



REGIONAL COALITION FOR CLEAN RIVERS AND STREAMS

FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 23, 2020

PREPARED BY:



enviroissues



FY 2019-20 OVERVIEW

The Regional Coalition for Clean Rivers and Streams (Coalition) continued its work – initiated in the mid-1990s – of providing coordinated messaging to target behaviors linked to stormwater pollution from residential sources across the Portland metropolitan region. The Coalition continues its brand recognition efforts by consistently using the previously developed *The River Starts Here* creative concept in its various materials. Other Coalition activities in the 2019-20 fiscal year included sponsoring and promoting the Coalition and its messages at community events.

Coalition participants include:

- Clackamas Water Environment Services
- Clean Water Services
- City of Gladstone
- City of Gresham
- City of Lake Oswego
- City of Milwaukie
- City of Oregon City
- City of Troutdale
- City of West Linn
- City of Wilsonville
- Oak Lodge Water Services
- Multnomah County
- Washington County

This report covers the time frame of July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020.

BACKGROUND

As identified in the 2013 Strategic Plan, the mission of the Coalition is to collaborate across the Portland metropolitan region to improve watershed health by changing household behaviors, reducing polluted runoff and connecting people with their local waterways. Coalition members leverage their collective resources to conduct outreach to communities across the region with common stormwater information and messages. Coalition activities complement individual agency efforts to raise awareness of stormwater runoff and affect behavior change to prevent pollution and protect regional surface water quality. Coalition activities support commitments relative to state permits under the federal Clean Water Act (administered by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality), including Total Maximum Daily Load and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) programs, as well as compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act.

Participants in the Coalition represent agencies that serve diverse population sizes from very small (Troutdale) to very large (Clean Water Services). As such the ability to run programs specific to their community is limited by funding and staffing. The Coalition represents an efficient, effective method to combine stormwater outreach funds. Coalition members continue to provide funding for the collaborative work each fiscal year based on the size of the respective community. The group shares



funds with Multnomah county acting as the fiscal agent to purchase associated consulting services, advertising, materials and event sponsorships. By sharing resources, the group is able to reach many thousands of people in the region compared to what entities can typically achieve on their own.

The Coalition targets behaviors from residential sources linked to stormwater pollution prevention. Information and messages used by the Coalition are intended to reach those making purchasing and management decisions about yard care, pets and auto maintenance activities – some of the most likely sources of stormwater pollution from residents. Coalition activities address a range of surface water contaminants, including nutrients and toxics from fast-releasing synthetic fertilizers and pesticides applied to yards and lawns, pollutant loads from car washing soaps, metals and other toxics from vehicle maintenance (and unmaintained vehicles), *E. coli* from pet waste, turbidity from eroded soils and other contaminants from illicit discharges.

Key Messages

The Coalition's key messages focus on raising awareness about pollution from stormwater runoff and motivating actions to protect surface water quality through action at the household level. The key messages are:

- Stormwater runoff is now our number one source of water pollution. When it rains, pollutants from your home, car, and garden wash into our rivers and streams.
- Bacteria from uncollected dog waste washes into our rivers and streams. You can protect our water by picking up after your pets.
- Yard and garden products wash into our rivers and streams. You can protect our water by eliminating these products or using compost and slow-release fertilizer.
- Motor oil, solvents, and soaps wash into our rivers and streams. You can protect our water by keeping car-care chemicals out of storm drains, diverting wash water onto your landscaping, and going to a car wash.

FY 2019-20 ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Activities during the reporting period focused on continuing to implement the Coalition's strategic plan with messaging and outreach using *The River Starts Here* creative concept, developed in FY 2014-15. This concept was informed by the research summary about stormwater behavior (DHM Research, Feb. 2014) used by Coalition members in partial fulfillment of the FY 2014-2015 MS4 permit requirement to evaluate the effectiveness of permittee's education and outreach program.

Strategic Plan Implementation

A strategic plan, adopted in 2013, continued to guide Coalition efforts during the fiscal year. The Coalition acted on strategic plan goals as summarized below:

Goal 1: Maintain a functioning Coalition

Each year, Coalition members prepare an updated cost sharing approach and budget, which was implemented in 2019-20. Members of the Coalition share their knowledge with the broader regulated communities in Oregon via the Association of Clean Water Agencies (ACWA). Members have presented on prioritizing public behaviors to maximize pollutant reduction success and on a water pollutant risk assessment database at the past two spring ACWA conferences.



Goal 2: Develop and adapt creative products to fulfill the Coalition’s mission

The Coalition continued to use collateral materials developed with *The River Starts Here* creative concept through event promotion and digital advertising, including materials such as temporary tattoos, T-shirts for staffing, message banners for booths, and a large durable watershed map. Coalition members use collateral materials through individual outreach events held throughout the year.

Goal 3: Practice adaptive management

The Coalition is committed to leveraging available resources to maximize impact while setting the stage for a future collaboration among agencies. Total member representation in the Coalition has increased in the past few years, bringing in more regional partners.

THE RIVER STARTS HERE MESSAGING AND OUTREACH

COMMUNITY EVENTS AND AGENCY COLLABORATION

Representatives of member agencies promoted Coalition messages throughout the fiscal year using Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter. The Coalition produced collateral materials emphasizing *The River Starts Here* brand and messages to support community events. In addition, the Coalition adapted to the changing landscape of COVID-19 by increasing social media posts and digital events. The primary focus of digital outreach was to drive engagement in the first annual Student Video Contest.

Watershed Village – The Big Float

In the summer of 2019, the Coalition staffed a large interactive booth at the Big Float along with a number of regional watershed councils including Tryon Creek, Oswego Lake, Johnson Creek, Columbia Slough and Clackamas River. The booth served lemonade, had a salmon obstacle course, a large watershed map that people put dots on to learn what watershed they lived in and a social media photo booth with props for people to take photos with. An estimated 500 or more people visited the booth.





STUDENT VIDEO CONTEST
FOR CLEAN RIVERS
WIN \$500

Dear Portland-Metro Area School Administrator:

The Regional Coalition of Clean Rivers and Streams (RCORS), a partnership of public agencies in the Metro region, works to educate the public about how stormwater pollution impacts our rivers and streams and steps we can all take to protect our water.

We invite your students to enter our first ever Portland-Metro area middle and high school video contest. To learn more about the RCORS, visit facebook.com/cleanrivers or theriverstartshere.org.

Contest details:

Contest entries will consist of 25 or 55 second videos about water pollution. Multiple entries allowed with separate application forms. All Portland-Metro area middle and high school students are invited to participate. Public, private, charter, and home school students in grades 6 to 12 as of September 2019 are eligible to enter. A \$500 first prize will be awarded in each of these categories:

- Best Long Video (55 seconds)
- Best Short Video (25 seconds)
- People's Choice (overall favorite, short or long)

Students may enter as a school group or club (e.g. Gresham High School technology class or Beavumont Middle School Green Club) or as an individual. Prize money will be awarded based on the category selected.

Video entries must focus on one of the following stormwater pollution prevention topics:

- A. Leave no trace: protect rivers while enjoying the outdoors
- B. We all live downstream: what connects you to Oregon's water?
- C. Everyday pollution prevention: how daily routines at home can pollute stormwater
- D. Cars: minimize water pollution from driving and maintaining vehicles
- E. Watershed councils: make a commercial promoting your local council

Videos will be evaluated based on factual accuracy, educational value, and entertainment factors.

Application and video factsheets are available at theriverstartshere.org

If you plan to enter, please email info@theriverstartshere.org so we can send you updates and reminders. Your email address will not be shared.

*Students in grades 6 to 12 in Washington, Clackamas, and Multnomah counties are eligible to enter.

The Regional Coalition for Clean Rivers and Streams is a partnership of Multnomah County, Clean Water Services, Clackamas County Water Environment Services, Oak Lodge Water Services, and the Cities of Lake Oswego, West Linn, Gladstone, Troutdale, Fairview, Gresham, Wilsonville, and Milwaukie.

Student Video Contest

Beginning in summer 2019, the RSH team developed a YouTube page in order to host a student video contest. The team also developed a region-wide mailing list including public, private and homeschooling organizations, and collected emails whenever possible. The team developed an application, rules, a waiver, added materials to its website and launched the first annual 6th-12th grade Student Video Contest in fall 2019 with submissions due in 2020. Finally, the team sent a mailer to 229 schools in fall and winter.

Categories included first prize of \$500 for best long video (55 seconds), best short video (25 seconds) and people's choice. The team created fact sheets to support student learning and video content accuracy on the topics of 1) Leave No Trace 2) Pollution from Cars 3) What Connects You to the River 4) Pollution from Everyday Behaviors.

The Coalition received an overwhelming response from participants and viewers who learned about our connection with local waterways. In this first year, local youth environmentalists passionate about telling their story responded to the call and helped create videos about how we each have a role in protecting rivers and streams. Overall, the Coalition received 46 entries, of those 36 were deemed completed applications with appropriate content accuracy and were uploaded to the Coalition's YouTube site.

On June 6, 36 middle and high school student finalists from throughout the Portland Metro area shared videos to encourage clean water behaviors like reducing pesticide use, practicing Leave No Trace principles in natural areas and traveling by transit, bike and foot to reduce pollution. Expert judges from the film industry, governments and river organizations voted to select the winners for the best 55-second and 25-second videos. From June 6-19, students rallied friends and family to vote for them to win the People's Choice Award for the most liked, commented, viewed and shared video. Over 4,000 community members watched student videos, which were viewed over 11,000 times. Viewers submitted over 1,800 likes and added hundreds of comments. Commenters shared their enthusiasm for these creative videos.



"I always forget that everyday activities can be harmful to my community whether I intended it to or not, I will definitely remember the car wash part!" – Margo Flanagan

"This is the greatest public service announcement for keeping our waters clean I have ever seen." – Robert Pirtle



In July, the Coalition met over Zoom to finalize all winners and honorable mentions. The Coalition will report on the winners and awards in the next fiscal year’s annual report.

River Starts Here Blog

In May 2020, the Coalition began refreshing the website and added a blog. The blog created new opportunities for agency collaboration, event cross-promotion and driving traffic to partner resources. This fiscal year, the blog promoted upcoming events including The Big Float, the East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District 2020 Yard Tour and local native plant sales.



WEBSITE: THERIVERSTARTSHERE.ORG

TheRiverStartsHere.org launched in June 2015. The website uses a modern design featuring *The River Starts Here* creative assets. It features an image slider highlighting Coalition messages and includes links to member websites and additional web resources. During the fiscal year, the Coalition met and analyzed the website layout and content areas and planed a full website refresh in August 2020.

Summary website analytics for the fiscal year are shown below. Statistics in parenthesis are the difference between last year’s and this year’s data. Positive changes are shown in green, negative changes are shown in red, and inconsequential changes are shown in lavender. New data points are presented in black.

Total sessions: 2,500 (▲ 114 %)

- **Users:** 1.7k (▲ 64%)
- **Traffic type**
 - Direct: 52% (▲ 160%)
 - Social: 33% (▲ 1,890%)
 - Organic (search engine): 14% (▼ 60%)
 - Referral: 1.2% (▼ 95%)
- **Bounce rate:** 77% (▼ 10%)
- **Time on site:** 1:39 (▲ 171%)

During this fiscal year, web traffic has increased rapidly. In particular, traffic from social media to the website increased 1,890%. This change is due in part to the hosting Student Video Contest content on the website. The River Starts Here also increased post frequency on social media and linked more regularly to the website. Finally, COVID-19 increased social media and website engagement in 2020.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Coalition continued posting to its social media channels with an increase in frequency compared to previous years. As in past years, the Coalition concentrated social media activity in the spring and



summer time period when households in the region have an increased interest in yard and garden activities relevant to surface water quality. Social media messages build on existing conversations and connect with organizations around the region. While spring and summer are also times for promoting events, this year presented a different challenge with the COVID-19 pandemic. The Coalition focused on promoting educational webinars and online events as opposed to in person events such as restorations and river cleanups.

Statistics in parenthesis are the difference between last year’s and this year’s data. Positive changes are shown in green, negative changes are shown in red, and inconsequential changes are shown in lavender.

Facebook page, [The River Starts Here](#)

A summary of Coalition Facebook account use during the fiscal and as of July 1, 2020 is as follows:

- **Followers (“likes”):** 1,684 (▲110)
- **Weekly organic reach:** 193 (▲29)
- **Posts:** 89 (▲16)

Facebook follower demographics breakdown:

Age	Female	Male	Total by Age
18-24	1%	1%	2%
25-34	11%	7%	16%
35-44	19%	8%	27%
45-54	16%	8%	24%
55-64	10%	4%	14%
65+	9%	4%	13%
Total by Gender	66%	32%	-

Table 1: Facebook followers by age range and gender. A large portion of the Coalition’s Facebook audience is made up of women from age 35-54.

The Coalition’s social media following is dominated by women. In particular, the Coalition Facebook mostly reaches women who are 35-54. The Coalition’s Facebook following has also increased its reach to older people while reaching fewer young people.

Facebook ads, [The River Starts Here](#)

The Coalition continued to use low cost social media advertising as part of its campaign in FY 2019-20. Continuing to focus on defined target audiences for messages (male v. female, age level for behavior, etc.) as well as targeting by ZIP code is a primary strategy. The majority of advertising was on Facebook.

A summary of Facebook ad engagement during the fiscal year is as follows:



- **Advertisements run:** 5
- **Reach:** 102,586
- **Link clicks and video views:** 31,305

Ads or Boosts during FY 19-20

Topic	Engagement	Reach	Impressions
The Big Float 2019—Watershed Village promo	94	781	NA
24 th Annual Columbia Slough Regatta	82	2,602	4,406
Sandy River Annual Float Clean -Up	406	16,418	26,660
Johnson Creek Annual Clean-Up	153	7,696	12,021
Harmful Algal Blooms educational post	1,159	60,603	131,800
12th Annual Johnson Creek Clean-Up	120	8,235	12,754
Tualatin Tire Collection Event	20	2,958	6,113
Where does Stormwater Go—Downspouts (Portland edu video)	82	1038	NA
Salmon recovery & toxics—educational-engagement	412	10,192	19,395
Car Washing techniques for water protection educational video (from City of Salem)	2,445	8,245	16,307
Willamette Riverkeeper Clean-Up	106	8,384	11,962
Student Video Contest post	18	504	
Student Video Contest	1,276	13,196	25,479
Student Video Contest -deadline extended (video link)	30,037	21,756	39,157
Pesticides Harm Pollinators/Backyard Habitat	175	1860	NA
Columbia Slough anti-littering promo	1,173	24,414	64,382
Follow Us: River Starts Here	5	15,555	34,849
JCWC Watershed Wide Event	113	5,999	12,026
Totals	190,723	210,436	2.5M
Total Cost			\$3,503*

Engagement is an interaction such as a like, comment, or click thru. **Reach** is the number of individuals who saw or interacted with the post. **Impressions** are the number of times placed by Facebook including being show to individuals more than once. NA=unpaid spot.

*Some ads also ran on Instagram.



Twitter, @riverstartshere

A summary of use during the fiscal year is as follows:

- **Followers:** 1,438 (▼32)
- **Tweets:** 53 (▲4)

Instagram, @theriverstartshere

A summary of Coalition Instagram account use during the fiscal and as of July 1, 2019 is as follows:

- **Followers:** 164 (▲160)
- **Posts:** 26 (▲14)



Instagram follower demographics breakdown:

Age	Female	Male	Total by Age
13-17	1%	4%	2%
18-24	5%	2%	4%
25-34	39%	35%	37%
35-44	28%	24%	26%
45-54	18%	24%	20%
55-64	4%	8%	6%
65+	6%	4%	6%
Total by Gender	62%	38%	-

Table 3: Instagram followers by age range and gender. A large portion of the Coalition’s Instagram audience is made up of women from age 25-44.

The Coalition’s move in 2019-2020 to consolidate Instagram handles and grow its audience has had tangible effects on the diversity of demographics reached. The Instagram audience is dominated by people ages 25-34. The Coalition can continue to build a following from youth by promoting YouTube and Instagram content while reaching older people through Facebook.

YouTube, The River Starts Here

A summary of the Coalition YouTube account during the fiscal year is as follows:

- **Subscribers:** 9
- **Videos added:** 5
- **Watch time (hours):** 28.5
- **Views:** 225

In 2019, the River Starts Here created a YouTube account for the Student Video Contest. During this fiscal year, the channel saw a modest increase in views and subscribers. The People’s Choice Award voting for the student video contest occurred in July 2020. The annual report for the next fiscal year will capture the large increase in YouTube audience.



FY 2019-20 BUDGET

Category	Services	Investment
Event sponsorship and promotion		
Big Float	2019 Big Float Sponsorship	\$3,000
Materials		
Mailers	Environmental Paper and Print – Student video contest mailer	\$424
Mailers	Student video contest mailer	\$120
Stickers	1000 The River Starts Here stickers	\$510
Banner	Streamside forest banner	\$125
Banner	Watershed village banner	\$100
Advertisement		
Facebook	Facebook digital advertisements	\$3,681.85
Coordination support		
Envirolssues	Meeting facilitation and member coordination, website maintenance, social media authoring	\$18,000
	TOTAL	\$25,960.85

Table 3: FY 2019-20 expenditures



OBSERVATIONS

The following observations are based on the results of FY 2019-20 activities and suggest future direction the Coalition may take in its mission of educating the public about the impact of stormwater runoff pollution on the health of our rivers and streams.

The FY 19-20 efforts consisted of the Coalition continuing to use online social media advertising, contracting with EnviroIssues to assist with increasing social media post frequency and meeting coordination and data analytics, building a YouTube page and creating thematic playlists and switching Coalition meetings to digital. As noted in the advertising review section, The Coalition's digital strategies were effective.

The Student Video Contest **outreach through schools proved challenging**, as only two teachers responded to the video contest by involving their students resulting in about 20 submissions. To compensate, the Coalition extended the deadline and purchased Instagram advertising that was geotargeted to the region's young people which resulted in

a total of 46 entries. This **digital outreach strategy was successful**. The group noted that given the amount of time it took to receive, organize and upload the videos, review them for accuracy and score them, having many more entries would be incredibly time intensive. As such, the outreach strategy will not be much altered. The group is very pleased with the quality of the videos submitted and the enthusiasm shown by the engaged young people and will continue this approach to engage the next generation of adults in addition to the adult population already engaged via Facebook and Twitter. The Coalition will continue to focus on Instagram and YouTube content targeted to reach young people.

Next fiscal year, the Coalition will conduct a **three-fold student outreach strategy** through school mailers, Instagram ads and through other community-based organizations, especially those serving marginalized populations and BIPOC youth, in an effort to achieve more diversity, equity and inclusion. The Coalition will now be able to use student videos from the 2019-2020 competition as collateral for social media ads and posts.

