



Year in Review

2022-2023
HIGHLIGHTS



Lower Columbia
Estuary
Partnership



Letter from the Director

DEAR FRIENDS OF THE LOWER COLUMBIA,
AFTER 2022'S MONUMENTAL ACCOMPLISHMENT OF COMPLETING THE STEIGERWALD RECONNECTION PROJECT, we entered this past year ready and eager to take on new challenges and projects. And wow, has our team stayed busy!

First, some big news. We secured full funding for the East Fork Lewis River Reclamation Project, which beginning in 2024 will restore a section of the East Fork where the river has overtaken abandoned gravel mines, causing slow and warm waters that can be lethal to salmon.

Climate change remains on the top of our minds. We are experiencing another record-breaking hot summer, and salmon, native plants, and other species are paying the price. To lend our support, we began meetings with communities along Baker Bay and Grays Bay to co-create solutions to sea level rise. We are also studying the potential for lower river wetlands to emit and capture greenhouse gases, thanks to a federal investment from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed in 2021.

This incredible investment has also allowed us to expand some of our other work, like improving habitat upstream from Steigerwald to further enhance water quality in the refuge.

And I should mention that we're not even done at Steigerwald. Crews worked over the winter to plant an additional 135,000 trees and shrubs, plus an additional 10,000 planted by 229 volunteers and 428 students who

got to learn on the refuge this school year. Our Monitoring Team will track changes at the site over time, to ensure the project meets habitat targets and informs future restoration. If you haven't visited the refuge yet, it's almost a completely new experience.

With multiple **stormwater projects** in progress from Washougal to the Portland metro area to Ilwaco, our water quality work is growing fast. These projects will reduce toxics entering the Columbia and its tributaries. We are also beginning a new study of toxic contaminants in the Columbia River—data that has been missing from our knowledge since an initial 2008 study.

Meanwhile, our Community Programs Team members are engaging students and community members with the river in new and well-rooted ways. Nearly 500 3rd and 4th grade students went through a new extensive, year-long environmental science program with our educators. We also held a record number of volunteer events—38 opportunities for community members to get a little dirty for a good cause planting native trees, mulching, pulling weeds, and building stormwater boxes.

I invite you to see just a few of the projects we have been up to on the other side of this report.

I am so fortunate to work every day with an incredibly talented and dedicated group of scientists and educators. Thank you for all the ways you support our community and our river.



E. ELAINE PLACIDO, DPA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The National Estuary Program

The Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership is a 501c(3) nonprofit and a National Estuary Program. The National Estuary Program was authorized by 1987 amendments to the Clean Water Act to create 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 a critical ecosystem that feed us,

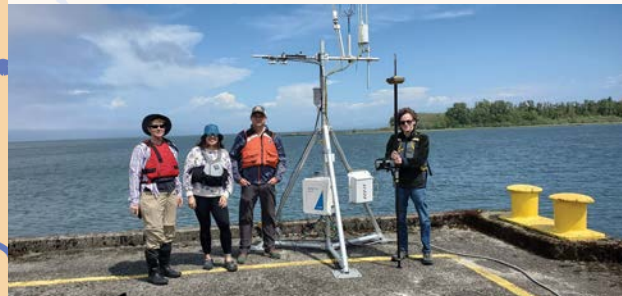
drive our economy, nourish abundant fish and wildlife, and provide a home to vibrant river and coastal communities. The States of Oregon and Washington and the US EPA established the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership in 1995 to address the numerous issues facing the river, from habitat loss to toxic contamination to emerging issues like climate change.



Scientific Research

METHANE RESEARCH

We began a study to measure the methane and other greenhouse gases released and taken up by tidal wetlands in the estuary. This will help entities across the region integrate climate change into restoration designs.



Improving Water Quality

Designed a new stormwater project at the Rainier Boat Launch. Additional projects are planned in Ilwaco and Washougal, Washington; Portland and Clackamas, Oregon; and along the Scappoose-Longview industrial corridor.



Connecting Kids to the Columbia

A grant from the Washington Office of Superintendent for Public Instruction and Recreation and Conservation Office allowed us to deliver a full year-long program to 477 students from 6 Clark and Cowlitz county schools, including Fruit Valley Elementary. These programs included five schoolyard lessons and three field trips to different natural areas—17 hours of science instruction per student.

- 2,965 students reached in the 2022-2023 school year

Restoring Habitat

LOWER EAST FORK RIVER

Secured full funding for the Lower East Fork Reclamation Project. The project will regrade and reconnect 300 acres of floodplain and restore the river where it flows through nine abandoned mining pits after the flood of 1996. The project will also reduce flood and erosion risks to nearby property owners and infrastructure.

Read more: estuarypartnership.org/efr

- Since 2000, 35,342 acres have been restored across the region.



THE LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER stretches 146 river miles from the mouth of the river upstream to Bonneville Dam. Over three million people live in the lower Columbia River area. Our 30 staff have been busy educating, organizing volunteer events, restoring rivers, cleaning stormwater, and advancing scientific research. Here are just a few highlights of our work.



Connecting the Community to the Columbia - Volunteerism

The Estuary Partnership has worked alongside volunteers to improve habitat at the Sandy River Delta since 2014. This year, we created additional stewardship opportunities, engaging volunteers to help native plants thrive. This is also the site where we are working to restore First Foods alongside Confluence and Tribal partners.

- 616 Volunteers engaged across the region
- Students and volunteers planted 25,941 trees and shrubs



INVESTMENTS IN THE WATERS AND ECOSYSTEMS OF THE LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER IN 2022-2023

In 2022-2023, we raised \$14.33 for every \$1 from the US EPA National Estuary Program, leveraging \$11.5 million and creating 60 jobs. With the economic multiplier, that is a total impact of \$19,155,422 across our region.

BASE FUNDERS

Oregon State • Washington State • US Environmental Protection Agency

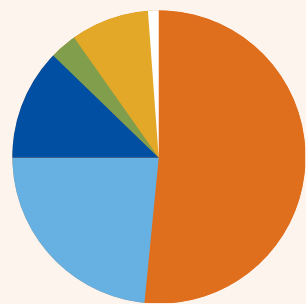
GRANTORS

U.S. EPA • Bonneville Power Administration • Washington Recreation and Conservation Office • Washington Department of Ecology • U.S. Forest Service • Floodplains By Design • Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District • Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board • Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office • Oregon State Marine Board • Gray Family Foundation • Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board • City of Vancouver • Clark County • Port of Vancouver • Clackamas Water Environment Services • East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District • Metro • Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District • City of Portland, Bureau of Environmental Services • Camas-Washougal Community Chest

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WHERE 2023 FUNDS WENT*



- 54% Restoring Habitat
- 21% Other Technical Programs (Monitoring & Data)
- 12% Community Programs (Education, Volunteer, Paddles)
- 3% Stormwater
- 9% General & Administrative
- <1% Fundraising

**preliminary, unaudited*

DONATED VOLUNTEER INVESTMENTS

	Hours	Value
Board Members	272.5	\$21,800
Professional Services	5,948.5	\$399,680
Student Service Learning	11,128	\$176,935
Parent and Teacher Volunteers	2,404	\$76,447
Planting and Community Volunteers	2,773	\$94,553
Other Goods and Services	-	\$6,837
TOTAL	22,526	\$776,252

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