

TUALATIN RIVERKEEPERS® 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Empowering the community to protect, restore, and enjoy the Tualatin River



Photo by Curtis Heikkinen

EDUCATION



Tualatin Riverkeepers' education program offers outdoor, hands-on experiences dedicated to teaching youth of all ages holistic watershed approaches that support the development of a sense of wonder and rootedness in the Pacific Northwest. The goal of the education program is to promote watershed thinking, an understanding that wherever we are the choices we make impact our ecosystem, plants, animals, and other people. TRK's education program strives to create opportunities for children to foster a connection with the natural world and help make learning fun. After all, our motto is "Clean Water, Dirty Kids"!

In February 2016, TRK hired Charissa Jones as the Environmental Educator, beginning a year of both transition and growth for the education program. With the support of our dedicated Volunteer Naturalists, our Field Trips Program expanded to include a fall session to ensure that there are ample opportunities to serve local K-8th grade students. We were able to host over 1,400 students on 28 field trips in 2016 with 60% of the schools being Title I.

TRK reaches youth through three main programs: field trips, nature camps and community opportunities. Community work is grounded on pioneering collaboration with institutions such as Community Partners for Affordable Housing and *Adelante Mujeres*, ensuring that youth from a truly global background are exposed to what makes the Tualatin magical. In order to continue to provide valuable experiences for youth and their families, we seek out partnerships that can provide us with resources and mentorship. The education program has put in a strong effort to continue strengthening old and developing new partnerships with organizations such as the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge. The Portland Metro STEM Partnership has also been instrumental in helping to provide professional development towards improving our curricula and program design.

Heading into 2017, we are strengthening our aim to instill curiosity and excitement for nature in our youth, and hope that the students of today become the Watershed Stewards of tomorrow.

RECREATION



The popularity of the Tualatin River as a dynamic river to explore via kayak, canoe or SUP continued to increase and our number of hosted paddlers continued to rise. Through all of our Trips & Tours programs, TRK Paddle Trip Leader Volunteers guided hundreds of paddlers on a variety of river experiences.

Continuing our goal of reaching out to everyone who calls our watershed home, we hosted a number of well-attended paddle trips with local groups such as Unite Oregon and Muslim Educational Trust, social justice partners who advocate for immigrant and refugee rights. Sharing stories of their experiences with waterways and natural areas from their homelands as we enjoyed a leisurely paddle helped us all connect to the Tualatin River watershed.

TRK's summer staff launched close to 2,000 paddlers from our Cook Park Boat Rentals in Tigard. After spending quality time on the river, 250 new families decided to become official Riverkeepers through membership. We continued to spread the word and let people find out for themselves that the Tualatin River offers a paddling experience that is fun, safe and accessible for everyone.

TRK's annual events added another year to their tallies. In June, we hosted our 27th Annual Tualatin River Discovery Day. Families from *Adelante Mujeres* also participated in our summer *Rumbo al Rio* (Heading to the River) paddle and education event. Some of the high school aged participants have been attending this event since they were in kindergarten! Paddlers who participated in our Persons with Disabilities Paddle found that most disabled persons can enjoy paddling with little or no modifications to kayaks or canoes. Local elected officials flexed their muscles and their paddling skills at our annual Politicians Paddle Race in August.

Through offering memorable experiences on our waters and green spaces, our recreation program is fast-tracking interest in the river while generating enthusiasm for community participation in all of our programs.

ADVOCACY



Watershed Watch, Tualatin Riverkeepers' environmental advocacy program, promotes clean waterways and healthy ecosystems. This program is the residents' voice for clean water, helping to steer water management agencies in the direction of conservation and advocate for progressive development that safeguards our waters. In 2016, TRK was fortunate to participate in a variety of advocacy measures for clean water as well as forge new career training opportunities for Latino and Muslim immigrant communities in Washington County.

Clean Water Services is in the midst of updating Phase 1 of their Design and Construction Standards for managing water resources. TRK has been working with their engineers to learn more about how to advocate for progressive measures during the process. Phase 1 includes a new 1,000 square foot impact area, water quality treatment threshold, and prioritization of Low Impact Development Approaches (LIDA) as the first consideration for water quality treatment.

City of Tigard is working to create a new Stormwater Master Plan to protect people and property from flood events, manage the stormwater pipe system, and enhance streams and floodplains. TRK has been working with the city and advocating for utilizing improved LIDA approaches as the plan has not been updated in nearly 20 years.

TRK is proud to announce that the eight week classroom portion of our Urban Forestry Jobs Training program successfully wrapped up at the end of the year (certificate presentation above). Coordinating with our partners *Centro Cultural* and Muslim Educational Trust, students have learned about urban forestry and the career pathways it can provide. Students are matched with paid internships in diverse locales ranging from the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge to the City of Cornelius.

TRK's watchdog capabilities are a constant reminder that our staff and volunteers will be working to ensure the Clean Water Act remains enforced and that innovative environmental solutions are utilized for the health of our river.

RESTORATION



Tualatin Riverkeepers' restoration program plans, installs, and maintains large-scale restoration projects. Based on watershed-level planning and prioritization, the program links community members to the restoration process, connecting multiple generations in unique and fun service projects where residents can feel the tangible benefit of planting trees and improving water quality along the Tualatin River and its tributaries.

TRK advanced restoration on several fronts this past year, spearheading community conservation events in multiple cities and also piloting our innovative climate change adaptation project in partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society.

In Sherwood, we worked in collaboration with Friends of Trees, city staff and various communities of faith to enhance spectacular Woodhaven Park. Volunteers worked tirelessly to improve the ecological integrity of the forest near key seasonal water sources. In Tigard's Cook Park, TRK continued its partnership with the city and PSU Indigenous Studies to plant native species and highlight the value of Indigenous people's voices in the restoration process.

In the late spring, TRK brought out yearling cattle to graze on approximately ten acres of privately-owned wet prairie called Butler Mitigation Bank, just west of the Progress Ridge area in Beaverton. Baseline vegetation monitoring plots were established and monitored throughout a month-long grazing period. This helped us understand what plant species the cattle preferred and when vegetation was reduced enough to remove the cattle. The cattle were effective in reducing thatch and biomass, and provided a needed disturbance to allow us to improve plant diversity through fall seeding. More importantly, this work opens the door for more innovative thought around restoration with the agricultural community.

TRK is honored to lead and collaborate in not only public engagement projects for restoration, but also in partnerships with agriculturalists and environmentalists that are novel for Washington County.



TUALATIN RIVERKEEPERS

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OUR MISSION

Tualatin Riverkeepers (TRK) is a community-based organization working to protect and restore Oregon's Tualatin River system. TRK builds watershed stewardship through education, public access to nature, restoration and advocacy.

The Tualatin Riverkeepers became a nonprofit in 1992 and is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

503-218-2580

www.tualatinriverkeepers.org



Tualatin Riverkeepers is proud to be a Waterkeeper Alliance Member.



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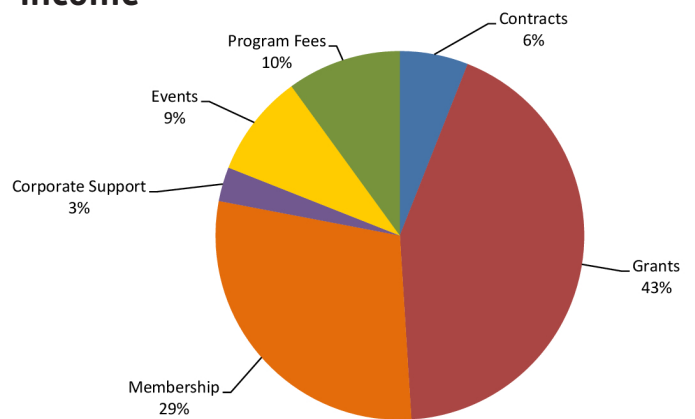
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