

Wild Whatcom

EXPLORING / SERVING / CONNECTING



2021 IMPACT REPORT

JUNE 2020-JUNE 2021



INSPIRATION FROM RESILIENCE

A letter from our Executive Director

This past year has been challenging for everyone in one way or another. Many have experienced great loss and abrupt changes in work or daily life, while all of us have had to find new ways to keep connected with family and community. At Wild Whatcom, our operations suddenly came to a halt in March 2020 for four months. During this time, thanks to a federal CARES Act grant, we kept our staff employed, focusing internally on developing curriculum, training staff, and preparing for new safety measures. In mid-July 2020, we reopened with adapted camps using masks and social distancing. Since then, the year has flown by as we continued to shift and change to meet the needs of our community.

Throughout the year I gathered energy, inspiration, and resilience from our incredible Wild Whatcom community. Our staff and board practiced ongoing flexibility and ingenuity as we created new programs, joined with new partners, and navigated through air-quality-driven cancellations and shifting school schedules. I feel so much gratitude for our team who, despite feeling fatigue and anxiety themselves, showed up as positive mentors for youth in our community during a time when everyone was hungry for normalcy and camaraderie.

And, of course, the silliness, joy, and curiosity of the kids we saw in the field throughout the year fueled our passion to continue supporting one another, even when the future remained uncertain. Many new families joined Wild Whatcom outings, eager to keep their family connected, safe, and active during a year of remote learning. We also saw support from new donors and sponsors as we joined with partners to create innovative programs to meet emergent needs.

This year has left me tremendously inspired for the years to come. From our staff and board to families and donors, I have continued to be impressed with the resilience, hope, and passion for supporting one another, lifting up our community, and, of course, having so much fun outside together! I look forward to seeing what we'll be able to accomplish in the coming year!

With gratitude and inspiration,



LICIA SAHAGUN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

OUTINGS & ADVENTURES

Programs open to the broader community to get you and your family outside, including summer camps, afterschool, and Explorers Club



1,133
PARTICIPANTS

25,000+
NATURE HOURS

\$29,250
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

"Bravo to Wild Whatcom on carefully considering how to administer programming during the COVID pandemic. We are so appreciative that our child has had opportunities to get outside and be with other kiddos (and mentors) during this difficult, stressful and isolating time. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!" -- Neighborhood Nature parent

This year each of our programs shifted in some way to include new efforts to keep kids connected and safe during COVID-19. Our Summer Camps started in July 2020 with stable cohorts, masks, and distancing. In Explorers Club, our cohort-style weekend program, we transitioned outings to city parks due to permitting restrictions and focused our service outings on fully outdoors stewardship projects. Our after school program, Neighborhood Nature, grew significantly this past year as parents were eager to keep their children connected with peers and community. We shifted quickly to offering this program in local parks instead of on school grounds as school districts navigated through remote learning schedules. We also offered new programs, Nature Lab and Wednesday Walks, programs operating when public school sessions were remote only. In February, we restarted our program for families, Wild Things, offered on Fridays in local parks. Though group size was limited, we still met new friends, relished new nature moments, and of course had a ton of fun!



"Wild Whatcom programs have honestly meant everything to us over the last year. We have been taking social distancing seriously for the last year due to her dad being immunocompromised. We decided to homeschool this school year, so if it wasn't for Wild Whatcom programming she would be completely isolated from other kids. She is thriving this year and I know without a doubt that Wild Whatcom has played a role in that."

-- Financial assistance recipient

STEWARDSHIP & SERVICE

For more than 10 years, Wild Whatcom's programs have been providing youth the opportunity to give back to their community through stewardship and service projects.

This year in a snapshot:

2,670 volunteer hours provided

345 pounds of garbage removed

130 native plants planted

13 service sites improved



"With over a decade of quality programming and environmental education experience, Wild Whatcom is a leader in their field and we are eager to work alongside them."

- Amy Brown, City of Bellingham Parks Volunteer Coordinator

Across many of our programs we integrate stewardship and service projects so young people have a chance to give back to their community, understand their agency in the world, and have a positive impact in the parks we visit. Due to COVID-19 safety concerns, we focused on outdoor stewardship, pulling invasive weeds, planting native plants, and picking up garbage from our local parks. This year we also formalized our longstanding partnership with the City of Bellingham's Parks and Recreation Department.



"I just wanted to say how great your partnership is with the parks department. Taal really loved that feeling of doing something for his community and took real ownership of it. We've even visited the trees at Squalicum that he prepped for winter!" -- Neighborhood Nature parent

PARTNERS

We have worked with a variety of community partners to give youth many ways to see the positive impact they can have in the world. Here are just a few:

City of Bellingham Parks and Recreation, Washington Trails Association, Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association, Whatcom Volunteer Center, Habitat for Humanity, International Coastal Cleanup, Recreation Northwest, Blue Skies for Children, Whatcom Land Trust, Bellingham Community Meals, Animals for Natural Therapy, and more!

PARTNER PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

Each year we raise funds to offer programs for free to public school districts and in partnership with community organizations to reach underserved youth.



CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

As we embarked on an academic year of fully remote learning, Wild Whatcom mobilized with other community partners to be the first to bring students back to classrooms in Bellingham Public Schools. Wild Whatcom spearheaded the program, which leveraged nine community partners to provide online learning support and a variety of outdoor enrichment, recreation, art, and stewardship. Students received transportation, two meals, full-day childcare, and outdoor gear (rain jackets, hats, gloves, and rain pants). We served more than 115 students, many of whom were English language learners, together representing more than 11 languages spoken at home.

SEED PROGRAM

Our Student Environmental Education and Discovery (SEED) program serves students with moderate to severe behavioral or developmental disabilities in Bellingham Public School's Life Skills and BRIDGES programs. We began the year offering virtual resources to our SEED teachers to help them engage their students outdoors. In the spring, we restarted our in-person program with eight classrooms, reaching 78 students with hands-on outdoor lessons and exploration!



CLIMETIME INITIATIVE

For the past several years, Wild Whatcom has joined with community partners including the Lummi Nation and the Northwest Indian College to provide up to 50 elementary school teachers with professional development opportunities. The project focuses on increasing teachers' understanding of climate science, while drawing connections between curriculum standards and hands-on outdoor lessons. This year we quickly shifted to virtual and offered lessons on justice-centered teaching and how to incorporate stewardship projects.



WHAT'S NEXT?

We have several exciting initiatives underway including new partnerships, expanding existing programs, and developing our leadership team.

OUTDOOR SUMMER SCHOOL

This summer Wild Whatcom is partnering with Bellingham Public and Mount Baker School Districts and community organizations to offer an outdoor portion to summer school initiatives reaching learners who may have fallen behind during the year of remote learning or need additional support accessing educational activities and outdoor enrichment. Thank you to Vamos Outdoors Project and Common Threads for ongoing partnerships to support these programs!



PATHWAYS PROJECTS

With the support from the Whatcom Coalition for Environmental Educators, we are working with several non-profit partners to pilot K-6 outdoor programming in the Mount Baker School District starting in fall 2021. This initiative leverages the expertise, capacity, and curricula of several partners to reach every elementary student with standards-aligned outdoor lessons. Stay tuned for updates on this work, which may serve as a model for other districts to bring more students outdoors!

LYDIA PLACE PARTNERSHIP

Though this project was put on hold for a year due to COVID-19, we are excited to start a pilot project with Lydia Place this coming year. The initiative includes a community picnic and guided outdoor walks and activities for families in Lydia Place's Campus Housing Program. The project includes outings in nearby nature as well as combined trips across housing complexes to Larrabee and Birch Bay State Parks to build community and see new natural spaces.



STRATEGIC PLANNING & GROWTH

Despite the pandemic, our staff and board gathered together safely for our annual retreats, done virtually via Zoom and in person outdoors. We used our time together to dream, dig deep, think critically, and plan ahead for what's next to come for Wild Whatcom. After several months of drafting, revising, and reviewing, our 3-year Strategic Plan will be available for the public in the fall of 2021. We look forward to sharing our priorities and plans with you soon!

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

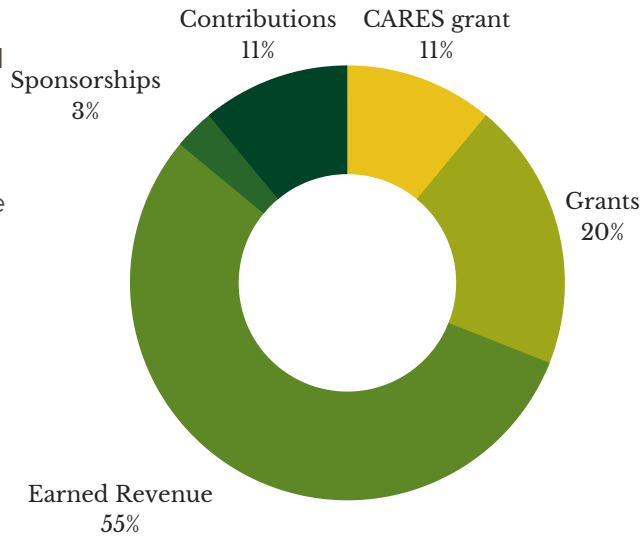
These are projected numbers for our fiscal year from September 1, 2020 to August 31, 2021

REVENUE (\$817,250)

Thanks to a second CARES Act federal loan, we were able to nearly fully recover lost costs due to our COVID-19-induced shut down.

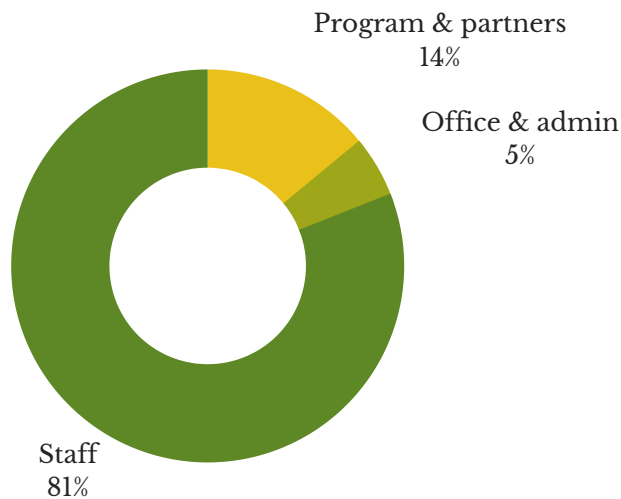
As we reopened programs, we saw increased demand for our fully outdoors programs, which kept young people connected and safe. We increased enrollment in nearly all of our fee-based programming and provided nearly \$30,000 in financial assistance.

This revenue has allowed us to not only keep current staff employed, but also hire new staff members to meet community demand. Net revenue will also provide financial stability as we plan to reopen our free programs offered to school districts in the fall.



EXPENSES (\$635,750)

The vast majority of our expenses go directly to supporting our programs. This year, we also spearheaded new collaborative initiatives, which included managing grant funding for several partners. Most of our budget is allocated to paying and appreciating staff, and this year we were able to offer raises for nearly all staff as well as benefits such as a mental health stipend, mask stipend, gear stipend, and more to keep our staff healthy and supported during the pandemic.



Our Board of Directors decided to meet both in person and virtually during this year's retreat. Some of our favorite conversations came from our small-group walk and talks when we reconnected, shared nature moments, and dreamed for our future!



Wild Whatcom staff reflected and brainstormed during the virtual portion of our January Staff Retreat. Though we did this via Zoom, it was still a productive time together after nearly a full year of remote and field work during the pandemic..



Our staff also gathered together in person throughout the year to continue practicing skills and honing our nature knowledge. Pictured here is our Program Director, Sammy Jolly, practicing fire by friction.



THANK YOU

We could not do what we do without you!

FOUNDATION FUNDERS & SPONSORS

Alcoa Foundation
 Bellingham Public Schools Foundation
 Brandon Nelson Partners
 Candela Technologies
 Highline Construction
 IMCO Construction
 McEachern Charitable Trust
 Mount Baker Foundation
 Norcliffe Foundation
 OSPI
 Schools Out Washington
 Seeking Health, LLC
 PAC Worldwide
 Peak Design
 The Cairn Project
 Whatcom Community Foundation

SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS

Agate Pond Preserve
 Barron Smith Daugert PLLC
 Bellingham Parks and Recreation
 Common Threads
 Garmo Family
 Lydia Place
 Marine Life Center
 Nuu-Muu
 NSEA
 North Cascades Audubon Society
 Northwest Mushroomers Association
 Northwest Youth Services

Pacific Rim Tonewoods
 Port of Bellingham
 RE Sources
 Satushek Family
 Sinnet Family
 The Volunteer Center
 Vamos Outdoors Project
 Washington Trails Association
 Whatcom County Parks
 Whatcom Land Trust

And our countless parents, donors, and other partners in the community!

We can never say thank you enough to all of our donors, funders, sponsors, supporters, and partners in the community! You help us bring youth and families outdoors to foster new relationships, connect with nature, and give back through service. This year, more than ever, we are grateful to you for not only supporting our mission and programs, but also for providing inspiration, hope, and resilience to our staff and board. Thank you for bringing so much joy to the "work" that we do. We hope to see you outside soon, and please reach out to learn more or get involved with our wonder-full Wild Whatcom community!



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www.wildwhatcom.org | info@wildwhatcom.org

(360) 389-3414 | facebook.com/wildwhatcom | instagram.com/wildwhatcom