

# 2023 IMPACT REPORT





Dear Friends,

I would like to express my deep gratitude and appreciation. In 2023, with the support of our community partners and program funders, we worked to expand our programming and develop resources for the diverse communities we engage. **Thank you.**

The hard work and passion of our team propelled another successful year. Their enthusiasm in the classroom and outdoors changes how students learn and perceive the world around them. **Thank you.**

I would especially like to thank Bethany Thomas, my dear friend and fellow co-founder. Bethany and I began ECO programs because the connection students have with nature when they are young impacts how they grow to care for it. After more than 20 years of working side by side, she is stepping down from her role as Board President to focus on her work with Earth Day Oregon and pursue new endeavors. She will remain a strong presence on ECO's Advisory Board. I am deeply grateful for her ongoing commitment and dedication to our mission. **Thank you.**

In 2023, we welcomed new team members and began delivering lessons in Spanish in 16 new classrooms at four schools through our new program, Aves Compartidas (shared birds). We secured copyrights for our Place-Based Units (PBUs) and worked to develop our online curriculum library. This year, we are excited to work with an Encore Fellow to roll out our PBUs for educators across the Pacific Northwest. We are working to deepen collaboration and strengthen our collective innovation to empower the next generation of environmental stewards and leaders. We are grateful to do this work together. **Thank you.**

In Community,



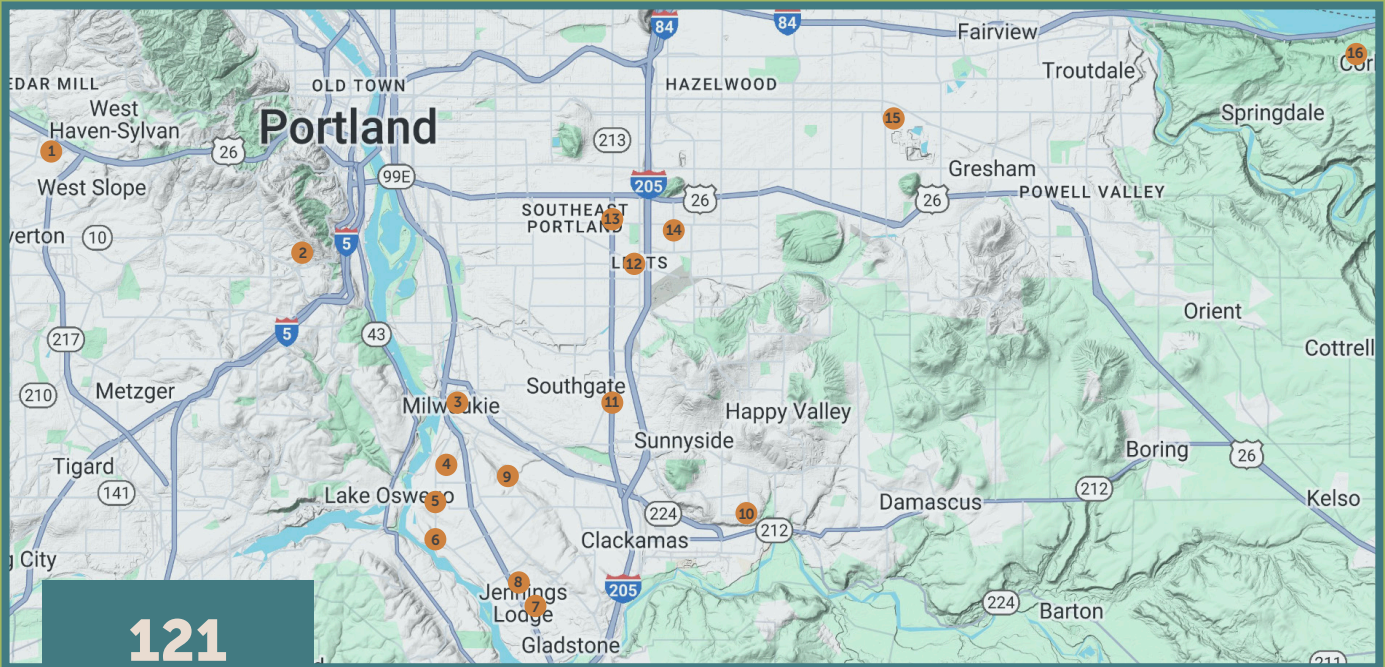
Sarah Woods

Co-Founder, Executive Director



# ECO PROGRAMS

Our programs are made possible by funding partners and community organizations who share our vision, nonprofits who bring knowledge and know-how, and businesses and individuals committed to bringing hands-on ecology and climate action to students across the Pacific Northwest.



**121**

Classroom  
Lessons

**3540**

Students

**112**

Teachers  
Supported

**124**

Field  
Experiences

**16**

Schools

## In 2023, our partnership with Corbett Grade School turned 13!

After 13 years of building relationships with their K-6th teachers and students, we are part of their school culture. We are thankful they prioritize place-based education because we're passionate about delivering it.

**“ECO is a valuable asset to our students. It provides important experiences for kids regarding local, natural resources and species that we otherwise don't have the time or resources to teach in such depth. We love ECO!”** *Teacher, Corbett Grade School*

(1) Rachel Carson School of Environmental Science (2) Robert Gray Middle School (3) Milwaukie El Puente Bilingual School (4) Oak Grove Elementary (5) New Urban High School (6) Riverside Elementary (7) Candy Lane Elementary (8) Rex Putnam High School (9) View Acres Elementary (10) Clackamas High School (11) Lot Whitcomb Elementary (12) Kelly Elementary (13) Marysville Elementary (14) Oliver P. Lent Elementary (15) Alder Elementary (16) Corbett Grade School



**3630**  
Classroom  
Contact Hours

**4830**  
Field  
Contact Hours

Thanks to the **Honda USA Foundation**, our work in outer SE Portland schools entered the 13th year with engaging lessons and stewardship opportunities for 360 students. Third through fifth graders at Lent, Kelly, and Marysville Elementary schools created native wildlife habitats on their school grounds while exploring our place-based STEAM lessons in and out of the classroom.

**Clackamas Water Environment Services** brought our Building Stewardship through Watershed Education program to Whitcomb Elementary and Clackamas High School. First through fifth graders explored native and invasive plants, erosion, and conservation through in-class lessons and hands-on stewardship of the school rain garden. High schoolers participated in our Climate Action program, learning about environmental justice, how climate change impacts watershed health, and actions to steward healthy communities.

**Oak Lodge Water Services** brought our Ecology Enrichment Program to fourth and fifth graders at View Acres and Oak Grove Elementary schools. Students dove into northwest ecology, land use, and the water cycle and engaged in service learning projects. High school students at Rex Putnam and New Urban explored their ability to affect positive change through our Climate Action program and on-site restoration projects in partnership with Clackamas River Basin Council.

Our Metro Middle School Watershed Restoration Program entered its seventh year along Johnson and Trillium Creeks with the support of the **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation**, **Avangrid Foundation**, and the **Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District**. These stream systems span two significant watersheds in Multnomah and Washington counties. Over 700 Rachel Carson School of Environmental Science and Robert Gray Middle School students conducted biological assessments and macroinvertebrate surveys and evaluated native plant density. They removed invasives and planted natives to restore the health and biodiversity of these crucial ecosystems.

Aves Compartitadas engaged third through fifth-grade students at Candy Lane, Riverside, Milwaukie/El Puente, and Alder Elementary schools in our migratory bird education program with funding from the **Metro Nature in Neighborhoods** grant program. Aves is a Spanish language program that combines cultural exchange, classroom lessons, and habitat restoration, providing a holistic approach to conservation education that is culturally specific and explores the interconnectedness of aquatic, terrestrial, and human habitats.



NEW PROGRAM

# AVES COMPARTIDAS



**“The experience of collaboration opens paths for understanding the cultural and environmental differences and similarities between watersheds. The students could perceive that although their pen pals are far away they share likes and interests.”** *Jalil Aragon, Aves Compartidas Coordinator and Instructor, Laja Basin*

In 2022, we began exploring an alliance with the Willamette-Laja Twinning Partnership (WLTP), thanks to an introduction by former ECO board member Dan Prince. WLTP was established in 2012 through a Thiess International Riverprize with a mission focused on habitat restoration, species recovery, and community education.

From the first conversations between ECO’s Director, Sarah Woods, and Tara Davis, WLTP’s late Founder and Director, it was evident collaboration would strengthen both organizations’ efforts in ecological restoration, environmental education, and community engagement, especially involving Latinx communities.

After Tara’s unexpected passing in the summer of 2023, Sarah began conversations with the WLTP team to explore ways to carry their mission forward. With the encouragement of funders and community partners, the WLTP staff decided to bring their Aves Compartidas program to ECO, carrying on the work Tara began.

Aves connects students in Mexico’s Laja Basin and Oregon’s Willamette Valley through migratory birds and provides a thrilling way for students to connect and share experiences, learn about ecological challenges, and share in conservation efforts. Aves brings a unique approach to climate action and dynamic content to our growing Spanish immersion programs at Oregon Title I schools.



## PLACE-BASED UNIT SPOTLIGHT

# OREGON LANDS

With funding from the **Gray Family Foundation**, we revised our Land Conservation lesson to develop Oregon Lands, a multidisciplinary Place-Based Unit to shed light on historical injustices, empower students to participate in conservation efforts, and see themselves reflected in stories about the land. This is an important component of our DEIJ commitment to ensure our curriculum is culturally relevant and meets the needs of the students and communities we engage.

Oregon Lands builds on two lessons developed by a skilled team of tribal members and educators for the Oregon Department of Education's Tribal History/Shared History Curriculum: Geography and Mapping Traditional Lands and Getting to Know Native Americans in Oregon. We are so pleased with the result and have delivered the units to Marysville, Lent, and Kelly Elementary schools in Southeast Portland and the Siuslaw Watershed Council on the central Oregon coast.

**“It is holistic in that it speaks to the restoration of relationships—both ecological and cultural. There is a strong commitment to equity, and making sure all voices are heard.”** *Katie Lynch, University of Oregon*

# DEIJ IS CENTRAL

Our board of directors and staff created a road map for the next three years, putting equity and resilience front and center. Our strategic plan builds toward a shared leadership structure, prioritizes the development of more culturally responsive curricula through partnerships, and further expands our programs into under-resourced communities.

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice are central to our strategic vision. DEIJ is a lens through which we can further develop our curriculum, guide our partnerships, and strengthen our organizational structure. We believe equity in ecological education is essential to the health of our communities and planet - as are people's diverse cultural histories and world views.



# THANK YOU FOR A SUCCESSFUL YEAR

In 2023, we were generously gifted **\$114,830** throughout the year to support **3540** students in classrooms and in natural areas that helped them understand the connection between nature and their own lives. Individual donors, local Oregon businesses and corporations, foundations and government agencies, school districts, and other nonprofit organizations all contributed to our mission to empower the next generation of environmental scientists, advocates, and stewards.

**“ECO continue[s] to be one of the most innovative and fearless ecological education outfits around.”** *Dan Prince, Former ECO Board Secretary*



## INCOME

- 53.8% Foundation & Government Grants
- 17.4% Programs
- 28.8% Individual & Corporate Donors



## EXPENSE

- 49.74% Programs
- 31.21% Operations
- 19.05% Fundraising





## STAFF

Sarah Woods, Co-founder & Executive Director  
 Julie Baweja, Program Advisor  
 Alexandra Gordon, Program Manager  
 Carina Zehr, Program Manager  
 Sebastian Witherow, Partnership Coordinator  
 Paul Foreman, Educator  
 Deaven Edmonson, Administrative Coordinator

## BOARD

Bethany Thomas, Co-founder  
 Amber Clark  
 Brian Dunnaville  
 Mindy Stutzman  
 Rachel Rudwall  
 Amanda Beckwith  
 Kelly Marchione  
 Shelley Peng

*Thank you to the board and staff who were part of our journey in 2023: Wasim Muklashy, Jami Haaning, Lara Jones, Christopher Peñuelas, Andy McGee, Olivia Clingman-White, Zach Taylor.*



**ECO inspires students to care for nature and their communities through hands-on science education and climate action.**

**Thank you for making our mission possible.**



## Thank you to our 1% for the Planet and Earth Day Oregon partners.

With the support of our partners, our programs impact schools and communities traditionally underserved in environmental education, providing pathways for low-income, BIPOC, and Latinx students to engage in place-based curriculum and stewardship projects. By providing culturally responsive programming, we ensure accessibility to nature-based learning experiences, empowering all students to become the next generation of environmental leaders.

