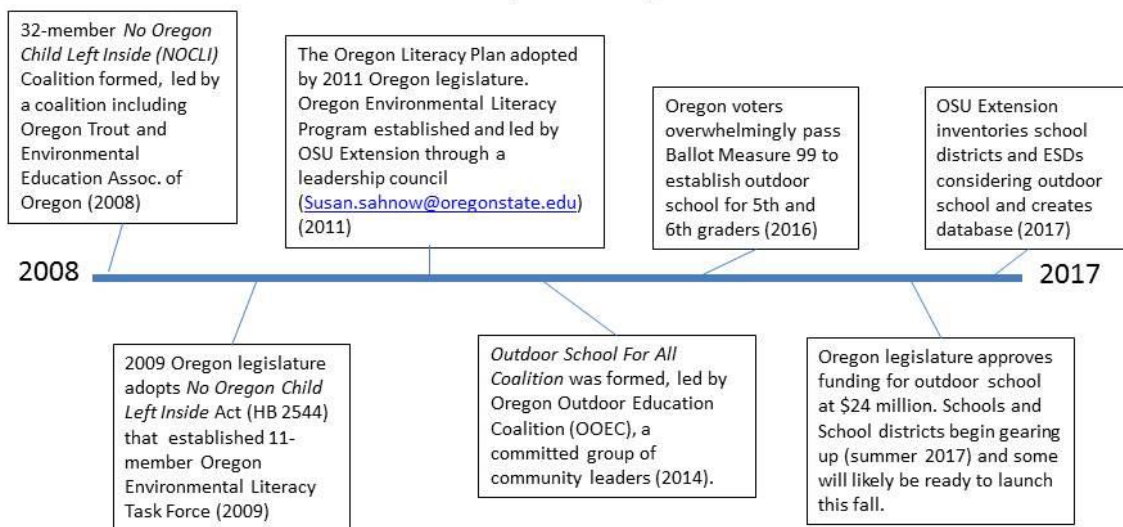
The Oregon Environmental Literacy plan was adopted by the 2011 Legislature and the Oregon Environmental Literacy Program (OELP) was launched under the leadership of the Oregon State University Extension Service. An OELP Leadership Team is comprised of OSU Extension staff across the state with Susan Sahnaw, OSU Faculty and the Director of Oregon Natural Resources Education Program as the lead.

An OELP Council is comprised of 12-15 members representing organizations and stakeholders across Oregon. Ten Regional Leader Teams share information and resources between regional outdoor education providers and the OELP statewide leadership. **Currently only a few watershed council staff**

or board members are active on these teams; this may be a strategic opportunity for councils going forward. A list of Regional Leader Team members is at <http://oelp.oregonstate.edu/who-we-are>.

Starting in 2014, a coalition called “*Outdoor School for All*” led a bold ballot initiative for state funding for outdoor school for all 5th and 6th graders. In November 2016, a whopping two-thirds of Oregon voters in 34 of 36 counties supported Ballot Measure 99 that commits state lottery dollars for residential-based outdoor education. The Governor was a huge supporter: she put forth a \$44 million line item for outdoor school in her budget, and the final number from the legislature approved in June 2017 was \$24 million- still a huge lift. Figure 1 below shows the timeline of events since 2008.

Figure 1: The Oregon Environmental Literacy and Outdoor School Timeline (2008-2017)



What do the Outdoor School ballot measure and the legislature’s recent approval for outdoor school funding mean for watershed councils?

Oregonians across the state have spoken loudly in support of outdoor school and things are just beginning to pick up speed. As a first step, the OSU Extension Service is inventorying schools and school districts that are ready to launch with outdoor school. So far, it appears that some schools and school districts’ residential outdoor school programs are ready for launching this fall, while others will need more time to gear up with logistics, curriculum, site preparation, staffing and other details. It’s likely that many schools are going to need help to gear up; this could be an opportunity for some watershed councils as contractors with local schools, districts, or ESDs, especially those schools and districts that

are at the beginning stages of outdoor school planning. Contacting these entities right away could position some councils to be in on the ground level as local outdoor school gets rolling. Many districts are appointing advisory committees that watershed councils staff or boards could offer to serve on.

Some councils may find that the outdoor school focus may be too broad and that engaging with outdoor school will take away from their specific educational focus on watershed health, but given that some schools and districts are at the beginning of planning and that funding for outdoor school is not prescriptive (that is, the curriculum can be designed locally), it may be worth it for some councils to at least look into the possibilities; outdoor school appears to be the biggest game in town for outdoor education funding at the moment.

To be effective partners in Outdoor School (and other school-based outdoor education), watershed councils should be familiar with standards in the Oregon Literacy Plan for grades K-12. Councils can help schools fulfill their science, social science, art, and other requirements through their programming. The Oregon Environmental Literacy Program framework uses the Next Generation Science Standards, (Oregon Social Sciences Standards). See the table below for an example from the standards.

Grade Level Progression for Environmentally Literate K-12 Students (Identifies what an environmentally literate student should know at each grade level)						
1st grade	2nd grade	3rd grade	4th grade	5th grade	Middle School	High School
Knows how to take care of themselves and others and places. Is beginning to identify how problems arise when environments change and can work with their peers to solve problems and answer questions.	Understand, value, and promote diversity among plants, animals, humans and their environment.	Understand there are relationships between plants, animals and humans and their environment within their region; is beginning to identify how these have changed over time.	Has knowledge of and is a responsible steward of their local environment and natural resources. They are competent at investigating their questions and formulating solutions to problems.	Has knowledge of their local environment and understands the impacts of technology and how it can be used to solve problems.	Are gaining a sense of self in their natural and human community, including their impact on others in those systems. They are able to discuss issues, take in multiple perspectives, back up personal opinions with evidence, and distinguish between opinion and fact.	Are inspired to be a life-long learner, stewards and enthusiasts of the natural world. They are prepared to make informed decisions that consider the economic, social and environmental impacts of issues using credible evidence.
Source: Standards Integration: A Framework for Incorporating NGSS, Social Sciences and Environmental Literacy into Classroom Curriculum, OSU Extension 2016, http://oelp.oregonstate.edu/sites/oelp/files/Integration%20Final%20Version%2012.13.16.pdf						

A copy of Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan and standards are at:

<http://www.ode.state.or.us/gradelevel/hs/oregon-environmental-literacy-plan.pdf>

The June 29, 2017 webinar for Oregon watershed councils and conservation districts on the Outdoor Education Momentum in Oregon with Susan Sahnaw of OSU Extension outlines Susan's recommendations. The 45-minute webinar was recorded and is available at: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1614627710847743489>).

Susan indicated that:

- Because of outdoor school legislation, outdoor school funding will be for all 5th or 6th grade students in Oregon.
- Funds will be available only to School Districts or Education Service Districts (ESDs) – to access the dollars councils must work with schools as a contractor or partner. How this arrangement is done will vary by school district or ESD.
- Outdoor School is not mandatory, but represents an opportunity for schools that make it a priority and/or are ready. It is an “opt-in” strategy.
- There is program flexibility- the curriculum and approach are not prescriptive.
- Along with the funding will come resources, assistance, and professional development for schools.

To engage in and receive information about specific outdoor school projects:

For statewide Outdoor School news, updates, events, and other information, council staff can join the Friends of Outdoor School email list. Email: kim@friendsofoutdoorschool.org. The Gray Family Foundation is high committed to outdoor school funding and offers updates on their website.

Council staff can join the Gray Family Foundation email list. Click on:

https://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/manage/optin?v=001rsBmTNBBmHdg2JYAdD3TRDnBHxvilBZfso1G05y065OkmCnC80b9YQCFHcjVcqAuCiqY3Uxbko62woYzzt_M5bCOdUI--SnbjPpn66aTXK0ZWH_BlpZAYPqSCj32E4zXgPtCjqu7VNEznVvYwm6-wQ%3D%3D

Revisiting the purpose of outreach

This shift in OWEB eligibility outreach (referred to as a ‘constitutional shift’) can be seen as an opportunity for council boards and staff to have a conversation about their core mission and the role of education in that mission. Council coordinators can bring the following questions to their boards and staffs in a facilitated discussion:

- *Is education an articulated part of our core mission? Do we need to adjust our mission statements and strategic plan objectives, if so? (note: when writing grant proposals to funders about outdoor education, it's critical to have this priority expressed in your core mission).*
- *Are human-related objectives such as changes in **attitudes, knowledge, and skills among people in our watershed** a key reason we exist as a council? Or do we ultimately measure our success on how much restoration we achieve, with metrics such as miles of streams treated and number of trees planted, with education as a **means** to that end?*

- *If human-related objectives are indeed part of our core mission, is direct delivery of programs for students and adults the most impactful way to affect change? Or is there a more strategic role we can play that may have even greater impact (such as teacher education)?*
- *Is our council duplicating efforts of other organizations offering outdoor education or do we add a unique service that is not already being offered by others?*
- *Are we able to make the time investment required to diversify our funding, find new partners, and/or reframe our work so our programs are eligible?*

The OWEB constitutional shift in eligibility is an opportunity for boards and staff to think through what changes they are looking to affect among whom, and how those changes links to their organization’s strategic plan and direction. Boards can articulate (or revisit) the desired outcomes and target audience of their education programs and consider narrowing their audience so they can measure impacts more definitively. Targeting “the public” may be too broad while targeting more specific audiences such as specific recreational groups, 5th and 6th grade teachers, and faith-based organizations (as only three examples) may be more measurable and may help make it easier to hone in on new and strategic partners whose missions align with watershed councils.

Seeking ‘the unlikely partner’ and reframing what you do

- Before writing grant proposals to keep existing programs going, I recommend that council staff take time to think through other ways of getting outdoor education goals met by piggybacking on other organizations’ events and programs and/or by launching out with new partners. Many councils are already doing this but we believe it will be even greater part of the approach going forward.
- Most existing OWEB outreach projects already involve multiple partners, so the answer may not be necessarily to “get more partners.” My observation is that many, if not most, partners of OWEB outreach grants have tended to be with more typical organizations (e.g. school districts, USFS, ODFW) and that there is much room for more innovation in partnering. This will require reframing existing education programs to attract new and “unlikely (or less likely) partners” (hospitals, public safety organizations, Community Cares organizations, corporations, workforce development organizations, the research community, and physical camps- see the list below for other examples).
- To prepare for being “partner ready,” councils can conduct an ‘asset-mapping’ exercise internally (that is, brainstorm “*what our council can offer a partner*”—is it GIS skills? Curricula? Teaching supplies? Conference call line, leveraged funding?). Have your list of assets ready to offer potential partners.
- Brainstorm which organizations are involved with issues related to human health, community development, food security, recreation (including sports), cultural resources, history, business and workforce development, youth development, education, rural development, tourism, diversity organizations, reading literacy. Align yourselves with new sectors that you may not have reached out to before by reframing what you do. Some examples:

- Health care** (e.g. non-profit hospitals with community benefit spending requirements. Note that there will be an Oregon Conservation Partnership webinar on August 24 at 10 a.m. to share more about community benefit spending requirements and what it might mean for watershed councils. Register at: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3518793834511083778>. Also see the section below on “Opportunities with the Health Care Sector”)
- Workforce/career development** (e.g. worksourceOregon.org and Northwest Youth Corps, high school career development staff and high school counselors)
- Art in nature** (e.g. Arts Education Program of the Oregon Art Commission)
- Kids and science** (e.g. STEMOregon.org)
- Recreation and tourism** (e.g. Travel Oregon, see Federation of Western Outdoor clubs directory at http://www.federationofwesternoutdoorclubs.org/fwoc_memberclubs.html) and Southern Oregon Visitors Association at <http://www.southernoregon.org/lodging> [for councils in the south])
- The history and humanities** (e.g. Oregon Cultural Trust or a tribal cultural resource department)
- Diversity/equity/inclusion (DEI)** (e.g. Latino Network’s Youth Arts and Culture Program)
- Youth development** (e.g. county OSU Extension 4-H programs or Oregon Master Naturalist Program volunteers. The Oregon Cultural Trusts website shows information on 289 non-profits focused on youth in Oregon)
- At-risk youth** (e.g. local ‘Communities that Care’ organizations, county juvenile departments, law enforcement, alternative high schools)
- Community investment** (infrastructure development. Local Oregon Department of Transportation offices)
- Economic development** (e.g. look up the Oregon Economic Development Association members such as business development corporations – member directory at <https://oeda.starchapter.com/directory.php>). Local Chambers of Commerce and economic development organizations such as North Santiam Economic Development Corporation.
- Community engagement and involvement** (e.g. Community Action Teams- see list by community at <https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/CRD/css/docs/homeless-referral-list.pdf>). Look up The Ford Family Foundation Field coordinators.
- Food systems** (e.g. Food banks)

Group exercise to do with your board/staff to stimulate creative partnerships:

Here is a powerful way to get your board and or staff thinking about new and creative partnerships, borrowed from the curriculum of Rural Development Initiatives (www.rdiinc.org). It is an inspiring way for a board or staff group to “think outside the box” in developing partnerships. The exercise should take 45-60 minutes and could be done at a board or staff meeting.

Step 1: At your meeting, have your board or staff brainstorm organizations and entities in the watershed in each of the following categories -the more outlandish, the better (note that the organizations don't have to have anything to do with water or the environment- in fact, be sure many *don't*). (10 minutes each. If you are short on time, divide the group into three groups and have each one assigned to one category).

- a. **Associations:** formal and informal groups and networks that are not directly associated with watershed work, plus those that are. Write each group on a different square post-it note in big letters using a Sharpie pen and post them on the wall in front of the group. (Use pink post-it notes)
- b. **Institutions and professional entities:** Formal entities such as city councils, schools, government agencies. Be as specific as possible (e.g. not city of Medford, but City of Medford Planning Department). Write each group on a different square post-it note in big letters using a Sharpie pen and post them on the wall in front of the group. (use blue post-it notes)
- c. **Economic Assets:** Where the financial capital is found in your region. Local businesses, financial institutions, philanthropists, local and state foundations. Who are donors and granting organizations? Write each group on a different post-it note in big letters using a Sharpie pen and post them on the wall in front of the group. (use yellow post-it notes).

Step 2: Once all the post-it notes are posted on the wall in front of the group, invite one board or staff member to come to the wall and pick two post-it notes from each color, for a total of six---- with their eyes closed (the facilitator may need to guide them so they don't trip). Then have the person read the six post-it notes out loud to the group as the facilitator writes them in large letters on a flip chart. Assign groups of 4-5 people to create a hypothetical watershed education project that involves all six organizations and entities as partners with your watershed council, including a project name. All entities must have a role either in funding, planning, delivery, promotion, evaluation, or other role. After 15 minutes, ask each group to describe their hypothetical project out loud to the whole group.

At first, you may hear groans as the groups try to come up with an education program that involves all seemingly unrelated groups with your watershed council (for example, the local senior center, credit union, seafood store, local gun club, varsity basketball team, and local Catholic church) but the process will allow the group to see how it is possible to create new projects with new partners.

Opportunities with the health care sector

Some watershed councils may find success in reframing their outdoor education to focus on the connection between nature and human health through relationships with their local hospitals and by learning the language and structure of health care organizations in their watershed.

Most hospitals in the U.S. operate as non-profit organizations and are exempt from paying taxes. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires these non-profit hospitals to conduct community health improvement activities that address preventative care and population health. The Willamette Partnership in Portland, under the leadership of Bobby Cochran, is exploring how this requirement can translate to partnerships between conservation organizations and the health care sector. The Willamette Partnership recently conducted a health care needs assessment to study this opportunity in the Willamette Region (and Seattle) and is expanding the assessment statewide this summer. Bobby presented a session at the 2016 Outdoor Education Summit in Newport called “*A Health Guideline for Outdoor and Environmental Education*” that discussed the intersection of environmental education and health outcomes where he described research that shows that mental health, social cohesion, and activities that foster empathy and sharing cultures are just as important as physical activity and nutrition in terms of drivers of health outcomes. He hypothesizes that this research opens the door for closer alliances between conservation and human health in Oregon.

For some watershed councils, he believes, there may be future opportunities to conduct nature-based education in partnership with (and funded by) non-profit hospitals. This requirement could give councils and districts an opening to deliver programs that promote community health linked with nature.

Until now, he says, much of the ‘community benefit spending’ hasn’t been related to prevention but rather for covering patients who can’t afford to pay – but given the mounting research-based evidence that nature exposure has a positive health effect, the Willamette Partnership is finding that some hospitals are interested in funding nature education/engagement focused on prevention and population health.

He adds that the health care sector has unique language and systems and it would require a genuine commitment on the part of conservation organizations to learn about the health care sector and reframe their education work with a health and health equity lens.

According to Bobby, “*Conservation groups have to show they’re serious about improving health before they ask for money [to do outdoor education]. That is likely to mean shifting who they engage with and how, applying a health equity lens to their work, and being open to meeting communities with health disparities. Hospitals/public health organizations are interested in nature. But it really has to be a two-way partnership.*”

The Oregon Conservation Partnership is hosting the Willamette Partnership for a webinar on August 24 at 10 a.m. to discuss this potential partnership opportunity. To register, click on <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3518793834511083778>.

Getting involved in regional and state level outdoor education leadership

There is a lot going on in Oregon in outdoor education and the story is evolving weekly. The Oregon Environmental Literacy program staff expressed that there is a need for stronger networks for environmental education in the regions; and they wished that all organizations involved in outdoor education within a region would have better knowledge of each other's programs and coordinate more across their regions, rather than each organization and their partners being primarily focused on their own delivery. It's possible that if councils are engaged at the strategic level, there is more chance to find partners and be first in line for funding opportunities.

Specifically council staff and volunteers could join:

- Regional Environmental Literacy Advisory groups
- Local outdoor school advisory committees (by school district or ESD)
- Environmental Education Association of Oregon membership and leadership

Funding sources for outdoor education

This section outlines several key public and private funding sources known to provide resources for environmental and outdoor education. They include federal, state, private, corporate, as well as a brief discussion of crowd-funding and fee-based outdoor education. Note that funding programs shift timelines and eligibility over time so each source should be researched independently on line.

Federal sources

❖ Bonneville Power Administration Science and Energy Education Grants

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education with emphasis on electric utilities, Includes hydroelectricity and environmental studies, Maximum amount: \$5,000.

<https://www.bpa.gov/PublicInvolvement/CommunityEducation/Pages/Education-Grants.aspx>

❖ Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Education Grants

The Environmental Education Grants Program has offered grants to organization that are a local education agency, state education or environmental agency, college or university, 501(c)(3) non-profit, noncommercial educational broadcasting entity, or tribal education agency.

In 2016, 3 grants were given in each of EPA's 10 regions (30 nationally). 25% non-federal match required. Protecting water was one of five key areas of the environmental education grants. Partnerships are encouraged for stronger proposals.

The Environmental Education Grants Program has supported environmental education projects that increase the public's awareness about environmental issues, and provide them with the knowledge and skills to take responsible actions to protect the environment. In the last two years, the grants have been focused regionally to build capacity on the state level.

See www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants

❖ NOAA Office of Education Grant Programs

Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) program (coastal)

The B-WET program funds locally relevant, experiential watershed related environmental learning in K-12 grades. This program promotes understanding to protect and restore watersheds and related ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems. B-WET is national in scope with 7 regional programs including the Pacific Northwest, see www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/awards.

The Environmental Literacy Program (ELP)

The ELP program promotes use of environmental information, and ocean, climate, and atmospheric literacy to a diverse group of educators, students, and the public. The grants have included professional development for K-12 and informal educators, field-based education, service learning, and exhibits at aquariums, museums and science centers that are all based on oceans, coastal ecosystems, Great Lakes, weather, and climate sciences. Grants: www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg/elg_award_search.php.

❖ National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

In FY 2017, NEA funded 19 grants for \$1.3 million in Oregon, with grants from \$10,000 to \$50,000. The current U.S. President's budget proposes elimination of NEA but they are still accepting applications for FY 18 (due Sept. 1). Among the relevant programs is a grant program called "Our Town" where organizations may apply for creative place-making projects that contribute to the livability of communities and through strategies that leverage arts, culture, and/or design toward achieving community goals. See <https://www.arts.gov/grants/apply-grant/grants-organizations>.

❖ National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF)

While NEEF does not accept unsolicited proposals, this grant program is worth knowing about. NEEF is the only Congressionally chartered non-profit for environmental education and among the national leaders in environmental education.

The majority of NEEF's grant making is through competitive grant award programs. Search on their website for current available funding opportunities and learn how to apply for a grant at <https://www.neefusa.org/grants>.

State sources

❖ Oregon Youth Conservation Corps

Community Stewardship Corps or Summer Conservation Corps

- Funding for youth work crews to complete projects including wetland/bank/stream restoration and invasive species removal

- Summer employment for youth, work skills training with an emphasis on education, focus on disadvantaged or at risk youth

Maximum amount: \$12,000

Letter of Interest due January, Application due mid-February

<http://www.oyccweb.com/grant-guidelines.html>

❖ **Oregon Department of Environmental Quality**

Nonpoint Source Implementation (also called 319 Grants)

-Technical assistance, site assessment, public awareness and education, training, technology transfer, demonstration projects, and monitoring

Maximum amount: \$30,000 (Funding this year is uncertain)

Applications due in May.

<https://www.oregon.gov/deq/wq/programs/Pages/Nonpoint-319-Grants.aspx>

Water-related Funding Sources

<https://www.oregon.gov/deq/wq/programs/Pages/DWP-Funding.aspx>

❖ **Oregon Cultural Trust**

Each county has a cultural coalition that receives a grant from the Oregon Cultural Trust for distribution to local grantees. Application deadlines vary by county (e.g. November 1 for Clatsop Cultural Coalition, and twice annually in December and May for the Baker Cultural Coalition). The Trust also has a statewide Cultural Development Grant program with applications due each April. All of the grants are funded by the Oregon Cultural Trust tax credit. The Cultural Trust seeks proposals that provide a *“statewide positive impact on, or improvement of, cultural resources and activities and the expansion of public and private support for culture.”* <http://culturaltrust.org/grants/>

Private foundations and non-profits

❖ **General**

General database of funders: <http://search.foundationcenter.org/#/i-want-to/2>

Grantspace: <http://grantspace.org/> (a blog of The Foundation Center for non-profit grant seekers)

The Foundation Center posts various Requests for Proposals (RFPs or immediate funding opportunities) at: <http://philanthropynewsdigest.org/rfps>. Viewers can search and scroll for new RFPs by type of funding such as ‘environment’ or ‘children.’

❖ **Charlotte Martin Foundation**

Enriching youth and preserving habitat, increasing opportunities for minority youth, conserving biodiversity in a changing climate. Priority given to smaller organizations in rural areas

Maximum amount: \$25,000, smaller projects encouraged. Application deadline: Sept 1, Announced Oct 15. <http://www.charlottesmartin.org/>

❖ **Collins Foundation**

Grants are considered on a bimonthly basis (apply two months ahead. Emphasis on Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity). Average grant: \$35,000, typically start from \$5,000 for small projects. Application deadline is Sept 1. <http://www.collinsfoundation.org/submission-guidelines>

❖ **Oregon Community Foundation Community Grant Program**

OCF's aim is to create positive, substantive change and attempt to resolve problems at their source, and advance equity, diversity and inclusion. They favor projects that have strong local support and address a significant community need. Grant amounts: \$5,000 to \$50,000 (average \$20,000). Deadlines twice annually: Jan 15 and July 15. <http://www.oregoncf.org/grants-scholarships/grants/community-grants>

❖ **Jubitz Family Foundation**

Innovative projects that protect the environment, support children, and promote peace or protect and restore natural forest and natural habitats throughout Oregon.

Amount: \$2,500-\$10,000 (The foundation gives about \$550,000 per year). Application deadlines: Sept 15 and March 15. <http://www.jubitz.org/application-guidelines>

❖ **Spirit Mountain Community Fund**

Education, Environmental Preservation

- Effective education for all, programs that build on the school experience
- Water quality, river habitat conservation and restoration, fish restoration, reducing toxic pollution

Will fund up to 50% of project budget, with a maximum of \$7,500 (small grants) and \$50,000-\$100,000 (large grants). Letters of Inquiry due July 11, Sept 5, and Nov 7.

<https://www.thecommunityfund.com/grants-programs/eligibility>

❖ **Union Pacific Foundation**

The Foundation has distributed funds since 1959 to qualified organizations in communities served by Union Pacific. Grant program is currently being updated. The next application period will open in April 2018 with grants awarded in September 2018. <https://www.up.com/aboutup/community/foundation/>

❖ **Gray Family Foundation**

This foundation has dedicated itself to promotion of environmental education. Formerly part of the Oregon Community Foundation, the Gray Family Foundation has been its own foundation since 2012.

The foundation gives priority to projects that seek to increase one or more of the following areas—either teacher education or direct services:

- Educators (K-12 teachers, administrators and informal educators) preparedness to integrate EE across subjects.
- Environmental educators' preparedness to support K-12 needs utilizing best practices and rigor.
- K-12 professionals' preparedness to use the natural and built community and systems as a context for learning.
- K-12 students' ability to collaborate, problem solve and apply critical thinking to local and global environmental issues.
- K-12 students' preparedness for success in careers inside and outside of the environmental field through increased participation in environmental education,
- Diversity of students and communities engaged in outdoor and environmental education learning experiences.

Preference will be given to proposals that commit:

- Dedicated staff time;
- K-12 administrative support;
- Expertise in environmental education, K-12 instruction, or community culture;
- Service to communities of color or historically marginalized populations.

Gray Family will consider proposals submitted by schools, districts, colleges, government agencies or 501(c)3 non-profit organizations serving Oregon. <http://grayff.org/grants-overview/>

❖ **Bill Healy Foundation**

Grants primarily support projects in Oregon and Hawaii focused on Environmental Conservation and/or The Well Being of Children. Offer both small and large grants. Often, first time requests will be small grants. Applications due 2nd Friday in December awarded in May.

Small Grants: Oregon & Hawaii: \$1,000 to \$25,000, Large Grants: Oregon & Hawaii: \$26,000 to \$75,000.

<http://www.billhealyfoundation.org/granting2013.html>

❖ **Project Learning Tree (PLT)**

Project Learning Tree works to advance environmental literacy and stewardship through excellence in environmental education, professional development, and curriculum resources through its GreenWorks! Grants program. Small grants of up to \$1,000 must involve at least one community partner with a school. 50 percent match required (in-kind acceptable). Open to any PLT-trained educator.

Applications due: September 30. <https://www.plt.org/resources/greenworks-grants/>

❖ **Captain Planet Foundation**

Grants serve as a means of bringing environment-based education to schools, and to inspire youth and communities to participate in community service through environmental stewardship activities.

Deadline: September 30, 2017

<http://www.captainplanetfoundation.org/>

❖ **Walton Family Foundation**- Funds both Environment and K-12 education categories.

For environment projects, letters of inquiry should be addressed to:

The Walton Family Foundation

ATTN: Letter of Inquiry

919 18th Street, NW, Suite 650

Washington, DC 20006

<http://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/>

❖ **Pisces Foundation**

This foundation aims to advance strategic solutions to natural resource challenges and prepare the next generation by supporting environmental education. They are rooted in California but seek impact beyond it. Funding categories include water resources and environmental education.

<http://piscesfoundation.org/about-us/our-purpose/>

Corporate funds

Watershed councils have seemed to have the best luck partnering with companies for corporate sponsorships of specific activities and events (especially where their products can be donated and featured) and those that are related to outdoor recreation. This includes companies such as Patagonia, Columbia Sportswear, Cabela's, Kettle Chips, and REI. Health organizations such as Kaiser Permanente have helped fund some council activities. Community Banks, local software companies, and forest companies have provided funding as well. Many larger companies such as Columbia Sportswear have community liaison staff (such as Jennifer Lutman at Columbia Sportswear at jlutman@columbia.com).

Charity donation-based Crowd funding

Wikipedia describes 'charity donation-based crowdfunding' as the collective effort of individuals to help charitable causes. While some of the best known crowdfunding platforms include Kickstarter and gofundme, there are some sites that are dedicated to environmental causes. For example, Worthwild is a crowdfunding platform for environmentally-conscious businesses, nonprofits, and individuals that want to raise money to fund projects that protect and sustain the planet. Worthwild emphasizes that the most successful campaigns will most likely be won through support from networks with whom organizations have already made connections. <http://www.worthwild.com/about>

Fee-based education programs

Some environmental organizations have launched innovative fee-based programs such as nature education-themed birthday parties, including the City of Portland Parks and Recreation Department's nature-based birthday parties (see Case Studies below). Modeled after what could be called the "Chuck E. Cheese Restaurant approach," (Chuck E. Cheese is a youth-oriented restaurant that provides pizza, drinks, party hosts, and customizable email invitations for birthdays) This approach is an example of a cost-recovery approach that could become part of a portfolio of fundraising opportunities for councils (Chuck E. Cheese charges \$14-24 per child for a birthday event, depending on the level of services provided).

Network of Oregon Watershed Councils (NOWC)

NOWC is mentioned in the list of funders because of our connection to funders who look to the Network as a single contact point for funding watershed councils. For example, NOWC recently connected watershed councils that are members of the Network with a Vermont-based non-profit organization called **onetreepanted.org** that links corporate donors and tree planting projects around the world. Funders sometimes approach NOWC because of the efficiency and convenience of one contact rather than needing to contact many individual councils. This link to funding sources is a benefit of NOWC membership.

Case studies

Watershed education partnerships

(Felicity Dyllal, NOWC intern)

Case #1: Unique partnerships

Crooked River Watershed Council and Crooked River School District and Career Tech Education

One way that the Crooked River Watershed Council (CRWC) accomplishes its education goals is to partner with Crook County High School on classroom and field classes on public lands policy, fire, and forest management for high school students. These classes offer college credits and help students explore a career path. The classroom portion is funded by the school district, while the field trips are supported by OWEB. The program costs approximately \$66,000 per year, and OWEB's portion is less than \$25,000. Local partners provide the majority of the funding, including a \$15,000 contribution of Title III funds approved by the Crook County Commissioners.

Watershed Council Council Coordinator Chris Gannon feels fortunate to have their OWEB grant funded for more than one biennium. He attributes their continued funding to a good match between their program and what OWEB is able to fund. He notes that they carefully avoid the word 'education' in their proposals.

Chris's advice for watershed councils is to design a long-term program that reflects community values and involves local partners. Crook County has a strong natural resource orientation economically, so Crooked River Watershed Council's program is a good fit.

"Take your proposal to local partners first and build momentum. Get the local community invested. Having community support already in place makes it much easier for OWEB to approve your proposal," says Chris.

Chris advises councils to aim to get over half the program dollars, both cash and in kind, from local partners. A modest ask improves chances of competing well for grant funds, he believes.

Crooked River Watershed Council has increased their partner funding slightly over the few years, leading to smaller portion of the total funds provided through OWEB. Chris thinks this makes their repeated funding requests to OWEB more favorable, as it shows they care about keeping costs down and not assuming OWEB will fund them.

Case #2: Integrating education with restoration projects

Rogue River Watershed Council

The Rogue River Watershed Council's strategic plan is focused on projects on the ground, and they see outreach as an important component to be woven into every project. They don't run stand-alone educational programs but are trying to include an outreach aspect in each of their restoration grants. For this council, education isn't separate from restoration but an intentional, integrated part of the whole.

The Rogue River Watershed Council was created in 2015 by merging four smaller local watershed councils: Little Butte Creek, Bear Creek, Upper Rogue, and the Stream Restoration Alliance of the Middle Rogue. The council has five staff members. They inherited partners, projects, and funding from their previous entities, but as a new council some projects are in progress, others are just getting off the ground.

The Council has focused its outreach goals mainly on landowners and the public, with little K-12 programming. They use signs, brochures, and flyers combined with public presentations and exhibit tables at many community events such as Earth Day, public land cleanups, stewardship days sponsored by other entities, and their own "Kids and Creeks" fall streamside cleanup event. They have a "stream table" sandbox with running water that they take to events and summer camps to provide interactive learning for kids. Rogue River also sends out a quarterly newspaper to around 500 community members. Each issue has a theme, and presents what is going on "under the surface" in regards to spawning and migration, features different species, and promotes resources to learn more about the watershed. As the council begins to complete streamside projects, they hope to include tours as part of their public outreach efforts.

Rogue River Watershed Council has never received outreach grants from OWEB, but has written educational components into some of their other OWEB grants. They have also received a handful of grants from private foundations, the Department of Environmental Quality, and the Bureau of Land Management. Rogue River gets support from partnerships with other organizations, some of which provide funding and others which help by getting the word out or through technical assistance. These partnerships have included city planning and public works departments, irrigation districts, water masters, and ditch associations; water treatment services, fishing clubs, rafting programs (for pictures), contractors who are willing to volunteer their services, school districts, landowners, and local plant nurseries. Rogue River Watershed Council is also part of the Rogue Basin Partnership, a team of the regional watershed councils and natural resource agencies and organizations that work together to create larger projects across the basin.

Case #3: Fee-based outdoor education programming Portland Parks and Recreation Department

The City of Portland Parks & Recreation hosts about 20 nature-themed birthday parties per year for 3-10 year olds that enable the department to accomplish outdoor education on a cost-recovery basis. According to Chrissy Larson, Parks and Recreation environmental education coordinator, many parents find the nature birthday party option considerably more affordable than other types of themed birthday events and venues (such as pool rentals). Chrissy calculates that the price (\$80 - \$100 for groups up to 10 plus \$50 in addition for groups of 11 to 20) pays for the 2.5 hours of staff time and craft supplies. Portland Parks & Recreation conducts extensive summer programs, so they do not offer the birthday parties June through August, when they would be most in demand.

The format is less formal than a school field trip and resembles a summer camp. Having the right staff personality - someone who can draw kids in, make it exciting and be creative with down time - is essential to creating a birthday atmosphere. Their parties include crafts, a story, a game, lots of exploration time, and minimal lesson planning. Bigger parks with more wild area work well for older youth. Keeping the structure more free-form and child-directed help kids have a meaningful time in natural setting. While not as knowledge-packed as a school field trip, the impact of connecting a child to nature and associating wild spaces with fun can fuel a long-lasting desire to learn more.

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/462732>

10 things that watershed councils can do now

1. Contact your local Education Service District now to find out the contacts for outdoor school planning in each school district in your watershed and the status of outdoor school planning for their district. Market your staff to them as a contractible resource for outdoor school planning and implementation. OSU Extension is currently conducting an inventory of local contacts and will be posting them on the *Outdoor School for All* website at <http://www.outdoorschoolforall.org/> as they learn about them. But don't wait for this list: call your school districts and ESDs now- it's reported that some schools hope to launch yet this fall.
2. Contact and offer to join your local Outdoor School Advisory committee that will help guide outdoor school in your region (only a few councils are represented on these committees so far). A list of Regional Leader Teams is at <http://oelp.oregonstate.edu/who-we-are>.
3. Make sure that your organization's mission statement includes education so when you are writing proposals to funders, your proposal clearly says that educating kids/public is a core part of your mission. Reframe what you do and look for overlap with other sectors- look for the 'unlikely partners.'

4. Join the Environmental Education Association of Oregon and subscribe to Clearing Magazine to stay on the leading edge of outdoor education in Oregon. CLEARING is a 501c3 non-profit organization serving the environmental education community throughout the Pacific Northwest (www.clearingmagazine.org).
5. Set up a gotomeeting (video conference) with other neighboring watershed councils and look for synergies and efficiencies (if your council is a member of NOWC, you can use our gotomeeting license and we will help you set it up).
6. Map your organization's assets (skills, equipment, knowledge, relationships etc) and have it ready in a document to offer new partners.
7. Conduct a group exercise to stimulate creative partnerships with your board (see page 9 for instructions).
8. Get familiar with the Next Generation Science Standards, the Oregon Social Sciences Standards and the Oregon Environmental Literacy Strands and use them to get on board with your local outdoor school planning committees.
9. Be clear on your desired outcomes – find your niche in your watershed. Don't be all to all. Focus. Target your audience.

And finally.....looking ahead...

Plan to attend the next annual Outdoor Education Summit in your area [once the dates are set] and enthusiastically network with people there.

<https://www.oregonoutdoored.org/summits/>. Contact Alicia Brady at alicia@oregonoutdoored.org for more information or watch the website.

Resources for councils

Tools of Engagement: Toolkit for Engaging People in Conservation (National Audubon and EETAP, USFW, Together Green) 2011. <https://naaee.org/sites/default/files/toolsofengagement.pdf>

Evaluating Your EE Programs: A Workbook for Practitioners, <https://naaee.org/eeopro/publication/evaluating-your-environmental-education-programs-workbook-practitioners>

Clearing Magazine - the primary print and online periodical for environmental education in the Pacific Northwest. <http://clearingmagazine.org/>

For updates on Outdoor School at the state level: www.outdoorschoolforall.org

Benefits of environmental education - the science.. (to use in grant proposal writing):

<https://www.neefusa.org/nature/water/benefits-environmental-education>

or

<http://grayff.org/research-on-the-effects-of-outdoor-school/>

Key people to know about

- Larry Beutler, Clearing Magazine, managing editor, www.clearingmagazine.org
- Theresa Crain, Environmental Education Association of Oregon office administrator, <http://www.eeao.org/index.php/contact/staff-contractors-contact-list> (503) 857-7884
- Rachael Bashor (Program officer) and Nancy Bales (Exec Director), Gray Family Foundation, <http://grayff.org/>
- Susan Sahnaw, OSU Extension, Oregon Natural Resource Education Program, susan.sahnaw@oregonstate.edu
- Bobby Cochran at Willamette Partnership—cochran@willamettepartnership.org, (503) 208-3448