

Environmental Science Center

Science Sustained Support

Application Contact

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Council District 8

Organization Director

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Website

<https://envsciencecenter.org/>

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Mission

The Environmental Science Center promotes environmental stewardship and academic achievement through science-based education.

Short Organization Description

The Environmental Science Center promotes environmental stewardship and academic achievement through science-based education.

Community

The Environmental Science Center (ESC) has been providing free environmental education programs in the south King County community for over 24 years. From the beginning, ESC has worked to develop long-term relationships with many individual teachers, school districts and local tribal members in this community. Relationships with the teachers in our community have been critical these past few years as we navigated new and changing learning environments.

Through careful planning and expansion, ESC has grown from working solely with a few Highline School District teachers to working with all the school districts in south King County. We have partnership agreements with districts and regularly receive letters of commitment for our school programs. ESC's school programs are designed to work with all grades. Beach Heroes was created for K-3rd grade students, students in 4th-8th grade participate in Salmon Heroes, and middle school through high school students participate in our teen leadership programs. According to data collected from the Washington State Report Card, around 66% of the students we work with are considered low income (and qualify for Free or Reduced-Price Meals), 31.5% are English Language Learners, and 79% are People of Color.

ESC also is committed to offering free programs for the general public (toddlers through adults and elders) and we try to bring those programs to where the public is already gathering so transportation is not a hinderance. Initially based in Burien, we opened our own learning hub in Seahurst Park in 2011. As we grew, we continued to include outreach

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in the community at locations where the public was already gathering such as community centers, libraries, and festivals. A partnership with the City of Renton in 2022 gave us space at their downtown Liberty Park building and has significantly increased the public programs we are able to offer. We've made new connections with the City of Renton's senior center and the King County libraries in Renton to add to our offerings. Continued partnerships with Burien and Renton, as well as new partnerships in Tukwila, Kent, and Auburn have allowed us to grow throughout the region.

As we grow, we continue to prioritize our goals to make these programs accessible. Our community programs remain free and our school-based programs are free for all schools where more than 45% of students are considered low-income. We offer discounts and/or free school programs as funding allows to schools under that 45% low-income threshold. We have a number of boots, warm layers, and ponchos to help make the outdoors comfortable. And we prioritize hiring bilingual staff on top of translating all our program materials into the languages our community requests. We currently have eight main languages we translate and are adding to this number each year based on community needs.

Programming

Environmental Science Center's Salmon Heroes is a multi-part, outdoor field program for south King County students in grades 4-8. The program was created in 2006 and has adapted and grown over the years. The program now includes multiple classroom lessons that bookend a three-hour field study at a local salmon-bearing stream. We've linked the program to the state science standards and have added teacher trainings to help teachers deepen their experience.

In the last few years, many schools have chosen to do an extra lesson with ESC naturalists following their core Salmon Heroes experience. We help teachers create unique, student-led environmental action projects with their students on their school campuses to help empower the youth.

Some schools opted to focus on trash clean-up around their school yard. Several elementary schools were given trash grabbers to use for these projects. Students were excited to be a part of these new "Environmental Clubs", often taking time during their recess to clean up the school yard. One group of students was so upset at the amount of trash found that they wrote letters to their principal asking for more trash cans around the school yard.

Other schools have embarked on restoration projects and have removed ivy from their schoolyard and replaced it with native plants. One school even scheduled a planting day during a non-school day so families could be involved in the project!

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Teachers at Nelsen Middle School in Renton were amazed at the response from their students following their planned work day of removing 150 pounds of trash from their schoolyard and stenciling over 20 storm drains.

"LOVED the experience and so did the students. The impact of knowing the weight value of our effort by the end of the day has made a significant impact on student behavior within the grade level and influenced our Green Team to perform a regular campus clean-up involving anyone willing to join. Thank you very much for the partnership, collaboration, and experience." 6th grade teacher

"In my sixteen years of teaching, this has to be the BEST thing I have ever done. The enthusiasm and joy of finding garbage to pick up we saw with our students will remain with me. The people who came to our school have such a cool vibe-beautiful people. I totally dig hanging out with beautiful people. Thank you for all you do." 6th grade teacher

Many people, youth especially, are eager to help find solutions to local environmental problems, but too often, there are few opportunities for them to give back. To see school leadership, families, and local neighbors excited to participate in stewardship projects during their free time demonstrates a deep love and understanding that the Salish Sea belongs to all of us and we each have the ability to create a healthier watershed for all.

Management

The Environmental Science Center (ESC) is led by a core group of nine staff members and 10-12 part-time seasonal naturalist educators. Core program staff have over ten years' experience working in outdoor, informal environmental education and have participated in regular anti-racism trainings over the last few years.

The ESC Board of Directors functions as representatives. Board members provide leadership for the organization and work closely with ESC staff to identify goals and provide Strategic Leadership. The Board of Directors are the legal authority for ESC and partner with the Executive Director for effective governance of the organization.

ESC is wrapping up our current five-year strategic plan. This plan led to more district-wide partnerships with our school programs, more stewardship opportunities for teachers and students, increased community-focused public programs, and increased financial health and diversity of income sources. Staff and board are currently brainstorming for our next five-year plan and have tentatively identified growth in certain content areas such as climate science and drop-in nature play opportunities as well as increased teen internship opportunities and continued fostering of meaningful relationships with community partners. Additionally, we are in the process of hiring a Development Director to support adaptability during our growth.

Future

The Environmental Science Center engages community members and students in environmental issues and ways to care for our shared resources. As we grow, our core values and the needs of our communities will guide us toward more novel forms of environmental stewardship. Together with our community partners we plan to provide the following services over the next two years:

Field-Study School Programs: In our outdoor classrooms of salmon spawning streams and intertidal beaches, ESC naturalist educators use a variety of teaching techniques to help engage students of all learning abilities to create a corps of environmental stewards. These programs focus on observing habitats and undertaking ways students can make a positive impact. Teacher trainings help support teachers as they integrate outdoor learning into their curriculum.

Out-of-School Programs: ESC's naturalist educators teach after-school science clubs in low-income areas to enrich students' scientific literacy and civic responsibilities. Summer camps, with a focus on environmental studies, also help engage these students outside of the classroom.

Teen Leadership Programs: ESC engages teen leaders with programs such as the youth naturalist training, restoration projects, internships, and assisting with community partner events. These programs help students learn skills that will prepare them for college and career, especially in the blossoming and critically important green job categories.

Community Stewardship Programs: ESC engages people of all ages at free community events run primarily from our hubs in Burien's Seahurst Park or Renton's Liberty Park as well as several festivals throughout south King County. These include daytime and nighttime beach walks, restoration and beach cleanups, senior center programs, family science days, and seasonal guided bird and plant walks.

Economic Impact

While the Environmental Science Center is a small organization, we do currently offer full benefits to our nine core staff members. This includes full health/dental/vision coverage, FSA's with employer contribution, 401K with employer contribution, sick leave, vacation time and holidays. ESC's part-time seasonal naturalists are offered paid time off/sick leave accrued through hours worked. We are always conscious of ways to increase wages to make these positions more appealing in this high cost of living area.

ESC also works with several local contractors to provide services such as language translations or scientific content/Environmental Justice expertise. Several of these groups are small BIPOC-led organizations including some local Indigenous educators. ESC spent over \$30,000 during our last fiscal year on these local expert contractors.

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Through our grant writing, ESC has received federal dollars over the years including a recent EPA grant that allowed us to give out \$25,000 in subawards to local BIPOC-led organizations and local school districts to help with transportation.

And finally, when inputting our operating expenses and total audience over the last fiscal year, the AEP6 calculator (<https://aep6.americansforthearts.org/calculator>) lists our total expenditures as \$1,387,473. This includes 23 jobs created, \$860,479 in household income, and over \$250,000 in local/state/federal tax revenue.

Support Materials

Support materials may include lists of Board of Directors/Commissioners, Staff, and/or Events in addition to other attachments.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS/COMMISSIONERS

Meg Alley, President, (June 2025 term limit), Communications and Development Director at Team Read

Nicole Killebrew, Vice President, (December 2025 term limit), Interpretation Coordinator, Staff Diver, and Volunteer Trainer at the Seattle Aquarium, Regional Leader for the National Network for Ocean and Climate Change Interpreters

Steve Buchsbaum, Treasurer, (June 2026 term limit), retired from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Carolina Chambers, Secretary, (December 2025 term limit), Campaign Administrator for the Philanthropy team at The Nature Conservancy

Orian Grant (they/them), (December 2024 term limit), Black Star Farmer and Environmental Science Center

Don Hunsaker III, (December 2026 term limit), retired, currently with Renton History Museum

Rachel Lytton, (December 2026 term limit), Support Leader at Benchling

Karen Lynch (December 2025 term limit), Testing Engineer at Boeing

Karl Mejia, (December 2025 term limit), Chief Executive Officer of JL Darling

Lawrence Reymann, (December 2024 term limit), retired from Columbia Records, currently with Seattle Aquarium, Renton's Community Services/Parks Commission, King County Park Ambassador for May Creek, and Seattle Public Utilities' Adaptive Management Work Group

Brenda Sullivan, (December 2025 term limit), retired engineer in psychoacoustics for NASA

EVENTS

IN-SCHOOL FIELD STUDY PROGRAMS (10,648 students/2,148 adults):

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Salmon Heroes locations: Normandy Park Cove (Normandy Park), Renton Community Center (Renton), Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks Park (Kent), Clark Lake Park (Kent), Mary Olson Farm (Auburn), classrooms in south King County

Beach Heroes locations: Seahurst Park (Burien), classrooms in south King County

Teacher Workshop locations: Seahurst Park (Burien), virtual over Zoom

Fall 2022 (September-December):

1. Salmon Heroes (4-hour program) – 120 classes; 2,886 students; 371 teachers/chaperones; 9 School Districts (Highline, Kent, Renton, Charter, Tukwila, Auburn, Federal Way, Fife, Private)
2. Additional Stewardship Action Projects on school grounds – 19 classes; 479 students; 21 teachers; 4 School Districts (Renton, Charter, Highline, Kent)
3. Teacher workshop series (15-hour program) – 4 teachers; Highline School District

Spring 2023 (March-June):

1. Beach Heroes (3-hour program) – 114 classes; 2,475 students; 638 teachers/chaperones; 8 School Districts (Highline, Kent, Renton, Private, Seattle, Ellensburg, Tukwila, Tahoma)
2. Teacher workshop series (15-hour program) – 17 teachers; 6 School Districts (Renton, Highline, Federal Way, Auburn, Fife, Private)

Fall 2023 (September-January):

1. Salmon Heroes (4-hour program) – 126 classes; 3,234 students; 469 teachers/chaperones; 9 School Districts (Highline, Renton, Kent, Charter, Auburn, Private, Seattle, Tribal, Fife)
2. Additional Stewardship Action Projects on school grounds – 53 classes; 1,316 students; 36 teachers; 6 School Districts (Highline, Charter, Kent, Auburn, Renton, Private)
3. Teacher workshop series (15-hour program) – 14 teachers; 3 School Districts (Renton, Highline, Clover Park)

Spring 2024 (March-June):

1. Beach Heroes (3-hour program) – 98 classes; 2,053 students; 631 teachers/chaperones; 9 School Districts (Highline, Kent, Renton, Tukwila, Charter, Seattle, Tahoma, Ellensburg, Private)
2. Teacher workshop series (15-hour program) – 4 teachers; Highline School District

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS (821 students/260 adults):

2022-2023 School Year

1. Cascade Middle School, Highline School District (80-hour program) – 8 students

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2. North Hill Elementary School, Highline School District (90-hour program) – 36 students
3. New Futures program, Alcove Apartments, Burien (4-hour program) – 17 youth, 3 adults

Summer 2023

1. New Futures program, Seahurst Park, Burien (3-hour program) – 124 youth, 36 adults
2. Burien summer camp, Seahurst Park (19.5-hour program) – 35 youth, 5 adults
3. Renton summer camp, Liberty Park/Seahurst Park (16-hour program) – 91 youth, 7 adults

2023-2024 School Year

1. New Futures program, Alcove Apartments, Burien (3.5-hour program) – 11 youth, 2 adults
2. New Future restoration program, Seahurst Park, Burien (20.5-hour program) – 9 youth
3. Seahurst Elementary, Highline School District (18-hour program) – 26 youth
4. Family First Community Center, Renton – 300 youth, 160 adults

Summer 2024

1. New Futures program, Seahurst Park, Burien (3-hour program) – 124 youth, 36 adults
2. Burien summer camp, Seahurst Park (21-hour program) – 25 youth, 9 adults
3. Birds Connect summer camp, Seahurst Park (9-hour program) – 15 youth, 2 adults

TEEN LEADERSHIP (144 students/15 adults):

Youth Naturalist Program (at In-School Field Study locations)

1. October 2022 - Summit Atlas Charter (26.5-hour program) – 4 teens
2. May 2023 – Summit Atlas Charter (22-hour program) – 9 teens
3. October 2023 – Summit Atlas Charter (29.5-hour program) – 4 teens
4. November 2023 – Waskowitz Environmental Leadership School, Highline School District (4-hour program) – 27 teens, 1 teacher
5. April 2024 - Waskowitz Environmental Leadership School, Highline School District (7.5-hour program) – 30 teens, 1 teacher

Big Picture Middle School Restoration Program (Highline School District)

1. 2022-23 school year – Seahurst Park, Burien (52.5-hour program) – 21 teens, 3 teachers

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2. 2023-24 school year – Seahurst Park, Burien (52-hour program) – 19 teens, 4 teachers

New Start High School/Innovation Heights Academy Internships (Highline School District)

1. Fall 2022 – Salmon Creek Park, Burien (11.5-hour program) – 4 teens, 1 adult
2. Spring 2023 – Salmon Creek Park, Burien (21-hour program) – 5 teens, 1 adult
3. Fall 2023 – Hilltop Park, Burien (12-hour program) – 10 teens, 2 adults
4. Spring 2024 – Hilltop Park, Burien (12-hour program) – 11 teens, 2 adults

PUBLIC PROGRAMS (1,866 youth/2,166 adults):

Fall 2022

1. Beach Cleanup, Seahurst Park, Burien – 9 youth, 13 adults
2. Bird and Plant Walk, Seahurst Park, Burien – 8 youth, 12 adults
3. Renton Senior Center Program, Renton – 18 adults
4. Salmon Fest, Mary Olson Farm, Auburn – 55 youth, 60 adults

Winter 2022-23

1. Bird and Plant Walk, Seahurst Park, Burien – 5 youth, 16 adults
2. Moonlight Beach Walks (3), Seahurst Park, Burien – 50 youth, 71 adults
3. Bird Fest, Burien Community Center – 60 youth, 120 adults

Spring 2023

1. Renton Senior Center Program, Renton – 11 adults
2. Renton Neighborhoods Sustainability Fair, Teasdale Park – 164 youth, 109 adults
3. Normandy Park Arbor Day Festival, Normandy Park – 50 youth, 60 adults
4. School partnership programs beach cleanups (4), Seahurst Park, Burien – 103 youth, 29 adults

Summer 2023

1. Summer Beach Walks (3), Seahurst Park, Burien – 173 youth, 103 adults
2. Toddler Summer Beach Programs (4), Seahurst Park, Burien – 62 youth, 52 adults
3. Renton Senior Center Program, Seahurst Park, Burien and Renton (3) – 37 adults
4. Backpack Days/Open House, Liberty Park, Renton (3) – 126 youth, 99 adults
5. Renton Family program, Liberty Park, Renton – 8 youth, 5 adults
6. Duwamish River Festival – 50 youth, 90 adults

Fall 2023

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1. Beach Cleanup, Seahurst Park, Burien – 11 youth, 12 adults
2. Bird and Plant Walk, Seahurst Park, Burien – 1 youth, 6 adults
3. Renton Senior Center Program, Renton – 11 adults
4. Renton Family program, Liberty Park, Renton – 9 youth, 7 adults
5. Salmon Fest, Mary Olson Farm, Auburn – 15 youth, 35 adults

Winter 2023-24

1. Bird and Plant Walk, Seahurst Park, Burien – 1 youth, 14 adults
2. Moonlight Beach Walks (3), Seahurst Park, Burien – 44 youth, 101 adults
3. Bird Fest, Burien Community Center – 50 youth, 110 adults

Spring 2024

1. Bird and Plant Walk, Seahurst Park, Burien – 3 youth, 17 adults
2. BioBlitz/Beach Cleanup, Seahurst Park, Burien – 44 youth, 99 adults
3. Renton Senior Center Program, Renton – 14 adults
4. Renton Library Story Time programs (6) – 111 youth, 81 adults
5. Renton Neighborhoods Sustainability Fair, Teasdale Park – 40 youth, 60 adults
6. Normandy Park Arbor Day Festival, Normandy Park – 26 youth, 47 adults
7. Space for All STEM Fair, Kent
8. School partnership programs/beach cleanups (5) – 105 youth, 67 adults

Summer 2024

1. Summer Beach Walks (3), Seahurst Park, Burien – 234 youth, 234 adults
2. Toddler Summer Beach Programs (4), Seahurst Park, Burien – 55 youth, 47 adults
3. Renton Senior Center Program, Renton – 11 adults
4. Duwamish River Festival – 62 youth, 192 adults
5. Renton Library Story Time programs (6) – 114 youth, 96 adults