

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



## DISCOVER YOUR FOREST

*Friends of the Deschutes & Ochoco National Forests  
& Crooked River National Grassland*

*Discover Your Forest is dedicated to promoting the discovery of the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and Crooked River National Grassland by enriching the experience of visitors, building community support and creating the next generation of environmental stewards.*

PROUD PARTNER OF



[WWW.DISCOVERYOURFOREST.ORG](http://WWW.DISCOVERYOURFOREST.ORG)



## Dear Supporters,

At Discover Your Forest, 2020 was filled with challenges, setbacks and heartbreak like it was for many. The impacts to our partners and programs stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the devastation felt by our friends and neighbors in a catastrophic wildfire season and the pain in our community stemming from centuries of social injustice challenged us to deliver our mission in new ways. 2020 was also filled with innovation, self-reflection and triumph over adversity. Discover Your Forest, our staff, partners and volunteers showed incredible commitment to our core values and found ways to impact, inspire, inform and be of service to our community. With Visitor Centers closed and Interpretive Programs cancelled, our staff worked tirelessly to serve visitors through virtual interpretive opportunities, printed materials for visitors and providing support to our partners to sell recreation passes, maps and materials online.

Our conservation education programs were replaced with virtual programs delivered to hundreds of students as part of their remote learning reality. These programs provided invaluable support to teachers who were asked for so much this year. We could not be more proud of our education staff who rose to the occasion and rapidly pivoted their programs to this incredibly challenging format to serve students and teachers when they needed us most.

This spring and summer, our Volunteers on the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests largely stood down as a measure to protect themselves and others from the spread of COVID-19. As time progressed, many trails volunteers found ways to serve safely and they were able to make incredible impacts and provided much improved experiences for the exploding numbers of recreationists on the Forest in 2020.

Our residential volunteer program this year welcomed 14 camp hosts in the Newberry Caldera. These incredible volunteers served the public tirelessly this summer and were truly on the front lines providing families with incredible camping experiences on our forest. We are so thankful for the work of these amazing individuals!

As people around our country fought for social justice, Discover Your Forest endeavored to identify and acknowledge the disparities and threats facing Black, Indigenous, People of Color, the LGBTQ+ community and people experiencing disabilities that occur on our Public Lands. We have strengthened our commitment to making our programs and our Public Lands welcoming and safe for all people. We are taking action on all fronts to engage with our community members and change our way of doing business to serve our broader community in a more just and equitable way.

In 2020 we saw a collective realization of the incredible value of our Public Lands. In addition to being places we play, Public Lands became places we went to be with our families, to heal our minds and bodies and to find peace. We watched together and saw an explosion of use on our National Forests in 2020, with hundreds of thousands of users accessing new trails, learning new sports and spending much more time outside. With this use came new challenges. To address growing issues of resource damage, user conflict and safety, we are working hard to develop resources for visitors to understand how to recreate responsibly.

I want to close this letter with a message to all those who recreated on our National Forests in 2020. No matter where you call home, how you recreate or who you are, we are glad you're here. Discover Your Forest invites each of you to explore how you can give back to the places that gave us so much this year. Reach out to volunteer, donate, attend a program or become a member. Do more than just visit.

Together we can create a bright future for our Public Lands.  
With Gratitude,



Rika Ayotte  
Executive Director

## BY THE NUMBERS

**\$500K+** RAISED TO SUPPORT  
OUR FORESTS

**2020 WINNER**

of the Public Lands Partner Award  
from the Public Lands Alliance



**21**

Residential and camp  
host volunteers

**1,079 VOLUNTEERS**



**VOLUNTEER HOURS**

2020 53,064

2019 117,373



**VOLUNTEER SERVICE**

2020 1.44 MILLION

2019 2.98 MILLION

**6,000 KIDS**



Discover Your Forest adapted to serve  
local students through both in-person  
and virtual programs this year



**20**

New **VIRTUAL PROGRAMS**  
available for students

In 2019, DYF hosted **11 INTERNSHIPS**  
on the Deschutes and National Forest,  
paying nearly **\$20,000 IN STIPENDS.**





## GET INVOLVED

At Discover Your Forest, we want you to do more than just visit your public lands. If you love our National Forests, there are so many ways that you can connect, give back and make a difference in these special places. Here are a few ways to get involved:

### VOLUNTEER

Central Oregon's National Forests and Grassland is extremely grateful for the incredible community of diverse volunteers who are devoted to stewardship and their public lands. Whether you are an aspiring or an advanced outdoor enthusiast, our volunteers advocate for healthy forests and protection of natural landscapes by providing education to visitors, helping to maintain trails, serving at wilderness trailheads, picking up trash, preventing the spread of invasive plants, and much more. Our staff supports volunteers by onboarding, training and ensuring that everyone is having a rewarding and successful volunteer experience. Are you interested in volunteering in your local Forest or Grassland? If so, come share your talents with us!. Learn more at [discoveryyourforest.org/volunteer](https://discoveryyourforest.org/volunteer), or reach out to our Community Engagement Director at 541-508-9899 or [stacey.cochran@discoveryyourforest.org](mailto:stacey.cochran@discoveryyourforest.org).

### PARTICIPATE IN A PROGRAM

While in-person events are still on hold, Discover Your Forest is still offering some fun ways to take part in programs. From hosting Backcountry Film Festival virtually for the first time ever, to DIY Stargazing Kits, virtual snow science and more, we are still working to connect with our community. As things are changing every day still, the best way to stay up-to-date with our programs is to follow us on social media, or check in at [discoveryyourforest.com/all-programs](https://discoveryyourforest.com/all-programs).

### DONATE

The stresses put on teachers and young students during the pandemic is hard to fathom – making it even more vital that we support them with quality programs this year. By investing in Discover Your Forest, you are helping to ensure our ability to offer important programs that protect the future of our Central Oregon forests. There are a

variety of ways to support us financially, and every dollar helps. Learn about all of them at [discoveryyourforest.org/donate](https://discoveryyourforest.org/donate)

### BECOME A MEMBER

You can show your support for the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forest and Crooked River National Grassland by becoming a member of Discover Your Forest. Your membership funds go toward conservation and interpretive efforts on our local National Forests.

For just \$25 per year, you will receive: 15% Off In all DYF stores, along with reciprocal discounts in over 100 stores across the US, members only quarterly outings and discounts, as well as access to our quarterly newsletter and much more.

Signup is a breeze. Head to [discoveryyourforest.org/membership](https://discoveryyourforest.org/membership)

## CREATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS

At Discover Your Forest, we believe in the power of change. We believe the best gift we can give to future generations, and the best legacy we can leave behind, is a community of environmentally literate youth who are equipped with the skills to address current and future environmental challenges.

We offer programs across Central Oregon, serving children from preschool through college. All of our programs are offered completely free of charge. We fundraise and strive to make sure that all children have the opportunity to fully participate regardless of their ability, language or socioeconomic status.

You can support these programs by volunteering, donating or simply helping to share our programs with parents and educators in your life. Together, we can create the next generation of environmental stewards.

#### WE WANT ALL STUDENTS IN OUR PROGRAMS TO:

- Learn to enjoy the outdoors and develop a positive attitude toward the natural world
- Observe and experience nature, becoming familiar with its systems and species
- Understand the ecological web and its importance within Central Oregon and across the globe
- Become environmentally literate and assume responsibility for the future
- Understand the impact humans have on the environment and how to mitigate these impacts



## TESTIMONIALS

### SARAH WILSON TEACHER

*"Discover Your Forest was quick to adapt their elementary program to engage JCSD students participating in Comprehensive Distance Learning. This pivot enabled Jefferson County Community Learning Center to curate virtual enrichment class programming while students were learning from home. We are incredibly grateful to DYF for providing these learning experiences for our students!"*



### RANDY HARANO VOLUNTEER

*"Being a Volunteer Ranger has been the most rewarding volunteer endeavor of my life. I've had the opportunity to meet people from all over the world and help them to understand the marvelous historic and geologic wonders on Newberry National Volcanic Monument. Being a volunteer ranger has simply been awesome! Amazing staff and coworkers make it a fun place to be. You can't beat a day on the Monument greeting visitors and working with amazing staff."*



### KEVNEY DUGAN PARTNER

*"This year taught us just how valuable our National Forests are to our community. Discover Your Forest plays an essential role in giving visitors the tools they need to become stewards of their Public Lands. We are proud to partner with them to help preserve and protect these special places."*





## MEET OUR STAFF



### RIKA AYOTTE Executive Director

Rika has been the Executive Director of Discover Your Forest since 2015. Her background is in museums and she has experience in executive leadership, public programs and education. Rika's role is to grow the philanthropic support base, to ensure our financial future and to enable us to better serve our public lands.



### KAREN GENTRY Education & Interpretation Director

Karen has been with Discover Your Forest since 2010. She oversees the creation and facilitation of all of our programming; spanning seasons, topics, audiences and forests. She also acts as the trainer for our volunteer interpreters, and leads community projects throughout Central Oregon.



### STACEY COCHRAN Community Engagement Director

Stacey started with Discover Your Forest in 2014 as their event and volunteer coordinator. Growing into the Community Engagement director role, she cultivates relationships with community members to support their success as a volunteer steward, making sure they have everything they need for an incredible and rewarding experience. Stacey also manages our career pathways program, fostering mentored experiential learning for youth who are passionate about the health of our public lands.



### GAIL WHELAN Retail Operations Coordinator & Business Manager

Gail has been with us since 2012. She is responsible for 11 retail stores in Central Oregon and manages recreation pass sales for our Forest Service partners, accounting for 5 sites within the Deschutes National Forest. She stocks a wide selection of maps, books, interactive and fun educational retail items in all of our visitor centers and ranger stations.



### AMY JENSEN Marketing & Events Director

Amy joined the team in 2019. Her role includes the planning and execution of major annual fundraising events such as Stars Over Newberry, Campout for Public Lands, and Backcountry Film Festival. She also runs our membership program and oversees all marketing efforts.



### BECKY YAEGER Conservation Education Specialist

Since 2018, Becky has been coordinating conservation education programs at sites across the forests. After leading snowshoe tours for students during Winter 2020, Becky converted her field trips to virtual explorations. She made video lessons and new online activities for distance learning that have allowed a majority of kids to continue participating in DYF programs.

## PROTECTING OUR PUBLIC LANDS

2020 pushed our public lands further than any year before. With unprecedented use across the globe, forests and grasslands saw record numbers of visitors in dire need of both the serenity and thrill that nature offers. With thousands flocking to their public land sites, it is more important than ever to educate and encourage best practices. Our partners at the Forest Service worked to compile information to keep visitors, wildlife and our wild places safe:



### KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Check the status of the place you want to visit. If it is closed, don't go. If it's crowded, have a Plan B.

### PLAN AHEAD

Prepare for facilities to be closed, pack lunch and bring essentials like hand sanitizer and a face covering.

### PRACTICE PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Keep your group size small. Be prepared to cover your nose and mouth and give others space. If you are sick, stay home.

### PLAY IT SAFE

Slow down and choose lower-risk activities to reduce your risk of injury. Search and rescue operations and health care resources are both strained.

### EXPLORE LOCALLY

Limit long-distance travel and make use of local parks, trails and public spaces. Be mindful of your impact on the communities you visit.

### LEAVE NO TRACE

Respect public lands and waters, as well as Native and local communities. Take all your garbage with you.

### BUILD AN INCLUSIVE OUTDOORS

Be an active part of making the outdoors safe and welcoming for all identities and abilities.

For more information, visit [recreateresponsibly.org](https://recreateresponsibly.org) or [discoveryyourforest.org/TakeCareOutThere](https://discoveryyourforest.org/TakeCareOutThere)

## FINANCIALS

18% Trails Coalitions

4% Events

10% Donations

3% Grants

42% Retail

23% Forest Service

30% Staff Expense

37% Program Expense

2% Events

31% Retail Expense

## OUR DONORS

\$10,000+

Mt. Bachelor  
REI  
US Forest Service  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
Visit Central Oregon  
Roger Worthington  
Worthy Garden Club  
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

\$5,000 +

Children's Forest of Central Oregon

\$2,500+

Cascades East Transit

\$1,000+

Sunriver Rotary Club Foundation  
Sisters Movie House

\$500+

Winter Wildlands Alliance  
Earthcruiser USA LLC  
Pine Mt Sports  
Gray Family Foundation  
Victoria Gordon & Robert Bradley  
John Hope

Discover Your Forest would also like to recognize and thank the hundreds of other donors and members who provided additional support throughout the year.