

Experience Vancouver Lake

Engaging the Vancouver Community with Vancouver Lake

PROJECT GOAL

Experience Vancouver Lake engages Vancouver area students and community members in a comprehensive watershed outreach program that builds community awareness and appreciation for Vancouver Lake. Estuary Partnership staff will build on existing, successful relationships with Vancouver area schools and partners, as well as build on previous efforts and partnerships, to create connections and a sense of ownership between Vancouver area citizens and Vancouver Lake through education, engagement, and direct on-the-water experiences. The program builds a constituency of people committed to ensuring Vancouver Lake remains a valued regional community treasure and environmental resource.

Objectives

- Short term: Connect the community to Vancouver Lake through active engagement in a range of activities.
- Long term: Build 'ownership' and support for Vancouver Lake's care and increase the value of the Lake and its environs to the community.

Annual Deliverables

- Three 1-hour classroom programs to nine classes (approximately 270 students) & One 4-hour field trip to nine classes (approximately 270 students)
- Five Community Events & Two Community Paddles
- One on-line water trail mapping page
- Communication materials (press releases, web site/Facebook posts, etc.)
- One annual Vancouver Lake workshop, conference or summit

EDUCATE

1. Educate Vancouver Area Students: \$26,486.44

The Estuary Partnership has a six-person team of professional environmental educators, with extensive experience working with students throughout the lower Columbia River, including a long history of working with Vancouver area schools districts, schools, and students. Our programs meet state benchmark requirements for grade level as well as teacher classroom objectives. We help teachers learn how to teach in the field, something they have indicated they need. We work with a range of partners, including schools in the Vancouver, Evergreen, Battle Ground, Ridgefield, Camas, and Washougal School Districts, agencies like Clark County, the Port of Vancouver, Vancouver Parks, Department of Ecology, and community organizations such as the Vancouver Water Resources Center, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and other partners.

Annually, as part of this project the Estuary Partnership will work with approximately 270 students (9 classes), providing approximately 1,900 hours of instruction to Vancouver area students on an extensive Vancouver Lake education project. Each class will receive three, one-hour classroom programs, and one, four-hour field trip to Vancouver Lake. Around 20 parent volunteers will be involved annually, assisting with student field trips and learning about Vancouver Lake along with their child. Costs include bus transportation for students, teachers and parent chaperones and volunteers.

- **Classroom Lessons:** Estuary Partnership staff will tailor existing classroom programming to focus on Vancouver Lake and the Vancouver Lake watershed. Classroom lessons will focus on healthy watersheds, native and invasive plant species, and human-environment connections. Classroom lessons build upon each

other, integrate with teacher's existing curriculum and state science standards, and prepare students for their field trip.

- **Field Trips:** Field trips will be designed to actively engage students in Vancouver Lake. Likely activities are paddles in the Estuary Partnership's Big Canoes, educational hikes, field observation, water quality monitoring, and service learning projects (clean ups, plantings, invasive species removal projects, etc.).

ENGAGE

2. Engage Vancouver Community Members in Vancouver Lake Events: \$26,125.00

Annually, the Estuary Partnership will conduct five community events and engage approximately 100-130 community members. The exact nature of the events will be determined by needs and opportunities and may vary from year to year; the focus will be on plantings or invasive plant removal. Other events include birding hikes and clean ups. The Estuary Partnership's Education Team and Volunteer Coordinator will host each event, recruit volunteers, provide all necessary materials, and provide site information during the planting. Estuary Partnership scientists will provide additional support as needed.

The Estuary Partnership conducts dozens of community events each year in the lower Columbia River. Events focus on getting people outside and engaged with local natural resources in a direct way.

EXPERIENCE

3. Experience Vancouver Lake through On-Water Recreation Paddles: \$9,650.00

The Estuary Partnership will engage up to 120 people with on-water Vancouver Lake experiences each year. Options include, hosting two annual community paddle days with multiple trips in the 29' foot canoes; and/or hosting an annual 11-mile community paddle from Vancouver Lake to Ridgefield, Washington, that highlights opportunities and issues along Lake River – a key input to Vancouver Lake.

The Estuary Partnership has more than a decade of experience coordinating the Lower Columbia River Water Trail and promoting recreational activities. The Estuary Partnership will promote and improve access to the Lewis River – Vancouver Lake Water Trail by developing an on-line map based on the Lewis-River-Vancouver Lake Water Trail Paddling Guide that allows people to further explore the water trail for trip planning purposes. The Estuary Partnership will also work to clarify Vancouver Lake area signage and rules regarding non-motorized boating, work to enhance non-motorized boat access to Vancouver Lake, and investigate installation of mile markers and/or other appropriate signage between Vancouver Lake and Ridgefield that will facilitate experience and understanding of Vancouver Lake.

EXCHANGE

4. Communicate to Support Vancouver Lake: \$3,484.20

Estuary Partnership community relations staff, working with the Education and Science Team, will use various communication strategies to implement the program. The focus will be to, promote Vancouver Lake events, build community engagement, and engage further with existing Vancouver Lake users (sailing and rowing clubs, paddling shops, community groups, etc.) to enhance and build on cross promotion opportunities. Estuary Partnership staff will prepare content for press releases, websites (Estuary Partnership, Port of Vancouver, Clark County, and City of Vancouver), Facebook pages, and other social media platforms that engage people in Vancouver Lake and create community and long term stewardship of its vital recreation and natural areas.

5. Host Annual Vancouver Lake Partnership and Community Forum/Gathering: \$6,720.00

The Estuary Partnership will work with City of Vancouver, Clark County, the Port of Vancouver, Washington State University, and other community partners to develop and host a one-day Vancouver Lake focused forum designed to engage members of the Vancouver Lake Partnership, other key stakeholders, and the community in a day of Vancouver Lake focused updates and discussion. We will develop the forum agenda collaboratively and it may include a range of topics from emerging science about Vancouver Lake and its environs, to restoration, education, and recreation updates, to educational activities, to a community/public engagement discussion. The forum will

provide an opportunity to focus the Vancouver area community on Vancouver Lake and its resources, opportunities, challenges, and could include an outdoor component, and or a community/public engagement discussion.

EXPLORE

5. Pursue Science and Restoration Opportunities: Included as part of the partnership with the Estuary Partnership.

The Estuary Partnership's Science Team brings water quality and ecosystem monitoring expertise, habitat restoration project development and implementation expertise, and other science experience relevant to Vancouver Lake, as well as a strong network of partnerships within the science community. For this project, the Science Team will work with the Education Team on curriculum refinement and service learning/community planting project development and explore and pursue, where applicable, grant or other funding sources to accomplish additional Vancouver Lake investigations to further enhance our understanding of the Vancouver Lake system and inform future management decisions.

ADMINISTRATION

6. Contract Management, Invoicing, Reporting and Tracking: \$2,323.20

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The Estuary Partnership quantifies results of our education and community engagement programs and adapts our programming to ensure that our activities are useful to teachers, students, and community members. Our professional, six-person Education Team consists of highly qualified and experienced staff – five have Masters Degrees, including three with Masters Degrees in Teaching and teaching licenses. Combined, the team has more than 60 years of experience teaching environmental education. The team works closely with teachers and community partners to develop and deliver programming that achieves measurable results.

Student Assessments. For the past five years, the Estuary Partnership has annually surveyed at least 25% of the students and teachers we work with to assess the effects of our Education Program on students, including their watershed knowledge and affinity for nature. In the 2013-2014 school year, we sampled approximately 1,000 students (of the 4,500 we served) – a statistically valid sample size with less than a 3% margin of error. Student assessments are independently evaluated by Dr. Paul Michael, an Associate Professor of Psychology at Pacific University who helped the Estuary Partnership create the survey and annually works with us to fine tune it.

Our 2013-2014 post-test results show that 94% of students feel the field trip increased their appreciation of local habitats and wildlife; 95% of students said they enjoyed planting native plants or removing invasive species; and 93% want to return to their field trip site with friends and family. Our survey results consistently show that students show a statistically significant increase in their demonstrated knowledge of science concepts as well as improved attitudes toward nature.

Teacher Surveys. Approximately 50% of the teachers we work with complete a post-program survey, providing guidance for curriculum and program refinement. These assessments allow us to adapt our programs to meet current teacher curriculum needs and state benchmarks requirements, ensuring our programs are expanding and complimenting existing work.

Community Members. In the past five years, we have followed up informally with community members after paddle and volunteer events to recognize their involvement and solicit feedback. We send an email with photos, website and Facebook links, and future engagement opportunities. For this project, we will initiate a more formal feedback by introducing a short on-line attitudinal community survey. We will assess their experience at the event, previous connections with or perceptions of Vancouver Lake (if any), intent to take part in future activities at the lake, and whether their expectations were met. We use the formal and anecdotal feedback to improve and adjust our programming.