

LIVING THE GREEN



MEMBER NEWSLETTER

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MIKE RILEY

ECO CENTRAL: A CAMPAIGN FOR CENTRAL OREGON'S FUTURE

Central Oregon's landscape is uniquely beautiful and fragile. Located at the edge of mountains and desert, we see and feel the impact of rapid regional growth and a changing climate daily. From unaffordable housing and increasing traffic to wildfires, smoke, weird weather and drought, we are on the front lines of rapid change.

Just before the pandemic hit, The Environmental Center quietly launched Eco Central: a capital campaign that invests in Central Oregon's sustainable

future. I am thrilled to report that we have now hit a \$2.4 million milestone!

So far, 62 generous donors have invested in the Eco Central Campaign. Their support is already making important new work possible. Here are a few examples:

- **Driving a climate action plan for Deschutes County.** Eco Central contributions are driving a new project that brings together diverse stakeholders to identify and implement climate action priorities.

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LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CONT'D

- **Investing in emerging climate leaders.** Our funders are supporting a spectrum of internship and fellowship opportunities, with a focus on engaging people whose voices are often missing from climate action conversations.
- **Advancing walking and biking, robust transit, clean energy and waste prevention.** Eco Central support ensures that sustainability concerns are heard and reflected in regional and state policy.
- **Expanding school gardens to Redmond, Prineville and Madras.** Eco Central support is expanding a successful program to reach more children in schools and after-school programs.
- **Engaging youth.** Eco Central support means expanding opportunities for Central Oregon youth who want to make a difference in their community, including the youth-led Green Leadership Coalition and summer programs. More outreach and new partnerships are engaging a growing number of Latinx youth in environmental education programs.
- **Developing plans for a larger, greener and more accessible facility.** Eco Central Campaign sup-

porters have committed to help us renovate and expand our home at 16 NW Kansas Ave in Bend, ensuring our community has a hub for community engagement and action on climate and sustainability for decades to come.

A big thank you to those who have helped us get this far – we are so grateful for their support! Stay tuned as we move the Eco Central campaign forward. We'll keep you posted on our progress and how you can get involved in this collective effort to create a healthy, low-carbon and resilient future for all.



Mike Riley, Executive Director

Want to learn more about the Eco Central Campaign? Visit envirocenter.org/eco-central/vision or contact Mike Riley at mike@envirocenter.org or (541) 420-8565.

eco CENTRAL 

A Capital Campaign for Central Oregon's Sustainable Future

HIGH SCHOOL GREEN LEADERSHIP COALITION

The new Green Leadership Coalition (GLC) focuses on students in Central Oregon who are passionate leaders and advocates for lasting change within their schools. The GLC plans to work together and produce tangible results within schools and communities for successful experience and impact. Meeting monthly, the GLC is supporting and collaborating with high school students on sustainability action.



Student leader Grace Pell, from Mountain View High School, shared, "I am beyond excited to have a space to work with peers who are passionate about sustainability!"

After the kick off meeting in January 2022, students discussed energy, waste, advocacy and school

sustainability. Student goals for 2022 include becoming a certified Oregon Green School, launching composting programs within their schools, continuing recycling programs, and educating themselves and their peers on sustainability. Green Teams/Conservation Clubs will encourage and support one another for successful sustainable shifts within their schools.

GLC is a two-way street for The Environmental Center: to learn from teens and to help them meet their goals. Students have and will benefit from being able to share and learn from each other to make an impact on their communities.

High school students in Central Oregon can learn more on instagram [@green_leadership_coalition](https://www.instagram.com/green_leadership_coalition), and by reaching out to Grace Pell at gp5018@icloud.com.

TOURIST DESTINATION PILOT PROJECT

Did you know that Deschutes County has over 4.3 million visitors annually? That's a lot of extra people who produce waste and may practice different recycling habits while enjoying their vacations.

We are excited to announce a partnership with Visit Central Oregon and six visitor destinations across Deschutes County to help visitors rethink waste! We are kicking off the project by collecting baseline waste data at each site with the help of our local partners at Cascade Disposal and Republic Services. Next, we'll conduct site visits to get an idea of each property's existing practices. Finally, we will make recommendations on strategies for reduce, reuse, recycle, and compost for sites to consider implementing - such as improving recycling infrastructure, swapping to reusable alternatives, education materials for guests, and staff trainings. Each site is eligible for up to \$1,000 in technical assistance to support implementation.

Participating sites include: Campfire Hotel, The Bird's Nest Airbnb, Mt. Bachelor Village, High Desert Museum, Tetherow Resort and Visit Central Oregon Visitor Information Center.

Stay tuned to see what we learn together!



Top: The Bird's Nest Airbnb hit the ground running with a binder full of tips and resources to help guests rethink waste.



REDMOND SCHOOL GARDEN UPDATE

We've been working hard to support school garden efforts in Redmond, and we have exciting updates to share! Adrienne Atkins, our FoodCorps Service Member, has been busy at M.A. Lynch Elementary school teaching hands-on lessons to Kinder, 4th, and 5th graders about nutrition and gardening. With help from The Environmental Center's school garden grant program, Adrienne is supporting a new committee focused on garden development and maintenance. In addition to garden and classroom activities, Adrienne serves up a healthy snack twice per week in the cafeteria! (Not to mention she recently hosted a virtual cooking class, where families got to cook spring rolls together.) We can't wait for spring to continue these successful programs at M.A. Lynch.

Other highlights in Redmond include:

- An Eagle Scout garden revitalization project at John Tuck Elementary School,
- a garden educator network workshop held in Redmond, and
- grant-funded projects at Tumalo Community School, Tom McCall, and StepUP.

Thank you to all members who donated to the Garden Program this past summer in order to expand this important work in Redmond - you made this all possible! Read more about our Redmond garden programs at envirocenter.org.



Fifth grade students explore a worm bin as they learn about vermicomposting.

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APPLY TO BE A FOODCORPS SERVICE MEMBER!

Do you want to serve up change? Together with communities, FoodCorps serves to connect kids to healthy food in school. Their vision is to create a future in which all of our nation's children - regardless of race, place, or class - know what healthy food is, care where it comes from, and eat it every day. Apply to serve here in Central Oregon, other parts of our state, or one of 13 other states across the country!

Interested? Email denise@envirocenter.org to learn more, or apply today at FoodCorps.org/Apply.



Our FoodCorps Service Member, Adrienne, assists kindergarten students in taste-testing carrots that they harvested during a garden lesson the day before.

MOVING FORWARD WITH DESCHUTES COUNTY ENERGY PLANNING

We are working with two student interns from OSU-Cascades to help us understand how energy is used in Deschutes County and where that energy comes from. We are modeling this work on the baseline energy assessment that was completed by the Hood River community when they were developing their county-wide energy plan.

Last month, we met with our first group of stakeholders including representatives from Bend, Redmond, and Sisters communities and local utilities to discuss trends in the energy landscape and important data points to collect and analyze. Stakeholder and focus group meetings will continue in the coming weeks to help us better understand the challenges and opportunities related to energy use in our community. Stay tuned for how you can get involved this spring!

This work will be combined with research that our RARE AmeriCorps member, Grace Andrews, is doing to compile an energy planning best practices toolkit.

Who does the burden fall on when we make energy changes? We need to prioritize economic development and diversification, well paying energy jobs, and incorporating rural development with energy efficiency.

- Ciara Williams, Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council

EARTH DAY CELEBRATION

We are excited to bring back the annual Earth Day celebration on **Saturday, April 23rd!** At this time, we are planning to move forward with a street fair on Kansas Ave and a short parade route in downtown Bend. This family-friendly event features live music, food trucks, kids' activities, and a variety of environmental organizations who can get you connected to local initiatives. Stay tuned for announcements about local artists and performers, as well as an exciting initiative to make this event lower waste than ever before.

Volunteers Needed

We are looking for community members to help with the parade route, Earth Guardians (pictured here), vendor set-up, and our Rethink Waste effort. Interested in supporting this event? Please fill out the [volunteer application](#) on our website, and we'll be in touch soon. Thank you!



ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE IN SALEM



THANK YOU TO 2021 YEAR-END DONORS

The Environmental Center Team wishes to say a huge, "Thank You!" to everyone who contributed through Central Oregon Gives. We received \$4,285 from 45 generous donors. These financial contributions provided a solid foundation to start our work in 2022.

While we did not receive matching funds, we are excited for the amazing local organizations who did: The Giving Plate, Street Dog Hero, World Muse, Saving Grace, Kôr Community Land Trust, and Desert Sky Montessori. Thanks again for your support!



The 2022 legislative session was short and sweet!

In the last month-and-a-half, we saw a few wins and some changes that we hope will be wins next spring.

Legislators have chosen to replace the **Reach Code bill** (a priority bill for The Environmental Center) with legislation to create an interim task force known as the Resilient, Efficient Buildings (REBuilding) Task Force. This bill – coupled with the 2022 Climate Resilience Budget — will mean real climate action this year and a commitment to major policy in 2023. Although we are disappointed to see common sense climate bills like Reach Code fail, we are optimistic for comprehensive policy solutions to decarbonize our building sector. Our coalition looks forward to engaging with the REBuilding Task Force, and will hold legislators accountable to their promise of action next year. **Look for action alerts in the next six months to weigh in on policy solutions.**

Legislators passed one of the two bills that comprised the **Emergency Heat Relief Package, SB 1536**, with leadership from Verde and the Community Alliance of Tenants. Air conditioning and heat pumps can save lives - especially as extreme heat waves grow more common in Oregon. This bill will help to remove barriers for renters and landlords to use portable AC units, and provide funds for emergency cooling shelters.

They also passed the **Farmworker Overtime bill, HB 4002**, thanks to the leadership of Oregon's farmworker union, PCUN.

It's still important to reach out to your Oregon Legislators and thank them for voting yes, or tell them you are disappointed in their no vote. Visit envirocenter.org/advocating for future action alerts and to find a list of legislators and their contact info.

... AND WORK CONTINUES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

We've been hard at work supporting action on climate and transportation throughout the City of Bend.

Our staff have been working with the Environment and Climate Committee to help prioritize climate action strategies that the City of Bend will focus on over the next 18 months. We have also been working with the Transportation Bond Oversight Committee on getting its first set of bond projects to focus on necessary improvements to Bend's biking, walking and transit infrastructure.

Questions about our advocacy work within the City of Bend? Contact neil@envirocenter.org.

16 NW Kansas Ave
Bend, Oregon 97703

541-385-6908
info@envirocenter.org

envirocenter.org



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MEMBER NEWSLETTER

EVENTS IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

1st & 3rd Tuesdays : 4-6pm

Happy Hour in the Garden

Volunteer in the Kansas Avenue Learning!
Beverages sponsored by Worthy Garden Club
and Caboost Kombucha.

March 10 : 6pm

Climate Justice as Freedom

Julie Sze, Ph.D. will discuss front line climate
justice movements.

March 12 : 7pm

Backcountry Film Festival

Discover Your Forest's annual winter fundraiser!
This year's theme is "Embrace the Br."

March 13 & 15 : 3-4pm

Know Underground: Soil Health Presentation

Meet us in the Kansas Ave Learning Garden to
learn about the four principles of healthy soil.

March 13 : 6pm

No Man's Land Film Festival

Join Bend Film for a screening of "Diversify Our
Outdoors" at The Tower Theatre.

March 17 : 4:30-5:30pm

March Green Drinks

Learn about eco-options for body disposition
after death from the Peaceful Presence Project.

March 26 : 12pm

Ochoco Creek Park Clean-Up

Volunteers are needed to support an instream
and bankside cleanup of Ochoco Creek.

April 2

Gala de Oro

Save the date for Latino Community Associa-
tion's annual fundraiser event.

May 18 & 25 : 12-1pm

Know Wonder: Rethink Plastic Waste

An interactive discussion with tips and resources
for rethinking our relationship with plastics.

Mountainfilm on Tour-Bend

That's a wrap, folks! We just finished up two weekends of powerful documentary films for our annual fund-raising event, Mountainfilm on Tour - Bend. Thank you to everyone who made this event a success, including all 2022 sponsors, local businesses who donated raffle items, members like you, and everyone who attended and shared the virtual show. We hope you were as inspired and challenged as we were watching these films.

Until next year...

