



Leadership For a Clean and Just Oregon

# NEWSLETTER

## FALL 2019

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The Native American Student Union (NASU) joined a Beyond Toxics tour of Shady Creek Forest. Pictured (L to R): Kata Autobee, Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes, Oklahoma; Stacia Henry, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, Nevada; Jason Gonzales, Oregon Wild and Ana Molina, Beyond Toxics organizer. | Photo by Emily Cook

## Putting Communities First

Beyond Toxics is dedicated to ending the problem of environmental pollution. Our work interweaves protecting the land, air and water – all common assets – with supporting the ability of people of color, the working class and immigrant families to build a better future for themselves. Here's a glimpse of upcoming projects in our 2020 Strategic Plan!

**Chlorpyrifos**, the organophosphate created to kill soldiers in two world wars, was our top legislative focus in 2019. Scientists have concluded there is no safe level of exposure to this highly hazardous neurotoxin, which causes brain damage in children, destroys beneficial insects and taints many common foods. This year's tumultuous legislative session eclipsed our ability to win a ban on chlorpyrifos in Oregon. We're coming back ever stronger to finish the work in 2020! In partnership with PCUN, Oregon's farm worker union, farm labor advocates, organic food growers and others, we intend to ban the use of chlorpyrifos. New York, California and Hawaii have already declared chlorpyrifos illegal to protect their communities. We say Oregon must be next!

Our office has received a large numbers of calls from Oregonians who have experienced illness and damage from the herbicide **Crossbow**, a toxic mix of

2,4D and triclopyr. Crossbow can drift far offsite to sicken people, kill trees and plants and cause lasting property damage. We requested official records from the Oregon Department of Agriculture pertaining to complaints and investigations into Crossbow drift, and discovered nearly 200 records detailing problems with this herbicide. The evidence of Crossbow's misuse and damage calls for action. We will be addressing the problem in our policy work, thereby protecting health and property.

**Oregon's forestlands and watersheds** are hammered by clear cut logging followed by aerial herbicides sprays. Through inaction, the Department of Forestry and the Board of Forestry sanction these outdated practices. A 2013 Beyond Toxics report on aerial herbicide sprays makes clear: Oregon has the weakest timber management laws in the West! We are part of a coalition of impacted communities and organizations dedicated to overhauling the Oregon Forest Practices Act. Our aim is to protect drinking water, fish and wildlife habitat, healthy trees and soils for carbon sequestration and ecosystem balance. To learn about ballot measures slated for the 2020 election, be sure to visit [forestwaters.org](http://forestwaters.org)!

Let's fix this broken system and take control back from Wall Street corporations that exploit our state's natural resources to benefit their shareholders.

## Non Toxic Oregon Project needs your support

by Ephraim Payne

Parents should be able to take their kids to public playgrounds and parks without worrying about toxic chemical exposures that can damage their developing brains. Every child deserves the pleasure of running on grass and smelling flowers.

Increasingly, urban youth, especially low-income and minority youth, only have access to nature in public parks and on school playgrounds. Research shows that children need repeated contact with nature to foster physical and mental well-being.

That's why we launched Non Toxic Oregon and why we need your help. Despite warnings from international childhood health experts that pesticides pose considerable risks to children, many cities and schools still use multiple toxic pesticides to control weeds and pests in



*"It's terrifying to think that just playing in the park can expose my unborn son and my daughter and all the other kids in our neighborhood to neurotoxins that could forever effect how their brain develops."*

– Carly Lettero  
Researcher and Writer, Corvallis

parks and on playgrounds and ball fields. These chemical poisons disrupt the endocrine systems of young children and unborn babies alike. They cause measurable IQ loss and behavior problems and impact children's ability to succeed in school and life.

In just a few months, Non Toxic Oregon has inspired local governments to get off the pesticide treadmill. The cities of Eugene, Springfield, Ashland and Talent, plus Lane County are working with Beyond Toxics to launch organic land care in their parks.

You can help us bring Non Toxic Oregon to more cities, school districts and counties throughout Oregon. Mountain Rose Herbs has generously offered a \$10,000 gift match for Giving Tuesday, December 3rd.

Please help us make our gift match goal and double the impact of your support. Let's keep children safe!

## How are soil health and children's health related?

A report on Non Toxic Oregon

by Lisa Arkin

In September, fifty-eight public park managers and school district maintenance staff gathered with Beyond Toxics, as part of our Non Toxic Oregon project. Co-hosted by Springfield's Willamalane Park District and the City of Talent, two all-day workshops attracted representatives of nearly a dozen local governments to take a deep dive into learning about organic land management.

The goal of the project is to protect children in the places they learn and play. Children need to explore and experience nature as part of their healthy development. Many children living in working class neighborhoods and communities of color depend on public parks for affordable and accessible outdoor experiences. However, pesticide residues may contaminate lawns, fields and flowerbeds. Even small pesticide exposures increase the risk of cancer, brain damage and hormone disruption. By preventing children's exposure to pesticides, park employees can play an important role in a community's commitment to environmental health and equity.

In addition to learning how to protect children's health, attendees focused on "Soil 101" – practicing soil management with the primary goal of nurturing beneficial micro-organisms in the web of life beneath our feet.

Guest speakers from the national organization Beyond Pesticides explained how improving soil health can protect children, pets and employees by eliminating the perceived need for synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. The attendees were impressed and seemed to soak up the science behind non-toxic land management. We hope they see the path to creating verdant and durable lawns and playing fields without poisons.

During the workshops, I was pleased to witness these public landscape managers shift their thinking to include a commitment to children's

health and soil productivity. For example, City of Talent Public Works Director, Bret Marshall, gave a demonstration of their new weed steamer (see photo at left). By applying a burst of hot steam, this machine dispatches weeds in a variety of locations, from flowerbeds to sidewalk cracks, without using any chemicals.

We advocate for an end to the use of toxic herbicides and pesticides in schools and parks and along roads, bikeways and trails. Our Non Toxic Oregon project provides the science and best practices for a successful transition to organic land care for children's health.



(L to R) Lisa Arkin, Beyond Toxics ; Chip Osborne, Osborne Organics and Jay Feldman, Beyond Pesticides. Chip and Jay visited Oregon in September to present several training sessions with land care professionals.



City of Talent employee demonstrates steam weed control.

## Frontline Communities Gather for Environmental Justice Summit by Pablo Alvarez



Beyond Toxics and the NAACP Eugene/Springfield are proud to announce Oregon's inaugural environmental justice summit. On April 16th-19th the University of Oregon will welcome frontline and tribal communities, academics and decision-makers from across the state to come together and discuss the environmental and climate justice issues confronting Oregonians.

There will be ample opportunities for youth involvement, including panels and a Call for Youth Artists. Entries of video, spoken word, dance and music will be accepted. The selected artists will be showcased during the Summit.

The Summit agenda explores critical topics pertaining to water justice, clean air and a healthy workplace, climate justice, Just Transition and the important role of traditional ecological knowledge and science when crafting policy. The goal for the EJP Summit goes beyond just talking about the issues; we will focus on solutions created by the people most impacted. The EJP Summit intends to elevate the voices of those too often left

The organizers are committed to hosting fifty representatives from Tribal as well as urban and rural frontline communities to lead the panels and conversations at the Summit.

The keynote speaker for the Environmental Justice Pathways Summit is Mustafa Santiago Ali, Vice President of Environmental Justice, Climate, and Community Revitalization for the National Wildlife Federation (NWF). Before joining the NWF, Mustafa was a VP at the Hip-Hop Caucus and worked under the Obama and Bush Administrations serving as senior advisor for environmental justice and community revitalization at the US Environmental Protection Agency.



**Dr. Mustafa Santiago Ali, Vice President of Environmental Justice, Climate and Community Revitalization for the National Wildlife Federation**

behind at conferences and summits and ensure their recommendations are featured in a forthcoming Environmental Justice in Oregon Policy statement.

The Environmental Justice Summit is proudly supported by Meyer Memorial Trust, the Center for Environmental Futures, the Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics, the OSU Spring Creek Project and many departments at the University of Oregon.

Other speakers will include Adrienne Hollis, VP of Environmental and Climate Justice for the Union of Concerned Scientists; Jo Ann Hardesty, City of Portland Commissioner; Don Gentry, Chairman of The Klamath Tribes; Don Sampson ATNI Climate Change Project Director and Reyna Lopez, Executive Director of PCUN and many more.

We urge you to mark your calendars for April 16-19 and visit [EJPSummit.org](http://EJPSummit.org) to get more information, answer the Call for Youth Artists and register! You will not want to miss the opportunity to connect with people across the state and build a statewide movement for environmental and climate justice.

## Rare environmental justice victory for West Eugene community

by Lisa Arkin

The Lane County Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA) signed an agreement to improve air quality monitoring and community engagement in West Eugene. The agency's September agreement is a result of a civil rights and environmental justice complaint we filed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with our partner, the Crag Law Center. The complaint was a response to LRAPA's 2013 approval of an air pollution permit modification for Seneca's Sustainable Energy biomass plant.

The investigation was conducted by the EPA Office of Civil Rights (OCR) which is responsible for enforcement of federal civil rights laws. Our civil rights complaint successfully made it through a complex gauntlet of federal agency procedures and resulted in a meaningful outcome for a vulnerable community.

### The Problem

Seneca Sustainable Energy emits hundreds of tons of air pollutants every year, all of which are considered very dangerous to nearby residents, especially children. Those most at risk live in Bethel-Danebo, Trainsong, and parts of River Road, all in West Eugene.

The Bethel-Trainsong neighborhoods of West Eugene are home to more people of color and low-income residents compared to other areas of Eugene. These neighborhoods are exposed to 99% of the industrial air pollutants in the Eugene city limits and are overburdened with the impacts of breathing dirty air. For example, children's asthma rates in West Eugene are almost twice the state average.

Beyond Toxics' complaint alleged that LRAPA violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act when it failed to consider disproportionate impacts on communities of color or provide avenues for meaningful community participation in LRAPA decision-making. U.S. EPA's Office of Civil Rights accepted LRAPA's voluntary compliance agreement to conduct more air quality monitoring in West Eugene in coordination with Beyond Toxics; report air quality information in languages other than English; adopt clear grievance procedures and non-discrimination procedural safeguards; and place a non-discrimination coordinator on staff.

By filing this complaint, Beyond Toxics and Crag Law Center brought EPA's civil rights enforcement power to Lane County to ensure that impacted communities have input into environmental health decisions.

## Update from Southern Oregon's environmental justice work

by Bianca Ballar

Despite the recent sharp intensification of bleak and stifling violence against Latinx communities and immigrants, 2019 has seen the color and voice of Southern Oregon's environmental justice frontier expand and diversify markedly.

While detainments, family separations and exportations by ICE escalated and made nationwide news during the late summer, I spoke to a crowd gathered at the March To End Human Detention. In Southern Oregon we need to dismantle and heal the culture of racism and white supremacy to better combat the status quo and make this a safer place to live. Many agreed that our region has work to do to resolve ignorance around the needs of Latinx and undocumented community members.

In partnership with Rogue Climate, I helped launch "Cafecitos," a support group for Latinx youth interested in empowering themselves and making a positive change for their communities. After several high energy encounters over coffee and Latin pastries, Cafecitos has evolved to include activist and community organizing trainings in the form of Cafecitos and Accin. Latinx youth are actively engaging in local politics--both campaigns for public office and grassroots organizing--to make a clear difference for their community.

As a result of my call to address local racism, Beyond Toxics was invited to an interview "How to Help Immigrants and Address the Border Crisis" on local Rogue Valley Television. Viewers asked how they may contribute to practical solutions. In addition, Oregon Senator Merkeley has reached out to Beyond Toxics and the circle of Southern Oregon non-profits that serve Latinx and immigrant communities. His request to better know our local work, issues, and concerns has brought our organizations closer together. As part of these new-found connections, and with the guidance of UniteOregon, our non-profits organized an Immigration Forum in Medford this fall, which the Senator attended. As a Beyond Toxics organizer, I spoke to the need for better farmworker protections and the need for support to ban chlorpyrifos. We all acknowledged the growing voting power of Latinx people in this country.

This is just the beginning of our long journey together resisting corporate dominance and empowering the Latinx voices in Southern Oregon. I am excited to see where our rural Latinx and environmental justice movement will go. **Unidos, si se puede!**

## Tribal Climate Resilience in the Pacific Northwest

### by Krystal Abrams



Krystal Abrams, Social Media and Pollinator Projects Manager

Native American Tribes and First Nations are most at-risk of suffering the devastating effects of climate change. Climate change is no longer a distant threat, but a dangerous force that places our native communities and their lands at immediate risk. As with so many threats, indigenous peoples have been at the front lines of the chaos caused by climate change, forced to fight to protect

their land, homes and culture. Across the nation, tribes are rallying together to fight against climate change.

What makes a community more vulnerable to climate change? Many factors can contribute to tribal vulnerability, but tribes that live close to rivers and coastal floodplains, or in areas prone to extreme weather conditions are most likely to experience hardships. Tribal economies that are heavily dependent on steady climate conditions (agriculture, fishing, and winter sports) also face future risks. Many Native communities in the Pacific Northwest fit into at least one of these categories and many are already implementing climate action plans.

#### The ATNI Climate Change Summit

This summer I visited Kalispel land (in Washington) to attend the Climate Change Summit with the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians and allies. This summit brought together leaders from Tribes and First Nations throughout the Pacific Northwest and North America to discuss tribal efforts to address climate change. The summit focused on tribal climate resilience, protecting and applying traditional knowledge in climate change initiatives, and implementing a unified tribal climate change policy agenda.

#### What are tribes doing to prepare?

Overall, tribes are focused on immediate action, as many nations are already feeling the harsh impacts of climate change in the Pacific Northwest. A woman from the Quinault tribe on the Washington Coast mentioned that her tribe was considering a relocation plan.

If adopted, this would involve moving nearly the entire village further inland. Sadly, sea level rises, brought on by climate change, have swallowed a chunk of the tribe's coastal land. The Quinault, whose ancestors have lived in their fishing village since time immemorial, are now faced with the prospect of uprooting their families and moving to higher ground.

The tribes in attendance also identified another crucial way to prepare for climate change: respecting and protecting traditional knowledge and incorporating it into future conversations to help shape future adaptations. Attendees spoke about the importance of protecting traditional knowledge within climate change initiatives, and rightfully so. After all, without the knowledge of our past, how can we hope to create a vibrant and equitable future?

Many attendees unpacked and analysed the concept of *Decolonizing Science*. This subject is often unfamiliar to many outside tribal communities. We must ask, how has science been used as an instrument of colonization? As a science major and an indigenous woman myself, I believe that a system that excludes indigenous knowledge in the scientific process is a problem and, frankly, narrow-minded. I see the concept of indigenizing the scientific method as a way to empower people to think about the natural world in more than one way. The idea behind "decolonizing" scientific inquiry is not to displace objective data collection or methodology but to enhance it by incorporating ways that indigenous people think about and understand the physical world.

It's important to remember that our ancestors have cultivated and managed biological diversity for thousands of years. The extractive, Euro-introduced economy is still very new in this place and has fostered inequities and over-consumptive behavior. If we are going to succeed in transitioning towards a more regenerative economy, we need to keep the perspectives of our tribes in mind and create more space for their voices in conversations that shape climate policy and land management.

Alongside our environmental justice allies Beyond Toxics helped win a set-aside for Just Transition funds for impacted communities, including low-income, rural and communities of color, as well as removed exemptions for trash incineration. We're proud to contribute to Oregon's shift to de-carbonize our economy.



## Fall Action Roundup

A crew of young students came in late September to help weed the Beyond Toxics Pollinator Garden in West Eugene. | Photo by Emily Cook



Beyond Toxics staffers, Krystal Abrams (left) and Ana Molina (3rd from left) led students from the UO Native American Student Union on a tour of a private forest managed with resilient forestry principles. Dave Eisler (far right wearing a hardhat) hosted the tour. | Photo by Emily Cook



César G. Abarca, Ph.D. of Humboldt State University came to facilitate the creation of the non-toxic saw dust mural for Dia de los Muertos at the Springfield Public Library. He found a young artist to help him.



Yolanda Gomez, Beyond Toxics Board member, participated in the Dia de los Muertos festivities. Photo by Steve Cash.

## Welcome Jennifer and Emily! Photos by Krystal Abrams



Jennifer Eisele, Pesticide Projects Fellow

Beyond Toxics welcomes Jennifer Eisele, our new Pesticide Projects Fellow. She brings invaluable experience to our organization based on her previous work on pesticide regulations in the Tribal Environmental Protection Program of the Shoshone Paiute Tribes of Nevada. Jennifer chose to join the Beyond Toxics team thanks to a job placement program administered by the Oregon Siletz Tribes.



Emily Cook, Photography Intern

Emily Cook is working on her B.S. in Environmental Studies at the University of Oregon. With extensive experience as a freelance photographer, including wedding photography, she brings a wealth of skill and a keen eye to Beyond Toxics this fall. Emily's interests include gaining a foundation in natural and social sciences and political studies, to pursue a future in environmental justice related fields.



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Beyond Toxics weaves social justice and human rights advocacy into environmental protection policies.

**JOIN US!**

**2019 Holiday Party**  
Refreshments & Entertainment!

5 - 7:30 PM  
THURSDAY

**CE 19**  
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