

LIVING THE GREEN



SUPPORTER NEWSLETTER

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MIKE RILEY

Facing a Chaotic Future: How We Can Respond with Action, Compassion and Hope

Since I last sat down to write, two big things have happened. First, 2024 was officially the hottest year on record. Climate change marches forward, along with the droughts, severe weather events and wildfires that come with it. Second, Trump 2.0 has begun, this time with much more immediate, widespread and direct attacks on the needy and vulnerable, on science-based climate policy, and on our democracy.

So it's been even more difficult this last month to not be overwhelmed by the cascade of chaos, bigotry and anti-science rhetoric and action, and the lack of compassion, at the top of our government.

A speaker at a recent luncheon I attended asked the audience this question: "What are these times asking of us?" Here are my top four answers to her question.

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LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CONT'D

1. Do not self-censor or disengage.

Trump and his chaos inducing minions want us to do both. Why? Because it gives them more power. Stay engaged, stand up for your values. Support local candidates that reflect your values—our next election for schools and parks is this May.

2. Defend and support those being targeted by Trump 2.0.

Right now the clearest and most vulnerable targets are immigrants (especially Latinos), trans people and their families. They are valuable members of our community. Do what you can, with your time and/or dollars, to show them your support and solidarity, in your personal circles, at work and in the community.

3. Support local and state level action that is grounded in climate science.

Pay attention to what science tells us about how human-induced climate change is showing up in our world and what we need to do to avoid the worst case scenarios. Then advocate for policy that reflects the science, locally and in Salem.

4. Do your part to reduce climate pollution.

Waste less food, reuse more. Walk, ride a bike and

take the bus more often. Buy or lease an electric vehicle. Improve the energy efficiency of your home and go solar.

The big takeaway? It's important to remember that In the midst of climate crisis and rising political attacks, it's up to us to stay engaged, defend the vulnerable, and make change at the local level while holding onto moments of joy and wonder.

These next four years are going to be very challenging. Rest assured, our work at The Environmental Center remains grounded in our values and the power of grassroots action. We believe in local change that makes a world of difference. And we believe our community is strongest when everyone feels welcome and included, that they belong.

Thanks for helping The Environmental Center do its part to build a cooler and more compassionate future.



- Mike Riley
Executive Director

GARDEN GRANTS UPDATE



Our Garden For Every School School program is excited to award garden grants for local schools across Central Oregon again this year. In total we were able to award over \$18,000 to 15 local schools to support garden-based education and outdoor classroom projects! Additionally, we partnered with The Rotary of Greater Bend, who is fully funding 3 more school garden projects, contributing almost \$4,000. We're very grateful for

this partnership to be able to better serve our region's school gardens!

These garden grants would not be possible without the support of individual donors, local and regional businesses, foundations and non-profit organizations. Thanks to all of our Garden for Every School supporters: Bend Studio, Central Electric Cooperative, Central Oregon Beekeepers Association, Central Oregon Health Council, Central Oregon Radiology Associates, Clabough Foundation, El Sancho, First Interstate Bank, Gray Family Foundation, Marie Lamfrom Foundation, New Sun Energy, Oregon Farm to School & School Garden Network, Pacific Power, Saginaw Sunset, and Savory Spice Bend.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

Our 2025 city and state advocacy efforts are well underway. This year is a long session in Salem which means you can expect our work and potential action alerts to happen through June. Here are some of the areas we are working on this year:

Energy Affordability and Resilience: We are working to ensure that Central Oregonians can easily access incentives and resources to make their homes more energy-efficient and resilient. This includes supporting a policy that streamlines information about available incentive programs and supporting additional funding for efficiency initiatives from the last legislative session. By making it simpler and more affordable to upgrade homes with clean, efficient technologies, we can lower utility costs and reduce emissions across the state.

Waste Reduction Strategies: Working with others in a statewide coalition, we will continue to support legislation that reduces waste generation. This area of focus will include the right to repair updates to support the ability to repair broken items so they don't need to be thrown away. There are dozens of waste-related bills this session and we are always working to support efforts to reduce the waste that is generated and support policies to improve our collection and recycling systems.

Sustainable Transportation: We are expecting a big transportation package this year to help address ODOT's budget shortfall. As members of Move Oregon Forward we will be advocating for policies that are safety and climate forward. We support a transportation system that prioritizes safety by eliminating serious injuries and deaths, investing in protections for vulnerable road users, and reducing vehicle miles traveled to improve public health and environmental outcomes. To combat climate change, we will advocate for policies that expand clean transportation options, integrate transportation and land use planning, and increase funding for public transit, electric mobility, and walkable communities.

We also will be working on policies to support school bus electrification and micromobility/ebikes.



As the 2025 legislative session continues, we will provide more detailed information on our specific priorities and the bills we support. We encourage community members to stay engaged and keep checking in to participate in our advocacy efforts.



A CALL TO ACTION FOR MIGRANT PEOPLE



Photos: @trueunique

The Environmental Center stands in unwavering solidarity with all communities that face systemic marginalization and oppression, including migrant and indigenous people.

We denounce the ongoing and escalating acts of discrimination, violence, and injustice faced by migrant people and oppose policies and actions that threaten their safety, dignity, and well-being. We are deeply disturbed by their continued criminalization, and by policies that continue to separate families, and threaten the safety of those who seek refuge and opportunity.

Migrant people deserve dignity, respect, and the right to live free from fear and persecution.

Our commitment to environmental sustainability is inseparable from our dedication to racial, social, and economic justice.

The climate crisis is not just an environmental issue but one of deep racial, social, and economic inequity. Indigenous, migrant and Black communities, and 2SLGBTQ+ people are the first to experience the impacts of environmental degradation, whether through displacement, pollution, or violence. Yet they are who have been systematically excluded from key decision-making processes and often bear the burden of unjust policies and actions.

We stand with the unwavering belief that a truly sustainable world is one in which all people—regardless of their race, identity, migratory, or socioeconomic status—can thrive. We are committed to fostering a world where environmental justice and social justice are not separate battles but intertwined struggles, and where all of our communities can heal and grow together.

We are not just stewards of the land, but also each other. It is through shared responsibility that we will build a more just, resilient, and sustainable future for all.

Learn about migrant farmworker's justice at:
envirocenter.org/latino-fest-2023

WHY YOUR PHILANTHROPY MATTERS

Now more than ever, individual giving is essential for non-profits. Not only are we faced with an administration that's wantonly dismantling decades worth of environmental policy, they are attacking funding streams as well.

Non-profits operate as part of our cultural ecosystem. Where the government stops and corporate limitations begin, non-profits take up the space to provide some balance in the system.

As a fundraising professional, I can honestly say I have never experienced so much uncertainty in the non-profit world. Federal funding freezes have organizations panicking and taking drastic measures to secure or protect their funding.

The Environmental Center is fortunate we don't currently receive federal funding, but we are not immune. Funding streams will shift to fill gaps caused by the federal freeze, and the impact will ripple through the non-profit ecosystem crippling organizations that need to be fighting.

This is why your philanthropic dollars are so important right now. Donors like you are crucial to stability of non-profits. Thank you for all your support for us and so many other non-profits in the region. Keep it up, it matters!

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

Why I support the Environmental Center!

"When I moved to Bend in 2008, I was very excited to discover the Environmental Center. It is the first organization I have seen that provides local programs that support sustainability as well as advocating for sound policies at the local and state level. It gives me a place to put into action the concept of, "Think globally, act locally." I appreciate all their work to reduce waste, address climate change, and especially programs to educate youth and promote school gardens. And, Green Drinks helps me learn about local companies and organizations doing good things. I feel very lucky to have the Environmental Center working for us here in Central Oregon."

Sincerely,
Deb Brewer / Bend

FUN FYI!

DEB BREWER IS THE
INSTIGATOR AND
CARETAKER OF OUR
LITTLE FREE LIBRARY
IN THE LEARNING
GARDEN.

You can also become a monthly donor like Deb! Monthly donations are the most effective way to create lasting sustainable change in our community. Join the growing number of donors who give monthly at envirocenter.org/donate.

YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAM EXPANDS

Our Youth Education Program has expanded to engage Spanish speaking youth and families. Have you driven by the Redmond RootedHomes development lately? It's buzzing with activity as the homes in the back of the RootedHomes community land trust site are starting to be framed up! We're still far away from seeing our community learning garden space in the front, but we have some progress to report. While we continue to participate in for family outreach events at Hugh Hartman Elementary School, Redmond School District's Dual Language Magnet School around the corner from the future garden site, we're building connections with staff to learn how we can best integrate future garden use with these students.

We showed up to a family holiday night back in December and got some insight into crops these students might be interested in growing through our art garden. (Thank goodness it's a sunny site, there was a lot of interest in watermelon!) When we returned for "Restaurant Night" we helped serve up some rice and beans to accompany the fresh student-made corn tortillas and quesadillas. Kids wore chef hats and aprons, took orders, and served their families with pride at the meal they helped make. In preparing for this event they worked on 10 English Language Proficiency standards! We love it when teachers use creative food and garden based activities to engage learning in a hands-on way that meets their educational goals, and look forward to supporting events like this in the future by connecting it to foods they plant and harvest from the nearby learning garden!



The 19th Street Learning Garden, as we're currently calling it, will be a Bilingual Learning Garden from the ground up. Hugh Hartman Elementary School is a dual language immersion school serving many Spanish speaking families, and students learning both English & Spanish. As this is a super power none of the current youth education staff possess, we're really excited to be adding capacity with a Bilingual Youth Education Program Coordinator. Initially they will be working with students, staff and community members to help gather community input for the design of this future garden space. We will also be soliciting input from homeowners, as this will be a shared community garden that Rooted-Homes homeowners on site will also have access to. We're very excited about digging into this emerging community asset!

The new Bilingual Youth Education Program Coordinator will also be delivering our EarthSmart classroom presentations in schools and communities with a high number of Spanish speaking youth and families, as well as attending community events and doing outreach to share summer camp opportunities. We're looking forward to being able to better connect with students and families that we weren't adequately engaging in the past, and learning about the ways their families and cultures practice sustainability.

EVENTS IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

February 24th

Gardening for a Home Wildlife Haven

Join Deschutes Land Trust and naturalist Yvonne Babb at the Tower Theater to learn more about creating a wildlife haven at your own home. Have you ever wanted to help wildlife in your own yard, but don't know where to start? What plants are the most beneficial? Yvonne will share design principles, soil health, microclimates, and more.

March 5th

"Reveille & Retreat: Discover How Two Female Army Captains are Empowering Military Women Through Adventure"

Come to Embark and join Captain Dakota Olsen-Harris of the Army National Guard and Captain Kim Liszka of the United States Army/Reserves to learn about the Reveille & Retreat Project, a series of retreats carefully crafted for military women.

March 9

SheJumps | Get the Girls Out! Mt. Bachelor, OR

Join a celebration of Get the Girls Out!—a nationwide campaign uniting women and girls—transgender and cisgender—as well as non-binary individuals to embrace the outdoors while fostering a sense of adventure and camaraderie.

March 12

Fossils and the Future: Lessons from Oregon's Ecological Past

Spend an evening with Oregon Natural Desert Association as they uncover the fossilized world of eastern Oregon. Dr. Samantha Hopkins, Univ. of OR Professor and Earth Sciences Department Head, will take you on a journey through time.

April 8th

Farming While Black: Reclaiming Land and Agricultural Heritage - Film Screening and Discussion

Visit COCC's Wille Hall for reflections on the plight of Black farmers, from the height of Black-owned farms at 14% in 1910 to less than 2% today. Learn more about a rising generation finding strength in the historical knowledge of African agrarianism and its potential to save the planet.

earth day

April 26

Earth Day Fair & Celebration

Save the date! This family-friendly event will feature a lively and inclusive celebration where people of all ages are encouraged to wear costumes that showcase their favorite thing about planet Earth. The fair will feature food vendors, booths, performers and artists. More info coming soon.



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