



Environmental Justice Report 2025

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF STATE LANDS

Environmental Justice Report: 2025

Oregon Department of State Lands

This report from the [Oregon Department of State Lands](#) to the Oregon Environmental Justice Council highlights our policies and activities in the calendar year of 2025 regarding the Council's priorities. ORS 182.535 requires named state agencies to report annually on progress to:

- Address environmental justice issues.
- Increase public participation of individuals and communities affected by agency decisions.
- Determine the effect of agency decisions on traditionally underrepresented communities.
- Improve plans to advance environmental justice in Oregon.
- Utilize the environmental justice mapping tool under development.

Oregon's Environmental Justice Council

In 2022, the Oregon Legislature passed [HB 4077](#) that codified the [Environmental Justice Council \(EJC\)](#) within the Office of the Governor. This statewide council is responsible for advising the Governor and state natural resource agencies on environmental justice issues. The Department of State Lands is one of those sixteen participating agencies.



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Table of Contents

Letter from the Director 4

AGENCY INTRODUCTION 5

Mission Statement 5

Agency Leadership 5

State Land Board 5

Environmental Justice Liaison..... 6

Agency Budget and Revenue Sources 6

Our Work 7

2025 HIGHLIGHTS 8

Agencywide 8

Aquatic Resource Management Program: Protecting Waters and Wetlands 10

Real Property Program: Managing School Lands 12

Elliott State Research Forest: Researching in Working Forests..... 13

South Slough Reserve: Understanding and Exploring Estuaries 14

POLICY, PROCESS, AND TOOLS 16

Address Environmental Justice Issues and Determine Impacts on Communities 16

Environmental Justice Mapping Tool 16

Trainings 17

Public Participation and Meaningful Involvement 18

Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments 20

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRESS 21

Environmental Justice in Strategic Plans 21

Barriers and Opportunities 21

LOOKING AHEAD..... 22

Appendix A: Definitions and Legislative References 23

Appendix B: Executive Summary: Agency Needs in Advancing Environmental Justice..... 25

Letter from the Director

Kaitlin Lovell

Dear Governor Kotek and Council Members:

The Oregon Department of State Lands respectfully submits our annual Environmental Justice report to the Environmental Justice Council.

As DSL's new Director, this is my first year submitting the report, and I am impressed by the many ways DSL's work intersects with environmental justice communities. In this report, you will find examples of how DSL's work across the state depends on crucial partnerships with public agencies, Tribes, nonprofits, and individuals dedicated to strengthening the relationship between the health and resilience of Oregon's diverse ecosystems and the health of Oregon's communities.

Each year brings new learning and growth, and 2025 was no exception. DSL continued to implement its DEI Action Plan, make its services more accessible to more Oregonians, and equitably assessed fees and compensation to ensure the Common School Fund provides a sustainable benefit to Oregon's schools. DSL expanded its individual and collective engagement and partnership with the Tribes, provided low-cost educational opportunities at the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve, expanded graduate level research in the Elliott State Research Forest, and improved its staff training.

An important area of learning and growth was exemplified by the complex work to protect the ecologically sensitive floodplains of the Sandy River Delta from encampments and hazards, while providing trauma-informed, compassionate services to people impacted by our efforts. This work saved lives and protected hundreds of tons of debris from polluting the river during the December 2025 flood, the sixth highest on record in the Sandy River. DSL is applying these important lessons across our lands - from the coast to the McKenzie River to Redmond - working closely with social service providers across Oregon.

Our environmental justice work is becoming institutionalized in the everyday work of DSL's teams but we know we have more work to do. We are grateful for the insight and expertise of the Environmental Justice Council and the Governor's Office and look forward to continuing our collaborative efforts to ensure a more just and sustainable future for Oregon.

Sincerely,



Kaitlin Lovell

Director

Oregon Department of State Lands



AGENCY INTRODUCTION

Mission Statement

To ensure Oregon's school land legacy and protect waterways and wetlands of the State through superior stewardship and service.

Agency Leadership

Kaitlin Lovell, Director

Chris Castelli, Deputy Director of Land Management

Caiti Hudson, Deputy Director of Administration

Jimmie Phillips, Human Resources Manager

Bill Ryan, Deputy Director of Aquatic Resource Management

State Land Board

Established by the Oregon Constitution in 1859, the State Land Board oversees the Common School Fund, which sends millions of dollars every year to Oregon's K-12 public schools.

When Oregon was admitted to the Union in 1859, Congress granted our new state nearly 3.4 million acres of land to help fund schools. Approximately 681,000 acres of school lands remain in state ownership today.

The Land Board has been composed of the Governor, Secretary of State, and State Treasurer throughout its history. The Land Board oversees DSL and meets regularly to make decisions regarding school lands and Oregon-owned waterways, and to provide direction on Department policies, operations, and budget.



In 2025 the State Land Board included Secretary of State **Tobias Read**, Governor **Tina Kotek** (Chair), and State Treasurer **Elizabeth Steiner**.

Environmental Justice Liaison

Each of the participating state agencies named in ORS 182.535 designates a staff member as the Environmental Justice Liaison for the agency.

Cait McCusker

Community Engagement Specialist, Oregon Department of State Lands

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Agency Budget and Revenue Sources

Below is an excerpt from the Oregon State Legislature's 2025-27 Budget Highlights. A more detailed summary of the agency's budget can be found in the Oregon State Legislature's forthcoming *2025-27 Legislatively Adopted Budget Detailed Analysis*, to be published here: <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/lfo/Pages/Publications.aspx>

	2021-23 Actuals	2023-25 Legislatively Approved	2025-27 Current Service Level	2025-27 Legislatively Adopted
NATURAL RESOURCES				
State Lands, Department of				
General Fund	123,060,000	4,002,152	-	442,576
Other Funds	53,209,130	78,064,069	42,370,516	91,961,197
Other Funds Nonlimited	14,913,221	19,052,461	20,749,534	20,749,534
Federal Funds	2,477,678	6,130,888	2,565,522	4,442,918
Total Expenditures	\$ 193,660,029	\$ 107,249,570	\$ 65,685,572	\$ 117,596,225

*Note: The significant General Fund expenses in 2021-23 are related to the transfer of the Elliott State Forest.

	2023-25		2025-27	
	Legislatively Approved		Legislatively Adopted	
	Positions	FTE	Positions	FTE
PROGRAM AREA: NATURAL RESOURCES				
Agriculture, Department of	535	403.27	493	395.85
Energy, Department of	134	123.99	131	128.43
Environmental Quality, Department of	873	857.59	898	889.00
Fish and Wildlife, Department of	1,384	1,188.96	1,349	1,169.02
Forestry, Department of	1,431	1,075.02	1,412	1,080.92
Geology and Mineral Industries, Department of	41	40.50	50	48.80
Land Conservation and Development, Department of	109	92.18	111	110.22
Land Use Board of Appeals	7	7.00	7	7.00
Marine Board	45	42.50	46	43.50
Parks and Recreation Department	871	632.30	865	629.40
State Lands, Department of	113	110.78	144	138.42
Water Resources Department	259	248.71	247	244.25
Watershed Enhancement Board, Oregon	49	45.91	48	47.50
NATURAL RESOURCES TOTAL	5,851	4,868.71	5,801	4,932.31

Our Work

The Department of State Lands (www.oregon.gov/dsl) is a small agency that makes big contributions to Oregon. Our oversight benefits more natural and working lands and waters than any other state agency. We work to protect these resources for generations to come through four main programs.



PROTECTING WATERS & WETLANDS

DSL oversees removal-fill and wetland conservation laws and use of publicly owned waterways. This work helps protect waters and wetlands for their many contributions to Oregon, like streams for swimming and fishing, wetlands to clean water and reduce flooding, and rivers where commerce thrives. [See the latest annual report.](#)



MANAGING SCHOOL LANDS

DSL manages 1.5 million acres of school lands and minerals in all 36 counties across the state. This work sends revenue to the Common School Fund and provides big community benefits – like leasing land to cattle ranchers in Eastern Oregon or helping attract family-wage businesses to Redmond through rezoning and sale of school lands. [See the latest annual report.](#)



UNDERSTANDING & EXPLORING ESTUARIES

South Slough Reserve provides research and education to support stewardship of estuaries and coastal watersheds in Oregon and beyond. Located on the South Slough inlet of the Coos Estuary in Charleston, the Reserve manages nearly 7,000 acres, including open water, wetlands, rivers, and forests. [See the latest annual report.](#)



RESEARCHING IN WORKING FORESTS

The Elliott State Forest was established northeast of Coos Bay in 1930 as Oregon's first state forest. Today, about 83,000 acres are now a nationally important center for forest science research and management that also contributes to conservation, education, recreation, Indigenous culture, and local economies in Oregon. [Learn more about the Elliott State Research Forest here.](#)

2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Agencywide

Improving equitable access to DSL services: Expanding digital access has been a multi-year priority for DSL, implemented in phases to ensure thoughtful, inclusive rollout while maintaining non-digital options. In 2025, DSL introduced electronic signatures for waterway leases—the latest step in this ongoing effort. Previously, customers had to print, sign, and scan or mail documents, which created barriers for many leaseholders. Offering multiple submission pathways has reduced administrative burdens and improved accessibility. Staff report strong positive feedback from customers, along with increased processing efficiency and faster response times.

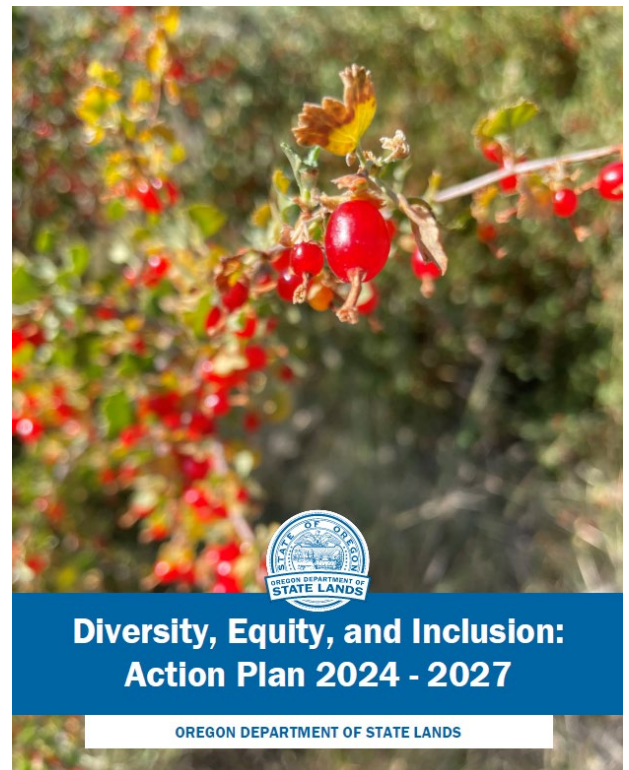
Collaborated with LCIS, the Cultural Resource Cluster, and Natural Resources Workgroup: DSL staff participated in these meetings throughout the year, and DSL provided ongoing updates on the Elliott State Research Forest, rulemakings, legislative actions, and the new abandoned and derelict vessels program. We're always seeking ways to be a good partner and share resources when possible. For example, throughout 2025 DSL's Tribal Liaison participated in an informal subgroup of several cluster members working on an indigenous style guide to inform state agency written materials, in collaboration with Tribal staff. This work is anticipated to continue through 2026.

Year two of our three-year DEI Action Plan: As a companion to our current Strategic Plan, the DEI Action Plan focuses on workforce development, inclusive communications, community engagement, and operationalizing DEI across agency practices. Looking ahead to the 2027-2031 Strategic Plan, DEI will be fully integrated throughout the planning process, with equity commitments embedded directly into strategic goals and actions rather than in a separate companion plan.

Community engagement staff at DSL: In the 2025 legislative session, funding was approved for a permanent Community Engagement Specialist position. This investment strengthens our ability to build sustained, meaningful relationships with communities across Oregon. This supports more consistent outreach, deeper trust-building, and more equitable participation in decision-making.

Engagement and Tribal consultation on rulemakings: Throughout 2025, DSL advanced six rulemakings through one or more stages of the rulemaking process. For each rulemaking, DSL invites Tribal consultation. Unless a rulemaking is minor or conforming, DSL convenes a rulemaking advisory committee of interested and impacted parties followed by a minimum 30-day public comment period. All advisory committee meetings are publicly noticed, recorded, and open to anyone to attend and observe. Time is dedicated on each agenda to hearing comments from community members, so their voices are heard throughout the advisory committee process in addition to the comment period. [Learn more about DSL's rulemaking process on our website here.](#)

- **(OAR 141-142) Rocky Shore Habitats:** Incorporate new rocky habitat designations in conformance with Part III of Oregon's Territorial Sea Plan. *Status: Adopted and effective on February 12, 2025.*



See DSL's [DEI Action Plan \(PDF\) on our website.](#)

- **(OAR 141-079) Codifying the Forest Management Plan for the Elliott State Research Forest:** In October 2024, the Land Board approved the Forest Management Plan. The adoption of the plan into rule further codified it and advanced public accountability on the Elliott. *Status: Adopted and effective on April 9, 2025.*
- **(OAR 141-85/89/90/93) Removal-Fill and Wetland Delineation Fees:** Established new fees for Oregon's Removal-Fill Program which protects the state's wetlands and waterways by requiring permits for activities that involve removing or adding material to rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, and other waters. *Status: Adopted and effective on January 1, 2026*
- **(OAR 141-082) Leases, Licenses, and Registrations on Oregon-owned Waterways:** Implements best management practices to protect the health and safety of Oregon-owned waterways and achieve sustainable operations. *Status: Rules drafted, RAC and comment period held. Land Board to consider adoption in Spring 2026, with anticipated effective date of July 1, 2027.*
- **(OAR 141-085) Permitting and Mitigation in Oregon's Wetlands and Waters:** Improves stream mitigation accounting and mitigation banking, along with minor updates to removal-fill permitting. *Status: Rules drafted, RAC and comment period held. Director to consider adoption in Spring 2026, with anticipated effective date in Fall 2026.*
- **(OAR 141-083) Undersea Infrastructure Easements in Oregon's Territorial Sea:** Rulemaking is needed to strengthen protections for Oregon's territorial sea and marine ecosystems, while ensuring fair public compensation for use of the seafloor. *Status: Rules drafted, RAC begins February 2026. Comment period anticipated in Summer 2026.*



Every year since 2004, the State Land Board Awards recognize projects and partners for their exceptional contributions to thriving Oregon waterways, wetlands, and lands.

Left: Governor Tina Kotek stands with the 2025 Land Board Award makers: Molly Leno, Stephanie Craig, and Michael Scotto di Carlo.

Right: Close up image of the awards featuring weaving by Stephanie Craig, anqati tæmtæm ténas siyaxus, (Takelma Rogue River, Cow Creek Umpqua, Santiam and Yoncalla Kalapuya, Clackamas Chinook, Wakanasisi, Mohawk, Métis, and American). Craig is a master basket weaver, anthropologist, educator, and cultural consultant.



Aquatic Resource Management Program: Protecting Waters and Wetlands

Reducing Barriers for Tribal Mitigation Banks

Staff-to-staff coordination is ongoing to address the barriers the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians (CCBUTI) experienced when seeking approval of the Villines Mitigation Bank in Douglas County. Staff are exploring a potential new approach to mitigation bank sponsorship by CCBUTI that is acceptable to both the State and the Tribe. Related, in 2025 DSL began work to update administrative rules (OAR 141-085) which govern mitigation banking, and the advisory committee included a representative from CCBUTI. Rulemaking is ongoing, but current draft rules address definitions of public bodies to be inclusive of Oregon's federally recognized Tribes.

Waterways Stewardship: Improving Equitable Access and Environmental Safety

Throughout 2025, the DSL Waterways Stewardship Team conducted monthly clean-ups across Oregon waterways, removing abandoned structures, vessels, vehicles, hazardous materials, and marine debris from ocean beaches, river islands, riparian areas, and navigable channels. These efforts improved environmental conditions and expanded access to safer public waterways and recreation spaces.

From an environmental justice perspective, DSL prioritized targeted, recurring clean-ups at Lindbergh's Beach and Cathedral Park in Portland—public river access points with high value for communities that may face barriers to outdoor recreation and increasing summer heat. Hazards and debris at these sites reduced safe access and usability. DSL completed six focused clean-ups at these locations in 2025 and plans to continue this work in 2026.

Coordinated Response at the Sandy River Delta

DSL participated in a complex, multi-agency project addressing unauthorized encampments and associated hazards on state-owned land within the Sandy River Delta natural area. The project balanced environmental restoration, public safety, and compassionate outreach to vulnerable residents.

Project goals included:

- Connecting residents with safer, healthier living options through trauma-informed outreach
- Cleaning and restoring impacted natural areas
- Improving public safety and access
- Maintaining progress through continued monitoring

Outreach professionals conducted weekly visits during the summer, linking individuals to shelter, food, clothing, and support services through regional partnerships. By the end of 2025, more than 200 tons



of debris and six abandoned vehicles had been removed. Outreach and coordination efforts also helped relocate 30–50 individuals out of a flood-prone area before a December extreme flooding event, reducing risks to life, property, and the surrounding environment.

Expanding Support for Disadvantaged Communities: Abandoned Vessel Removal

In 2025, DSL secured a \$1 million Abandoned & Derelict Vessel Grant from the BoatUS Foundation to expand vessel removal services in disadvantaged coastal and Columbia River communities. Working with the Oregon Public Ports Association, DSL prioritized projects in areas identified as underserved and burdened by socioeconomic and environmental challenges.

Grant-funded work will begin in 2026, targeting dozens of vessels for removal and disposal. These efforts will reduce environmental hazards, improve safety and access at public ports, and prevent future impacts to nearby disadvantaged communities.

Supporting Tribal Restoration and Economic Development Projects

Throughout 2025, DSL staff worked closely with Tribal partners to support restoration and economic development initiatives. Collaboration with the Klamath Tribes focused on developing multi-functional restoration projects that address water quality, agricultural runoff, and c’waam and koptu (sucker fish) habitat, while integrating DSL’s regulatory permitting into project planning. DSL also partnered with federal partners to present on the removal-fill permitting process and participate in site visits with the Klamath Tribes’ Ambodat Department. In addition, DSL expanded its engagement in new forums and regions. DSL staff presented at the LCIS Economic Development Cluster meeting—an event DSL does not traditionally attend—on wetlands and sewer service expansion beyond Urban Growth Boundaries. DSL staff also met with Burns Paiute emergency management staff to discuss flood mitigation concerns and explore regional solutions.

Real Property Program: Managing School Lands

Partnerships in Land Management

DSL's ten-year Asset Management Plan guides management of Oregon's 680,000 acres of school lands to generate revenue for the Common School Fund. The plan, recently updated in 2024, includes an increased focus on renewable energy, partnership projects, and wildfire resiliency.

DSL staff are partnering with CTUIR to acquire grant funding for fuels reduction/forest resiliency work in Umatilla County. The 320-acre Johnson Creek project would serve both CTUIR lands and adjacent lands managed by DSL. Strategic removal of vegetation that could serve as fuel is critical to mitigating wildfire risk, particularly in fire-prone areas like Eastern Oregon. The project is awaiting funding approval from the BIA Reserve Treaty Rights Lands program.

Navigating Cultural Resource Concerns

DSL program staff, supported by our archaeologist, regularly address cultural resource concerns on DSL-managed lands and communicate with potentially impacted Tribes.

For example, in 2025 DSL engaged in ongoing collaboration with several Tribes about reinternment of cultural artifacts that had been previously stolen and then recovered in Eastern Oregon. The stolen artifacts have been successfully reinterned.





Elliott State Research Forest: Researching in Working Forests

Elliott State Research Forest Board of Directors

The Elliott State Research Forest (ESRF) Board supports public accountability, transparency, and meaningful engagement. While current Board members do not serve as formal Tribal representatives, Mike Kennedy (retired Natural Resource Director, CTSI) and Michael Wilson (retired Natural Resource Director, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde) are two Board members who bring long-standing experience with Tribal natural resource issues. To support next steps in Indigenous engagement and co-stewardship, the ESRF Board explored these topics during its November 2025 retreat. The session included discussion of potential engagement models and stewardship approaches used in other DSL programs, such as the South Slough Reserve, as well as examples from other state agencies like the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Initiating Consultation to Establish Meaningful Partnerships

Holding true to the commitments made in the Forest Management Plan, in the fall of 2025 Director Lovell invited the five federally-recognized Western Tribes in Oregon to resume consultation on the Elliott to explore options for Indigenous engagement and co-stewardship opportunities on the forest. To date, the CTCLUSI has responded to initiate consultation in late 2025.

Adopted the 2025-2027 Operations Plan

DSL adopted the 2025-27 Operations Plan on July 1, 2025, following the Elliott State Research Forest Board's June recommendation and an extensive public review process. The plan outlines timber harvests, restoration projects, road maintenance, and other activities planned over the next two years. It also identifies current and potential research efforts, noting that development of the forest's long-term research framework remains underway.

Shutter Creek Development and Headquarters Planning

Shutter Creek, an empty former correctional facility on the Oregon Coast, has been transferred from the federal government to the state for use as the research forest headquarters. DSL is currently advancing a public visioning and partnership planning process for redevelopment of the property, an effort that will include robust Tribal and community collaboration. Several Tribes have either visited Shutter Creek and engaged in visioning activities with DSL or expressed interest in exploring the potential of the space in supporting ceremonial needs.

The Elliott is both a natural and cultural resource for many Tribes. Interests range widely on opportunities for connecting with the forest – for example harvesting cedar for canoes and first foods like huckleberries, or pursuing models for indigenous management practices such as cultural burning.

South Slough Reserve: Understanding and Exploring Estuaries

The South Slough Reserve program is managed in collaboration with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Water Quality Monitoring

Reserve science staff continue to collaborate with the Coquille Indian Tribe and CTCLUSI to manage real-time water quality stations and to discuss data related to water quality in Coos Bay. Reserve staff have also been providing technical support to the CTCLUSI staff for new water quality monitoring efforts in Coos Bay and to help link Tribal station data to the Northwest Association of Networked Ocean Observation Systems.

Accessible Education and Outdoor Experiences for Coastal and Tribal Communities

The Reserve coordinates programming designed to connect all learners to our estuaries and coastal watersheds.

- Community classes provide people of all ages and backgrounds with the chance to learn through activities like bird watching, kayaking along water trails, and nature-based crafts. Reducing or removing barriers to education supports all Oregonians, and most of this programming is free to attend and very popular with the local coastal communities.
- Science camps encourage kids and teens to connect with the natural world and learn about research and stewardship. Based on feedback from the last several years, the Reserve implemented a new lottery system for 2024 summer camp sign-ups which continued for 2025. The two-week sign-up window increases equitable access for community members with limited internet access and time.

Reserve staff also regularly partner with Tribes and other community partners to serve as a hub for accessible, outdoor learning:

- Reserve staff engaged with the Coquille Indian Tribe to take the Kilkich Youth Corps members out on the Chmoosh canoe, so they could get outside and learn more about their historical connections with Oregon's south coast. This was the first time many of these youth had ever been on a canoe, making it an extraordinary day of sharing connections to this special space.
- In spring 2025, the Reserve served as a field trip hub for the Estuary Explorers after-school program in Coos County. Reserve staff coordinated and hosted place-based field experiences for K–8 students from four rural and underserved sites, including visits to restoration areas and estuary habitats. Materials are being developed in Spanish to expand offerings in the future.



Eelgrass meadows at the Reserve have declined since 2016. Staff are investigating causes of the decline, experimenting with restoration methods, and testing the use of unmanned aerial vehicles to map eelgrass in the estuary. Key to this work is monitoring data. Pictured here staff and partners go out in the field at nighttime to collect this data.

Teachers on the Estuary

Teachers on the Estuary advances environmental justice by providing free climate and coastal science training to educators serving rural and economically disadvantaged communities facing disproportionate environmental risks. In July 2025, the South Slough Reserve and partners delivered a four-day workshop combining virtual collaboration with hands-on estuary and watershed field learning. The program featured Jesse Beers, CTCLUSI's Cultural Stewardship Manager, who engaged educators on Indigenous knowledge and the importance of incorporating multiple ways of knowing into classrooms—an element widely cited as a program highlight. Participating teachers developed strategies to integrate locally relevant climate and estuary education, expanding equitable access to climate literacy and STEM pathways for historically underrepresented students.

Partner on Projects on the Reserve

Reserve staff worked with members of the CIT and CTCLUSI on a short video showcasing co-stewardship restoration efforts of the Wasson Valley and management the South Slough Reserve. This video highlights how Reserve staff approach all their work and is part of a three-part series of short videos highlighting the overall restoration of the Wasson Valley.

Reserve staff are working with members of the CTCLUSI to establish a traditional garden of first foods and culturally significant plants as part of the Wasson Valley restoration project. A key step taken in 2025 was site selection for the traditional garden.



20th Annual Mill-Luck Salmon Celebration

South Slough Reserve was honored to be invited to the 20th Annual Salmon Celebration hosted by the Coquille Indian Tribe at the Ko-Kwel Casino Resort in Coos Bay. The biggest highlight was the salmon bake (of course), but team highs also included participating in the Tribal canoe races, making new friends at our booth, and connecting with old friends in the midst of dancing, drumming and flute playing. Thank you to the Coquille Indian Tribe for inviting us again and congrats on twenty years!

POLICY, PROCESS, & TOOLS

Address Environmental Justice Issues and Determine Impacts on Communities

ORS 182.550 Section 1: Address environmental justice issues

ORS 182.550 Section 3: Determine the effect of agencies' decisions on environmental justice communities.

Strategic Plan Projects

An important outcome of creating DSL's three-year DEI Action Plan was highlighting the need to operationalize diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice into all strategic planning projects. DSL is revising the project charter template to include a DEI Impact Statement as well as initial guidance to support staff in revising existing charters or in crafting new ones.

Rulemaking

With input from rulemaking advisory committees, a Racial Equity Impact Statement is developed for every rulemaking. This is required of all state agencies via House Bill 2993 (2021).

Application and Permit Reviews

Monitoring of agency impacts is centered on impacts to water resources and public trust values, as well as protection of cultural resources on Oregon-owned waterways and the state-owned uplands. All applications for permitting and uses of state-owned lands require a Land Use Compatibility Statement. This determines whether a DSL permit or approval will be consistent with local government comprehensive plans and land use regulations.

Customer Service Survey

Although not specific to environmental justice communities, inviting direct feedback from the people we serve and those who are impacted by agency decisions is critical to improving our policies, processes, and tools for all Oregonians. Every two years DSL conducts a customer satisfaction survey. In addition to examining the results internally, they're sent to the Oregon legislature as a key performance measure. All state agencies strive to meet the same standards for customer service, and report on their performance when presenting budget information.

Environmental Justice Mapping Tool

ORS 182.550 Section 5: Utilize the environmental justice mapping tool

The DSL's Environmental Justice Liaison participates in multiple planning efforts to stay informed and provide input in planning meetings, data gathering, surveys, focus groups, etc. when requested:

- Environmental Justice Council meetings
- Environmental Justice Liaison meetings
- Environmental Justice Data Inventory Group

We're examining our current processes and practices to determine how they can be adapted to integrate the new statewide tool in development. Anticipated to launch in 2027, the planned release of Oregon's EJ Mapping Tool aligns with the next cycle of DSL's strategic plan.

DSL uses the statutory definition of environmental justice communities (ORS 182.535 Section 4):

“Environmental justice community” includes communities of color, communities experiencing lower incomes, communities experiencing health inequities, tribal communities, rural communities, remote communities, coastal communities, communities with limited infrastructure and other communities traditionally underrepresented in public processes and adversely harmed by environmental and health hazards, including seniors, youth and persons with disabilities.

Trainings

Across the agency, DSL encourages staff participation in trainings, workshops, and community events to raise awareness of concepts and application of diversity, equity, inclusion, environmental justice, and tribal relations. Some examples of training activities in 2025 include:

Tribal Training:

- **Cultural Resources:** DSL's Government Relations Manager / Tribal Liaison and our Ownership Specialist attended this year's Cultural Resources and Archaeology training hosted by Oregon Parks and Recreation Department in collaboration with CTUIR. This was a valuable opportunity to meet with Tribal members and staff, and connect DSL policies and responsibilities to real-world impacts.
- **Agency Training:** DSL is taking steps to develop a comprehensive training approach for staff. This work includes assessing the agency's long-term training needs, identifying what can be delivered in-house versus through external partners, and establishing a baseline of shared knowledge across the organization. As an early step, the Tribal Liaison held an agencywide foundational training in December 2025 covering core principles for working with Tribes such as Tribal sovereignty, reserved rights, consultation, and collaboration. A staff survey in January 2026 on tribal training needs will inform next steps.

DSL's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee: DEI Dialogues

DSL's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee fosters an inclusive environment for all staff, promotes an agencywide climate of equity and anti-racism, and seeks to operationalize DEI in serving DSL's mission.

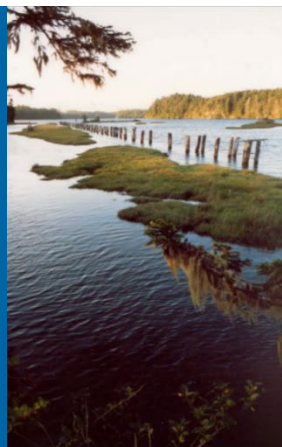
In 2025, the Committee continued an event series called "DEI Dialogues" open to all DSL staff. This discussion series is centered on a video, article, comic, book, or podcast; the bulk of each session is spent in open and inclusive dialogue. Three events were hosted in 2025 with over 100 participants:

- Inclusive Workforce Development in Natural Resources
- Inclusive Access to Outdoor Recreation
- Cultural Competency in Environmental Education

Statewide Trainings on DEI

Throughout 2025, DSL's Director, Human Resources Manager, and Environmental Justice Liaison participated in the quarterly DEI Cohort meetings led by the DAS Office of Cultural Change. This Office is currently developing a series of statewide trainings to advance core concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion for all State of Oregon staff. Foundational knowledge of these core concepts will support natural resource agencies in building upon more complex and advanced topics in advancing environmental justice.

Sabra Comet is the Coastal Training Program Coordinator at the South Slough Reserve and a member of the Osage Nation. They have a master's degree in Environmental Management, focusing on Indigenous natural resources management. Sabra is co-authoring a paper with the NERRS Science collaborative on Indigenous data sovereignty. They hosted a conversation with DSL staff on the history of exploitation of Tribes in the U.S. as well as why data sovereignty (ownership and direct input) is so important.



WHAT IS 'DATA SOVEREIGNTY'?

Primary policy decider, ownership, storage of primary source/original 'raw' data

Dictates ethical policies and procedures

Upkeep of permissions from data sources

Oversees analyses/products using data



Public Participation and Meaningful Involvement

ORS 182.550 Section 2: Increase public participation of individuals and communities affected by agencies' decisions.

Identifying Community Considerations

DSL is committed to providing access to meaningful engagement through inclusive public service and access to information. DSL's Community Engagement Specialist / Environmental Justice Liaison and the project team begin by identifying community and partner interests and where on the spectrum decisions might impact or interest them. This process supports targeted public noticing for the comment period and the outcome of decisions, as well as forming advisory committees.

Concurrently, DSL considers the impacts to Tribal governments and offers consultation or coordination as appropriate. *For more information, see page 17.*

DSL anticipates integrating Oregon's Environmental Justice Mapping Tool into this process when this tool becomes available in 2027.

Meaningful Involvement: Public Comment, Meetings, and Advisory Committees

When public meetings are held regarding local projects, the Department seeks to host those meetings in person near the site of the project as well as a hybrid option to increase access. In 2023, DSL invested in portable hybrid technology to support these efforts.

- **Projects in wetlands and waterways.** Projects in wetlands and rivers, streams, lakes, or other waters usually require a removal-fill permit to protect the state's water resources. Waterway use authorizations allow certain uses of Oregon-owned rivers, lakes, territorial sea, and other waterways while compensating Oregonians for usage of these public resources. Application status, materials, and opportunities to comment are online, and the State Agency Coordination Program supports the notice and public comment process. Sometimes these projects require more opportunities for public participation, and a public meeting will be held.
- **Land sales and exchanges:** Approximately 1.5 million acres of surface and subsurface lands across Oregon are managed by DSL, and occasionally those lands are sold or exchanged for land at full market value to maximize revenue for the Common School Fund. Status of pending or finalized land transactions and opportunities to comment are online. Sometimes these require more opportunities for public participation, and a public meeting will be held.
- **Rulemaking:** Throughout each year, DSL proposes rules that determine how DSL and other state agencies operate, including how they interpret and implement state laws. Administrative rules can also describe agency practices and policies. The rulemaking process is designed so there are several opportunities for people or organizations to provide feedback on a proposed rule by holding informational meetings and

Determining Impact on Communities

People/groups who may be directly affected by the proposed changes. Through impacts to their property, activities, business operations, etc. For example, people or businesses who apply for removal-fill permits in wetlands and waterways, currently lease state-owned lands or waterways, or use state-owned land for recreation.

People/groups with interests or concerns that may be affected by the proposed changes. Those who have a connection to the issue the decision is related to. For example, conservation groups interested in protecting natural resources, building groups interested in reducing barriers to development, economic development or business entities, etc.

People/groups who should be made aware of the proposed changes. Typically includes government agencies, law enforcement agencies, local legislators, and the public (either the public in a specific geographic location, or statewide for proposed changes that could affect many Oregonians.)

public hearings, convening Rulemaking Advisory committees, and inviting public comment. All advisory committee meetings are noticed and open to anyone to attend and listen in, and meeting agendas include allocated time to hear comments from people outside the advisory committee.

- **State Land Board:** The Land Board oversees DSL and meets regularly to make decisions regarding school lands and state-owned waterways, and to provide direction on DSL operations. Anyone can attend these meetings (online or in-person), and there are opportunities to submit testimony in writing or verbally.
- **Elliott State Research Forest Board of Directors:** In April 2024, the State Land Board adopted a formal oversight structure of the Elliott to ensure public transparency, accountability, and oversight in administration of the new program. This included the [creation of a new Board](#) for the research forest. Board meetings are open to the community to attend, and meeting recordings are posted online.



In October 2024, the State Land Board officially established the Elliott State Research Forest through adoption of the initial forest management plan. Many years in the making, feedback on this plan was gathered from the public, partners, government entities (including sovereign Tribal nations) and the Elliott State Research Forest Board. Over [400 public comments were received in Summer 2024](#), and DSL staff consulted the ESRF Board in responding to each comment and updating the final plan. Learn more about Oregon's first state research forest here: <https://www.oregon.gov/dsl/Pages/Elliott.aspx>

Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments

In addition to meaningful involvement with the public, DSL places a high priority on being accessible to and actively communicating with the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon: Burns Paiute Tribe; Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw; Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon; Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Oregon; Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon; Coquille Indian Tribe; Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Tribe; and the Klamath Tribes.

Government-to-Government Policy

This work is aligned with our values in collaboration, inclusion and natural resource stewardship. DSL's policy on State/Tribal Government-to-Government Relations guides our work with Tribal governments.

Some of the ways we pursue this work agencywide:

- Reaching out early and regularly to Tribal representatives about Department actions likely to affect Tribal members, natural resources, or cultural resources of Tribal interest.
- Carefully and thoughtfully consider Tribal comments concerning pending decisions and actions.
- Helping Tribes protect cultural and natural resources in Oregon through our programs.
- Providing opportunities for meaningful engagement, including government-to-government consultations, participation in Rulemaking Advisory Committees for proposed rules, and other staff-to-staff level informal collaboration.
- Meeting regularly with individual Tribal governments, participating in Tribal-state workgroups focused on natural resource management and protection of Tribal cultural resources, and attending the annual State-Tribal Summit.
- Training DSL employees on Tribal government, sovereignty and issues of interest to Tribal nations.
- Consulting with DSL's archaeologist, the State Historic Preservation Office and the State's Physical Anthropologist at LCIS on geographic or issue-level Tribal interests.



A comprehensive overview of DSL's policies and processes for government-to-government relations across the agency and within each program can be found online in our [State / Tribal Government-to-Government Report \(PDF\)](#)

Tribal Relations Collaborative

The Tribal Relations Collaborative at DSL, formed as a pilot in 2023, connects the Government and Community Relations team with staff across all our programs to promote collaborative solutions and resource sharing. Aligned with DSL's Government-to-Government Policy, the Collaborative structure supports communication across programs on Tribal interactions, relationship building, identifying process improvements, and assessing agency resource needs such as training and guidance. The pilot has been ongoing for two years, and the Collaborative continues to evolve in membership, cadence, and focus. A group charter is in development to formalize processes and structure.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRESS

ORS 182.550 Section 4: Improve plans to further improve environmental justice in Oregon.

Environmental Justice in Strategic Plans

Agencywide Strategic Plan 2022 - 2027

DSL's [five-year strategic plan \(FY July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2027\)](#) is focused on advancing agencywide goals, and the plan contains multiple initiatives connected to environmental justice, equity, and inclusion. Learn more about current initiatives underway on page 22 of this report.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan 2024 - 2027

A companion to our strategic plan, our first [three-year DEI Action plan \(July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027\)](#) is focused on actions that advance five key outcomes:

- DEI is operationalized and understood across the agency.
- We have a culturally, racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse workforce.
- Our staff support an inclusive culture of belonging.
- We offer meaningful community engagement opportunities at all levels.
- Our communication is inclusive and accessible.

All Oregonians benefit from the Department of State Lands' programs. Centering diversity, equity, and inclusion principles offers a better avenue to communicate and collaborate with the people directly impacted by our programs. This includes Tribes, property owners and developers, environmental consultants, state agencies and municipalities, outdoor recreationalists, educators and students, and businesses. Indirectly, this includes people seeking housing and anyone living near Oregon-owned waterways or public trust lands. Among those impacted are people from communities of color, people from lower-income households, Tribal communities, and other communities who have been historically excluded and underrepresented in public processes.

Policy and Legislation

Our policy and legislation initiatives are in alignment with our strategic plan goals. Direction on how those align is guided by the Governor's Office, the State Land Board, and the legislature. As DSL drafts each session's legislative concepts, Racial Equity Impact Statements are shared with the Governor's Office.

There is no agency impacted legislation from the last legislative session where Environmental Justice Council engagement is cited in the legislation.

Barriers and Opportunities

As a small agency of Oregon, it's critical for DSL to collaborate with sister agencies to share resources and collaborate on solutions. To further develop and implement environmental justice policies at DSL or more broadly across the State of Oregon, please consider the following four core areas:

- Increase Funding and Budget Support
- Staff Capacity and Training
- Enterprise-wide Policies and Guidance
- Leadership and Interagency Collaboration on Tools and Resources

For more details about these four focus areas, please see **Appendix B for the Executive Summary: Agency Needs in Advancing Environmental Justice** co-written by the Environmental Justice Liaisons and Environmental Justice Coordinator in September 2024.

LOOKING AHEAD

Advancing environmental justice within DSL programs, policies, and practices is key to improving our customer service and public involvement practices, rulemaking outreach, and permit review processes.

DSL will continue to:

- Attend the Environmental Justice Council meetings to offer information or insight as needed.
- Attend the Environmental Justice Liaison meetings to share resources, coordinate to respond to requests from the Council, and partner on interagency initiatives.
- Participate in the development of the statewide Environmental Justice Mapping Tool.
- Participate in government-to-government activities such as the Cultural Resources and Natural Resources Workgroup meetings, as well as any State or Tribal trainings offered.
- Track and evaluate legislative developments and evolving priorities to inform decision-making and be a good partner on advancing environmental justice.
- Review our approach to community engagement to identify opportunities for improvement through process, tools, or other resources.

Looking ahead to 2026, DSL will be pursuing several action items in our 2022-2027 Strategic Plan and/or 2024-2027 DEI Action Plan that support or advance meaningful participation in agency decision-making, advance environmental justice, or more broadly increasing access and inclusion to our services:

- Implement DEI Impact Statements into new Strategic Plan project charters and consider ways to revisit active projects underway to address benefits and burdens to environmental justice communities.
- Examine current practices for engaging Tribal governments to identify improvement opportunities, such as: updating our government-to-government policy and coordination with the State Historic Preservation Office on strategies to better evaluate cultural resources through state permitting.
- Explore long-term, sustainable agencywide staff trainings on Tribal history in Oregon and best practices in consultation.
- Provide implicit bias training for management staff and the EJ Liaison.
- Modernize our permitting and information system and increase access to our services and participation opportunities for wetland and waterway permits and land management decisions. Finalize the development of and implement a new customer service portal that will increase access to participation opportunities for DSL wetland and waterway permits and land management decisions.
- Examine our agencywide needs for language translation to support education, research, recreation, community involvement, and stewardship of natural resources as a regulatory agency.
- Open the 2025 – 2027 grant cycle for the Submerged Lands Enhancement Fund to support local governments, community-based organizations, and Tribes in waterway stewardship projects. Examine opportunities to increase access to, and positive impacts on, environmental justice communities through this grant program.

Appendix A: Definitions and Legislative References

Key Definitions

Environmental Justice: (ORS 182.535 Section 3)

“Environmental justice” means the equal protection from environmental and health risks, fair treatment and meaningful involvement in decision making of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, immigration status, income or other identities with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies that affect the environment in which people live, work, learn and practice spirituality and culture.

Environmental Justice Community: (ORS 182.535 Section 4)

“Environmental justice community” includes communities of color, communities experiencing lower incomes, communities experiencing health inequities, tribal communities, rural communities, remote communities, coastal communities, communities with limited infrastructure and other communities traditionally underrepresented in public processes and adversely harmed by environmental and health hazards, including seniors, youth and persons with disabilities.

Meaningful Involvement: (ORS 182.535 Section 7)

“Meaningful involvement” means:

- a) Members of vulnerable populations have appropriate opportunities to participate in decisions about a proposed activity that will affect their environment or health;
- b) Public involvement can influence a decision maker’s decision;
- c) The concerns of all participants involved are considered in the decision-making process; and
- d) Decision makers seek out and facilitate the involvement of members of vulnerable populations

Environmental Burdens: (ORS 182.535 Section 2)

Environmental burden” means the environmental and health risks to communities caused by the combined historic, current and projected future effects of:

- a) Exposure to conventional pollution and toxic hazards in the air or in or on water or land;
- b) Adverse environmental conditions caused or made worse by other contamination or pollution; and
- c) Changes in the environment resulting from climate change, such as water insecurity, drought, flooding, wildfire, smoke and other air pollution, extreme heat, loss of traditional cultural resources or foods, ocean acidification, sea-level rise and increases in infectious disease.

Legislative References

House Bill 4077 (2022)

Legislation establishing the Environmental Justice Council, the Council's responsibility to develop an environmental justice mapping tool, develop a biannual report to the Governor, and the requirement for natural resource agencies to submit an annual report to the Environmental Justice Council. [See House Bill 4077.](#)

Senate Bill 420 (2007)

Legislation establishing the Environmental Justice Task Force, the predecessor for the Environmental Justice Council. It also includes requirements for the Task Force to submit biannual reports to the Governor and the requirement for natural resource agencies to submit an annual report to the Environmental Justice Task Force. [See Senate Bill 420.](#)

ORS 182.550 Reports by natural resource agencies

All directors of natural resource agencies, and other agency directors as the Governor may designate, shall report annually to the Environmental Justice Council and to the Governor on the results of the agencies' efforts to:

1. Address environmental justice issues;
2. Increase public participation of individuals and communities affected by agencies' decisions;
3. Determine the effect of the agencies' decisions on environmental justice communities;
4. Improve plans to further the progress of environmental justice in Oregon; and
5. Utilize the environmental justice mapping tool developed under section 12 of this 2022 Act.

Appendix B: Executive Summary: Agency Needs in Advancing Environmental Justice



Environmental Justice Council

Executive Summary Advancing Environmental Justice in the State of Oregon: Summary of Agency Needs

The following priorities have been identified to advance environmental justice in the State of Oregon based on Agency Annual Reports submitted in January 2024.



Increase Funding and Budget Support

Increased funding is crucial to support environmental justice efforts. This includes budget support for staff positions, community engagement activities and events, community compensation for participation, legal costs, training, translation services, tools, and specific program initiatives.



Staff Capacity and Training

Increase staff capacity by funding new positions dedicated to environmental justice, as well as providing new and existing staff with the necessary training. Many natural resource agencies would benefit from staff dedicated to environmental justice to set and articulate a vision for environmental justice, develop agency-level policies and procedures, and support practices across teams. Providing new and existing staff with enterprise-wide, required training on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging concepts will establish a level-setting foundation. This would enable agencies to build off this foundation with more advanced training in environmental justice (e.g. identifying communities, environmental justice assessments, environmental justice engagement strategies, etc.) and related training such as facilitation, conflict management, plain language, and culturally relevant communication.



Enterprise-wide Policies and Guidance

The establishment of enterprise-wide policies, associated funding, and clear statewide direction on contracts and contracting to address priorities such as language translation and interpretation, community engagement vendor contracting, community compensation for participation, and administrative and legal support. This comprehensive approach is essential for the effective implementation of environmental justice policies.



Leadership and Interagency Collaboration on Tools and Resources

It is important for agency leadership to consistently advocate for and resource environmental justice policies, opportunities for interagency collaboration, and guidance for staff.

State agencies currently participate in the DAS Office of Cultural Change quarterly DEI Cohorts which is a current example of interagency collaboration. Agency leadership continued participation in the DAS Office of Cultural Change quarterly DEI Cohorts can support this effort, but this alone will not address collaboration needs related to environmental justice.

Agencies need interagency collaboration to share resources, best practices, and tools to effectively engage with environmental justice communities including GIS and data collection tools, translation services, communication platforms, and outreach materials.

Coordination of agency community engagement also addresses concerns about overburdening community-based organizations and community member capacity when seeking feedback for public processes such as rule making, listening sessions, focus groups, etc.



Environmental Justice Council



Summary

Oregon has sixteen natural resources agencies listed under House Bill 4077, and all the agencies listed below are required to submit annual reports to the Environmental Justice Council for the previous year in January the following year.

They include:

- Department of Agriculture (ODA)
- Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
- Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD)
- Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI)
- Department of State Lands (DSL)
- Department of Forestry (ODF)
- Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)
- Department of Energy (ODOE)
- Department of Transportation (ODOT)
- Oregon Health Authority (OHA)
- Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD)
- Public Utilities Commission (OPUC)
- State Fire Marshal (OSFM)
- State Marine Board (OSMB)
- Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)
- Water Resources Department (WRD)

Annual reports submitted in January 2024 for calendar year 2023 are available on the [Environmental Justice Council website](#) for review.

These agencies all demonstrated various levels of funding, staffing, and readiness to implement the Oregon standard of “meaningful involvement”. Specific details regarding agency needs can be found on each of the agencies respective 2023 annual reports.

This document is intended as an executive summary of the needs from most natural resources agencies. Each agencies needs may differ and are reflected in their individual annual reports.

2024 annual reports will be submitted in January 2025, and they are expected to be available on the Environmental Justice Council website no later than March 1, 2025 for activities covering calendar year 2024.