

Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission

February 27, 2024

Agenda Item:	7a	Information
Public Comment Allowed:	No	
Topic:	Heritage Division Update	
Presented by:	Christine Curran, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer	

A Year of Accomplishments

In 2023, staff moved many goals forward with our heritage community partners under our Heritage Commission and Oregon State Historic Preservation Plans. Key highlights include:

- Assisted federal and state agencies in identifying and safeguarding historic properties by issuing 275 archaeology permits, providing 1,059 project review responses, and signing 19 Memorandum of Agreements and 5 Programmatic Agreements to mitigate negative impacts on historic properties and streamline processes.
- Surveyed 198,389 acres and documenting 4,548 historic properties, including 4,003 archaeological sites and 545 buildings.
- Listed nine properties, including landmarks associated with Portland's African American community and OPRD's Wasco Warehouse & Milling Company Hydroelectric Project Historic District (White River Falls State Park), in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Expanded the Oregon Main Street Network structure to include the Rural Regional Main Street Hub, aimed at aiding small towns in their downtown revitalization efforts.
- Hosting the 2023 Oregon Main Street conference in Independence, which attracted the largest number of attendees in its history.
- Conducted the 2023 Fall Workshop on organizational planning in four locations across the state and offering a dual-language workshop for the first time.
- Released "The Heritage Organization's Guide to Creating & Cleaning Up Collection Information" to assist organizations in starting or improving their collection information.
- Expanded Northwest Digital Heritage to include over 650,000 digital records from 225 collecting organizations across the Pacific Northwest.
- Secured a FEMA grant with the University of Oregon's Institute for Policy Research and Engagement (IPRE) to assist in developing community-wide disaster resilience plans for Oregon Heritage All-Star Communities to protect heritage resources.
- Awarded \$6,172,619 through programs such as Oregon Main Street, Historic Cemetery, Oregon Museum Grant, and Certified Local Government programs.
- The Oregon Chinese Diaspora Project (OCDP) received the National Trust/Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Award for Federal Partnerships in Historic Preservation, and the Vanport Mosaic Project was honored with the Leadership in History award from the American Association for State and Local History.

Staffing Changes in the Heritage Division

With a new year, the SHPO congratulates several of our staff on their new beginnings. Since October 2023, Jessica Gabriel, our built-environment compliance reviewer; Jason Allen, survey and inventory coordinator; and archaeologist Shane James, took positions with other agencies. Mary Beth Grover, our compliance program assistant, retired this last January. Archaeologist Stacy Scott and Karen Litvin from OPRD Grants have temporarily joined the Heritage Division to assist with the work. Job announcements are out for several positions, and others are forthcoming as the agency rehires for vacated positions and adds capacity through the end of the biennium to address increasing workloads. We have already begun welcoming new staff.

Mary Newcomb is the Heritage Division's new Administrative Specialist and Executive Assistant to the Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer. She's joining the team with over a decade of administrative work, experience working with and for Oregon's natural resource agencies, and a passion for increasing the accessibility of government communications, programs, and services to the public. In her new position, she will assist program coordinators with board and commission meetings, act as the division's expert on administrative processes, and help Deputy Director Chrissy Curran wrangle her schedule. Off the clock, you may run into Mary as she travels the state with her partner and pups, always searching for hikes and great food.



Val Ballestrem is our new Preservation Bureau Assistant and brings 16 years of experience as the Education Manager at the Architectural Heritage Center in Portland. Val has a master's degree in history from Portland State University, focusing on the Pacific Northwest and public history. Val is passionate about making history accessible, having contributed to the Oregon Encyclopedia and authored *Lost Portland, Oregon*, in 2018. He has given public presentations on various topics, including the Mount Hood Freeway and notable Oregon architects. Val enjoys baseball, camping, and traveling. Last September, he walked Hadrian's Wall in England with his partner. In his downtime, he's often in the kitchen, whether it's cooking, canning, or feeding Clio and Zira, the two seemingly always hungry cats.



Dylan Ray Tsolakos joins as the new Compliance Bureau Assistant. Dylan holds a Master of Science in Historic Preservation from the University of Oregon, focusing on the Pacific Northwest, public history, and industrial archaeology. Dylan is passionate about making history accessible, cultural landscapes, and preservation of the recent past. He has a varied educational background, including archaeology, museum studies, public health, preservation trades, and public history. Apart from historical pursuits, Dylan enjoys kayaking, mountain biking, and traveling. He spends his downtime exploring the Pacific Northwest and planning future adventures.



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