



ROOTS RUN DEEP

2023 Annual Report



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

ROOTS RUN DEEP

I began my role at Tualatin Riverkeepers at the end of 2022, stepping in to an organization with a rich and important history in the region. Admittedly, I didn't have a full appreciation of the depth of the roots that Tualatin Riverkeepers had established in the community, but I quickly learned about them. Tualatin Riverkeepers is here still here today because of the hard work and dedication of our members over the course of more than three decades, and that commitment came through loud and clear during my many meetings over coffee and lunch early in my tenure.



While we'll always be faced with new challenges in protecting our watershed, it's important to understand and honor our history and traditions as we move forward as an organization. No other tradition is important as Tualatin River Discovery Day, and we were thrilled to hold Discovery Day for the first time since 2019. While Discovery Day was a terrific celebration of the river and a way for so many members to reengage, we also used the event as a means to look forward. Our Equitable Access work – which continued in 2023 – identified significant gaps in access in the upper watershed. We chose our 2023 Discovery Day route – from Rood Bridge Park in Hillsboro to Metro's Farmington Launch – as a way to engage upper watershed residents and leaders.

The river and the watershed looked very different at our founding in 1993, and the dedication of Tualatin Riverkeepers members and our partners are a large part of the reason that the river enjoys its current level of health. But our watershed faces numerous challenges – land use pressures; the coming impact from Emerald Ash Borer; forest and agricultural practices; and a rapidly-changing climate. Our deep roots and past successes give us the foundation to continue to ensure clean, cool water in the Tualatin River watershed, while building a more equitable, inclusive future for all of our residents. It's up to all of us to ensure this future. We have a growing array of opportunities to engage in our work, and I encourage you to join us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Glenn Fee'.

Glenn Fee,
Executive Director

The Tualatin River watershed includes traditional village sites of the Tualatin band of Kalapuya, the Atfalati, along with other tribes present since the last ice age, creating communities and seasonal encampments to harvest and use the plentiful natural resources of the area. This valley has a complex and layered history; we make a commitment to learn it, to recognize, support, collaborate with and advocate for Indigenous People, and to consider the convergence of legacies that bring us to where we are today as we paddle its waters. We offer gratitude for the land itself, for those who have stewarded it for generations, and for the opportunity to learn, work, and be in community on it.

ENGAGING RESIDENTS, BUILDING ADVOCATES

As an organization with a mission to protect and restore the Tualatin River watershed, we believe the best way to build stewards is through active engagement. In 2023, we worked to increase active engagement in our two core non-advocacy programs – Stewardship and River Experiences. On the Stewardship side, a \$100,000 grant from the Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District will support our work to restore seven acres of upland forest, wetland and prairie at Dirksen Nature Park. Dirksen, where we held nearly half of our 2023 restoration projects, has become a key site for us to train restoration leaders and assess the impact of concentrated efforts by both volunteers and contractors. Our Restoration Leader program, launched in 2023, focuses on training and equipping community volunteers to lead restoration projects, both with TRK and partners in the watershed. The program, as well as restoration sites, will expand significantly in 2024.

Tualatin Riverkeepers has enjoyed great success in our advocacy efforts over the years, but our river experiences are often our public face. Through new rental dates at Rood Bridge Park in Hillsboro and expanded September dates at Cook Park, we hosted nearly 2,000 paddlers in 2023. These paddlers included participants in more than 30 “partner paddles” during the season, with a focus on engaging residents of the watershed - often through partnerships with community organizations - who are unlikely to have experienced the river prior to coming out with us. Our watershed

faces continued challenges over the coming decade, including pressure from development and emerging contaminants such as 6PPD-Quinone and PFOAs. By effectively engaging watershed residents and leaders in our restoration and river activities, we’re continuing to build strong advocates for watershed protection over the decades to come.

Photo by Eric Stachon



ADVOCACY

- **30** comment letters submitted
- Successfully passed the **Beaver Bill and Climate Resiliency** package



STEWARDSHIP

- Hosted **19** restoration and stewardship projects
- Secured a **\$100,000** grant for the restoration of **7** acres at Dirksen Nature Park



RIVER EXPERIENCES

- Led **32** distinct paddle trips
- First Tualatin River Discovery Day since 2019, with **110** paddlers
- Welcomed **1,962** paddlers through our rental program

A RETURN TO OUR

In 1990, a group of Washington County residents came together to oppose the Westside Bypass, a proposed freeway that would have bisected the county's rich forests and agricultural land. In an effort to draw attention to some of the natural areas that would be destroyed by a new freeway, Tualatin River Discovery Day was born. At a time when the river had almost no access, these intrepid paddlers created a paddling event that would endure a full 34 years later. Through the work of these residents and allies such as 1,000 Friends of Oregon, the ill-conceived bypass was defeated. The group turned its attention to the health of the watershed, and Tualatin Riverkeepers was founded in 1993.

Tualatin River Discovery Day remained at the heart of TRK's annual calendar until its abrupt Covid cancellation in 2020. Longtime Tualatin Riverkeepers members made it clear how much the event meant to the organization, and 2023 marked its celebratory return after a 3-year absence. True to its roots, the 2023 Discovery Day highlighted a section of the river linked to Tualatin Riverkeepers' advocacy work, with this year's paddle stretching from Rood Bridge Park in Hillsboro, the furthest upriver launch on the river, to Metro's Farmington launch five miles downstream, at River Mile 33.3.

Through our ongoing equitable access work, we've identified significant gaps in access in the upper watershed. These gaps include lack of public transit to the river, few facilities supporting users of differing abilities, a lack of river-adjacent parks, and only two formal launches. The Farmington launch remains the closest formal launch to the launch at 99W, nearly 22 miles downstream, leaving the middle half of the navigable river without formal access. Our 2023 Discovery Day featured more than 100 paddlers, including elected officials the upper watershed and community members served by our partners at Adelante Mujeres. As we have throughout the history of Discovery Day, we celebrated a beautiful stretch of the river, and we did so with an eye toward specific actions that we'll be taking in coming years to improve access in this part of the watershed.



Photo by Eric Stachon



Photo by Radford Bean

ROOTS



Fundraiser photos by Tim LaBarge

GREEN HERON FUNDRAISER

The Tualatin River watershed is home to beautiful terrain – from forests of the Coast Range to rich agricultural lands and rivers, creeks and wetlands that are key to clean, cool water. Visitors come from throughout the region to paddle the Tualatin River, sip wine among the many vineyards, and visit the countless farms during harvest season. We work hard to protect and restore our watershed in part to ensure that these amenities are available for generations to come.

The Green Heron fundraiser celebrates our work, honors important community members, and raises money for the future. It's also our chance to bring our community together in unique places in our watershed, celebrating everything the Tualatin Valley has to offer.

More than 140 guests gathered for this year's Green Heron at Alpaca Farm and Gardens in Hillsboro. Resident alpacas paid the gathering a visit, guests took period photos in our restored Swan Boat, and they learned about the history of the Atfalati people on this land. The event awarded two incredibly important supporters – the City of Tigard and The Fervia Family – and we raised nearly \$50,000 in support our work. We look forward to continuing to grow the Green Heron as an event that celebrates our roots while accentuating all of the reasons why we do our work.

River Champion Award – City of Tigard

One of Tualatin Riverkeepers' most important partners in the Tualatin River watershed - through a Climate Action Plan, energy efficient upgrades in city buildings, and expanded biking and hiking trails - the City of Tigard is leading the way in building a more sustainable community. Tigard's Cook Park hosts Tualatin Riverkeepers' summer boat rental with thousands of paddlers visiting each season, and Dirksen Nature Park is home to our partnership to restore upland forest, native prairie, and critical wetlands. We're incredibly grateful for the city's leadership and longstanding partnership, and look forward to its continued growth.

Green Heron Award – The Fervia Family



husband, Chris, and John's wife, Lorraine, have volunteered time over the years and a member of the latest generation, Margot and Chris' son, Jonathan, has served as a River Rental staff member the past few summers. We're so fortunate to the Fervia family for their years of support!

Roots run deep at Tualatin Riverkeepers, and the Fervia Family's roots have long fed the health of the organization. Margot Fervia-Neamtzu served for years as our beloved Office Manager, and has volunteered countless hours of time and energy to TRK. Her father, John Fervia, is TRK's volunteer archivist and Tualatin River Historian whose tirelessly researched history of the Tualatin River has been presented nearly one hundred times at community gatherings throughout the watershed. Margot's

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Eve Goldman, *Advocacy
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Erik Horngren, *Volunteer and
Restoration Manager*

Emily Pappas, *Communication
and Events Associate*

Jessica Parsons, *Admin and
Membership Coordinator*

Tualatin Riverkeepers thanks our major corporate and foundation supporters from 2023!

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NW Cannabis

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Qorvo

City of Tigard

City of Tualatin

Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation
District

Willamette Week Give Guide

SUPPORT OUR WORK

We're thankful for ongoing support from our members, from community foundations, and from businesses that call our watershed home. Donors choose to support us in a variety of manners - through one-time gifts or monthly gifts; through donations of equipment; or via Bequests, Stock and Estate Gifts. Contact our Executive Director, Glenn Fee, to discuss more ways to support our work.

DONOR PROFILE

In 1985, Lisa Brenner and Tom Stibolt were looking for a home in a natural setting to raise their young family. They found it on 29 acres along the Tualatin River, at the time one of the most polluted rivers in Oregon, just north of Sherwood. In 1990, as encroaching development threatened their rural environment, Lisa and Tom joined with neighbors to create STOP, Sensible Transportation Options for People, in opposition to a proposed Westside Bypass, which also galvanized the Washington County residents who held the first Tualatin River Discovery Day. Lisa and Tom also participated in forming Citizens for Quality Living in Sherwood to stop an illegally operating medical waste facility close to Sherwood's grade school.



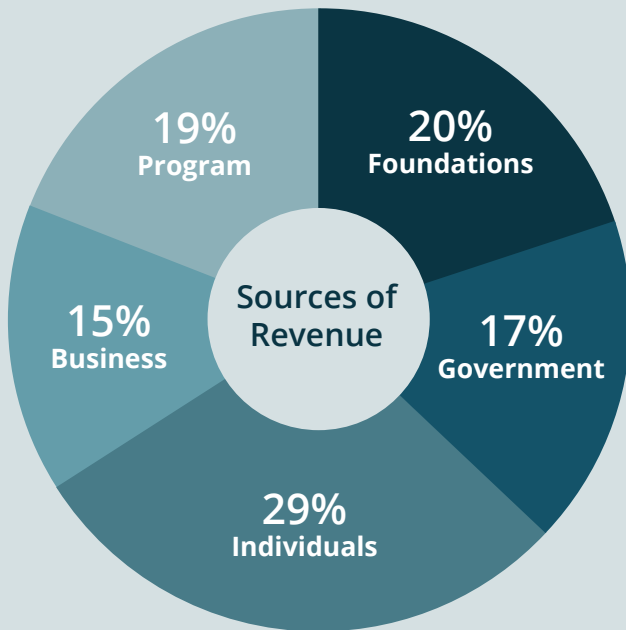
With victories in hand, these activated area residents turned from opposition to preservation, ultimately creating a new wildlife refuge and founding Tualatin Riverkeepers. In the early 1990s, Citizens for Quality Living persuaded the Fish & Wildlife Service to create an urban refuge, a new concept, but in the middle of the process a budget freeze prohibited creation of new refuges. Lisa and Tom worked with federal officials to donate 12 acres of their own land so that there was an existing Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge. The new refuge quickly grew through additional purchases. Friends of the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge was founded in 1993, the same year as Tualatin Riverkeepers. Today, the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge encompasses more than 2,000 acres – much of it surrounding Lisa and Tom's home – and the Tualatin River is a clean and protected regional treasure.

When asked why they support Tualatin Riverkeepers, Tom's response is to the point: "Because we love the river. We like to see people using and caring for the Tualatin." Tom went on to cite pressures of urban development as the greatest current threat to the river. Lisa and Tom continue to be involved with the Friends group, one of TRK's strongest partners, in protecting the Tualatin River from threats to clean water. Our ongoing thanks to Lisa and Tom, along with hundreds of other donors and supporters, who allow us to continue to protect and restore this incredible watershed.

FINANCES

2023 Revenue - \$516,798

2023 Expenses - \$460,995



VOLUNTEER

Tualatin Riverkeepers relies upon a dedicated core of volunteer leaders to help us project, restore, and enjoy the Tualatin River. Some of the roles you can play as a volunteer leader:

Paddle Trip Leader

Hop in a boat and help others enjoy the recreational opportunities that the Tualatin River provides. Paddle Trip Leaders lead groups on paddles, ensuring safe and successful trips while sharing personal experiences and serving as an ambassador for our work.

Restoration Crew Leader

Restoration Leaders assist on or lead group volunteer habitat enhancement events throughout the watershed! Restoration Leaders commit to attend a minimum of four projects over the course of the year.

Watershed Ambassador

Our Watershed Ambassadors serve as the public face of TRK, representing the organization at events throughout the watershed, from public events such as volunteer fairs and Farmer's Markets to some of our own events.

